I AM THE OTHER; THEREFORE I AM NOT: BIOPOLITICS OF OTHERNESS IN ALI SMITH'S *SEASONAL QUARTET*

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Pamukkale University
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I hereby declare that all information in this document has been presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that as required by these rules and conduct I have fully cited and referenced all materials and results that are not original to this work.

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To Mesut, Melek & Kerem

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ABSTRACT

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In our biopolitical age, modern power, which Foucault refers to as biopolitical power, regulates and categorizes human life by degrading it into bodily existence and designating certain lives as life-worthy while excluding and letting subjects deemed undeserving die through various means. Like many contemporary novels, Ali Smith's *Seasonal Quartet* addresses the biopoliticization and marginalization of modern subjects through human landscapes from the recent past and post-Brexit Britain. Thus, this dissertation aims to explore biopolitical modernity and the biopolitical construction of otherness in Ali Smith's *Seasonal Quartet* in light of the theories of biopolitics advanced by Michel Foucault, Giorgio Agamben, Roberto Esposito and Judith Butler. This thesis not only discusses borderization portrayed through physical borders and cultural and psychological borders that shape mindsets but also analyses individuals' reduction into biological lives denied of political existence and the disintegration of society with an 'us versus them' mentality through bodies that do not adhere to normative identity definitions.

Still, Smith's protagonists become the autonomous storytellers of their life stories, the power of their own lives and the coauthors of the quartet by recollecting, imagining, dreaming and telling stories against biopolitical power manifested through the all-seeing narrator and the governing power. Thus, by probing the political possibilities of literature and s*torying* to confute the biopolitically constructed normality, *Autumn*, *Winter*, *Spring* and *Summer* suggest the possibility of a non-politicized, non-hierarchal and uncontrolled life by connecting with the Other and engaging with art, which, with its transformative, de-othering and unifying power, can reveal the human out of the political and construct the bond between the self and the other as a counter-discourse.

Keywords: Biopolitics, Otherness, *Seasonal Quartet*, Ali Smith, Foucault.

ÖZET

ÖTEKİYİM, ÖYLEYSE YOKUM: ALI SMITH'İN *MEVSİM DÖRTLEMESİ*'NDE ÖTEKİLİĞİN BİYOPOLİTİKASI

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İçinde bulunduğumuz biyopolitik çağda, Foucault'un biyopolitik iktidar olarak adlandırdığı modern iktidar, insan yaşamını bedensel varoluşa indirgeyerek, belirli yaşamları yaşanmaya değer olarak addedip hak etmediklerine hükmedilenleri çeşitli yollarla dışlayarak ve ölüme bırakarak, düzenler, sınıflandırır. Pek çok çağdaş roman gibi Ali Smith'in *Mevsim Dörtlemesi* de yakın geçmişten ve Brexit sonrası Britanya'dan insan manzaralarıyla modern öznelerin biyopolitikleştirilmesini ve ötekileştirilmesini resmeder. Dolayısıyla bu tez; Michel Foucault, Giorgio Agamben, Roberto Esposito ve Judith Butler tarafından öne sürülen biyopolitika teorileri ışığında Ali Smith'in *Mevsim Dörtlemesi*'nde işlenen biyopolitik moderniteyi ve ötekiliğin biyopolitik inşasını incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu tez, yalnızca fiziksel sınırlar ve zihniyetleri şekillendiren kültürel ve psikolojik sınırlar üzerinden tasvir edilen sınırlaşmayı ele almakla kalmayıp aynı zamanda bireylerin politik varoluştan yoksun bırakılmış biyolojik yaşamlara indirgenmesini ve toplumun, bedenler üzerinden 'biz ve onlar' zihniyetiyle parçalanmasını da analiz etmektedir.

Yine de Smith'in kahramanları, her şeyi gören anlatıcı ve de yöneten erk olarak karşımıza çıkan biyopolitik iktidar karşısında, hatırlayarak, hayal ve rüyalara dalarak ve öyküler anlatarak hayat hikâyelerinin özerk öykücüleri, kendi hayatlarının iktidarları ve dörtlemenin ortak yazarları haline gelirler. Böylece *Sonbahar, Kış, İlkbahar* ve *Yaz*, biyopolitik olarak inşa edilmiş normalliği çürütmek amacıyla edebiyatın ve öykülemenin politik olanaklarını irdelemekte, Öteki ile bağ kurarak ve sanatla ilgilenerek politikleşmemiş, hiyerarşik olmayan ve kontrol altına alınmamış bir yaşamın mümkün olacağını öne sürmektedir. Zira resmedilen sanat; dönüştürücü, kucaklayıcı ve birleştirici gücüyle politik olandaki insanı ortaya çıkarabilmekte ve bir karşı söylem olarak, benlik ile öteki arasında bağ kurabilmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Biyopolitika, Ötekileşme, *Mevsim Dörtlemesi*, Ali Smith, Foucault.

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INTRODUCTION

In an age overwhelmed by populism, racism, the refugee crisis, pandemics and protest movements bursting after long-seated social inequalities and ethnic discrimination, the boundaries between public and personal spaces have been erased as never before, whereas the self and the other have become more and more unbridgeable. The personal is also inescapably immersed in the political sphere and shaped by the very same political domain, yet fails to shape it in the least. Thus, the twenty-first century, with all its political and social crises, is marked by the construction and promotion of biopolitical lives as human life is politicized and turned into an object of power, politics has interfered and invaded the personal domain, and modern subjects, in their biopoliticized existences, are regarded as living abstractions, parts of humankind, members of the population and statistical data rather than individuals with unique identities and voices. Michel Foucault, in his theory of biopolitics, addresses this ongoing regulation and control of human life by modern power, which he refers to as biopower. According to Foucault, biopower reduces human existence to biological life and distinguishes certain lives as worthy of living and makes them live while simultaneously excluding others as undeserving and letting them die through various means. Many contemporary novels vividly portray these biopoliticized lives put on the margins as they resist the normalization strategies inherent in biopower or deviate from culturally recognized identities. A real-time account of the modern human condition, Ali Smith's *Seasonal Quartet* unveils the biopolitical control and marginalisation of modern subjects through the stories of the protagonists shaped by the socio-political crises of post-Brexit Britain and WWII Europe. In this regard, this dissertation discusses biopolitical modernity and the biopolitical construction of otherness in Ali Smith's *Seasonal Quartet—Autumn* (2016), *Winter* (2017), *Spring* (2019), and *Summer* (2020)—in light of theories of biopolitics proposed by Michel Foucault, Giorgio Agamben, Roberto Esposito and Judith Butler to question the poetics of modern biopolitical existence. Building otherized fictional selves and problematizing the relationship between power, discourse and otherization, Smith's four works reframe the human condition marked by the biopolitical operations of objectification, standardization and reduction of individuals into biological lives denied of political existence. The novels also portray borderization as a pervasive biopolitical mechanism aimed at controlling modern societies, encompassing physical, cultural and

psychological borders—the ‘us versus them’ mentality—that disintegrate and demarcate society through bodies that do not adhere to normative identity definitions. Thus, in the belief that the intersection of philosophy and literature will provide new insights to grasp the modern human condition shaped and undermined by biopolitical regimes, this thesis will analyse Smith’s particular novels to illuminate how these post-millennial works designate othering as a biopolitical phenomenon and portray the dehumanization of individuals as bodies hierarchized and, if deemed unworthy of living, excluded and left to die. Set against the backdrop of the polarized post-Brexit society in *Autumn* and *Winter*, modern immigration detention centers in *Spring*, and the pandemic-stricken Britain alongside the British internment camps and Vichy France of World War II in *Summer*, Smith’s works mirror how modern individuals have been turned into objects of power, made either targets or perpetrators of biopolitical othering on account of their fear of the Other, incarcerated into their personal spheres, disenfranchised, interned in camps or detained in detention centres and silenced. Their bodies become sites of politics, determining their inclusion and exclusion, recognition and abandonment, privilege and othering, which renders such terms as citizenship, judiciary and human rights entirely obsolete.

Seasonal Quartet also suggests the possibility of personal and collective freedom and a collective existence bereft of hierarchical definitions of being human through human interdependency and art. The novels centralize the metamorphic impact of an outsider figure on the protagonists. The Other walks into the characters’ lonely, desolate, biopoliticized lives and unveils their human selves by introducing them to art and inspiring them to imagine, dream, tell stories and reconnect to their hidden selves and the world. In this sense, this dissertation argues that the quartet, as a counter-discourse, highlights the vitality of human connectivity against singularizing biopolitical mechanisms and normative identity definitions. The novels portray otherized protagonists as self-governing, free ‘people of exception’ who challenge states of exception forced upon them and inspire other characters to emancipate themselves as well. Accordingly, this thesis defines *Autumn*, *Winter*, *Spring* and *Summer* as autobiofictions since Smith’s protagonists become autonomous storytellers of their life stories, the powers of their own lives and the coauthors of the quartet by recollecting, imagining, dreaming and telling stories against biopolitical power manifested through the surveillance state, non-state actors and the all-seeing narrator. Furthermore, by

probing the political potential of literature and s*torying* to confute the biopolitically constructed normality, the novels suggest the possibility of a non-politicized, non-hierarchal and uncontrolled life and call for finding new discourses to discuss inequality and racism in the twenty-first century. Art, with its transformative, de-othering and unifying power, can reveal the human out of the political and reconstruct the bond between the self and the other as a counter-discourse. *Seasonal Quartet*, thereby, designates art and literature as sites of resistance against divisive biopolitical discourses, echoing Foucault's views on art shaped by his reading of Nietzsche and his infamous statement in *The Will to Power*: "Art and nothing but art! It is the great means of making life possible, the great seduction to life, the great stimulant of life" (1967: 853).

Furthermore, this thesis explores the motif of circularity that pervades *Seasonal Quartet*, in which each book, named after a season, symbolizes distinct stages of human life and revolves around a protagonist associated with that season. *Autumn*, symbolizing ageing and decline, portrays the 101-year-old Daniel, whereas *Winter* introduces the aged and lifeless Sophia, echoing the wintertime. *Spring*, which evokes rebirth and childhood, centres on the 13-year-old Florence and lastly, *Summer* brings characters together with various perspectives, reflecting the togetherness, abundance and maturity associated with summertime. Nevertheless, this dissertation contends that *Seasonal Cycle* conveys the author's pessimistic view of the future of Britain by starting with *Autumn* rather than *Spring*, typically considered the beginning of the seasons. The analogy drawn between contemporary issues and traumatic events in the last century also signifies the novel's critique of the nation's collective amnesia and failure to learn from its history.

Accordingly, the first chapter will present the theoretical framework of biopolitics, drawing upon the insights of Michel Foucault, Roberto Esposito, Giorgio Agamben and Judith Butler. This section will comprehensively address the manifestations of biopower in the contemporary world while exploring new approaches to the theory. The second chapter will specifically focus on the reflection of biopolitics within the novel genre. Following an overview of biopolitical literary criticism, the section will introduce Ali Smith and her *Seasonal Quartet*. Subsequent chapters will individually analyse each novel within the tetralogy through the lens of a particular theorist whose biopolitical theory resonates prominently within that specific work. This approach aims to prevent unnecessary repetition regarding the common thread among

these philosophers—their focus on the politicization of human life by power structures, the establishment and perpetuation of otherness through socially enforced norms and exclusionary discourses, and the reduction of subjects to bodies treated as targets and instruments of governing power.

In the third chapter, *Autumn* will be analysed in light of Michel Foucault's concepts of biopower, racism and counter-discourse. The chapter will place particular emphasis on the analogy between post-Brexit Britain and 1930s Germany, both grappling with the rise of racism and social divisions. The section will also examine the protagonists' resistance to exclusionary discourses through friendship, love, and the hope instilled by art, employing the notion of counter-discourse. The representation of borderization will be specifically discussed as a means of biopolitical othering, manifesting through the appropriation of the common land, technological surveillance, divisive biopolitical rhetoric, societal polarization and the escalating anti-immigrant sentiments and xenophobia in the country. The stranded refugee bodies in Daniel's dream, his outsider position in pre-war Germany and Elisabeth's otherization by the townspeople and postal officers due to her non-conformity with the body standards of the biopolitical state will be explored as manifestations of biopolitical control and the thanatopolitical practices of the power over individuals' bodies. Furthermore, the section will dwell on the novel's critical stance about the construction of truth in modernity, revealing the blurred lines between fact and fiction in our post-truth age. The chapter will conclude by discussing the function of art in a dysfunctional society, with a focus on Daniel and Elisabeth's lifelong friendship sparked by their shared love of art, which inspires and enables them to establish a profound connection with life and find meaning in it.

The fourth chapter will explore *Winter* within the framework of Roberto Esposito's concepts of immunitas, communitas, and auto-tolerance, offering a thorough examination of the biopolitical construction of otherness. Lux's experiences as an undocumented immigrant, Iris's parental rejection due to her defiance of her gender role, and her surveillance by the state for her protests against its thanatopolitical policies serve as manifestations of the immune mechanisms at play in society. Sophia's stalking and harassment by shadowy agents further shed light on the designation of individuals as bodies subject to the surveillance and control of biopolitical power. The chapter will also scrutinize portrayals of borderization through not only the estranged Cleves sisters,

symbolizing the polarized British nation after the referendum but also Lux, who, like the rare Canadian warbler, has immigrated to Britain, living under the radar and defying political borders. The protests of the Greenham women activists against the nuclear weapons program of the government point out the crossing of boundaries through solidarity and friendship. Moreover, the chapter will explore the notion of auto-tolerance and the possibility of collective resistance through empathetic and ethical relationships with others. Lux's positive influence on the Cleves family, which restores their broken family ties and reconnects Sophia and Art with one another and life, illustrates the manifestations of auto-tolerance in the novel. The chapter will also incorporate the novel's emphasis on the transformative and therapeutic power of art. Sophia's encounter with Barbara Hepworth's sculpture and Arthur's reflection on a flower's trace on the manuscript of *Cymbeline* suggests how art is rendered as a force enabling the mother and son to transcend their biopolitically assigned identities and forge connections with others.

In the fourth chapter, *Spring* will be analysed through Giorgio Agamben's concepts of bare life, homo sacer, camp, Muselmann, sovereign state and the state of exception. The novel draws striking parallels between modern immigrant detention centres and the British internment camps of World War II, shedding light on the shared tragedies of refugees in the detention centres and enemy aliens interned in wartime Britain. Representative of modern homo sacers, both today's refugees in detention centres and the enemy aliens of the last century, as portrayed through Daniel, Cyril, Zelig, and other internees in British internment camp, as well as Hannah in Vichy France, find themselves trapped in a perpetual state of exception—a liminal state in which they are neither fully alive nor entirely dead as stateless bodies with no political existence. In addition to the emphasis on racist social media posts, political statements, and news reports revealing the subjective nature of truth, the chapter will also address the dehumanization of individuals as expendable bodies inhumanly treated by SA4A and surrounded by walls, security fences, and surveillance systems in immigration detention centres. The detainees' experiences in the Spring and Woods Detention Centres and Florence's plight as an immigrant girl separated from her undocumented immigrant mother and Paddy's destitute as a poor Irish orphan during the Troubles all serve as reflections of how minorities are systematically otherized and left to suffer and die. Furthermore, the chapter will discuss the portrayal of art as a metamorphic and

humanizing force through Richard's epiphany upon his encounter with Tacita Dean's artwork, which shifts his perspective, and Florence's Hot Air Book rekindling Brittany's human self suppressed by her dehumanizing work. In a similar vein, like the detainees who feel normal for the first time in a while and come together with the detention centre officers in laughter while watching a Charlie Chaplin film, Paddy and Florence preserve their humanity in the face of dehumanizing practices of biopower thanks to their artistic pursuits that signify the healing and unifying potential of art.

In the fifth chapter, *Summer* will be examined through Judith Butler's ideas of precarity, precariousness, normative violence, and grievability. The novel draws an analogy between the predicaments of refugees from Nazi-occupied Europe, interned as enemy aliens in Britain, and the abandonment of service workers and immigrants by the British government during the pandemic. Both communities are stripped of political agency, living in extreme precarity and vulnerability compared to the dominant White middle/upper class community. The novel also illustrates the constitution of otherness by designating these groups as mere biological lives confined by the fences of internment camps and modern immigration detention centres through a process of borderization. This chapter will also discuss the intrusion of the private domain by biopolitical state and non-state actors through Grace's distressing encounter with SA4A officials in her house. Moreover, the novel suggests the vitality of empathy and political solidarity through both Hannah who altruistically assists Jewish people flee from France and her modern counterparts—Iris, Charlotte, Art and Sacha—who contact and help Hero and other refugees upon their release from detention centres with the onset of the pandemic. In this sense, *Summer* highlights the transformative power of human interaction. While the Greenlaws undergo a transformation through their encounter with Art and Charlotte, their meeting with Daniel and Elisabeth reshapes the outlooks of all these characters on life. Recurring figures such as Daniel, Elisabeth, Hannah, Art, and Charlotte, who make their appearance in the final novel of the quartet and unite as a spiritual family by the novel's conclusion, convey the urgency of reconnecting with one another and the world. Lastly, *Summer* highlights the resilience found in art, portrayed not only by the director Lorenza Mazzetti, who perseveres despite her traumatic past but also the enemy aliens who uphold their humanity in the face of arbitrary and dehumanizing internment.

In light of the discussions outlined above, it is necessary to frame debates on biopolitics for a comprehensive and multifaceted analysis of the representation of otherness in contemporary British Fiction. Over the past fifty years, many theorists have explored how the political shapes, controls and subjugates the personal and reflected on the intersectionality of politics and life as the nomos of modernity to discuss the escalating racist and xenophobic sentiments and systemic dehumanization of specific communities. Born out of this preoccupation, the theory of biopolitics still continues to resonate in contemporary thought and critical theory as an alternative point of departure for understanding the ongoing challenges in modern socio-political space.

CHAPTER ONE
BIOPOLITICS

1.1. What is Biopolitics?

A term originating from the ancient Greek word "bios" (life) and politics, biopolitics simply refers to "a politics that deals with life" despite its extensive use across many disciplines, encompassing political theory, philosophy, international relations and cultural studies (Lemke, 2011b: 2). As a modern technology of power, biopolitics targets "the administration of bodies and the calculated management of life" and, to this end, "posits population at the centre of politics and science" (Foucault, 1978: 140; Koyuncu, 2018: 40). This modern form of governing power designates individuals as members of humankind and controls the population through normalizing strategies based on statistical data, medical practices and norms. In that regard, biopolitical regimes aim to regulate and administer human life and construct a population of governable, docile bodies, which indicates the invalidation of such achievements of humanity as "legal protection, citizenry and democratic rights such as voting" in practice (Erdoğan, 2016: 1).

The term was coined by the Swedish thinker Rudolf Kjellen although the idea of biopolitics dates back to Plato (Özmakas, 2018: 23). As a matter of fact, comparing the state to a biological organism whose head stands for the ruler and whose body parts represent the people is a long-established metaphor in Western political thought (2018: 14). Nevertheless, the concept was expanded into an intricate system of thought in the late twentieth century by the French philosopher Michel Foucault, whose ideas have been contested and developed into new trajectories in modern thinking. Foucault first addressed the term in the second part of his seminar entitled "The Birth of Social Medicine" in 1974 and elaborated his theory mainly in his *History of Sexuality* (1976) and *Society Must Be Defended* (1976-77) in the following years. Nonetheless, as Thomas Lemke notes, biopolitics is a "buzzword" that is difficult to define for its extensive reception and comprehensive use across various fields and discourses in the present day (2011b: 1). Moreover, Foucault's own discussion of biopolitics is problematic due to the "considerable differences between his treatment of biopolitics in *The History of Sexuality* and *Society Must Be Defended*, *Security, Territory, Population* (1978) and *The Birth of Biopolitics* (1979)" (Willaert, 2012: 110). Despite the

elusiveness of the concept, his *History of Sexuality* still offers the most widely used definition of biopolitics. In this work, the term designates a historical change from the sovereign power that claims "the right to take life or let live" to a new power adopted by modern states that intends to "foster life or disallow it to the point of death" (Foucault, 1978: 136, 138). Hence, while the sovereign's only influence over life unfolds through death when he decides to take his subjects' life or let them live, biopower centralizes biological life in its practices with the claim of making live and "invest[ing] life through and through" as its "highest function" (1978: 139). In that regard, this modern form of power aims to "distribut[e] the living in the domain of value and utility" rather than "bringing death into play" (1978: 144). Foucault furthers his claims by suggesting that as biopolitical technologies "qualify, measure, appraise, and hierarchize, rather than display itself in its murderous splendour," biopower "does not have to draw the line that separates the enemy of the sovereign from his loyal subjects. It effects distributions around the norm" (1978: 144). Furthermore, biopower, rather than merely engaging in the discipline and control of certain subjects in designated spaces, expands political technologies "of normalization and optimization beyond disciplinary spaces into the general population" (Twigg, 2016: 25). Upon the centrality of the population, one might as well say that biopolitics deals with the improvement of the life of a multitude rather than individuals. To put it differently, biopolitics is "a matter of making-live, but at the level of populations" (Clough & Willse, 2011: 50). While objectifying human life as the target "of a political strategy, of a general strategy of power," biopolitics "is directed not at man-as-body but at man-as-species" (Foucault, 2007: 16; 2003: 243). In that sense, the main objective of biopolitical technologies is to "achieve overall states of equilibration or regularity' for the effective management and control of the society (2003: 246). Thus, despite its claim to "subordinate" the "[r]epressive power over death" "to a power over life," biopolitics reduces individuals into "living beings" instead of defining them as "legal subjects" (Lemke, 2011b: 36). In Foucault's terms, population is turned into "the correlate of power and the object of knowledge" that renders "man […] nothing other than a figure of population" (2007: 110). Therefore, in these regimes:

> [p]ower would no longer be dealing simply with legal subjects over whom the ultimate dominion was death, but with living beings, and the mastery it would be able to exercise over them would have to be applied at the level of life itself; it was the taking charge of life, more than the threat of death, that gave power its access even to the body (Foucault, 1978: 142–143).

Thus, the birth of biopolitics in tandem with liberal practices against the unlimited power of the sovereign in the eighteenth century became a touchstone in political history. In the last chapter of *History of Sexuality, Vol.1,* entitled "The Right of Death and Power Over Life and Death," Foucault diagnosed three types of power that came forth across the modern period: sovereign power, disciplinary power and biopolitical power. For the philosopher, sovereign power is the absolute monarchical power yielded by a sovereign, who, as the source directing order and punishment, can decide to take life or let live. Nevertheless, Foucault claims that it "can found absolute power on the absolute expenditure of power, but […] cannot calculate power with minimum expenditure and maximum efficiency" (2003: 36). Thereupon, disciplinary power and biopolitical power emerged as new power mechanisms in the eighteenth century. Disciplinary power hinges upon the body at an individual level with the intention of disciplining subjects through positing individual bodies into such disciplinary places as "factories, schools, barracks, hospitals, which all resemble prisons" and "functions as a normative power" and "each individual, wherever he may find himself, subjects to it his body, his gestures, his behaviour, his aptitudes, his achievements" (1995: 228, 304). Thus, disciplinary technologies "make humans obedient and productive not by threatening that the sovereign will take their lives, but through capillary scientific technologies of normalisation such as routinisation, exercise and confined movement" (Twigg, 2016: 25). In this sense, this power mechanism signifies the anatomo-politics; namely the disciplining of individual body through "infinitesimal surveillances, extremely meticulous orderings of space, indeterminate medical or psychological examinations…" (Foucault, 1978: 145). Through constant surveillance, this power mechanism not only aims to subjugate the subjects but also urges their bodies to create value to maintain its power mechanisms (Özmakas, 2018: 62). In other words, the body is central to this normalizing power to "increase its usefulness and its docility, its integration into systems of efficient and economic controls" (Foucault, 1978, HoS: 139). Hence, disciplinary power targets to reconfigure its subjects into docile citizens and efficient bodies for preserving its authority and economic interests. As the latest form of power, "governmentality," for Foucault, is the new art of governance that the philosopher coins to refer to the ways the state controls and exerts authority over the populace and deploys regulatory mechanisms to create subjects governing themselves by a way of consent. Governmentality as the type of governance in neoliberal democracies is characterized by a decentralized form of power

and self-governance of subjects. In neoliberal governmentality, which restricts state interference for market mechanisms and promotes laissez faire economy, individuals are urged to correct and regulate themselves. Made up of political and social structures, evaluations, discussions and strategies that foster its operation, governmentality "has the population as its target, political economy as its major form of knowledge, and apparatuses of security as its essential technical instrument" (2007: 144). Regarding the inadequacy of sovereign power in providing sufficient responses to the impasses of industrialization and increasing population in the mid-eighteenth century, governmentality became the most efficient form of control for the regimes which have "create[d] tactics to persuade the population to participate in optimising their own bodies" and "assist[ing] the securitising work of biopolitical technologies" (Twigg, 2016: 28). As Boever also notes, "modern power's success depends on its governing less" and its "keyword becomes "security" (2013: 37).

Thus, this new rationality applies strategies and norms to construct a social body governed less but consolidated more, which leads its members to cherish a false sense of freedom as "where power refrains from positively implementing itself—that we turn out to be most controlled" (Boever, 2013: 37). Thus, "power becomes more and more interested in domains that traditionally fall outside of the law, such as sex and race" (2013:37). Accordingly, this new form of power posits population both "as a political subject, as a new collective subject" that "is called upon to conduct itself in such and such a fashion" and also "an object, […] on which and towards which mechanisms are directed in order to have a particular effect on it" (Foucault, 2007: 65). Hence, this restrictive yet less visible governing rationality marks the "threshold of modernity" (1978: 143). Foucault signals this transformation through referring to Aristotle's designation of man as a political animal: "[f]or millennia, man remained what he was for Aristotle: a living animal with the additional capacity for a political existence; modern man is an animal whose politics places his existence as a living being in question" (1978: 143). Nevertheless, as these three power technologies complement one another, biopolitical power does not signify a break from the sovereign power or render the disciplinary power redundant. However, biopolitics has turned out to be the most efficient form of power in governing the masses that are imposed to police themselves. In this sense, biopolitical regimes that have inherited the technologies of sovereign and disciplinary powers cherish an extensive and continuous but invisible dominion and

control over the society. Rather than a sinister repressive ruler or an omnipotent organization; a decentred, diffusional biopolitical mechanism that shapes the population for its so-called optimization is in effect now. The fact that it is human life that is biopoliticized and degraded into a medium of political design in the name of its preservation leads us up to a controversial issue in biopolitics; normativity.

According to Foucault, modern states elicit the knowledge about the society through statistics in order to monitor, calculate, assess and govern subjects effectively and create standardized models for the population. In this sense, biopolitical regimes govern, conduct and manage via norms which could be "applied to both a body one wishes to discipline, and a population one wishes to regularize" (Foucault, 2003: 253). Thus, norms with their "originally prescriptive character[s]" lead modern states to "determin[e]" and "identif[y] the normal and the abnormal" (2007: 85). This new political power uses the data accumulated through statistics and researches to create normative standards and a *proper* way of living for the population with the intention of controlling and sustaining life. In other words, thanks to these "insensible, but deliberate and directed, technologies of homogenization and standardization" of biopolitical states; "populations will be targeted for change on a particular scale and where the normal value comes to represent the ideal to be achieved" (Mader, 2011: 106). While subjectifying individuals as the advocate of these normalizing processes, normative discourses also objectify them by setting models for the ideal and normal. Thus, biopolitics "conducts the conduct" of its subjects and the law "operates more and more as a norm" in these regimes (Foucault, 1978: 144). It is also crucial to note that Foucault claims that population "is both aware of what it wants and unaware of what is being done to it" (2007: 141). Hence, modern subjects abstain from being labelled as abnormal, conform to norms and resign into biopolitical practices resulting from iterative normative discourses which as the utmost biopower technologies build the terms of belonging and abandonment for the society.

1.2. Biopolitics and Racism

Modern racism is beyond a community's tendency to think highly of themselves and poorly of others but embodies strong biopolitical motives and implications. In his *Society must be Defended*, Foucault highlights the indisputable correlation between biopolitical regimes and the rise of modern racism and asserts that racism, which was

ingrained in state mechanisms after the advent of biopower, is how this form of power establishes its relationship to death. Although biopolitical states target optimization of life of the population, the sovereign's right to kill as his supreme manifestation of power is not inapplicable or far removed from the biopolitical order. Racism has two key roles in biopolitical regimes. Firstly, it appears to be an efficient tool to disintegrate the society through differentiating the "master" race from "the bad race, […] the inferior race" and drawing a boundary between those who deserve to live and those who may be left to perish" (Foucault, 2003: 255). Through offering the normative definitions of being *fully* human, *less* human and nonhuman, biopolitical mechanisms lead to the inclusion of conforming subjects with *desired* identities and exclusion of the nonconformists or the "abnormal" regarded as threats to social body. Thus, racism functions by means of "splitting of a single race into a superrace and a subrace" (2003: 61). In that regard, from a Foucauldian standpoint, racism cannot be explained merely with long-standing convictions about the so-called supremacy of a particular ethnic group over others. For the philosopher, "the first function of racism" is "to fragment, to create caesuras" (2003: 255). Thus, biopolitical power manages its subjects through normative definitions which promote the exclusivist biopolitical technologies that objectify, hierarchize and racialize human body in order to construct a "pure," homogenized and consolidated society grounded on the self-other dichotomy.

Secondly, with these discriminatory operations, biopower imposes the idea that one community can live as much as it leaves others to death. Thus, modern racism does not only promote the normalization and justification of oppression but also advocates the extermination of the other communities, nations or the people with disabilities in the name of eliminating a biological danger and creating a more powerful society. According to Foucault, societies, when convinced they must safeguard their well-being "against all the biological threats posed by the other race, the subrace, the counterrace" that they inadvertently help create, tend to discriminate, suppress, and silence (2003: 61–62). Moreover, he also argues that this "us versus them" mentality also manifests itself as "[s]tate racism: a racism that society will direct against itself, against its own elements and its own products. This is the internal racism of permanent purification" (2003: 62). Race becomes a "a norm" that determines who must live and who may be let die (Willaert, 2012: 120). For the philosopher, "racism guided the rationality of state actions; it finds form in its political instruments and concrete policies as "State racism"

since the early twentieth century" (Lemke, 2011: 42; Foucault, 2003: 239). Foucault also claims that state racism and discriminatory strategies of biopolitical regimes in extreme cases may lead to apartheid regimes and genocides as in Nazi Germany and contends that "wars were never as bloody as they have been since the nineteenth century" (1978: 136). Thus, modern biopolitical states have become "the protector of the integrity, the superiority, and the purity of the race" and "the idea of racial purity" eventually "replaces the idea of race struggle" (2003: 81). It is also to be noted that the philosopher with racism refers to the systematic mode of othering that is not merely grounded on ethnicity and highlights the exclusionary practices against certain races, ethnicities, minorities, the abnormal, the disabled and the sick regarded as threats to overall organic structure of a society. Therefore, biopolitical power brings death into play as "the death of the other, the death of the bad race, of the inferior race (or the degenerate, or the abnormal) is something that will make life in general healthier; healthier and purer" (2003: 255). Furthermore, what Foucault suggests with the "murder" of the Other is not only homicide or genocide; but he "mean[s] everything that can be regarded as indirect murder": "exposing someone to death, increasing the risk of death for some people… political death, expulsion, rejection" (2003: 256). In other words, modern racism may not always end with genocides or mass murders; it may also give way to figurative deaths of nonconforming subjects that are left vulnerable to the risk of social and judicial exclusion, reduced into their bodily existences and rendered invisible in the socio-political sphere. Thus, othering is an indispensable component of biopolitical power that conducts marginalizing strategies despite its claims to protect and promote the wellbeing of the population. Considering the reduction of individual's life into a part of statistics and an object of on-going discriminatory operations, biopolitical technologies are, after all, far from affirming life but rather exclusivist, restrictive and dehumanizing. Biopower through its assimilating technologies builds a normalized society around a constructed and exalted ethnic and cultural identity. In this sense, Western biopolitical regimes have long been regulating their populations around the White heterosexual male identity and excluding coloured, queer and disabled people, women, immigrants and refugees. Hence, regarding individuals' objectification into cogs in the machine, their consolidation against certain communities via populist discourses and their control via technological surveillance; it is evident that Foucault's theory of biopolitics is by no means out-dated but still critical to grasp our crisis-ridden modern world.

1.3. Contemporary Biopolitics:

As current debates on abortion, public health, corona shutdowns and vaccination also illustrate, biopolitics has become the indisputable reality of the twenty-first century. Our lives have been shaped and regulated by the biopolitical operations of modern states which aim to standardize and manage populations while blatantly designating individuals as living beings rather than legal subjects with civil rights. In other words, in contemporary world, "life makes its entrance onto the political scene" in which "the legal subject is overlaid with the crucial figure of the 'living' being" as "a component of the new political object of the population" (Morton & Bygrave, 2008: 8). Accordingly, such issues as "healthcare, social security, retirement ages, and immigration," "unequal global distribution of essential medicines and medical technologies," "security tactics" including "racial profiling to the normalization of exceptional juridical spaces" and "the massive surveillance of all forms of electronic communication" also point out how human body is rendered as the first and foremost site of biopower (Campbell & Sitze, 2013: 3). Foucault's theory has sparked debates among many philosophers, including Giorgio Agamben, Roberto Esposito and Judith Butler who go beyond Foucault's "state-centric theory of racism" and his Eurocentric and phallogocentric discussions of biopolitics to explore contemporary human condition marked with racism, social disintegration, refugee crisis and migration and offer unique insights into the intersectionality of biopower, thanatopolitics, identity and othering.

As a prominent figure in contemporary political theory, Giorgio Agamben explores Foucault's theory of biopolitics in his 1995 work *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* and addresses the connection between biopower and thanatopolitics (the politics of death) and the tension between the political and biological. Based on the "provocative rereading of" Foucault's 'Right of Death and Power over Life', his work delves into the sovereign logic that underpins modern political life (Campbell & Sitze, 2013: 4). As Lemke contends, "[t]he modern era" for Agamben "signifies […] not a break with the Western tradition but rather a generalization and radicalization of that which was simply there at the beginning" (Lemke, 2011b: 53). Agamben notes that two different words were used to refer to life in ancient Greek in which the origins of western biopolitics lie: *bios* stands for a citizen's political life and *zoe;* namely, his animal or unqualified life which was strictly separated from his bios. Agamben then introduces the concept of *bare life* to signify the

inhuman life existing biologically as a body without the protection of judiciary-political rights; that is, the biological life in-between human and animal existence. Bare life emerges in times of *state of exception*; a term he takes from Carl Schmitt who has a major impact on Agamben's theory of sovereignty. Schmitt suggests that "the sovereign is he who decides on the exception" (Schmitt, 2010: 5). In other words, the sovereign can make, enforce and step outside the law, decide if and when the law is to be suspended and who will be killed or let live. Thus, as Agamben notes, state of exception signifies "the suspension of juridical order's validity" and "limit concept of the doctrine of law and the State" (1998: 18, 11). Although the law is in effect, it is suspended and produces an inclusionary exclusionary state: "the state of exception is neither external nor internal to the juridical order, and the problem of defining it concerns precisely a threshold, or a zone of indifference, where inside and outside do not exclude each other but rather blur with each other" (Agamben, 2005: 23).

Regarding that the sovereign can determine a state of exception and the lives that will be included to the state of exception as bare lives, Agamben asserts that bare life is the paradigm and primary norm of the sovereign power which underpins Western politics (1998: 11). Thus, bare life is the reduced state of human life from a political being into biological life. Agamben also introduces a figure from the ancient Rome; "homo sacer" who "has been excluded from the religious community and all political life: he cannot participate in the rites of his gens, nor […] can he perform any juridically valid act" (1998: 183). A homo sacer may be killed with impunity yet cannot be sacrificed and resides as a living corpse in judiciary and religious spheres: "his entire existence is reduced to a bare life stripped of every right because anyone can kill him without committing homicide; he can save himself only in perpetual flight or a foreign land" (1998: 183). For Agamben, homo sacer still exists today as brain death patients, refugees and immigrants with asylum request whose judiciary statuses are ambiguous and bereft of the protection of the law. Furthermore, he puts forth the concept of "camp" as "the most absolute biopolitical space ever to have been realized in which power confronts nothing but a pure life, without any mediation" (1998: 171). He claims that "the state of exception […] becomes the rule" in camp in which "judiciary-political system transforms itself into a killing machine" (2005: 86). Not that the concentration camps are new to the history. In Nazi concentration camps, the state of exception became a rule deemed necessary for the permanence of the country. He furthers his

claims by suggesting that camps still continue to exist today and "in our age all citizens can be said, […] to appear virtually as homines sacri" (1998: 111). Thus, while elaborating Foucault's view of biopolitics as the capture of biological life by the political, Agamben affiliates biopolitics more with death than life. He does this by highlighting its thanatopolitical practices, defining modern individuals as biopoliticized lives robbed of subjecthood and agency and for whom the boundary between the political subject and the living subject has been erased. In this sense, Agamben with his ideas of bare life, state of exception, homo sacer and camp does not merely problematizes the inclusion of simple life within the workings of power. He underlines the sovereign power built upon the creation of biopolitical bodies and the systematic reduction of the social into biological through refugees, immigrants and minorities included in the political society as the Other while simultaneously denied legal status.

On the other hand, Roberto Esposito in his *Immunitas* and *Communitas* (2008) also explores the racist and discriminatory discourses and practices towards certain groups by drawing an analogy between the biological response of the body towards bacteria and viruses and the social opposition to communities viewed as foreign or unfamiliar. According to Esposito, "the paradigm of immunization" underpins both Western political thought and the security practices that prevail in the world (2008: 45). Furthermore, these immunizing operations that target the "safeguarding and preservation of life" have both positive and negative impacts on the human condition as immunisation "protects and promotes life while also limiting life's expansive and productive power" (Lemke, 2011b: 90). Despite aiming to safeguard life from outside threats, these immunizing mechanisms eventually end with the devastation of life itself. In other words, the "immunitary logic" brings on the negation of life while attempting to secure and optimize it (Esposito, 2008: 56). Thus, despite seemingly positive goals of the "development of life," biopolitics with its "paradigm of immunity" not only "negates the singularity of life processes and reduces them to a biological existence" but also leads to the "destruction and elimination" of life (Lemke, 2011b: 90). The immunitary practices of biopolitical regimes, thereby, result in the exclusion of individuals and communities viewed as risks to the population, and in extreme cases, culminate in their confinement or elimination. Judith Butler, much like Esposito, engages in a critical examination of the nexus between politics, power, and the human body. She discusses precariousness of life and its possible insights in cultural studies

and political thought in her *Precarious Life* (2004) and *Frames of War* (2009). She sets forth the term precarity which is a "politically induced condition in which certain populations suffer from failing social and economic networks of support and become differentially exposed to injury, violence, and death" (Butler, 2009: 25). Thus, as a state of vulnerability, uncertainty and insecurity, precarity illuminates such populations as minorities and immigrants that "are at heightened risk of disease, poverty, starvation, displacement, and of exposure to violence without protection" (2009: 25–26). On the other hand, a related notion to precarity, precariousness as a status "implies living socially, that is […] a dependency on people we know, or barely know, or know not at all" (2009: 26). Hence, human life is precarious for being dependent on others, exposed to others, vulnerable to harm and destruction, which designates human interdependency as a prerequisite for survival and a homely existence. Butler also explores how life is defined by the operations of power, namely norms, discourses and political and social institutions that work toward maximizing the condition of precariousness for a group or population while leaving others in the state of precarity. Thus, while highlighting human interdependency, Butler revisits the hierarchies of identification to call the definition of human into question and claims that grievability of one's life essentially signifies his/her recognition as human.

Discussions on biopolitics have become even more specified and put in quite particular contexts recently. For instance, in her *Race and the Education of Desire* (1995), Stoler explores the resonances of biopolitics in the postcolonial context and highlights the relation "between sexuality and race in the functioning of colonial power" (Willaert, 2012: 111). On the other hand, like Étienne Balibar, Paul Gilroy and Agnes Heller, Haraway also sets forth a "feminist reading of Foucault's biopolitics" and discusses the female condition through its relation to "politics of race" (Campbell & Sitze, 2013: 4). Dillon and Neal (2008) also address the theories of biopolitics to revisit the contemporary security mechanisms and call its modern resonances into question. In the face of these extensive inquiries on contemporary biopolitics, this dissertation will mainly draw on the theories of G. Agamben, R. Esposito and J. Butler who have provided major insights in biopolitical studies. Agamben's theories of bare life, homo sacer, sovereign state, state of exception and camp, Esposito's immunization and communitas and Butler's precarity, precariousness and grievability are rooted in the

context of current political climate and offer a rich conceptual foundation to explore the resonances of biopoliticization and othering in contemporary literary space.

Concerning the biopoliticization and marginalization of individuals in the contemporary world, othering is underpinned by thanatopolitical practices of governing powers and grounded in the exclusion of certain bodies in the name of preservation of the well-being of the social body. Thus, I intend to address the intersectionality of body, border and modern biopolitical power to explore the representation of xenophobic, exclusivist and racist tendencies in contemporary fiction. In that regard, this dissertation will define othering within a biopolitical scope and suggests the term *biopolitical othering* to refer to the biopolitical construction and promotion of otherness. Didier Fassin in his article "The Biopolitics of Otherness: Undocumented Foreigners and Racial Discrimination in French Public Debate" (2001) first coined the term "biopolitics of otherness" to problematize the intersection between the biological and social structures in French public space. While exploring "the French people's relation to otherness," Fassin highlights how the body of immigrant is turned into a site of politics and how ethnic minorities, particularly Afro-French people confront racial discrimination in the public space (2001: 3). Accordingly, with the intention of suggesting a more inclusive concept, I attempt to use the term biopolitical othering to refer to the condition in which body turns into the foremost border of biopolitical modern condition. Biopolitical rationality has transformed the body into a site of inscription for the politics of exclusion; a border differentiating the human from the less human and determining the terms of insecurity, dehumanization, disenfranchisement and political invisibility. Moreover, with biopolitical othering I also suggest the otherness created not only through an individual's inborn, phenotypic characteristics as Fassin suggests, but via his/her challenge to the normative identities of biopolitical power. In other words, with biopolitical othering, I attempt to underline the marginalization of the modern individual either on account of the identifications based on genetics such as phenotype, ethnicity or sex; or rather due to his/her nonconforming standpoint, tendencies and identities ascribed in the course of his/her life such as being a refugee, an immigrant, a dissident, a disabled, a non-binary or a person repudiating his/her gender role. As identity is not stable or fixed but fluid and subject to change, there are no clear cut, permanent positions that refer to privileged and underprivileged lives in the biopolitically configured society. Thus, privileged subjects may also be

excluded from their recognized social statuses and comfort zones, posited as “others” once they have transcended the boundaries of normal and its normative prescriptions. Hence, human subject is either an Other or a candidate to the state of otherness depending on his/her impulse to follow the herd or choice to stand against the norms accepted by most.

CHAPTER TWO
POETICS OF BIOPOLITICS

2.1. Biopolitics and the Novel

Literary studies have not remained indifferent to the discussions on biopolitics. Above all, biopolitical theory offers a fruitful theoretical ground to explore the contemporary literary space which mirrors, deconstructs and reconstructs the reality in its own fashion. Built upon thematic and formal inquiries of literary texts, biopolitical literary analysis concerns with the construction and deconstruction of biopolitical operations in the fictional space and explores the objectification and othering of modern individual by power structures in a work of literature. Thus, this critical approach does not "aim to uphold or justify biopolitical governance in the same way that a Marxist or psychoanalytic literary criticism accepts the value and veracity of the Marxism and psychoanalytical theories that inform them" but uncovers "how a literary text problematizes biopolitical theories" (Twigg, 2016: 14). On the other hand, the novel genre which emerged along with biopolitical governing practices in the early eighteenth century also offers a structural paradigm of biopolitical modern existence and serves as a reflection, almost a replica of biopolitical order. Accordingly, while highlighting the concurrent emergence of the novel and biopolitical power with modern states, Arne Boever in his *Narrative Care: Biopolitics and the Novel* (2013) not only relates this societal form to Foucault's theory of biopolitics and care, but also underlines how characters are stuck in the biopolitical realm of fiction as the representatives of modern individuals that are struck in their biopoliticized lives. Thus, according to Boever, the novel has always been in an on-going "struggle with its political origins" as a biopolitical "form of life-writing" and "a dark apparatus of capture" (2013: 21). While rendered as self-governing subjects with free wills, characters in the microcosm of the novel correspond to modern individuals whose conducts are shaped by the normative frameworks and who are bestowed relative freedom and autonomy by biopower. Just as human subjects are unable to emancipate from technological and biometrical surveillance, characters regard themselves as free subjects despite being under the incessant control and monitoring of the governing, panopticon power, namely the author whose ideological stance also dominates the fictional space. Thus, while the author as the manifestation of the biopolitical power may make characters live or let them die, the

novel signifies the paradigm of biopolitical space of modernity in which there is no possibility of freedom from biopolitical apparatuses, camps, the states of exception, immunized masses and being reduced into bare lives as modern Homo Sacers in states of precarity.

Rethinking the contemporary British novel thematically from a biopolitical lens moves the current discussions on biopolitics beyond the binary of life and death and offers new perspectives to analyze the poetics of modern condition tainted by racism, fundamentalism, anti-refugee sentiments, xenophobia, homophobia and so forth. In other words, bringing political philosophy and literature together and revisiting the literary portrayals of othering from a biopolitical perspective will not only contribute to the formation of biopolitical literary criticism but also render literature as an alternative point of departure for understanding the biopolitical construction of othering in the society. In that regard, I will address Ali Smith's *Seasonal Quartet* which unapologetically represents the objectification, singularization and othering of individuals by means of their bodies which appear as the utmost borders splitting human from less human. However, the quartet does not offer a mere reflection of the biopolitical modern condition as this would mean normalizing the biopolitical control of the society and legitimizing marginalizing operations of these regimes. The *Quartet* instead deconstructs discriminatory biopolitical discourses and oppressive biopolitical practices with its humanist stance, which makes Smith one of the most original, skilful and "insistently political" voices of contemporary fiction (Wood, 2018).

2.2. Ali Smith and her Seasonal Quartet:

Ali Smith has built a reputation as a prominent and prolific author long before her award-winning quartet and was described as "Scotland's Nobel laureate-in-waiting" by Sebastian Barry in 2016. As a matter of fact, she has been shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize for Fiction no less than four times and severally acclaimed for her awarded novels; *Like* (1997), *Hotel World* (2001), *The Accidental* (2005), *Girl Meets Boy* (2007), *There But For The* (2011), *Artful* (2012), *Shire* (2013) and *How to Be Both* (2014) and her plays and the collection of stories; *Free Love* (1995*), Other Stories and Other Stories* (1999); *The Whole Story and Other Stories* (2003), *The First Person and Other Stories* (2008) and *Public Library and Other Stories* (2015). Addressing a number of themes ranging "from homelessness to consumerism to cyber bullying,"

Smith mainly explores gender, sexuality, language, illusion and reality with a "myriad of modern and postmodern techniques and thematic construction to critique contemporary culture" (Franssen, 2021; Benfield, 2017: 2). Hence, a prevalent theme in her body of work involves providing political critiques and insightful societal commentaries.

Smith's anti-authoritarian standpoint is clearly manifested in her renowned *Seasonal Quartet* which offers "near live commentary […] engaging directly with narratives surrounding social and economic inequality, fake news, racism and immigration in post-referendum Britain" (Franssen, 2021). With the intention of presenting the most timely picture of human condition, Smith (2019) wrote her *Seasonal Quartet* "close to their publication (in the old Victorian mode, published practically as soon as written) that they would be about not just their times, but the place where time and the novel meet". In one of her interviews, she elaborates on her intention of publishing novels as contemporaneous as possible:

> The concept was always to do what the Victorian novelists did at a time when the novel was meant to be new… Dickens published as he was writing *Oliver Twist*. He was still making his mind up about the story halfway through. That's why it's called the novel – what it can do, what it's for, what it does (Smith in Armitstead, 2019).

Thus, these autonomous yet interconnected novels intended to be "as up-to-the-moment as possible" are manifestations of Smith's explorations of the novel's limits and boundaries (Butler in Armitstead, 2019). Besides illustrating the author's mediation upon the human condition, time and the contemporaneity, the four novels entitled after seasons also signify the circularity of time against its linear understanding. Through visitations to past, flashbacks, inner monologues and free indirect discourses, Smith literalizes the cyclical pattern of time and destabilizes chronological time sequences to underpin the parallelism between today's challenges and the traumatic experiences of humanity in the last century. Thus, what is at stake in the quartet is not just the portrayal of a present shaped by the past. All the four novels communicate a present that is interconnected to the past in a repetitive and circular pattern. In the same vein, with the seasonally structured titles of the novels, *Quartet* suggests that humanity has made almost no progress in restoring social equality and promoting new, inclusive discourses against oppositional thinking and othering.

Despite its preoccupation with the past, Smith's quartet is mainly grounded on a critique of the present. The novels, by mirroring the socio-political challenges of Britain and rendering the country as the microcosm of the modern world, shed light on modern individual's biopoliticized and objectified life, polarized societies, inhuman treatment of refugees and the stereotyping and dehumanization of minorities in the public space. In this sense, *Autumn*, *Winter*, *Spring* and *Summer* complete a rich picture of modernity in which human life is regulated, standardized and normalized by biopolitical regimes, individuals are reduced into their bodily existences and those who do not fit into a politically and culturally recognized identity are racialized and systematically marginalized by the institutionalized discriminatory rhetoric. While defining our age as an epoch of divisions and partition, these works also challenge the subject's singularization and isolation by the current ubiquitous biopolitical technologies that weave the social fabric of otherness.

Seasonal Quartet also suggests border as a recurring symbol of biopolitical othering through portraying the modern condition encircled by closures that designate the states of inclusion and exclusion, recognition and abandonment. In that regard, the four novels render biopolitical construction of otherness through presenting incarcerated otherized figures as refugees, immigrants, ethnic minorities or women who are literally or psychologically confined due to their nonconformity to the normative definitions of being human. In Smith's panorama of the contemporary world, biopolitical operations of recognition and absence predicate on the subject's body, confining the person into monolithic identity categories and gives way to a segregated society. To put in another way, the quartet manifests biopolitical othering through representing singularized, objectified and incarcerated Others confined into camps, detention centres, suburbs, their marginalized social positions and dehumanized bodies. The novels picture how the human body is designated as a biopolitical border segregating those bereft of a humane existence from the ones that *are more equal than others*. Hence, Smith's works not only render human body the main means and end of biopolitical othering as a site categorized, included or excluded and designated as the new border of contemporary socio-political space but also portray the physical, social and psychological ghettoization of the Other as the new nomos of modernity. Thus, borders are set forth as the leading mediums of politicization, immobility, incarceration and death in *Quartet*. The body of the outsider- a refugee, immigrant, Jew under the Nazi regime or a German

in the 1940s Britain- is rendered as a biopolitical border that demarcates modern political space rather than the frontiers of countries. Therefore, in Smith's society of Others, individuals are not only physically confined into camps, detention centers or disciplinary spaces but also forced into a suffocating psychological position of otherness in the public domain. Accordingly, Smith's first work in the quartet presents a polarized post-Brexit country. However, *Autumn* is more than "a-state-of-nation novel" that illustrates the "British literary fiction's response to the shock wave of the Brexit vote" (Rudrum, 2019: 35). While portraying the racialization of bodies and biopolitical othering of individuals incarcerated into the position of "them" in their home country by dint of their bodies, the novel also mirrors their emancipation by dreaming, imagining and storytelling and via art. Thus, *Autumn* is the first part of a post-millennial epic that celebrates freedom, solidarity, friendship, art and love against all odds.

CHAPTER THREE

AUTUMN OF A SOCIETY: RACISM, SURVEILLANCE AND BORDERIZATION IN *AUTUMN*

As the inaugural work of the quartet, *Autumn* offers a dazzling yet realistic panorama of modernity against the backdrop of post-Brexit Britain grappling with the escalating racism and deepening social and political schisms, which aligns with Michel Foucault's theories of biopolitics. The novel highlights the protagonists' biopolitical otherness due to the standardizing, discriminatory and oppressive operations of Western biopolitical regimes over their subjects while representing the autumn of a society whose long-ignored problems have surfaced after the country's withdrawal from the European Union. In this context, borderization serves as an effective biopolitical instrument, manifested through the appropriation of common land, extensive technological surveillance, social polarization and the rise in xenophobia that has led the majority to give in to divisive narratives. *Autumn* also highlights Foucault's idea of counter-discourse through the protagonists' resistance to exclusionary discourses thanks to the transforming power of friendship, love, friendship, art and storytelling. Through the enduring friendship between 32-year-old art lecturer Elisabeth Demand and her 101-year-old neighbour and lifelong mentor Daniel Gluck, who has introduced her to art and storytelling and is currently in a prolonged sleep in a care home, the novel questions the function of art in a dysfunctional society marked by lies, political deceptions and a sense of illusion.

Regarded as "the first great Brexit novel" that contextualizes the months after British society voted for leaving EU in 2016, *Autumn* with its title also associates the belatedness and disillusionment attributed to this season with the prevailing mood of the nation after the referendum (Lyall, 2017). Assuming this despondent standpoint, *Autumn* pictures the aftermath of Brexit as an epoch in which everything is beginning to fall apart, racism and xenophobia are on the rise and a metaphorical winter is drawing on. In the same token, as one of the two protagonists of the novel, 101-year-old Daniel Gluck dreams in his prolonged sleep in the care home while approaching the final phase of his life. His comatose state as a very old man on the verge of death also signifies autumn associated with agedness, the transience of time and decay. Furthermore, the novel draws a parallel between Daniel who is in-between life and death, reality and

dream and the post-Brexit country torn between two opposing standpoints about the European membership of the country. Both the protagonist and his country have come to such a pass that fact and fiction, reality and illusion and, truth and lie have become more and more indistinguishable. Accordingly, while exploring biopolitical operations shaping postmillennial political space with colourful and fragmented pictures of contemporary Britain, *Autumn* addresses the objectification of human life by surveillance state and non-state actors, the ghettoization of society whose members are singularized with the fear of the Other, borderization of the public space and the biopolitical othering of individuals excluded, disenfranchised and incarcerated through their bodies.

Concerning the monitoring and control of modern subjects through digital biopolitical technologies of the state and non-state organizations, *Autumn* mirrors the invasion of the personal domain by the security mechanisms of biopolitical power which leaves individuals no room for autonomy and spontaneity while "seek[ing] to administer, secure, develop, and foster life" (Lemke, 2011: 35). In that regard, Smith, in her work, first and foremost pictures how everything is political despite the desperate attempts of modern subjects to distance themselves from the political agenda of the country. None of the characters of *Autumn* are ardent supporters of a political party but representatives of the modern individuals whose personal spaces are controlled by politics, yet who have no impact on these pervasive, exclusionary practices in the least.

Thus, biopower assumes a panoptical gaze upon individuals in this control society and incessantly monitors them with such modern biopolitical technologies as biometrical surveillance and CCTV cameras. Foucault in the chapter "Panopticism" of *Discipline and Punish* (1975) introduces the concept of the panopticon through his discussion of the social theorist Jeremy Bentham's vision of the panopticon in the late 18th century[1]. After addressing the role of prison as a tool of power and disciplinary mechanisms through Bentham's prison, the philosopher moves onto the matrix of power permeating the population, which as a strategy, is deeply ingrained in contemporary society. In light of the ubiquitous tendencies of modern disciplinary societies to control and standardise, Foucault suggests "Bentham's Panopticon" as the central structure that

[1] The notion of the panopticon refers to the composition in which a central figure is placed in the centre with the ability to monitor and exercise sovereignty over all the subjects in a power structure. Foucault claims that there has been a change from the panoptic model to the "government of populations", which targets collective processes rather than extensive surveillance of individuals and signifies the advent of biopower (2007: 94).

signifies these two power mechanisms which underpin "[a]ll the mechanisms of power, which, even today, are disposed around the abnormal individual, to brand him and to alter him" (1995: 199–200). Thus, the panoptic design creates homogeneous effects of power as a constant, exhaustive and all-encompassing surveillance instrument. Besides highlighting the formation of disciplinary societies via the transition from enclosed disciplines to an unlimited extendible Panopticism, Foucault sets forth the term "disciplinary normalization," which predicates upon "establish[ing] the division between those considered unsuitable or incapable and the others" (2007: 85). According to the philosopher, discipline normalisation proposes a model and urges "people, movements, and actions to conform to this model, with normal being precisely that which can conform to this norm, and the abnormal" that cannot "conform to the norm" (2007: 85). Rather than "the normal and the abnormal," "the norm" is preliminary and central in disciplinary normalization, which, thus, incorporates the techniques of "normation" instead of "normalization" (2007: 85).

Regarding these "normation" strategies in *Autumn*, Elisabeth's experience in the first chapters illustrates the fixed gaze of the governing power upon some bodies racialized and stigmatized as potential threats to the wellbeing of the state through CCTV cameras and digital and biometrical surveillance. During her visit to her mother, Elisabeth goes into a post office in the town to renew her passport after the referendum and grapples with the discriminatory and dehumanizing aspects of bureaucracy and formal government structures. While the stipulations for the passport photo and biometric information drawn from citizens show the monitoring of individuals by the biopolitical regime, the officer's attitude also suggests how the biopolitical state normalizes the marginalization of certain bodies and criminalizes those who do not fit into the phenotype of the superrace. Though she has applied for passport renewal as a British citizen, Elisabeth's body is monitored and subjected to *normation* through surveillance. That is why she is occasionally questioned about her travelling plans by the officer: "Going travelling? he says. Probably, Elisabeth says. Just in case. Where you thinking of going? he says. Lots of places, I expect, Elisabeth says. Who knows? World" (Smith, 2017a: 22–23). As she does not give a clear answer to the officer's inquires, he keeps harping on the same question and insists on learning about her plans, which points out the panoptic gaze of the state that aims to "alter behaviour, […] train or correct individuals" and keep them in line by making them feel being incessantly

monitored (Foucault, 1995: 203). In this sense, Elisabeth is the representative of the modern subject who is never made to sense the gaze of the governing power: “Where are you planning to travel to? Well, nowhere, till I get the new passport, Elisabeth says. He points to the unstamped circle next to the stamped one… Where did you say you were thinking of going, again? I didn’t, Elisabeth says” (Smith, 2017a: 25).

Beside surveillance, biopolitical power also employs technologies of standardization to construct a homogenized and governable society. The idea that everyone has to think, believe and act like the majority is primarily manifested through the culturally constructed and imposed body image. While caricaturing those totalizing, dehumanizing and oppressive operations of biopolitical regimes through the bureaucratic regulations and biometrical requirements for Elisabeth’s passport photo, *Autumn* challenges normative standards and the long-seated white privilege in Western societies with laughter. When the postal officer insists that her hair “has to be completely clear of [her] eyes” and “can’t be anywhere near [her] face, she sarcastically responds: “[the hair] is on my head […]. That’s where it grows. And my face is also attached to my head” (Smith, 2017a: 23). Her photo is found “improper” for application as her physical appearance does not align with the standardized ideal of body set by the biopower, which “measure[s]” and “hierarchize[s]” its subjects based on a pre-established definition of being human (Foucault, 1978: 144). In that regard, the officer’s assertion that Elisabeth’s “face is the wrong size” and his note as “HEAD INCORRECT SIZE” point out the promotion of a uniform, subservient and conformist society (Smith, 2017a: 24–25). Thus, her undesired corporality rather than her photo that did not meet the requirements for a passport makes her an issue for the officers.

Through the othering of Elisabeth’s body, the novel pictures how biopolitical surveillance subjugates, controls and hierarchizes human life and in Ceyhan’s terms, undermines “nonstandard” bodies as “a political technology of population management” (2012: 38). biopolitical surveillance “tak[es] the human body and its movements as the focal points” to “capture the contingent features of the ‘uncertain”‘ and “reassure populations in complex and uncertain contexts of our times where security has become a high priority” (2012: 38). Yet, Elisabeth who puts the security policies of the governing power into question expects a rationale for being defined as “wrong in the head” and asks “[w]hy her “face” “need[s] to be a certain size (Smith, 2017a: 25). Despite the postal officer’s claim that it is due to what is specified, she implies that this

is all "for facial recognition technology," which makes him "look her full in the face for the first time" (2017a: 24–25). The absurdity of the situation and her vain attempts to prove herself as an eligible citizen for a passport unveil the transformation of modern public space into a semi-open prison in which subjects are systematically spied on and controlled via biometrics, facial recognition technologies and intelligent tracking systems in the name of the security. As Foucault suggests, security is not just about securing a particular region, rather it is "centrifugal," continually "expand[ing]" and "exercised over a whole population" (2007: 67, 25). In this sense, modern security technologies "are characterized by their pervasiveness as they are not just tools for security agencies but invade the daily life of individuals" (Ceyhan, 2012: 40). Thus, *Autumn* not only renders Elisabeth the representative of modern subjects designated either as threats and second-class citizens but also pictures Britain as the microcosm of the digitally supervised world where the private and public are no longer apart, democracy culture has become all talk and personal space is monitored and turned into a site of the power rather than a free sanctuary for the individual. Elisabeth is evidently conscious of these "technolog[ies] of security" and her possible stigmatization as a person of interest to be closely monitored due to her body, remarks and unusual name (Foucault, 2003: 249):

> this notion that my head's the wrong size in a photograph would mean I've probably done or am going to do something really wrong and illegal, […]. And because I asked you about facial recognition technology, because I happen to know it exists and I asked you if the passport people use it, that makes me a suspect as well. And there's the notion, too, in your particular take on our story so far, that I might be some kind of weirdo because there's an s in my name instead of a z (Smith, 2017a: 26).

Subjected to biopolitical othering, Elisabeth is designated as an *internal danger*, an anomaly for the social body. In addition to the officer that claims that the "piece of hair here should be off the face" and "right back off the face," another officer also states that her "eyes are too small," which illustrates how biopower categorizes subjects to determine those that pose risks and protect "the whole from internal dangers" (Smith, 2017a: 107, 108; Foucault, 2003: 249). Thus, as Elisabeth's designated otherness reveals, more bodies are defined as threats and marginalized in today's world in which surveillance methods have become more invasive and menancing.

Interestingly, although Smith does not give any detail about Elisabeth's physical appearance, the officer's remarks implicate that her body does not fit into the normative racial and cultural standard of the superrace: "Your eyes don't sit with the permissible

regularity inside the shaded area, she says. This does not line up. This should be in the middle and, as you can see, it's at the side of your nose. I'm afraid these photographs don't meet the necessary stipulation" (Smith, 2017a: 108). Thus, as A. Houen suggests, biopolitics not only "regulates the populace's wealth and health" but "also takes the lives of individuals hostage" (2008: 68). In this sense, Elisabeth is a modern everywoman/man targeted by "anonymous, bureaucratised" operations of biopolitical power, which "disenfranchises each individual's life and death by turning it into a generalised matter of population" and an "object of a political strategy" (Houen, 2008: 68; Foucault, 2007: 16). Although a person is recognized as a legal subject or excluded as an Other depending on whether biometrics and other automated technologies determine their identity to be safe or potentially risky, Elisabeth does not come to terms with her objectification or being taken hostage by biopolitical operations that "establish profiles, patterns and probabilities" (Dillon & Lobo-Guerrero, 2008: 267). She demands the photos to be sent even if they are rejected at the end and and assures that on such an occasion, she would "tell" the officer that she was "quite right," Elisabeth herself "was wrong, "[her]hair was wrong and [her] eyes were in totally the wrong place" and thus, submit to her biopolitical otherness (Smith, 2017a: 109).

Besides Elisabeth's ambiguously drawn otherness during her passport application process, her attempt to get an appointment for her mother Wendy also manifests biopolitical surveillance and reduction of individual into a part of bureaucratic data during her stay in her mother's town. In Wendy's medical practice, Elisabeth learns that her mother "isn't listed at this surgery" and has been taken off the patient list without prior notice (Smith, 2017a: 104). When she asks why they took Wendy off the list, the receptionist refuses to answer as "this is confidential information" (2017a: 104). Upon her demand to "register and see someone anyway," she is asked to show her ID or "something with a current address and preferably also with a photograph" (2017a: 104). Furthermore, despite giving the receptionist her passport, Elisabeth cannot verify her identity and thus add her mother's name to the list as her "passport is expired" and she has no "utility bill around with [her] in case someone needs to be able to verify [her] ID" (2017a: 105). Without papers, Elisabeth is outside the state's knowledge, which makes her stateless, robs her of her citizenship and thus her recognition as a political and legal subject. As her query to the receptionist implies, her absence in the knowledge of the biopolitical power excludes her from the public space, dehumanizes and renders

her a spectral position in her own country: “How does having your name on a piece of printed-out paper make you who you are? (2017a: 105). Furthermore, her constant surveillance by biopolitical security mechanisms also echoes Gilles Deleuze’s idea of “control societies”. In his essay entitled “Postscript on Control Societies” (1990), Deleuze claims that today’s society is a control society rather than a disciplinary one that “has relied on “sites of confinement” (2010: 139). Thus, a biopolitically governed society is shaped by more precise, pervasive and continuous “ultrarapid forms of apparently free-floating control” (2010: 139). In that regard, Elisabeth as the representative of the modern individual, lives in Deleuze’s control society and faces the transformation of the nation into an entire site of confinement by the biopolitical technologies.

The control society in *Autumn* is managed and kept under surveillance by not only the traditional institutions of the biopolitical regime but also non-state actors like SA4A which is a shadowy sinister security firm that surrounds, monitors and demarcates human life. This mysterious, all-powerful company has encircled the common land with electric fences in Wendy’s village and begun to surveil the area incessantly with cameras and security guards against any intruders although there seems nothing to protect. The borderization of common land in the village recalls Étienne Balibar’s insightful article entitled “What is a border?” (2002) which suggests that borders are not just “external realities” but “also *internalized* by individuals, as [the border] becomes a condition, an essential reference of their collective, communal sense, and hence, once again, of their identity” and turns into “*invisible borders,* situated everywhere and nowhere” (2002: 78). Balibar takes his idea of border a step further by addressing “the heterogeneity and ubiquity of borders” and underlines that “the tendency of borders, political, cultural and socioeconomic, to *coincide* […] is tending today to fall apart. The result of this is that *some borders are no longer situated at the borders at all,* in the geographico-politicoadministrative sense of the term” (2002: 84). In that regard, the fences erected by the SA4A not only serve to control and confine modern subjects into their private spheres but also signify their imprisonments within ideological discourses and socially constructed identities propagated by biopower. Concerning the SA4A as the representative of multinational power mechanisms and security/tech corporations which undermine privacy and human rights and, police certain communities in the name of security, it is evident that “there is no biopolitics

which is not simultaneously also a security apparatus" (Dillon & Lobo-Guerrero, 2008: 266). Thus, the practices of this multinational corporation indicates that biopower is "not the exclusive attribute of the state, but can be achieved anywhere by any organization through information gathering and data-management processes and tools" (Ceyhan, 2012: 38). As a matter of fact, this "new modality of (bio)power" designates the "private organizations" as "[t]he actual holders of power" which are "more hybrid" and "deterritorialize[d]" and "exercised in non-traditional locations" (2012: 38). Concerning Ceyhan's claims with respect to Balibar's discussion, the electrified fences built around the common land signify borders as the leading tools of biopolitical modernity. Accordingly, Foucault also designates borderization as a technology of biopolitical power which wields its authority over "[t]erritorial borders, individual bodies, and a whole population" (Foucault, 2007: 25). In one of her interviews, Ali Smith also questions the borders that incarcerate modern individuals in a similar vein: "Where do we end up if we wall ourselves in, […] insist on fortifications, and you create a kind of prison for yourself" (Smith in Laing, 2016). Thus, borders are more than fences, walls, barbed wires or frontiers but rather demarcate modern public and political space through bodies. Similarly, Btihaj Ajana in her insightful article "Surveillance and Biopolitics" suggests that "the biopolitics of borders" stands out as the governance of both death and life, as "the management of that waiting-to-live, the management of that non-life […], and at times, it is the management of death" as well as "of "life"; the life of those who are capable of performing responsible self-governance and self-surveillance" (Ajana, 2005: 10; Rose, 1999: 259). With respect to the borderization through bodies, Smith in her interview to *The Guardian* also underlines the social disintegration brought out by the Brexit poll which has crystallized schisms and created new borders between the self and the other:

> The notion of a referendum is in any case a divisory line: you choose one side. Meanwhile, you've got the mass division of 65 million people crossing the world from parts of it which are untenable, unliveable and in flames. And what's left of the world deciding whether or not to open the gates or the walls or to build more gates or walls. How can we live in the world and not put our hand across a divide? How can we live with ourselves? It isn't either/or. It's and/and/and. That's what life is (Smith in Laing, 2016).

Thus, not only those territorial borders but also invisible boundaries that exclude minorities, immigrants and refugees have become the new paradigm of the postmillennial world. The accelerating racism, prejudice and authoritarianism with the concerns about terrorism and immigration have led to the justification and

normalization of the new borders drawn within the social body. In that regard, *Autumn* treats borderization through the schisms in the society and the estrangements of individuals from one another by reason of the fear of the Other or being turned into an Other in their home country. Post-Brexit Britain is portrayed as a country that is as disintegrated as Charles Dickens's France in his *A Tale of Two Cities*:

> All across the country, people felt it was the wrong thing. All across the country, people felt it was the right thing. All across the country, people felt they'd really lost. All across the country, people felt they'd really won. […] All across the country, people felt unsafe. […] All across the country, people felt legitimised. […] All across the country, people told people to leave […]. All across the country, the country split in pieces (Smith, 2017a: 60).

The emphasis of the novel on the similarity of the predominant mood of the British citizens following the referendum to that of the French nation in Dickens' work highlights the divide of post-Brexit British society into two nations with two opposing political stances towards the future of the country. David Rudrum in his analysis of *Autumn* in "The Polymodern Condition: A Report on Cluelessness" (2019) also contends that: "in [that] state-of-the nation novel, the state is irreducibly and irreconcilably plural. There is no state of the nation-- there are states, certainly, but none of these states are states of nation. Indeed, the very idea of the nation itself has been split into pieces" (2019: 36). Thus, through intertextual references to Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities* Elisabeth reads to unconscious Daniel who is in a prolonged sleep, the novel evokes the tumultuous times of the French Revolution not only to communicate the prevailing unrest in the UK but also to refer to the dualities in the socio-political landscape of Britain, which is undergoing despair as well as hope like the 1780s France: "*It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness,[…] it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness*" (Smith, 2017a: 201). Thus, *Autumn* not only pictures a withering world but a disintegrating one via illuminating the biopolitical designation of the British society polarized as "Leavers" and "Remainers" and manipulated by the post-9/11 racism talking and the xenophobic and anti-immigrant sentiments following the mass influx of refugees. As a matter of fact, Brexit has crystallized not just social divisions, but created a country that has gone through a historical turning point as Smith (2019) also suggests: "Brexit's particular divides aren't just local, familial, national, international; right now they're also a fracturing of our time, life before the vote, life after the vote". In light of this, the dichotomy between the two communities reflects the

boundaries that define, separate, and paralyze human life in the modern world. On the other hand, as Sivrioğlu contends, regarding *A Tale of Two Cities* that mirrors the rising political unrest between France and England after the Revolution, the tense relationship between England and France in two different epochs; following the French Revolution and the 2016 Brexit referendum as a "major intertextual link in political discourse enables Smith to pursue the long term lasting relations between the two countries" (2022: 2).

Concerning the analogy between Great Britain following the Revolution and post-Brexit country, both of which witnessed social schism and the mounting strain of opposing political viewpoints, the novel uncovers how normative schemes have been borderizing public domain and the population for centuries. Normativity which serves to the categorization of some behaviour as socially, culturally and politically acceptable and desirable while stigmatizing others as undesirable or forbidden is employed by biopolitical regimes to draw borders in the social body, singularize and disconnect subjects and normalize the society in accordance with biopolitical strategies. Those normative frames not only conceptualize individuals as human, less human and non-human, but also expose them to the risk of othering and social exclusion if they do not conform to the predefined cultural identities. After all, borders "operate in the service of an international class differentiation, and as 'instruments of discrimination and triage'" (Balibar, 2002: 82). In this way, "the poor […] becomes the border itself" and "live a life which is a waiting to-live, a non-life" (Balibar, 2002: 83). Elisabeth has also become a border herself in her mother's town because of her unspecified physical appearance rather than her socioeconomic status in *Autumn*. Her dehumanization and otherness at the post office, her mother's medical practice and on the street illustrate how the discriminatory biopolitical rhetoric against minorities, refugees and immigrants has taken hold of the townspeople. This rhetoric giving way to the division in the post-Brexit society is also explored by Foucault in his discussion of racism which is, as Lemke clarifies, "an expression of a schism within society that is provoked by the biopolitical idea of an ongoing and always incomplete cleansing of the social body" (2011: 43–44). Thus, as a referendum determining the withdrawal of the country from the EU, Brexit manifests that thanatopolitical impulse of biopolitical power to resume the "incomplete cleansing" of the population (2011b: 44). For the Brexiteers that signifies the superrace; "it wasn't that they didn't like immigrants" but it was "about

control" and "defend[ing]" themselves against the potential threats to the social body (60-1). Their arguments illustrate how "biopolitics is also, and crucially, a matter of governing mobility—and immobility" (Lorenzini, 2021: 43). Thus, the Leavers with their claims of rightfulness reminds that borders are "one of the main forms in which power is exercised in our contemporary world" which embodies "more or less porous [borders] for people of different colors, nationalities, and social extractions" (2021: 43). Thus, while highlighting the affinity between biopolitical technologies and rise of racism in the postmillennial world, *Autumn* sheds light onto the roles of institutions or governments as well as of the politically recognized community in the construction and promotion of biopolitical otherness. Hence, normative frames in Smith's human landscapes do not simply give way to a majority-minority dichotomy, but to societal othering through which some communities are turned into borders themselves; undermined, silenced and forced into disenfranchisement, invisibility and segregation for the preservation of a homogenized social body.

Nonetheless, through flashbacks to Pauline Boty's artistic career and her picture of Christine Keeler who was the model at the heart of the Profumo Affair, a major political scandal in Britain in 1963; *Autumn* suggests that these divisions have been rooted in the society long before the influx of refugees, 9/11 or Brexit. Smith, in one of her interviews, also underlines the similarity between the contemporary polarized nation and the disintegrated British public in the 1960s, which both saw "pivotal moment[s]"of British political history: "a lie in the political sphere had dramatic consequences for society at large. Like Brexit, like the invasion of Iraq, the Profumo affair marked a turning point" (Smith in Laing, 2016). For Smith (2016), "[w]e were dealing with a kind of mass culture of lies. And it's a question of what happens culturally when something is built on a lie". Thus, the long history of disinformation and social fragmentation in the country reveals that "[t]he power of the lie" is "[a]lways seductive to the powerless" (Smith, 2017a: 114). By reason of biopolitical strategies, the British witness times of rupture in which "the media was insane," "politicians lied," "fell apart" and "vanished," racism has never been so provoked and minorities so undermined (Smith, 2017a: 60). The novel also mirrors a discriminating world revolving around populist discourses and suggests fear as the main motive behind the biopolitical operations and othering. A mass paranoia towards the threat of the Other which might rob the superrace of their privileged cultural identity is systematically propagated to trigger racist and anti-

immigrant responses in post-Brexit Britain in which Englishness is promoted as the measure of being fully human; namely "the normal value [that] comes to represent the ideal to be achieved" (Mader, 2011: 106). Furthermore, in this bleak "Autumn" scenery, "[t[he whole city's in a storm at sea and that's just the beginning" (Smith, 2017: 213). While walking in her mother's village, Elisabeth sees a street writing on the front of a cottage "from the door to across above the window [that] has been painted over with black paint and the words GO and HOME," which points out the citizens' segregation into their political stances and ethnic identities (2017a: 53). After the referendum, metaphorical borders have been drawn between the two opposing communities even in Wendy's village in which "half the village isn't speaking to the other half of the village" (2017a: 54). Thus, *Autumn* sets the scene for *Seasonal Quartet* through portraying a bordered, bleak public space in which the villagers as the representatives of modern biopolitical subjects are "related to one another via insensible, but deliberate and directed, technologies of homogenization and standardization" (Mader, 2011: 106). In this bordered panorama, the country is also rendered as the microcosm of the West that has long failed to free itself from political and social schisms while racializing, ghettoizing and incarcerating the body of the Other.

Besides the social and cultural borderization of Britain, *Autumn* also pictures encirclement of the common land by SA4A to address how biopower incarcerates and controls human life by bordering the territory. Thus, the novel not only addresses the social divisions based on privileged and underprivileged cultural identities but also illuminates the new and complex regimes of territorialisation and enclosures of the common land that leave modern individuals no room ungoverned or uncontrolled. Accordingly, Judith Butler in one of her interviews as part of the series "Shared Spaces" asserts that "[t]he city has something in common with a prison when it never ends" and calls attention to the role of public spaces to construct public consciousness about civil society (*Judith Butler*, 2015):

> we are […] living in a time in which public spaces shrinking and in which public spaces being sold or public spaces being monitored so the idea of a free public space where anyone can go or where groups could assemble either in formal association or in public assemblies is harder and harder to do (*Judith Butler*, 2015).

As a manifestation of borderization which is a key biopolitical tool in the management of human life, *Autumn* portrays how the spaces open to the general public are shrinking and the possibility of a peaceful assembly and demonstration becomes less

likely through the plot in Wendy's village. Once a common land, the terrain where Elisabeth used to wander freely as a kid has been taken from the locals through the back door, given to a powerful security firm and encircled with electrified fences and monitored with security cameras for no reason. Besides suggesting the designation of the nation as a control society in which every space is incessantly controlled, the land also signifies immobilization as a thanatopolitical operation that leaves individuals no autonomy or freedom. In other words, the electrified "mass of chainlink metal" erected across the land which was once belong to common people points out how British public space is segregated and ghettoized, communities are confined into certain districts and stereotypical identities, and daily life is borderized more blatantly and intensely after Brexit (Smith, 2017a: 56). Wendy "sits down on the churned-up ground near the fence" and talks out her weariness of "vitriol," "anger," "selfishness," passivity, antagonisms, "violence" and lies that have taken their everyday existence hostage, which also unveils how the characters' personal stories are profoundly influenced by the socio-political climate of the country (2017a: 56): "I'm tired of how we're doing nothing to stop it. I'm tired of how we're encouraging it. […] I'm tired of lying governments. I'm tired of people not caring whether they're being lied to any more. I'm tired of being made to feel this fearful" (2017a: 56–57).

While *Autumn* on the one hand "communicat[es] the readers on Brexit and its fierce consequences on both national and individual identity of the English" and mirrors how "in the name of the national identity of English, individual identity is shattered into pieces through lack of unity in self and the very essence of being a human being," the novel on the other hand "establish[es] a new connection between the old and the new through the criticism of British Government" (Sivrioğlu, 2022: 6). The walls or wires that restrict people's right to wander or come together with public awareness and trap them into their unqualified lives signify these dehumanizing implications of Brexit for the nation. Thus, while associating the referendum with a bordered, incarcerated and nonhuman existence, the novel renders borderization as a critical technology of biopower to isolate and efficiently control subjects and turn them into predictable and governable bodies. The country is "divided, a fence here, a wall there, a line drawn here, a line crossed there, a line you don't cross here, a line you better not cross there, […] a line you can't afford there, a whole new line of fire, line of battle, end of the line, here/there" (Smith, 2017a: 61). Hence, borders as the arbitrary and deterrent apparatuses

of power lead social divisions, subjugation of individuals and prevent any possibility of dialogue, solidarity or togetherness. Furthermore, the precautions taken by SA4A to keep common people away intensify throughout the novel. While walking by the fences, Elisabeth realizes that "[t]he fence has doubled since she last saw it" and both fences are "electric-clipped" (Smith, 2017a: 139–140). Thus, Brexit as a socio-political turning point gives rise to more control, territorialisation, social divisions, human rights violations and isolation of the government from both the Continent and its own nation. Accordingly, she is stopped by "a black SUV truck rolling along in the flat space between the layers of fence" and the driver who has a "logo on his pocket" that "says SA4A" told her she "can't walk [t]here" as it is "private land" (2017a: 140, 141). Unperturbed, Elisabeth keeps on walking and replies: "It's common land. Common land is by definition not private" (2017a: 140). When the man continues his warnings and states that she is "in direct contravention," Elisabeth objects: "Of what? […] And whatever you say I'm in. Well. It looks from here like you're in prison" (2017a: 141). Thus, the novel through its critique of the enclosure of public spaces, not only addresses the incarceration of individuals into camps, ghettos, their unqualified lives or stereotypical definitions, but also designates the country as a semi-open prison with no possibility of togetherness or liberation from control. Regarding that biopolitical control, the man starts to film and take Elisabeth's photos, which illustrates the technological surveillance and inescapable panoptic gaze of biopolitical power over its subjects. Accusing her of "unlawfully trespassing**"** SA4A's land; the security guard warns her to "leave the area immediately" or [she]'ll be forcibly removed by security" (2021: 43). However, there is no logic behind the encirclement and safeguard of the land as "There are no people. There are no buildings. There is just fence, then landscape" (2017a: 142). For Elisabeth, the fences and wires turn the common land into a "[p]rison for trees. Prison for gorse, for flies, for cabbage whites, for small blues. Oystercatcher detention centre" (2017a: 142). Thus, borderization goes beyond demarcation of lands but denotes the biopolitical strategy of immobility, singularization and subjugation of the population to create docile bodies and discourage any possibility of collective resistance. In this vein, via the borderization of social body; individual's body is also targeted as the inhuman object of biopolitical control and oppression with biometrical surveillance. As manifestations of these oppressive operations of biopower, the guard threatens Elisabeth that her act of trespassing will "lead to legal charges being implemented against [her]" which "may involve being forcibly detained and [her]

personal information and a sample of [her] DNA being taken and retained" (2017a: 142). Hence, while the lands belonging to public are decreasing, the society is also incarcerated via biopolitical technologies that singularize, restrain, control and subjugate the individual. In other words, CCTV cameras, digital surveillance and other technologies serve what fences do to the land once Elisabeth used to walk freely; they constrain, keep apart and take hostage.

Autumn mirrors how biopolitical regimes take control of human life through bordering the land, society and the body as the practices of the two enemy countries during the World War II also illustrate. While alluding to the Holocaust and the systematic segregation and murder of European Jews by the Nazis with the aim of annihilating the Jewish community in Europe, the novel also sets forth British internment camps simultaneously founded for the enemy aliens in the country. In one of her visits to the aged care home, Elisabeth learns from a care assistant that Daniel and his father were forced to stay in one of those high security camps as enemy aliens in the UK during the World War II due to their German origin. Even if "[h]im being English really," Daniel went "in there with his old father the German even though he could have stayed outside if he'd chosen" (Smith, 2017a: 170). Similarly, as his motherland treated his father and himself as potential enemies, the Nazi regime also identified her sister as an enemy to the superrace and eventually killed her due to her Jewish origin. Regarding Daniel's presence which "represents the old and Europe" and "is evocative of the Union and the past that Elisabeth associates with good, old, happy days," it is clear that while he stands for the Nazis for the British government in the 1940s and the enemy for the Nazis in Germany; Daniel, in post-Brexit UK, symbolizes the ties of the country to the Continent which has reached to a breaking point, very much like the old man's life that is about to end (Sivrioğlu, 2022: 5). Similarly, very much like Jews in the Nazi Germany and the people with German origin in Britain in the 1940s, today's refugees and immigrants are posited as bodies that are walled off to be controlled and excluded. As a reflection of this long-standing homelessness of minorities, Daniel has always felt he "doesn't quite belong" in his homeland (Smith, 2017a: 161). Thus, as Lorenzini also notes, otherness is a biopolitical construct and "biopolitics is always a politics of differential vulnerability" rather than "a politics that erases social and racial inequalities by reminding us of our common belonging to the same biological species" (2021: 43–44). Biopolitics "structurally relies on the establishment of hierarchies in the value of

lives, producing and multiplying vulnerability as a means of governing people" (2021: 43–44). In this regard, Smith delineates othering as the unspoken agenda of biopolitical regimes to fragment the society into superrace and subraces with the aim of constructing a governable population. While lives and lands are bordered for that ideal, human body is also rendered as the foremost border determining one's possible dehumanization, invisibility and even annihilation. Thus borders are drawn not only around the common lands with the electrified fences but also among the British subjects whose mindsets are walled with *us* versus *them* mentality. In other words, the society is territorialized like the land in *Autumn* which pictures the exclusion of the subraces, namely refugees, immigrants, people of colour, the queer and nonconformists into spectral, marginalized statuses in the public space. In that regard, the portrayals of encircled lands, closures, social divisions and the stereotyping of non-white communities all suggest border as a recurring symbol of biopolitical othering in the novel. In this panorama, normative definitions are metaphorical walls that incarcerate certain communities into monolithic identity categories, marginalize and render them less human. Thus, those who do not fit into certain ethnic or cultural profiles are imprisoned into their own bodies, skins and isolated existences. In this sense, while suggesting human body as the modern border that determines one's recognition or abandonment as the Other, *Autumn* addresses biopolitical construction of otherness through its characters that are regarded as the outsider, the immigrant, the refugee or the internal enemy by dint of their racialized bodies.

Through the forceful critiques addressed to the white supremacy in the public space and the disenfranchisement of minorities and refugees, *Autumn* presents normativity as the nomos of modernity that polarizes the society and marginalizes those who do not fit into the desired cultural/ethnic identity. Nevertheless, Smith's characters are nonconformist, autonomous individuals against the biopolitical power that aims to produce the truth of its subjects and thus their uncontrollable, unique subjectivities echo what Foucault offers as a means of resistance to biopolitical power: "Maybe the targets nowadays is not to discover what we are, but to refuse what we are […] We have to promote new forms of subjectivity through the refusal of this kind of individuality which has been imposed on us for several centuries" (1983: 216). That is why, Elisabeth as a single, outspoken, feminist lover of art refuses to conform into her gender role like Wendy and her mother's girlfriend Zoe who as two lesbian lovers challenge the

oppressive state policies and practices of SA4A with the free spirit of seventies. On the other hand, as a very old, unmarried and eccentric German songwriter, Daniel is regarded also an outsider in Wendy's village in the first place. Not only his German origin but also his artistic creativity, imagination and strong interest in art render him outlandish. However, *Autumn* is not a work that revolves around a few protagonist or a single story. Like Daniel, Elisabeth, Wendy, Zoe, Hannah and the post-Brexit society, refugees are also central to the novel as the invisible, muted Other. Confined into their dehumanized bodies, refugees are pictured with a nightmarish scene in the opening of the novel that alludes to their bodies washed ashore. Daniel in his prolonged sleep notices the holiday makers' bliss on a beach right along the refugee bodies stranded in the same place and realizes that he is not dead yet but dreaming; since no dreams can be as harsh and ruthless as the reality. The provoking dichotomy of the refugee bodies and joyous European vacationers signifies much more than the contradiction of death and life. This unsettling scene rather reflects the contrast between the ignorance of the West and refugees' life and death struggle and sheds light onto the modern human condition marked on the one hand by those treated as humans and on the other, by others identified as bodies living without the protection of the law. Thus, while setting its political tone through a surreal and dreamy scene, the novel underlines the stateless bodies that are invisible and mute as ghosts: "there [are] washed-up bod[ies]" "on the shore" however, the people who are sunbathing, resting and swimming do not seem to realize these bodies (Smith, 2017a: 18). The Others, even their dead bodies, are unseen *under western eyes*:

> It is a dead person. Just along from this dead person, there is another dead person. Beyond it, another, and another. He looks along the shore at the dark line of the tide-dumped dead. Some of the bodies are of very small children.[…] Further up the beach there are more people. These people are human, like the ones on the shore, but these are alive. […] They are holidaying up the shore from the dead (Smith, 2017a: 12).

Daniel's dream illuminates the link of biopower to death in the most tragic way. Biopolitical states defines "the break between what must live and what must die" through racism and employ this prevailing thanatopolitical technology to let those with unrecognized identities die in different ways (Foucault, 2003: 254). In this sense, the dead bodies that only Daniel could see denote how racism dehumanizes certain communities in the eyes of the superrace. Regarding Foucault's claim that "the distinction among races, the hierarchy of races, the fact that certain races are described as good and that others, in contrast, are described as inferior" are all means "of

fragmenting the field of the biological that power controls" and "of separating out the groups that exist within a population," the novel challenges these biopolitically constructed hierarchies and plainly renders refugees whose bodies are washed ashore visible (2017a: 255). Thus, against the mindset designating "the death of the other, the death of the bad race, of the inferior race (or the degenerate, or the abnormal) [as] something that will make life in general healthier," *Autumn* highlights how xenophobic discourses lead to the public opinion that links social welfare to the exclusion of minorities and refugees that are viewed as threats to the social body. Hence, in Smith's literary landscape, refugees' dead bodies that speak up their plight to which western public has turned a deaf ear are no less significant than Daniel or any other protagonists.

On the other hand, it is crucial to note that *Autumn* portrays the otherization of protagonists without attempting to rationalize. While delineating how Elisabeth is treated with disdain and antipathy in her mother's village, Smith gives no details about her ethnic origin or physical appearance except for her age. While "go[ing] for a walk in the village," she realizes that people "in their gardens scowl at her or ignore her" and "an old lady [whom] she passes" "nods, doesn't smile, walks past, imperious" (Smith, 2017a: 253). "The village is a sullen state" and its unfriendly attitude towards Elisabeth illustrates her outsider position in the village she grew up (2017a: 53). The "[p]eople either look down, look away or stare her out. People in the shops, when she buys some fruit, some ibuprofen and a newspaper for her mother, speak with a new kind of detachment. People she passes on the streets […] regard her, and each other, with a new kind of loftiness" (2017a: 53–54). Thus, through giving no excuse for the aloofness of the townspeople or Elisabeth's otherization, the novel deconstructs the stereotypical representations of the Other and calls for confronting the fixed, widely held and preconceived ideas of the self that serve to the normalization of otherness of certain communities. The society is both "the subject of needs and aspirations" and "the object of government manipulation" that promotes biopolitical othering without even realising it (Foucault, 2007: 141). Concerning that Elisabeth "stands for the new" that is "attach[ed] to the past" via Daniel "and her relation to him establishes a bridge between her own past and England's with that of the EU and Daniel's," the local people's adverse manners also signify the tendency of the nation to isolate itself and avoid any possibility of "integrity with the whole to serve to the transformation of the new world order" (Sivrioğlu, 2022: 6).

On the other hand, the postal officers that stand for the institutionalized biopolitical power are as sceptical and unkind to Elisabeth as the villagers and keep asking about her travelling plans for no apparent reason. With regard to her biometrical photo and her name which "is not the normal way of spelling" the name Elizabeth**,** the man treats Elisabeth like a suspect that needs to be monitored and controlled due to her failure to fit into normative standards of being English. Upon his contention that "It's people from other countries that spell it like that, generally" despite her old passport "does say" she is "UK," she asserts that she is (Smith, 2017a: 22). As Sivrioğlu suggests, her name "is the French, German, Dutch, and Greek form of Elizabeth," which is not only "another link to EU" but also renders her "an outcast both from the birth and also throughout her life" (2022: 7). Thus, while biopolitical power designates Elisabeth as a threat to the public and *sees* her failure to fit into the culturally recognized identity, *Autumn* does not foreground her physical appearance or the causes of her marginalisation and thus contests the exclusionary discourses justifying one's social exclusion, namely the cultural definitions of "abnormality" which is "the fundamental characteristic of modern biological racism" (Mader, 2011: 108). Concerning her so-called abnormal subjectivity, Elisabeth, even in her childhood, refuses the monolithic identity definitions and discriminatory impulses that are pervasive in the society. She not only objects to her mother's opposition to her friendship with that reclusive elderly German neighbour, but also his identification with a single identity: "Daniel's not gay. He's European […] Or if he is, […] then he's not just gay. He's not just one thing or another. Nobody is. Not even you" (Smith, 2017a: 77). Her remarks highlight the stifling and limiting effects of identity categorizations that confine people to one category or another and ghettoize the entire social body. Furthermore, when Wendy insists that her daughter should "have normal friends like normal thirteen year olds," she questions the idea of normality held by her mother (2017a: 78): "It depends on how you'd define normal, […] Which would be different from how I'd define normal. Since we all live in relativity and mine at the moment is not and I suspect never will be the same as yours" (2017a: 78). Thus, *Autumn* tells the tale of our modern age in which norms have become de facto laws whose advocates are the majority rather than states.

On the other hand, the novel draws analogies not only between post-Brexit Britain and 1960s Britain shaken by the Prufomo scandal or France during the Revolution but also contemporary Britain and Nazi Germany. *Autumn* highlights the

parallels between racist operations in Germany at the time and xenophobic practices in the post-9/11 world through flashbacks to Daniel and Hannah's childhoods in Germany during the early years of Nazi rule. In other words, Smith's work implies that, very much like today's world, which has been transformed into a massive semi-open prison with racial profiling and biometric measuring and technological surveillance of individuals on the grounds of their phenotype, in the late 1930s, the latest developments and new methods in the biopolitical measuring for the preservation of the Aryan race were also cherished by the Nazis. While travelling with Hannah on a train in Germany before the outbreak of the World War II, Daniel feels himself as an alien due to the dismissive manners of the passengers who "see from his clothes that he's not from here" (Smith, 2017a: 99). Despite being of German descent, born in Britain, and a native speaker of both languages, Daniel's body is all that matters and is reason enough to shun him: "he can speak the language, though none of the strangers round him on the train knows he can, because they don't know who he is, or who she is, his sister next to him, they don't know the first thing about them" (2017a: 99). Besides, the passengers "are talking about the necessity of developing a scientific and legal means of gauging exactly who's what," which illustrates how biopolitical states have sought ways to legitimize the superiority of the superrace and maintain its privileged position. Another passenger makes reference to a further scientific investigation that aims to quantify humanness and categorize those who lack it: "There is a professor at the institute [who] is engaged in inventing a modern tool to record, quite scientifically, certain physical statistics" about the result of measurements of "[n]oses, ears, the spaces between" (2017a: 99–100). For the man: "[t]he measurement of parts of the body, most especially of the features of the head area, can tell you quite succinctly everything you need to know. Eye colour, hair colour, the sizing of foreheads (2017a: 100). He believes that as "a case in the first place of measuring and collating," this "complex case, in the long run" with its "collected statistics" will help them to "sift" and homogenize the population for the construction of a German superrace (2017a: 100). The professor's project reflects the centrality of scientific and statistical knowledge in the biopolitical configuration of society and suggests how science, particularly the statistics, serves to the identification and systematic othering of the abnormal in biopolitical regimes. In this sense, the train is a microcosm of Nazi Germany, where citizens were classified as normal and abnormal based on norms created by scientific investigations and those that were deemed as deviations were interned and exterminated by the biopolitical system.

Furthermore, Daniel also recollects the menacing manner of a soldier in the train corridor and the "insidious" "breadth of [his] chest" while he is passing by. When he leaves his compartment "there is a capped and booted man blocking the way […] swaying with the movement of this train […] as if he is a working part of its mechanical structure" (2017a: 101). The soldier "lifts one arm higher so the boy can pass under. As Daniel does, the soldier's arm comes down just far enough to brush, with the material of his shirt, the hair on the top of his head. Hopla, the soldier says" (2017a: 101). Thus, the similarity between the 1930s Germany and the contemporary Britain regarding the rise of extremist nationalism and institutionalized racism designates otherness as a timeless, widely held and biopolitically constructed position. In that regard, *Autumn* illustrates that the animosity minorities, immigrants and refugees confront today is not much dissimilar from the hostility Daniel faced as a kid. In other words, the novel suggests that the extreme biopolitical strategies of the Nazis for the purification and preservation of the German race are not a million miles away from the contemporary biopolitical technologies that target the marginalization of some bodies to justify security practices and stigmatize minorities as burdens, threats or scapegoats for the social and economic injustices. While highlighting the fine line between the xenophobic, anti-refugee tendencies in contemporary Britain and the anti-Semitism in Nazi Germany, the novel pictures the two countries from different eras as the two sides of the same coin despite the considerable difference in the extremity of their dehumanizing operations, as both states under biopolitical regimes have designated, undermined and excluded minorities or the underprivileged for the promotion of their English or German populations. Hence, *Autumn* not only instantiates Foucault's view of biopolitics as a power that targets the optimization of life but also deconstructs its seemingly positive ideals by suggesting that what biopolitical power attempts to preserve is not the life of *all* but of the superrace, and thus "there's no such thing as society" as we know (2017: 112).

Concerning the practices conducted to protect and optimize the life of the superrace, the Brexit referendum is presented as a breaking point after which being British is more overtly and systematically configured as being English as the culturally exalted identity, minorities are more plainly and officially blamed for the current social injustices and matters of the state, anti-immigrant protests are louder and hatred speech is normalized and institutionalized. In this tumultuous political and social atmosphere, "Elisabeth wonders what's going to happen to all the care assistants" since "[s]he

realizes she hasn't so far encountered a single care assistant here who isn't from somewhere else in the world" (Smith, 2017a: 111). Accordingly, the radio programme she comes across encapsulates how minorities are put on a tight spot. For the spokesperson in the programme, he claims that they have actively and "*rhetorically"* stood up to the integration of immigrant to the UK and "*rhetorically and practically encourage[ed] [them]selves not to integrate*" as an act of "*self-policing"* as "they truly believe that "*there's no such thing as society"* (2017a: 111–112). In this multitude, not only immigrants and people of colour but also people from other European countries have their share of this aggressive hostility. Elisabeth recalls the conflict a Spanish couple has confronted in the taxi line at the station on the way to her mother's house: "The people behind them in the queue shouted at them. What they shouted at them was to go home. This isn't Europe, they shouted. Go back to Europe" (Smith, 2017a: 130). For the group, foreigners in this nation have no rights or voice. However, by portraying the efforts of another group to protect and support the couple, Smith not only highlights the prevalent hatred toward the outlander but also brings optimism to her autumnal scenery: "The people standing in front of the Spanish people in the taxi queue were nice; they tried to defuse it by letting the Spanish people take the next taxi" (2017a: 130). According to Elisabeth, the scene she has witnessed is more than the usual infelicity of a group of impertinent people but signifies "a fraction of something volcanic" (2017a: 130). In other words, those who mistreat the couple and others who help them serve as an example of the social disintegration and divisions that have become more pronounced in the country since Brexit. There are subraces; the communities that are marginalized owing to their ethnic origins, sexual orientations, or anti-authoritarian sentiments on the one hand, and the superrace that views its Englishness as proof of its supremacy and ownership of the country on the other. The response to the previous street writing Elisabeth has seen paints a clear picture of this schism. While "passing the house with GO and HOME still written across it, she sees that underneath this someone has added, in varying bright colours, WE ARE ALREADY HOME THANK YOU and painted a tree next to it and a row of bright red flowers underneath it" (2017a: 138). Thus, despite the consolidation of the majority by biopolitical discourses in *Autumn*, a large number of individuals are also conscious of and resist their biopoliticization into bricks in the wall without any control over their lives. Elisabeth, as the spokesperson for these people, feels disillusioned and forlorn following Brexit, which has exacerbated the problems rather than resolving them as was

promised: “[She] wakes up feeling cheated of something” each morning and “thinks about […] the number of people waking up feeling cheated of something all over the country, no matter what they voted” (2017a: 197). Racism has grown more systemic, overt, and institutionalized in post-Brexit Britain, where minorities have been targeted publicly as a potential risk to be undermined as the threats a right-wing spokesman makes on a panel at radio towards the female MP reveal: “First we’ll get the Poles. And then we’ll get the Muslims. Then we’ll get the gyppos, then the gays. You lot are on the run and we’re coming after you” (2017a: 197–198). Regarding the spokesman’s comments, *Autumn* also offers a forceful critique of politicians and the media that legitimize biopolitical otherness. Brexit has thus caused a more racialized and disintegrating social body in Smith’s human landscape, on which biopolitical techniques are deployed more vehemently in the interest of creating a homogenized society. Stripped to their bare lives, these bodies are either “made live” or dehumanized, punished to exclusion and “let die” more daringly. In this way, the novel configures Brexit as a turning point where othering in the eyes of the public has become more readily condoned and routinized and where the body has turned into a border designating one’s humanness. Besides the snapshots from the British public space, *Autumn* also suggests body as the determinant of one’s recognition or absence through Daniel’s own confinement into his corporal existence during his prolonged sleep. Daniel signifies the bare life not only during the 1940s when he was stuck in his otherized corporal existence as an enemy alien in both the UK and Germany, but also at present with his very old, comatose body:

> He is so tiny in the bed. It is like he is just a head. He’s small and frail now, thin as the skeleton of a cartoon fish left by a cartoon cat, his body so near-nothing under the covers that it hardly makes any impression, just a head by itself on a pillow, a head with a cave in it and the cave is his mouth (Smith, 2017a: 33).

Unable to awaken from “the increased sleep period” that “happens when people are close to death,” Daniel finds himself in his old body in his dream and feels frustrated as “[h]e’d imagined death would distil a person, strip the rotting rot away till everything was light as a cloud” (Smith, 2017: 33, 4). Nevertheless, when he soon realises that his body has revived, he thinks he is dead “because his body looks different from the last time he looked down at it, it looks better, it looks rather good as bodies go … He’d forgotten what it feels like, to feel” (2017a: 6–7). Thus, the novel continues its emphasis on the body that turns into a prison of the self through portraying his disappointment

upon his recognition of his 101-year-old body and his subsequent resentment of the confinement of his personage, identity and consciousness into this old vessel. Soon, Daniel realizes that he is now stuck in a tree trunk with his old body: “The old man opens his eyes to find he can’t open his eyes. He seems to be shut inside something remarkably like the trunk of a Scots pine […] He can’t move. There’s not much room for movement inside a tree. His mouth and eyes are resigned shut” (2017a: 89). His dream reflects his immobility and confinement through his body imprisoned in the tree trunk, his consciousness in his old, comatose body and Daniel himself in his racialized body. Thus, he is stuck “in the bed, inside the tree” and in his otherized body (2017a: 90).

Nevertheless, Ali Smith’s novels are neither mere reflection of a bleak past in which human bodies are systematically dehumanized and casually detained; nor of dreary modern human landscapes overwhelmed by racial bigotry triggered by Brexit. Beyond offering pessimistic visions of the post-millennial world, *Seasonal Quartet* illustrates Foucault’s notion of counter-discourse which stands for the ways of thinking against dominant, institutionalized, power-centred discourses. *Autumn* sets forth the discourses constructed by oppressed voices such as the refugees, immigrants, people of colour and women and epitomizes how the novel genre offers a site of resistance to the biopolitical technologies of racialization that discriminate bodies as liveable or unliveable, human and less human, *us* and *them*. Rather than merely addressing those discourses; the novel de-others the marginalized and mirrors the commonality of being human to trespass the cultural, political and racial frontiers. Thus, *Autumn* displays how the aesthetic space of novel as a counter-biopolitical domain opposes current stereotypical categories and narratives in the public understanding and reconnects individuals. Furthermore, the characters challenge the oppressive biopolitical modern condition that others them through constructing their personal realities in their inner world untainted by biopolitical discourses. This newly gained self-authority, namely becoming the power oneself and constructing one’s own truths, also leads them to self-realisation, reach out others and embrace an existence not *for* but *with* others in solidarity. In this sense, rather than being escapist attempts for the characters; dreaming, recollecting and storytelling become means of disobedience, noncompliance and emancipation from biopolitical oppression, control and othering. Smith’s literary space which problematizes the distinction between reality and illusion designates art as the *lie*

that makes us realize the truth[2]. Dreams, memories and stories also turn into their artworks, namely *lies* through which protagonists create and articulate their truths. Hence, the counter-discourses and truths of their oppressed voices liberate them from all boundaries, impositions, definitions, standards and categorizations; and bestow them togetherness and harmony with other people, nature and the world.

In that regard, I will suggest *autobiofiction* as a term to refer to the novels that create a domain out of borders; a queer space in Jane Garrity's terms; "nonnormative locales that are physical, social, and constituted by and through social relations, as well as nonexclusionary and nonhomogeneous locations that are largely or exclusively theoretical constructs" (2016). Thus, in this non-normative space, characters assume the power of their own and create their counter discourses and realities by dreaming, imagining and recollecting rather than yielding to the control and manipulation of the biopolitical regime or/and the mindset of the anonymous narrator/author. Concerning the critique of othering and dehumanizing discourses in the novel, *Autumn,* as an example of autobiofiction, offers the characters that conduct themselves as the power of their own rather than being directed or controlled by the author, biopower or any other governing regime. Thanks to their imagination, memories and dreams that function both as sanctuaries as well as means of resistance, Elisabeth and Daniel gain self-made authorities over both the biopolitical regime and the author that monitor and control them as panoptical powers and thus become the authors of their own stories. In this sense, *Autumn* comprises life-histories ranging from Elisabeth's memories and critiques directed at institutionalized racism, hate speech and misogyny in culture and media, to Daniel's dreams, recollections and accounts of artworks of '60s pop artist, Pauline Boty. Besides these two central life stories, the novel offers a slice of Hannah's emancipation from the Nazi officers in Vichy France and Wendy's nostalgic memories of the 1970s, fondness for antiquities that brings her love and self-realization and her solo protest. Hence, while rendering resistance to biopolitics through characters' polyphonic creation of their own stories and truths, Smith's novel not only communicates the power of literature to reveal and subvert discriminatory discourses created through language but also manifests how words can actually make a difference through calling our understandings of the world and frames of mind into question. As Daniel also suggests: "Language is like poppies. It just takes something to churn the earth round them up, and

[2] From Pablo Picasso's interview in *The Arts: An Illustrated Monthly Magazine Covering All Phases of Ancient and Modern Art,* 1923.

when it does up come the sleeping words, bright red, fresh, blowing about. Then the seedheads rattle, the seeds fall out. Then there's even more language waiting to come up" (Smith, 2017a: 69).

Autumn, with the aim of deconstructing those biopolitical frames, makes the distant voices heard and the unknown recognized via its portrayals of marginalized lives. Thus, the novel presents these nonconformists characters to defy the stereotyping of certain communities and rationalization of their exclusion, segregation and disenfranchisement. Despite their different ethnicities, genders and ages; Daniel, Elisabeth, Wendy, Zoe and Hannah as idiosyncratic, rebellious, self-confident and free-spirited figures meet on the common ground of their negation of their stereotypical victimized position as the Other. With regard to their resistance against being designated as enemies or threats to the welfare of society, Smith's characters are all powerful, autonomous, unique individuals who repudiate their reduction into bare lives and incarceration into unrecognized identities by going beyond their biopolitically constructed selves, trespassing the frontiers of identity definitions, connecting with others and asserting themselves. Elisabeth meets up with Daniel, Hannah stands up against the Nazi soldiers with other women in the market and Wendy does not protest SA4A until she meets Zoe. Their meeting, friendship and emotional attachment embolden them, ignite their rebellion to biopolitical segregation and oppression and lead them to pave new ways for themselves rather than falling into line with masses.

In this sense, meeting with the Other is much more than a literary pattern in the narrative. The experience of emotional closeness and connection to a stranger is manifested through the intrusion of an outsider figure that walks in the character's barren and isolated life, turns everything upside down and then restores order and brings epiphany. *Autumn* first and foremost presents Daniel as the intruder Other that befriends Elisabeth. As suggested in one of Elisabeth's early memories of Daniel, this eccentric elderly German steps into her life as her new neighbour and inspires her to go beyond boundaries and question imposed truths: "And you can't rollerblade on grass, she said. Can't you? Daniel said. How very disappointing truth is sometimes. Can't we try? There'd be no point, she said. Can't we try anyway? he said. We might disprove the general consensus. Okay, Elisabeth said" (Smith, 2017a: 211). Furthermore, while their bond grows into a lifelong friendship based on mutual acceptance, caring and trust; Daniel's presence transforms the thirteen-year-old Elisabeth into an autonomous junior

arts lecturer at a London university. Despite her supervisor's objections, she wrote her dissertation on the only female Pop Art painter in Britain, Pauline Boty and introduced her works to art history. On the other hand, Zoe also intrudes into Wendy's life and develops a romantic attachment to her, which leads Wendy to embrace her queer identity and protest the encirclement of the common land by SA4A. Thus, for the mother and daughter, the Other's intrusion offers the possibility of establishing a bond with the other and reconnecting with one's true self. Accordingly, Franssen also notes that in Smith's work, "the presence of the stranger destroys the social order, but in doing so, space is opened up for the creation of new communities and kinship systems" (2021). Thus, the social order established by biopolitical power is overturned by the arrival of the stranger whose visitation turns out to be an emancipatory experience for the host to reconnect with the self, others and existence. Besides, while de-stereotyping the marginalized by depicting the Other as self-fulfilled, independent figures comfortable in their skins, *Autumn* as a work of counter-discourse also illuminates the necessity to meet on a common ground of humanness with others against the discriminatory operations of biopolitics. To this end, the novel revolves around the friendships of Elisabeth and Daniel; Wendy and Zoe; and the sibling relationship between Daniel and Hannah rather than the characters' traumas. Furthermore, as the representative of different generations, genders and ethnic communities, Elisabeth and Daniel find a middle ground in storytelling and art. Young Elisabeth develops her distinct individuality, decides to become an art instructor, and writes her thesis on Pauline Boty's artwork after he first introduces the artist's works to her. In that regard, as art grants these two worlds apart protagonists togetherness, so does *Autumn* which also creates an unbounded, unfettered ground defying othering. In addition, art turns into a way for them to liberate themselves from their biopoliticized existences that are under constant control:

> She'd opened the book she bought today. She'd started to read, from the beginning, quite quietly, out loud. It was the best of times, it was the worst of times […]. The words had acted like a charm. They'd released it all, in seconds. They'd made everything happening stand just far enough away. It was nothing less than magic. Who needs a passport? Who am I? Where am I? What am I? I'm reading (Smith, 2017a: 201–202).

Thus, like the reader who is reading *Autumn*, Elisabeth becomes absorbed in the novel to interpret the world and go beyond the erected walls, definitions and prejudices. Thanks to explicit debts of the novel to Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities*,

Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, *Autumn* "brings characters of different generations together, sparking [the readers'] curiosity and inspiring them to be more empathetic" through art (Franssen, 2021). Besides, as art liberates Elisabeth in her Bildung, it also brings the old man into life. Literature turns into a "healing power" which helps Daniel "regain his consciousness," since "Elisabeth in a way calls him back to life by reading *A Tale of Two Cities"* (Sivrioğlu, 2022: 7). On the other hand, regarding the construction of a queer space free from binaries; a site in which dissimilar and even contrasting ideas, standpoints and discourses can reside altogether, the novel lays emphasis on human interdependency and common ground of humanness as prominent themes. The idea that we are more alike to one another despite ideologies, normative definitions and phenotypical features that differentiate us is set forth to negate biopolitical othering. In this sense, Smith's first work in her *Quartet* illustrates the precariousness of human via the portrayal of human condition that transcends sexual, ethnic, cultural, generational, temporal and spatial borders. The author's refusal to give any details about the characters' physical appearances or cultural identities renders *Autumn* an oppositional domain that withstands the biopoliticization of life, reducing subjects into their bodily existences and deploying otherized communities as threats to the majority. Thus, Smith's work offers humaneness as an antidote to borders and biopolitical othering and offers art to introduce out-group members into our widely held frameworks, make the unfamiliar familiar, and turn *them* into *us*. In one of Daniel's journeys to Nazi Germany on the eve of World War II, Hannah assumes an authorial role and underlines the vitality to recognize vulnerabilities of all without succumbing to "despair," and determine "how best to act," viewing "hope" as "a matter of how we deal with the negative acts towards human beings by other human beings in the world, remembering that they and we are all human, that nothing human is alien to us" (Smith, 2017a: 190). Through her insights on our shared humanity, the novel suggests the imperative to dismantle tacit biases against the Other and underscores solidarity as a prerequisite for resisting biopolitical othering and dehumanizing practices. Besides the powerful and lifelong bonds between Daniel and Elisabeth as two friends, Daniel and Hannah as two siblings, *Autumn* reflects on the female solidarity through the twenty-two-year-old Hannah's exceptional leadership of a group of captive women for resistance in Nice in 1943. Along with eight other women, Hannah has been "picked up" and made to "sit on the floor in the back of a truck" (Smith, 2017a: 64). By standing up, she emboldens and provokes other women to do the

same and stand up for themselves in order to draw French women's attention at the market:

> Hannah stood up. One of the guards told her to sit down. The woman opposite stood up. One by one all the other women in the truck took their cue and stood up. The guard yelled at them to sit down. […] Get out of the way, the woman who'd nodded to Hannah said to the men. You can't kill us all. Where are you taking them? A woman had come over to the side of the truck and was looking in. A small gathering of women from the market, elegant women, headscarfed fish-seller girls and older women, formed behind her (Smith, 2017a: 65).

Eventually, "[t]he women in that small gathering on the side of the road moved closer together" and "[their hush] spread back across the market like shadow, like cloud-cover" (Smith, 2017a: 66). Despite their diverse socio-economic backgrounds, they act together, shout for the captives' release and stand against the soldiers, which eventually results in the liberation of the captive women. While Hannah becomes the first woman who walks away in 1943, Wendy as a modern-day heroine also becomes the first villager that stands up and raises her voice against the enclosure of common land by the surveillance company. Throughout the novel, she turns from a side character into a protagonist with her activism, endurance and attempts to encourage her daughter to take action and resist: "I want you to do something about it. […] Come on. We'll both go" (2017a: 55). Upon hearing the news about the government plans to "cut […] their funding for the houses where the kids who arrive here as asylum seekers have been staying" and "dump" "those kids […] in the same high-security places they put everybody," Wendy loses her temper and "started shouting about how those places are worse than jail, everyone under guard, bars on the windows, not fit for anybody, doubly not fit for kids" (2017a: 254–255). Nevertheless, as Zoe tells Elisabeth, her mother's protest was not all talk but directed to the fences of the common land which are the manifestations of the oppressive operations of biopower symbolized by the all-seeing SA4A:

> [Wendy] made [Zoe] stop the car. She left the car door hanging open and she ran off up a path. […], she was shouting at men in a van at the fence, I mean fences, and she was shaking the barometer in the air at them and then I swear she threw it at the fence! And the fence gave this great cracking sound, a flash came off it, and the men went crazy because she'd shorted their fence (Smith, 2017a: 255).

Although she has been taken into custody following her protest against the company, which has left almost no uncontrolled public space, this will not seem to deter her from protesting further: "[Wendy's] new plan is that every day she's going to go and get herself arrested […] bombarding that fence with people's histories and with the

artefacts of less cruel and more philanthropic times" (Smith, 2017a: 255). Thus Wendy, by collecting artefacts that symbolize life histories of ordinary people from "philanthropic times" against a relentless inhuman power mechanism and throwing those objects to the fences, goes beyond resisting the practices of a security company and withstands all borders that territorialize common lands, restrict people to certain districts, segregate and isolate bodies, and imprison subjects into emotionally sterile existences. In that respect, the novel puts forth interdependence against the pervasive exclusionary narratives and discourses of othering by mediating not only the pivotal confrontations between Daniel and Elisabeth, and Wendy and Zoe; but also the nonconformity, courage and resistance of Hannah and Wendy as similar women in two dissimilar eras and societies.

On the other hand, as one of the central themes of *Autumn*, the dichotomy of illusion and reality also turns the novel into a manifestation of counter discourse, namely a site of resistance to standardization, singularization and dehumanization of human subjects. In its portrayals of the biopoliticization and borderization of life, Smith's work mirrors the illusion systematically created and prompted by biopolitical power to blur the reality and illustrates "how it's deep in our animal nature […] [n]ot to see what's happening right in front of our eyes" as Daniel remarks (Smith, 2017a: 175). While mirroring the biopolitically designed and incarcerated lives of individuals, the novel also juxtaposes fact and fiction in a skilful mosaic-like structure. *Autumn* on the one hand represents a true collage of contemporary British political, social and cultural landscape, with debates about Brexit, refugees and immigrants in media and the parliament, as well as references to Pauline Boty's career, the novel foregrounds fictional figures like Elisabeth, Daniel, Hannah, Wendy and Zoe who contemplate on, criticize and protest the surveillance, control and othering in the socio-political domain. Furthermore, the characters challenge the political turmoil, uncertainty, social disorder, schism and bigotry by turning to their imaginations and inner worlds, which bestow them a sense of power and an undistorted lens reflecting a fair copy of the suffocating modern condition. Thus, through merging fact with fiction, the novel calls for questioning the controversial dualities of the real and illusionary, truth and lie, and the visible and underneath actuality of the contemporary existence. As a reflection of the interwoven status of illusion and reality, the novel begins each chapter like a journal by referring to the time and setting. While assuming the role of a journal reporting realties,

Autumn ironically suggests how bureaucracy, institutions, politicians and social media turn modern condition into a more fantastic and implausible experience than fiction. Nonetheless, according to the officer in the post office, "This isn't fiction […] This is the Post Office" (2017a: 27). Hence, besides underlining its fictional status through an absurd Kafkaesque scene, the novel sets forth the playfulness and fragmentation enmeshed in harsh contemporary realities, which renders the aesthetic space of the novel a domain free of the normalizing strategies of biopolitics. Therefore, Smith's first work in the *Quartet* not only pictures the modernity in which the personal is captured by the political, individual is dehumanized into a body and his or her body is marginalized via dominant rhetoric in modernity but also manifests counter-discourse with its anti-authorial and anti-authoritarian stance as well as its characters that all raise their voices against technological surveillance, othering and oppression.

Concerning the juxtaposition of fact and fiction and the emphasis on the fine line between reality and illusion, *Autumn* centralizes human imagination and consciousness against the biopoliticization and reduction of human beings into biological life. As a collage of dreams, visions, impressions, experiences, memories and traumas, the novel designates human consciousness as the creator of its reality rather than an object of power. That is why the characters are not victims at all, despite their otherized status. As for Daniel, who is in a comatose state till the end of the novel, his unconscious mind, dreams and memories of Hannah recreate reality that is unique, undistorted and uncontrolled. On the other hand, Elisabeth's dream and childhood memories about Daniel, and the flashbacks to Hannah's release from the Nazis not only draw a parallelism between today's democracies and the totalitarian states of the last century but mirror their authentic female subjectivities. Thus, besides providing a critique of modernity, *Autumn* offers characters that reconstruct themselves and their realities rather than resigning themselves into dehumanized positions constructed by a dystopic biopolitical power. Furthermore, the characters can only discover and build their true selves after they have met, felt emotionally attached to and supported one another. In other words, Smith's work manifests what John Donne also beautifully put into words: "No man is an island entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main" (1839: 1223). Thus, thanks to human intimacy, empathy, friendship and solidarity, they can write their own fictions and create an autobiofiction made up of their personal stories against the dehumanizing, marginalizing and incarcerating

operations of biopolitical power. In that regard, Elisabeth's dream pictures how she and Daniel walk free from their otherness, recreate their lives, and become authors of their own with their self-made authorities in their autobiofictions. By Daniel's bed in the care home, she falls asleep and dreams herself with him in a white room that symbolizes the conformist, lifeless and monotonous lives of modern everyman/woman: "She imagines its walls white. She imagines everything in it painted white. Even the holes in the floor, through the white broken boards, are painted white inside" (Smith, 2017a: 37). When they decide to go for a walk, the two find themselves "standing in pure clean white space," namely a "white desert" once again (2017a: 38). Although "[t]he whiteness goes on forever ahead of them," Daniel begins to colourize this dull, colourless world with various colours, which suggests how only a unique individual with his or her questioning and imaginative mind can enliven the dull lives cut from the same cloth and inspire many to reconstruct themselves as multi-coloured, liveable, lively lives (2017a: 38):

> [H]e pulls […] of his collarbone, like a magician, a free-floating mass of the colour of range. He throws it like a huge cloak over the whiteness ahead of them. Before it settles away from him he twists a little of it round a finger and binds it round the too-white orange he's still holding. The white orange in his hand becomes its natural colour. He nods. He pulls the colours green and blue like a string of handkerchiefs out of the centre of himself. The orange in his hand turns Cézanne-colours. People crowd round him, excited. People queue up, bring him their white things, hold them out (Smith, 2017a: 39–40).

As in her dream, Daniel has brought a breath of fresh air to Elisabeth's pale life, incites her imagination and makes her childhood and adolescence more colourful, liveable and memorable. Furthermore, Daniel, by conveying his love of art to Elisabeth, changes her life and inspires her to study art and become a lecturer in art history. Concerning his impressive personality and wisdom, it is beyond doubt that Daniel confronts, inspires and provokes not only Elisabeth but also the reader to question and deconstruct metanarratives, break their prejudices and develop more empathy. Thus, Daniel assumes Smith's position as the author of his own story, the creator of his reality and the power of his existence, and attempts to bring a new perspective to the mindset of Elisabeth and the reader. Hence *Autumn* represents a challenge to the normalizing practices of biopower as an autobiofiction that is mainly based on the life stories; the experiences, memories, dreams and imaginations of the two protagonists,. As Daniel's life story illustrates, no power can subjugate a mind that refuses to forget, quit questioning or stop dreaming.

Therefore, dreams are beyond manifestations of the characters' inner worlds in Autumn. The memories, stories, and dreams function as a defiance of the biopoliticized existence of the modern subject reduced to a body; a cog in the wheel without feelings or consciousness. In that regard, dreams as recurring and metafictional motifs are enigmatic experiences that mirror one's true self, hidden reality, and imagination, very much like literature, which is, by and large, regarded as a mirror to the human condition and life. Thus, considering that *Autumn* as a work of fiction is the frame of these life stories and dreams, it would not be wrong to suggest that the novel highlights the fictionality of normative definitions through these dreams. In this vein, as an allusion to Plato's cave allegory, dreams in the fictional world of the Quartet illuminate the humaneness of individuals, which unchains them from the restrictive operations of power, marginalizing discourses, and boundaries of identity divisions. Thanks to dreaming, imagining, telling new stories, and remembering their personal histories, Daniel and Elisabeth establish their self-authorities, namely their autobiopolitical presences in the aesthetic space. In that regard, the question Daniel asks Elisabeth when they have just met hints at the power of imagination that emancipates the subjects from the biopolitical and personal barriers drawn by the panoptic author/biopower and leads individuals to create their unique realities. Although she is not reading anything at that moment, Daniel asks her, "What [she is] reading?" (Smith, 2017a: 68). To her surprise, he explains: "Always be reading something. Even when we're not physically reading. How else will we read the world?" (2017a: 68). Daniel's remarks render literature a site beyond a sanctuary from barren, harsh, and mundane realities and suggest the necessity to imagine and "read the world" to create one's true, authentic and autonomous self rather than internalizing the norms, values and truths of the masses.

Regarding the emphasis on imagination as a means of liberation from the biopolitical technologies that stigmatize human subjects as normal and abnormal, Daniel with his game called *Bagatelle* also conveys Elisabeth the idea that imagination can deconstruct the old-seated narratives and set one free from the impositions of the biopolitical order that determine her or his life. Based on recreating new stories out of the already told ones without parroting them, Bagatelle, as Daniel explains, requires going beyond the dictated for creating unprecedented, plural narratives: "because the whole point of Bagatelle is that you trifle with the stories that people think are set in stone" (Smith, 2017a: 117). Thus, he attempts to provoke both the little girl and the

reader to put the truths imposed upon them into question through storytelling and designates stories -like the novel itself- as means to unveil the reality underneath the illusion. So that Elisabeth and the reader can recreate their realities and become both the authors and main characters of their own stories.

Besides, while co-creating a story, Daniel chooses the tale of a man in a tree costume. However, what Elisabeth prefers as a character is a man pointing a gun at the man in a tree costume, as she is sure that her character is more powerful than the other and will finally attain his goal. She regards Daniel's choice of character as irrational and ridiculous and stories as frivolous since for the girl "[t]here is no point in making up a world, […] when there's already a real world. There's just the world, and there's the truth about the world" (Smith, 2017a: 119). Although she considers stories as trivial and pointless as products of imagination and opposes to acknowledge the fine line between fact and fiction, Daniel with an authorial tone remarks that "there's the truth, and there's the made-up version of it that we get told about the world" and claims that stories are "no less true for," in Elisabeth's words, being "made up" (2017a: 119). He maintains:

> [W]hoever makes up the story makes up the world, […] So always try to welcome people into the home of your story. […] if you're telling a story, always give your characters the same benefit of the doubt you'd welcome when it comes to yourself … And always give them a choice – even those characters like a person with nothing but a tree costume between him or her and a man with a gun**.** By which I mean characters who seem to have no choice at all. Always give them a home (Smith, 2017a: 119–120).

Through Daniel's remarks, the novel suggests how stories may change the world by changing people's mindsets and calls for telling new, inclusive and non-exclusionary narratives to recreate counter realities no longer shaped by the divisive dehumanizing rhetoric of biopower. In this sense, *Autumn* designates itself as a picture of these new stories that not only give recognition and equal existence to characters otherized due to their ethnic or cultural backgrounds, genders or sexual identities but also tell the story of human as the ambiguity around Elisabeth's ethnicity and physical appearance illustrate. Thus, while highlighting the urgency for new, all-embracing narratives against the objectification and marginalization of the individual, the novel refutes the biopolitical discourses that normalize othering and unveils those assumptions constructed through and hidden in language. Accordingly, the stress Daniel lays upon retelling stories and his dreams in-between life and death signify the necessity to construct new narratives for the people that are marginalized and reduced to stereotypes and secondary roles in others' stories. In other words, for Daniel, new stories are a prerequisite for social

justice, equality and emancipation of those "that seem to have no choice at all" (Smith, 2017a: 120). In this sense, while outlining the transformation of the post-war British society with an emphasis on the similarity of matters in question yesterday and today, Daniel's stories and dreams, similar to those of Elisabeth, stand for sites of freedom from the impositions of a materialistic world that shapes, isolates, politicizes and racializes certain communities. His visions, dreams and stories turn out to be mediums for him to reconnect to his past, inner world and true identity that make him more than an animate body. Thus, very much like literature that mirrors that *I* is not dissimilar from *you* in hopes and destitute, dreams, memories and stories are what bridge the self to Others and free individuals from the simulacra of the modern world.

While incorporating common human experiences, *Autumn* also makes room for different, often conflicting and marginalized views and thus designates literature as an autonomous space bereft of binaries, standards and oppressive voices. Furthermore, Smith's work achieves that plurality of voices not only thematically but also structurally. The novel renders itself as a domain offering new, alternative narratives against biopolitically constructed discourses by speaking up different narrative voices without a dominant authorial voice. The introduction of Daniel's comatose state manifests the novel's emphasis on the freedom of stories against grand narratives or single stories that end in line with biopolitical discourses: "Here's an old story so new that it's still in the middle of happening, writing itself right now with no knowledge of where or how it'll end. An old man is sleeping in a bed in a care facility on his back with his head pillow-propped" (Smith, 2017a: 181). The anonymous narrator presents the novel as an improvisational story whose end is unknown. In this sense, the narrator designates *Autumn* as a tale that is not just timeless in its portrayals of universal human nature and contemporary in its re-visiting of socio-political issues but also authentic by speaking up for the silenced voices without parroting the stereotypical images of the Other. Thus, telling stories is not merely a way of communicating a narrative in the novel but suggests the critical role of art in reframing absolute truths in new contexts and putting their credibility into question, which is also suggested through Elisabeth's discussion of Pauline Boty's collages in her dissertation notes: "art like this examines and makes possible a reassessment of the outer appearances of things by transforming them into something other than themselves. An image of an image means the image can be seen with new objectivity, with liberation from the original" (2017a: 226). Hence,

the novel identifies art as a domain that provides new perspectives by voicing the underrepresented stories and leads to the recognition of lives hidden in plain view.

Autumn, as a rich, profound and outspoken work, is neither a mere Brexit novel nor single-sided political fiction. Johannes Wally in his article, "The Return of Political Fiction?," aptly underscores the novel's contribution to the rebirth of political fiction in contemporary literature, noting how the Brexit vote "led to the politicization of the literary world" (2018: 63). Written within the months before its publication to offer the most current picture of contemporary Britain, *Autumn* presents a timeless account of the modern human condition by merging biopolitics and literature, fact and fiction, historical and contemporary, playfulness and seriousness and thereby achieves an abiding universality out of its portrayal of the local, modern and specific. In other words, the novel provides a fictional space that not only bridges self and the Other, and past and present but also illustrates the common through the regional and the timeless via the present. Thus, *Autumn* is the first part of Smith's epic of the contemporary world and its protagonists are modern epic heroes and heroines searching their ways out of their biopoliticized, bordered and isolated lives by imagining, recollecting and telling new stories. Furthermore, while constructing otherized fictional selves, Smith's work signals the discriminatory practices of biopolitical power despite its seemingly affirmative goals like promoting and improving the lives of its subjects. Besides offering human landscapes from post-Brexit Britain and 1940s Germany and France, the novel underlines how normative frames and identity discourses provide an insufficient framework to discuss modern racism, xenophobia, the refugee crisis, gender oppression and homophobia. *Autumn* presents glimpses of the modern biopolitical condition, where life itself becomes politicized, repressive regulations target specific groups such as people of colour, immigrants and refugees; societies become polarized and the majority lets the minorities be silenced and excluded for their supposed welfare. Nevertheless, Smith's work also portrays Others without elaborating on the reasons for their marginalization or normalizing their exclusion and dehumanization. Hence, the novel challenges binary thinking and totalizing discourses failing to capture the uniqueness of individuals and calls for reconfiguring new, inclusive definitions of being human against the prevailing monolithic ones.

Autumn addresses the biopolitical construction of otherness by depicting the objectification, incarceration and marginalization of modern subjects through the

portrayals of a surveilled and disintegrated nation, isolated individuals reduced to their bodily existences and the borderization of the land, society and the individual. The novel not only pictures a polarized post-Brexit public under incessant control, with subjects estranged from one another due to the socio-political schisms but also represents an intruder Other walking into the troubled, barren and disorderly lives of characters and bringing order, spontaneity and peace—much like Daniel brings to Elisabeth's life and Zoe to Wendy's. Through dreams, memories and storytelling, the novel offers a fragmented, polyphonic and self-reflexive narrative that problematizes such dichotomies as reality and illusion, truth and lies, past and present and lastly life and literature. *Autumn* also suggests border as an essential means of biopolitical othering. Borders are addressed not only through the razor wires put up by a multinational security firm to appropriate the common land but also via the invisible frontiers drawn by Brexit, dividing society. The novel also sheds light on cultural borderization by challenging normative definitions and biopolitical discourses that singularize and segregate subjects based on stereotypical identity divisions. In that regard, through the portrayal of Elisabeth and Daniel as outsiders in different epochs and lands, and Hannah's captivity as a Jew in Vichy France, the novel suggests the body as the utmost, timeless biopolitical border that confines and discourages individuals from connecting with one another. Nevertheless, Smith's characters are not the victims of an unjust world but transcend their incarcerated existences, cross the borders and embrace one another. While tracing the intersectionality of body, borders and otherness, *Autumn* deconstructs the notion of normalcy constructed by biopolitical discourses and critiques the justification of surveillance, control and oppression in the name of eliminating risks for society. Rather than merely depicting the systematic oppression of certain communities, the novel also attacks the resignation of the majority to the divisive biopolitical rhetoric that argues for eroding immigrants, refugees, people of colour and minorities. Hence, vividly picturing the biopoliticization of human life in the contemporary world, Smith's work presents othering as a biopolitical phenomenon, border as its instrument, body as its border and Other as the new norm of modernity.

Lastly, *Autumn*, as an autobiofiction, crosses borders and constructs a queer space against the dehumanizing impact of biopolitical modernity. Daniel, Elisabeth, Wendy and Zoe never conform to racist, xenophobic and misogynistic tendencies in society or subjugate to their designation as bodies alive yet not living. Confronting

digital surveillance, discrimination and oppression, Smith's protagonists withstand the invasion of their personal lives by politics and welcome the Other whose arrival offers the possibility of reconnecting with their true selves and a more humane way of existence. Their friendships and acts of telling their life (his)stories through dreams, memories and stories also create a free space untainted by biopolitical discourses. Thus, Smith's protagonists emerge as the authors of their own lives, voicing their own stories and recreating their subjectivities throughout their life journeys. Despite the designation of their bodies as biopolitical borders, their intersecting stories portray literature as an emancipating realm that bridges social divisions, erases boundaries and reconnects *us* and *them* by challenging the racist practices in contemporary Western politics. Therefore, their stories, as tales of life, love and friendship, can stand against dehumanizing borders since "[t]here's always, there'll always be, more story. That's what story is. […] It's the never-ending leaf –fall" (Smith, 2017a: 193).

CHAPTER FOUR
DEAD OF WINTER: IMMUNITAS AND COMMUNITAS IN *WINTER*

In the quartet's second novel, *Winter*, which was "shortlisted for the Orwell prize for books" and stands out as the sixth nominee for a typically non-fiction prize, Smith "engaged in an extended process of mythologising the present state of Britain", intermingling "the news […] with recent and ancient history" (Merritt, 2017; Pittel, 2018: 64, 66). In contrast to the other works in *Quartet*, *Winter* "takes a more domestic approach at addressing the specific mood of Britain's divided society" and threads a prosaic reality marked with political schism and the rise of far-right and ethnonationalism with a poetic representation of a family reluctantly coming together in a fairytale-like Christmas Eve (Pittel, 2018: 64). The novel offers an insightful allegory of the contemporary UK with the broken ties of Cleves family that signal "the difficulty of healing [the nation's] longstanding political rifts and estrangements [which] captures a division at the heart of the nation and traces some of its histories as felt in the lives of sisters Iris and Sophia" (Byrne, 2020: 87). In this sense, *Winter* is the tender but bitter tale of the post-Brexit nation based on the intersecting stories of aged Sophia Cleves living alone in her grand, old house in Cornwall, her lifelong activist sister Iris, her son Arthur (Art) and his so-called girlfriend Lux, an undocumented immigrant. The novel addresses immigration, state surveillance and control, borderization, social polarization and patriarchal oppression as manifestations of biopolitical defence mechanisms that resonate with Esposito's concepts of immunitas, communitas, and auto-tolerance. *Winter* not only provides a profound commentary on these issues but also calls for solidarity and engagement with the Other against biopolitical divisions and centralizes art as a transformative power that connects the characters with their true selves and others on a deeper level upon their encounters with artworks.

Winter, much like *Autumn*, weaves politics into art, capturing the biopolitical condition of modern subjects reduced to abstractions and standardized by normativity and thus, adeptly incorporates Roberto Esposito's theories of 'immunitas' and 'communitas', as presented in his trilogy; *Communitas: The Origin and Destiny of Community* (2010) [1998], *Immunitas: The Protection and Negation of Life* (2011) [2002] and *Bìos: Biopolitics and Philosophy* (2008) [2004]. Central to his trilogy's final

work, the term ‘immunity’ (imminutas), denoting “a type of protection from an infection in the biomedical sense”, signifies a response to community (communitas) and permeates modern Western political space as a “paradigm” (Esposito, 2011:5). Esposito highlights the etymological connection between community and immunity, both derived from the Latin word munus which stands for “an office—a task, obligation, duty (also in the sense of a gift to be repaid)” (2011: 5). Thus, communitas and immunitas are grounded in a “law of gift, or care, in relation to others”, yet “the community is related to munus in a positive sense, the immunity is in a negative sense” (2020: 74). As munus, signifying a debt to the community, poses a threat to the individual, perpetually expecting more from its members, immunity, for Esposito, serves as a defence mechanism, shielding the individual from the excesses of communal living:

> immunity implies an exemption from or the derogation of such a condition of gift giving. He is immune who is safe from obligation or dangers that concern everyone else from the moment that giving something in and of itself implies a diminishment of one’s own goods and in the ultimate analysis of oneself (Esposito et al., 2006: 51).

Immunitas which denotes liberation, protection or defence from the insatiable debt to the community represented by minus underpins the contemporary political system. Esposito elaborates on his theory by drawing parallels with Autoimmune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). Much like an AIDS-positive body unable to defend itself against common illnesses, the social and political body, lacking immunity, becomes vulnerable to prevalent risks and threats, eventually leading to devastation. In instances of inadequate immunisation, such as in the case of AIDS, the body loses its ability to control illnesses originating from outside. Esposito argues that autoimmune diseases like AIDS diminish the organism’s capacity to respond to external dangers, eroding “the identity of the individual as the form and content of its subjectivity” and “destroy[ing] the very idea of an identity-making border: the difference between self and other, internal and external, inside and outside” (2011: 162). Thus, immunity signifies “a frontier, a dividing line, a term or limit (of the political) that protects individual life from the demands of the community” (2013: 4). Any possibility of contact triggers the immunization process, potentially turning the individual into an immunis; “someone who performs no office” or duties towards others to preserve his identity (2011: 5). He contends that “[w]hile the members of the communitas feel bound by this obligation of mutual care, whoever declares himself immune, feels exonerated, exempted from it. He

is free from obligations towards others" (2020: 74). Hence, as put by Esposito, immunity extends beyond individual needs to encompass the entire social body:

> immunity reconstructs [the protection barriers] in a defensive and offensive form, against any element – be it external or internal - that threatens its existence. This applies to certain individuals. But at a certain point, this exigency for protection, which is centred around the conservation of life, becomes generalised in all the social body (Esposito, 2020: 76).

Immunisation, denoting "a plan for meaningful action to construct and maintain the boundaries for what may count as self and other in the crucial realms of the normal and the pathological", extends to other societal domains to safeguard the well-being of society, contributing to major impasses of the postmillennial world (Haraway, 1991: 167). However, this broadened application of immunisation, crucial for the preservation of the individual and collective body, poses risks, potentially triggering auto-immune reactions through which the individual is reduced to species life, becoming a target of biopower. Thus, what appears to protect the subject and the community also tends to be what inhibits its growth and after a point, destroys it as "[i]mmunization in high doses means sacrificing every form of qualified life, for reasons of simple survival; the reduction of life to its bare biological layer" (Esposito, 2013: 61). In the contemporary world, heightened global anxiety about cultural identity, prompted by globalization, leads individuals to immunise themselves by aligning more closely with their local communities to resist the contamination of globalization. This biopolitical perspective unveils anti-immigrant practices as manifestations of a community's immunitary response to safeguard itself. Often identified as a significant threat to the ethnic, social, and cultural identities of a collective body, migration influx contributes to ambiguity between inside and outside like autoimmune diseases. Hence, given that an overly aggressive immunisation may reduce the body to bare life—a life without resources or other means of survival, the notion of immunitas offers insights into the possible implosion or explosion of the political body if political and cultural immunities continue to expand without control as such.

Regarding Esposito's theories of communitas and immunitas, *Winter* offers a panorama of post-Brexit Britain overwhelmed by aggressive immunisation practices that paradoxically limit and deprive the life they intend to protect and promote. In contrast to the familiar, peaceful winter scenes, the novel opens by connoting death and destitution, depicting a metaphorical wintertime in which long-seated convictions, ideologies and absolute truths have become obsolete. In this morally and intellectually

decadent atmosphere, everything is as sharp as black and white, bordered without a grey zone, and "[a] great many things were dead" such as "God," "romance," "[c]hivalry," "art" and "[l]iterature," (Smith, 2018: 3). In addition to artistic and cultural pursuits, political constructs and societal values have also withered away: "Culture was dead. Decency, society, family values were dead. The past was dead. […] The welfare state was dead. Politics was dead. Democracy was dead. […] Truth and fiction were both dead. […] Love was dead. Death was dead" (2018: 3). Despite taking place in "the dead of winter" and having an opening worthy of its name, *Winter* is set in "a bright sunny post-millennial global warning Christmas Eve morning" rather than a traditional snowy and wintry setting, in line with the author's assertion that "[y]ou can't have any of the seasons without the other seasons. All seasons exist within each season" (2018: 4–5; 2017b). The novel provides a current picture of British society and the post-millennial world facing "a seasonal shift" due to the destructive repercussions of climate change: "[i]t's winter, still, [t]here's no snow. […] It'll be one of the warmest winters on record, again" (2018: 58, 91). In the midst of this fading world and shifting seasons, an anonymous narrator unfolds the story of Sophia, who, despite aspiring to narrate a classic winter tale, grapples with her fictional existence and the discomfort of being a part of the narrator's story. She would rather tell a usual and comforting tale than convey the harsh reality of the human condition:

> if from a novel in which Sophia is the kind of character she'd choose to be, prefer to be, a character in a much more classic sort of story, […] about […] how something at the heart of us, at the heart of all our cold and frozen states, melts when we encounter a time of peace on earth, goodwill to all men; a story […], that's thoughtful, dignified, conventional in structure, […] where there are no heads divided from bodies hanging around in the air or anywhere, either new ones, from new atrocities or murders or terrorisms, or old ones, left over from old historic atrocities and murders and terrorisms and bequeathed to the future (Smith, 2018: 30–31).

The novel, rather than a conventional winter tale, serves as a commentary on contemporary atrocities often overlooked by mainstream media, in which, for Esposito, "immigration is commonly presented as a potential biological risk to the host country, according to a model that pathologized the foreigner" (2011: 7). Engaging with postmillennial challenges, including refugee influx, environmental disasters, and the long-lasting issues such as systematic othering, racism and social injustice, *Winter* addresses the notions of 'immunitas' through Sophia, 'communitas' via her sister Iris and 'auto-tolerance' with the motif of the intruder Other pictured through the floating head in Sophia's house, her son's so-called girlfriend Lux and, lastly, art. Esposito, in

his theory of auto-tolerance, suggests an affirmative approach to biopolitics, countering the thanatopolitical logic of immunisation. The notion of auto-tolerance advocates for opening individual and collective bodies, which, in Lemke's terms, eventually "defend themselves against attempts at identification, unification, and closure and articulate an immanent normativity of life that opposes the external domination of life processes" (2011a: 91). Thus, this affirmative biopolitics would replace the self-destructive logic of immunity with an emphasis on engagement and interaction over isolation, disengagement and withdrawal. Esposito elaborates his theory of auto-tolerance by drawing parallels with vaccination, emphasizing the necessity of controlled exposure to external influences for the body to safeguard itself. In that respect, this new politics "doesn't superimpose already constituted (and by now destitute) categories of modern politics on life, but rather inscribes the innovative power of a life rethought in all its complexity and articulation in the same politics" (2008: 157). Thus, Esposito calls for envisioning multiple norms that recognize diverse individuation processes and the processes in which the body "lives in an infinite series of relations with the bodies of others" (2008: xxxix). Such recognition would undermine the idea of otherness inherent in immunitary systems, fostering an outward-minded community defined by tolerance, acceptance and celebration of diversity.

Concerning the necessity to be involved in a series of relations with others, *Winter* unfolds the idea of auto-tolerance through the motif of the intruder Other, represented by the disembodied head Sophia sees in the opening chapters. The head serves as a symbolic representation not only of the ignored and silenced but also as a reminder of the pressing need to recognize and connect with others. The novel's title and Christmas setting also suggest the notion of "revisiting", a theme further conveyed through the narrator's reflections on Christmas music, described as "insistent about both loneliness and communality" and particularly resonant "at this bleakest winter time […] when regardless of the dark and the cold we shore up and offer hospitality and goodwill and give them out, a bit of luxury in world primed against them both" (Smith, 2018: 39). As the first manifestation of the visitation motif intertwined with the spirit of Christmas, Sophia sees a "tenacious," "disembodied head" in her old Cornish house, describing it as "the abrasion, degeneration, detachment, floater," initially appearing "small as a fly floating about in front of her" (2018: 19). She even consults an optician, discovering that her eyes are perfectly healthy despite her age. The floating head

gradually enlarges, reaching "whatever-it-was the size of a real child's head", prompting reflections on war-weary and refugee children worldwide (2018: 19): "Where were its lungs? Where was the rest of it? Was there maybe someone else somewhere else with a small torso, a couple of arms, a leg, following him or her about?" (2018: 29).

In the presence of "the head of a child, […] floating by itself in mid air," Sophia experiences no fear but rather engages in conversation with the cheerfully bobbing disembodied child, uncertain whether the head will remain a child, grow into an adult or become even larger (Smith, 2018: 7). Her hallucinatory experience reflects not just her alienation but what Esposito terms as "self-dissolution", a concept that aligns with "autoimmune diseases, in which the warring potential of the immune system is so great that at a certain point it turns against itself as a real and symbolic catastrophe leading to the implosion of the entire organism" (2011: 116). Despite her perfect eyesight and her name which signifies wisdom in classical Greek, Sophia's self-righteousness as a Brexiteer has severed her ties with reality and turned her into a person who lacks insight into the unsettling and hidden truths of the contemporary world. However, when the head playfully rolls down the hallway, Sophia for the first time resembles it to "the rolling, falling, cut-off, guillotined, beheaded, very real head of a –…" and tries to "shut it out of the house, which wasn't hard, because it was very trusting, the head" (Smith, 2018: 20). Once again, she seeks isolation from the distressing presence of the Other by excluding the outsider figure. Yet, despite her efforts to avoid the head by leaving the house and quickly returning, shutting the door to avoid being seen, the head does not give up and taps the window to enter the house. Although she turns the television and radio on and the volume up, she cannot prevent hearing "the gentlest tapping" in the window and the back door (2018: 21). In her attempt to evade the head, she goes to the loft and hides under the handbasin. Initially thinking she has gotten around the head, Sophia soon hears "tap tap tap" and finally "came out from under the sink and opened the skylight and it came in" (2018: 21). Thus, her attempts to expel the head from her house signify the deportation of refugees from the country, revealing the temporary nature of these solutions. Much like the head, refugees find themselves with no place to return, lingering behind closed doors. Her restlessness and efforts to get rid of the head illustrate the current fear of the Other and the drive to safeguard communities, a key point also addressed by Esposito:

> Everywhere new barriers are emerging, new checkpoints, new lines of separation from something that threatens, or at least appears to threaten, our biological, cultural and social identity. It is as if the fear of being touched, even inadvertently, […] in a short circuit between touch, contact and contagion, had become exasperated (Esposito, 2020: 76).

Despite being an uninvited guest, the head is "very well mannered, polite, the head of a good polite child (still pre-language, maybe, because quite silent)" (Smith, 2018: 7–8). Its toddler-like appearance conveys innocence, muteness and helplessness while "the life in it, the warmth of its demeanour" assures that the head is not "in the least dead" (2018: 9). Thus, the head brings life to the wintry, decadent life of Sophia as "a summer child in the winter light" (2018: 19). Paradoxically, the disembodied child appears more alive and human than Sophia who lacks the basic human experiences of eating, talking or feeling intimacy with anyone. The contrast becomes evident as she regards the head as a companion in time, expressing concern about losing it during a walk: "But what if the head got blown out to sea? Something hurt inside across her chest at the thought" (2018: 12–13). She realizes that the disembodied child has brought about a change in her lifeless and lonely existence in her grand and desolate tenement that feels more like a grave than a home: "I couldn't have a less obtrusive guest. It's very nice, having you around the house" (2018: 13). With the arrival of this mysterious intruder, Sophia slowly regains her ability to feel and empathize and recovers her humane side long dead, much like nature in winter. This enigmatic intruder not only arouses sympathy, love, and intimacy in Sophia but also transforms her from a ghostlike figure into a human.

> What had happened to it? Had what had happened to it hurt it very much? It hurt her to think it. The hurt was surprising in itself. Sophia had been feeling nothing for some time now. Refugees in the sea. Children in ambulances. Blood-soaked men running to hospitals or away from burning hospitals carrying blood-covered children. Dust-covered dead people by the sides of roads. Atrocities. People beaten up and tortured in cells. Nothing (Smith, 2018: 29–30).

Sophia, who has long immunized herself against certain emotions, begins to confront and contemplate others' suffering with the arrival of the disembodied head. While immunitary mechanisms "are necessary because no organism, individual or social, would survive without an immune system capable to defend it from dangers of external provenience," Sophia's lifeless, isolated existence suggests how these mechanisms can be "dangerous […] beyond a certain threshold, [as] they risk blocking, or even destroying, the very thing that they aim to protect" (Esposito, 2020: 75–76). Her cold, spiritless demeanour mirrors the post-Brexit condition of British society, which,

according to Sophia, conjures up the poverty-stricken Victorians grappling with despair, financial depression, and stark social inequality: "ordinary everyday terribleness, ordinary people just walking around on the streets of the country she'd grown up in, who looked ruined, Dickensian, like poverty ghosts from a hundred and fifty years ago. Nothing" (Smith, 2018: 29–30). The pessimistic, split society echoes the despondency of the Victorians, divided between a prosperous minority and a destitute majority suffering from the repercussions of the Industrial Revolution. Despite representing the "immunized models of community, where members are protected against foreign substances, external threats, and internal contagions," the old woman undergoes a metamorphosis thanks to the disembodied head: "But now she sat at her table on Christmas Eve and felt pain play through her like a fine-tuned many-stringed music and her the instrument" (Bird & Short, 2013: 2; Smith, 2018: 29–30). The head initiates a therapeutic confrontation with her long-repressed self, which prompts Sophia to empathize with the miseries of others and slowly brings her back to life. The novel, through Sophia's awakening as a representative of the Leavers, highlights the necessity to reflect upon and reclaim the shared past to regain the collective identity lost after the referendum. Furthermore, *Winter* presents the disembodied head as the symbol of marginalized communities, controlled and reduced to bodies, and thus, draws parallels not only between the head and the underprivileged but also between postmillennial British subjects and the Victorians dehumanized into bodies appropriated by biopower.

The novel portrays a society caught up in alienation, chauvinism and political schisms, contrasting the supposed unity and goodwill traditionally associated with the Christmas spirit. As Sophia's long estrangement from her sister unveils, Christmas, unlike its reception in popular culture, fails to evoke feelings of kindness, goodwill, tolerance, hospitality and solidarity in *Winter*. The Cleves sisters, symbolising the Leavers and the Remainers as two opposing identities, have long split up and ceased to talk to each other, illustrating the divisive technologies of biopolitical regimes that sever social bonds for the construction of a mass devoid of true social cohesion. As the representative of the Brexiteers and the superrace, namely the Anglo-Saxon community, Sophia exemplifies a perfect daughter, citizen, and businesswoman, dedicated to her community and advocating for immunising mechanisms. She "is not trouble, never trouble […] ever does anything wrong, she is pristine, correct, a girl clearly headed for head girl" (Smith, 2018: 33). Despite being a docile daughter, pupil and subject for most

of her life, Sophia challenges societal expectations and becomes a successful businesswoman, grappling with guilt for crossing the line as a woman in a man's world. She becomes the "head of her own business ahead of the pack at a time when girls aren't meant to be ahead or a head of anything, which will be the first time in her life she finds herself quite so in the wrong, and about which she'll inherit a fair level, no, an unfair level, of guilt" (2018: 23). Conversely, her sister Iris, symbolizing the Remainers, is a lifelong activist and former Greenham Common protester, who has recently returned from aiding refugees in Greece. Introduced through Sophia's memories, this "brilliant" and "trouble" activist woman, contrary to her conservative and conformist sister, defies her prescribed gender role since her childhood, fighting for minorities altruistically and standing in opposition to nuclear and biological weapons, climate change and environmental pollution (2018: 23): "Iris is a ban the bomb-er. No 'H' Bombs. No to Nuclear Suicide. From Fear To Sanity. Would You Drop an 'H' Bomb" (2018: 25). In the times when girls were meant to be obedient daughters, housewives and mothers with limited career options like secretariat work, Iris infuriates her family with her one-woman protest, echoing 1970s anti-war and anti-authoritarian demonstrators that unsettled the conformist, indifferent majority:

> father furious with her, mother mortally embarrassed when she shocked the visitors at tea not just by holding forth [the duffel coat], which in itself isn't on for girls to do, but by doing it about the poisonous dust in the air and in all the food now too then telling the people who came to the house from father's work about the two hundred thousand people condemned to death in our name… (Smith, 2018: 25–26).

As the last Cleves, Arthur, despite evoking King Arthur in the setting of Cornwall, lacks a distinct personality as the representative of indifferent and apolitical masses of modern times when "romance" and "[c]hivalry was dead" (Smith, 2018: 3). Nicknamed Art, Arthur is not an artist but a nature blogger who fabricates childhood memories online and earns his living by accusing artists of copyright infringement on behalf of SA4A, the "huge", sinister company that is "everywhere" (2018: 70). Art, like his mother, leads an immunized life from others. His apolitical and apathetic attitude has caused his girlfriend, Charlotte, to leave him, accusing him of being a "feckless" and "selfish fraud" who "is not the real thing" but pretends to be a nature writer (2018: 70). She takes revenge by smashing his computer and "send[ing] out fake tweets from his [personal blog] @rtinnature" (2018: 49): "[y]esterday, pretending to be him, she told his 3,451 followers that he'd seen the first brimstone of the new year Quartet. *3 months early the first thing of brimstone!*" (2018: 49). The responses of the followers to

Charlotte's fake tweets reveal the lynching culture and cyberbullying on social media: "The replies are already foaming like badly poured lager. Fury and sarcasm and rancour and hatred and ridicule, and one tweet which said if you were a woman I'd be sending you a death threat right about now. Art is not sure whether this is a po-mo joke or not" (2018: 50). While this cyberbullying exposes the dual nature of new media – an uncensored, free space and a realm for social control, manipulation and circulation of norms for biopolitical power, the novel also highlights the supranational nature of contemporary biopolitical power prevailing worldwide through transnational tech companies and organisations that create efficient and docile bodies. Iris' text message to Art following Charlotte's fake tweets precisely captures the power of these biopolitical technologies over individuals: "Dear Neph […] ur not soundng much like urself on twit :-$. So tell me now that u know persnlly: are we at mercy of tchnology or is tchnology at mercy of us? x Ire" (2018: 51). Upon her message, Art senses how reality and illusion have become enmeshed in today's technology-driven world, prompting him to question what is real, the people in the library with him or the subscribers freely tweeting their comments on social media: "So which is the real thing? Is this library not the world? Is that the world, the one on the screen, and this, this sitting here bodily with all these other people round him, isn't?" (2018: 51–52). His confusion points out that the virtual world has evolved into today's primary public space, merging simulacra and reality in a more problematic way. The novel also explores the contradictory division between reality and illusion through the critique of Art's ex-girlfriend, regarding his indifference towards the referendum. Charlotte, as a Remainer, views Brexit as a catalyst for social schisms. Despite her never-ending complaints "about the people from the EU being made to wait to see if they can stay in the country or not, and people married to people from the EU, and people whose kids were born here who might not get to stay etc," Art contends that these people "chose to come and live [t]here" and "ran that risk" and thus, "[i]t's not [in their] responsibility" (2018: 54). His immunised life, revealed through his political apathy towards the migrant issue, infuriates Charlotte more:

> Is this like when we were talking about the people who drowned trying to cross the sea running away from war, and you said we didn't need to feel responsible because it had been their choice to run away from their houses being burned down and bombed and then their choice again to get into a boat that capsized? (Smith, 2018: 55).

Despite the plight of refugees illuminating the destructive consequences of extreme immunization, Art insists on his immunised state as a member of the superrace

and argues that they "[a]re all right" and have nothing to "worry" about due to their "good assured jobs" and financial security (Smith, 2018: 55). However, Charlotte assets that she "is not okay [with his] default to selfishness," particularly when considering "the effect of forty years of political selfishness" on Britain (2018: 55). Conscious of the nation's polarization between legal subjects and living bodies, Charlotte envisions herself as "a quartered kingdom," in her dreams, "embody[ing] the terrible divisions in our country" (2018: 56). Despite his ignorance and self-centredness, even Art acknowledges that "[i]n her dreams [she] is right" (2018: 56). Thus, the novel reflects how Brexit, with its divisions, is the outcome of the nation's short-sighted reaction to the migrant problem in Europe. Esposito describes this impairing reaction as "the power that keeps" society "united against the enemy", which, through an act of division, "eliminate[es] it as community" (2010: 33). Charlotte highlights the segregation of British society and the systematic radicalization of political tendencies by the governing power, aiming to consolidate the majority for its own interests:

> The people in this country are in furious rages at each other after the last vote, […] and the government we've got has done nothing to assuage it and instead is using people's rage for its own political expediency. Which is a grand old fascist trick if ever I saw one, and a very dangerous game to play (Smith, 2018: 56).

While Art dismisses her concerns about the country's future due to the isolationist and populist governmental policies, Charlotte considers to be nothing more than "naive" (Smith, 2018: 56): "The world order was changing and what was truly new, here and there, […] was that the people in power were self-servers who'd no idea about and felt no responsibility towards history" (2018: 56). She resembles them to "plastic carrier bags"—"inhuman, […] brainless and unknowing about all the centuries of all the ways that people carried things before their invented" (2018: 56–57). The critique of the novel extends beyond politicians to the ignorant, obedient masses, benumbed by mass media culture and its constant stream of rapidly changing and shocking news: "When pre-planned theatre is replacing politics, […] and we're propelled into shock mode, trained to wait for whatever the next shock will be, served up shock on a 24 hour newsfeed" (2018: 57). According to Charlotte, mainstream media employs a systematic practice of desensitization, making individuals feel like "walking in a blizzard all the time just trying to get to what's really happening beyond the noise and hype" to distract and "make the currencies jumpy" (2018: 58). She further reproaches Art for never taking risks in his "irrelevant reactionary unpolitical blog" and

never "mention[ing] the world's threatened resources, […] water wars, the shelf the size of Wales that's about to break off the side of Antarctica, […] the plastic in the sea" and "in the seabirds" (2018: 58–59). However, as an everyman sitting on the fence with a sole interest in his life, Art insists that he is "just not a politico," politics is "transitory" and his blog "is by its nature not political" but "the opposite of transitory" (2018: 59). Thus, *Winter* also masterfully weaves character pairs to depict a compelling picture of modern Britain, similarly embodying conflicting ideologies and worldviews. Art and his mother Sophia, representing the Leavers, are callous to national and global crises, believing there is no point in engaging with them. In stark contrast, Charlotte, much like Iris, is a politically involved, empathetic, environmentally conscious activist. Unlike her impassive and compliant boyfriend signifying the masses, Charlotte feels "passion for all sorts of things" and has "endless feeling […] for everything" and "endless hurt and fury at the world's sadnesses, like they're personal, personally meant, personal affronts" (2018: 77). Art's response to "the old entrance of the library building [being] reserved for the people who live in the luxury flats" mirrors the divergence in their perspectives. He deems it "a waste of valuable energy to get angry about the kind of thing you can't do anything about, the kind of thing Charlotte goes on and on about" (2018: 46).

Winter introduces a Croatian immigrant girl as a mediator figure. In the midst of memories of Charlotte and the social media lynching, Art encounters Lux in the library restroom where, she, to his surprise, provides him with a sense of relief through her genuine smile, prompting him to reciprocate with a smile that appears "weird" to people passing by (Smith, 2018: 64). The impact of this eccentric girl over Art suggests how connecting to the Other serves as an antidote to the isolated, dehumanized and mechanized existence of modern subjects, which is an underlying theme in the quartet:

> She smiles and curves back towards the airflow and as he leaves the Gents he feels a bit better for just seeing another person, just having a passing exchange with another person, seeing someone doing such a lovely natural warm and warming thing. Just saying out loud the word forgive. He hadn't known it was such a powerful word. He is smiling (Smith, 2018: 64).

Lux's intrusion into his life as the Other signifies Esposito's affirmative reading of biopolitics based on the deconstruction of the binary of immunity and community through the designation of "an alternative, more hospitable understanding of the immune system" (Frost, 2022: 47). Furthermore, Art later notices the young woman who has smiled at him at the library restroom "reading whatever it is very assiduously" at a bus stop (Smith, 2018: 66). Intrigued by this "quite pretty," "pale" "a little rough"

and intensely “concentrated” girl who “looks like she’s about nineteen,” Art finds out that her name is Lux and that she is a Canadian immigrant who came to the country for university but was unable to complete her studies owing to financial difficulties (2018: 67). Thus, he offers her to accompany him to Cornwall as her girlfriend Charlotte for three days in exchange for 1008 pounds as his mother “is expecting him and Charlotte in Cornwall in three days’ time” (2018: 49). In this sense, Art, very much like himself assuming the role of a sensitive nature-lover in his blog, asks her to act as somebody else, which reveals not only the indistinguishability of reality and illusion in modern existence but also the ongoing erosion of the authentic self by the zeitgeist of modern biopolitical order. However, when Lux “has fallen asleep with her head on her arms on somebody’s suitcase” on the train to Cornwall, he feels “moved by the trust” as “it takes trust to fall asleep with someone you don’t know” and “he is moved by his own being moved” (2018: 78). Thus, Art is more and more impressed by the candour, naturalness and authenticity of this extraordinary girl who awakens him from long years of senselessness the moment he meets her.

Nevertheless, Art is not the only character who leads an emotionless life. When they have arrived Chei Bres, Lux and Art are shocked to see Sophia as a living dead, skin and bones without any sign of life or vitality, as frozen and deadly as winter. Her nonhuman, cold and lifeless body in her lonely life in the big old house unveils how “every individual needs a community, but an “authentic” one, “since our existence is completely one with it. There is no existence except in relation to the existence of others” (Esposito, 2010: 50). Fortunately, Lux gradually turns Sophia into life as she helps Art, takes her hat and scarf off, undoes her coat’s buttons and takes the bulk of her clothes except her gloves, while all Sophia says is that she is “very, very cold” (Smith, 2018: 84). Their encounter illustrates the vitality of meeting with the Other, which bestows modern subject self-recognition crystallized through the mirror of another self. Thus, the novel calls for getting out of the comfort zone walled by biopolitical discourses and prejudices not only to understand the unfamiliar or untold but to *know thyself*. From a biopolitical standpoint, rather than “provid[ing] protection from a foreign agent,” the immune system “absorb[s]” “each differential element […] from the outside” with its “complexity of the response” and thus the body, individual or community “expand and enrich the range of its internal potential” (Esposito, 2011: 174). In this regard, the visitation of the unknown Other is an unsettling and unfamiliar

experience that urges the individual into a journey to self-discovery in which prerequisites and groundless preconceptions about marginalized communities are questioned and deconstructed. Concerning Lux's transformative impact on Sophia and Art that shakes and subverts their barren lives, *Winter* designates being exposed to the Other as a revitalising force for the bleak picture of the modern human condition in which decency, family, culture, love, art, thought, hope and all other human assets are all dead.

Nonetheless, Sophia with her identity of Englishness has long closed herself off in Chei Bres, which also means "[h]ouse of the mind, of the head, of the psyche. Psyche's House" in Welsh (Smith, 2018: 270). In Esposito's words, "once identified, be it with a people, a territory, or an essence, the community is walled in within itself and thus separated from the outside" (2010: 16). Regardless of the girl's attempts to help her, she first criticizes Lux's piercing scars and then clearly states that she is not welcome there: "I wonder if you're aware, if you know, your face is full of little holes […] I also wonder if you know how unwelcome you are here […]. I'm unusually busy this Christmas and won't have time for entertaining guests" (Smith, 2018: 85). Sophia renders the girl a threat to her emotionally sterile life which is more dead than alive. Furthermore, the old woman posits Lux as an outsider not only figuratively but also literally by telling her "to sleep in the barn rather than the house" as "it's so hectic this year" (2018: 85). However, despite her disdainful attitude towards the girl, Lux remarks that "[a]nywhere will do" for her (2018: 85). Besides, as she has heard Charlotte's "virtuoso status on the violin" from his son, Sophia, very much like a colonizer addressing the colonized, demands the girl to "entertain her at some point" with her violin (2018: 85). Upon Lux's excuse for being "too shy to play anything," Sophie degrades the girl by remarking that she finds "[s]elf-deprecation […] almost always distasteful" and adds "there's nothing else [she] need[s] to know about [Lux] right now" (2018: 85, 86).

On the other hand, Art is also demoralised by his mother's condescending behaviour and regrets his decision to come to Chei Bres and bring Lux with him. With self-blame, he regards his existence as "a language no one else alive in the world speaks," "[a]n idiolect" that "[h]e is the last living speaker of himself" and "dead as a disappeared grammar, a graveyard scatter of phonemes and morphemes" (Smith, 2018: 87). Contrary to the girl's regenerative attitude that makes him "too blithe" and helps

him forget everything for a while, his mother, as the symbol of winter, freezes and kills the awakening life in Art (2018: 87). However, his guilt, hopelessness, self-pity and alienation begin to fade away thanks to Lux who revitalizes both Art and his mother as the symbol of spring and the rebirth of life. In Esposito's terms, she assumes the role of the "relational filters between inside and outside instead of exclusionary barriers" of immune systems and begins to "differentiate the immunitary protection of life from its destruction by means of the common" (Esposito, 2013: 87–88). Her influence on Chei Bres also echoes the philosopher's analogy of pregnancy which suggests that as the mother's immune system has tolerance to support the growth of the foetus, immunisation can be turned into a positive process that promotes life through the intertwining of the self with the other. Regarding Esposito's claim that against the "'autoimmunity aporia' and crisis, whereby attempts to protect a community against threats (alien others, terror) become excessive and self-defeating," auto-tolerance can be the answer to today's social and political crises (LaCapra, 2011: 109). In that sense, Lux's tolerance towards Sophia's demeaning attitude and her insistence on staying despite Art's offer to return to London all illustrate the regenerative influence of the girl's intrusion on the lives of the mother and son. Besides, Lux also urges Art to call his aunt for help although Sophia "ha[s]n't spoken for nearly three decades" with her sister (Smith, 2018: 88). Given the change Lux has made as a stranger in the Cleves family, *Winter* centralizes the prerequisite to open up and connect to those who do not think, believe or look like the majority to deconstruct the binary of *us* and *them*.

Concerning Sophia's gradual transformation into a more tolerant individual who is engaged with life, Lux's intimacy and sincere concern for the old woman help her come back to reality from hallucinations and paranoia in the first place. Sophia has long been starving herself due to her paranoia of being poisoned and become skin and bones in her illusionary, desolate existence. She has "apprehension" for most foods and "call[s]" her paranoia "the knowledge that everything [she] eat[s] is poisonous to [her]" (Smith, 2018: 190). Sophia's fear of food parallels the nation's fear of taking non-English people to the country as "[i]nstead of adapting the protection to the actual level of risk, [the community] tends to adapt the perception of risk to the growing need for protection—making protection itself one of the major risks" (Esposito, 2011: 16). Hence her long habit of famishing herself with food, which keeps her alive, points out the outcome of extreme immunization for the nation. Although the outside influence is a

cure for Sophia/ Britain to preserve her/its well-being, both have acute, groundless fears of the threat the outside poses. Accordingly, the girl cooks for and serves Sophia and gradually helps her eat again. Thus, Lux brings life and healing to Chei Bres with the food that previously meant death for Sophia. In the same vein, they always come together in the kitchen which is the symbol of warmth, family bonds and human connectedness; hearth and home. Nevertheless, Sophia's transformation does not happen overnight. She is to face herself and confront the repressed memories that keep coming back after Lux's arrival. On the first night of Art and Lux's stay, she still sees the floating head which "had played a game of inside/outside with itself to the steady toll of the bell" and loses her perception of reality in her room with the church bell ringing as if "Dead. Dead. Dead […] Or maybe: Head. Head. Head" (Smith, 2018: 106). Though, something has changed for Sophia who realizes that "the head had lost some of its hair since yesterday" and "looked bedraggled" and "[t]he newly visible top of the head's head, which the hair had covered till now, was very pale, fragile looking as a child's fontanelle" (2018: 106, 108). The metamorphosis of the disembodied head from a baby into a stone displays her awakening to life from her hallucinatory existence:

> The sleeping head on Sophia's shoulder grew heavy. She looked down at it, her very own Christmas infant, because it looked infant-like now that its hair was missing, as if returning to baby state. It was sleeping, yes, like a baby […] An eyelash fell off on to its cheek, then another, and between just the fall of each tiny lash the infant planet grew heavier… (Smith, 2018: 110–111).

Her callous attitude starts to change accordingly. While looking at the head, she thinks about the decapitated people in the bloody history of humankind despite being the representative of docile bodies in the biopolitical order. She ponders "the chipped-headless," "the knocked-off nothing-but-necks in Reformation-vandalized churches in whatever self-righteousness of fury, whatever intolerant ideology of the day," which once more brings forth the paradigm of immunisation. Sophia's reflections reveal the enmity, violence and oppression towards the nonconformist or rebel in the collective consciousness of the West and suggest the idea that history repeats itself. She realizes that "[t]here was always a furious intolerance at work in the world no matter when or where in history, […] and it always went for the head or the face" (Smith, 2018: 109). Furthermore, *Winter* evokes the story of Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* through the old memories coming back and the visitations of Lux and Iris. In her huge house in Cornwall, Sophia Cleves is Ebenezer Scrooge of our time as the former entrepreneur whose commitment to her job has always come before her family. She is visited by her

estranged sister Iris who is the *Ghost of Christmas Past*, Lux who is the *Ghost of Christmas Present* and Art the *Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come*. Not only their positions but also their names signify the parallels among the characters. As the *Ghost of Christmas Past,* first her memories and then Iris herself visit Sophia and challenge her lifeless existence. As the symbol of the present, Lux with her name conjures up St. Lucy, who is the patron saint of light in darkness. She also brings light into the darkness in Chei Bres and regenerates hope. On the other hand, Arthur as the *Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come* echoes King Arthur who not only belongs to history as a legendary king but also to its future as the forthcoming ruler of the country. In addition, Art, as Sophia's son, symbolizes her future. While *Winter* "transforms Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* into a subtly crafted post-referendum allegory" as Pittel argues, Sophia's confrontation with the ghosts of her past also stuck the old woman in a perpetual present (2018: 64): "Dead. Head. Head. Dead. Twelve. Midnight again, for Christ sake. The church bell rang it for the fifth time that night. Sophia made an exasperated sound. She turned over in her bed. The head lay next to her. It didn't move. It was as still as a stone" (Smith, 2018: 127). Besides, even when she attempts to hold onto the illusion of the floating head and talk to it, "[t]he head didn't care" and remains "the kind of silent they say graves are" (2018: 130). She realizes the inanimateness of the head which is now a stone "heavy, the heaviest it had yet felt. It had no eyes now. It had no mouth" (2018: 130). Thanks to the presences of Art, Iris and Lux, Sophia is no longer alone or in need of the head which "wasn't really a head any more. It now had no face. It had no hair. It was as heavy as stone. It was smooth all over. Where its face had been was a surface like polished stone, worked, like marble" (2018: 130). It is significant to note that the metamorphosis of the head finishes with Iris's arrival at Chei Bres. Hence, the intrusion of her sister as the unsubmissive Other provokes her into self-reflection and soul-searching, which brings her back to reality: "[s]he didn't really know what to call it now, head? stone? It was neither dead nor head," but "nothing but a stone" that "did nothing" (2018: 130, 142).

Similarly, nature metamorphoses in this midwinter time. Concerning Lux's name, which signifies St. Lucy's day corresponding to the winter solstice; namely the day with the least daylight and the longest night, the girl's arrival to Chei Bres symbolizes the coming of light to darkness, spring and the rebirth of life. After going

down memory lane, Sophia sits in her bed and realizes it is the morning twilight and the sun begins to dissipate the darkness:

> Up came the light. Good old light. Good new light. In fact the light had come up today marginally earlier than yesterday. And yesterday's light had been up a sliver earlier than the day's before that. There was this different quality to the light even only four days past the shortest day; the shift, the reversal, from increase of darkness to increase of light, revealed that a coming back of light was at the heart of midwinter equally as much as the waning of light (Smith, 2018: 141).

Besides suggesting the contradictory forces of nature creating a perfect balance and wholeness, the solstice heralds hope and conjureS up the notion of solidarity among the different, opposing communities that may build a peaceful and harmonious society. Accordingly, following the "coming back of light at the heart of midnight," Sophia cannot believe that "[s]omewhere in this house right now her elder sister Iris was asleep," which underpins the idea of the possibility of a more liveable world through reconciliation of contradictory viewpoints (Smith, 2018: 141). Nevertheless, despite her gradual awakening to reality and her critique of this "furious intolerance at work in the world," Sophia does not give up her privileged position easily and offers Lux the identity of Englishness as a blessing after learning her Croatian origin (2018: 109). Thus, the novel highlights the fine line between patriotism and ethnonationalism: "You're not English, I know that, I can hear it in your voice" and adds: "I will accept you, since you are Arthur's partner, as every bit as English as myself" (2018: 113). Her faith in her superiority as a member of the superrace in the presence of Lux is beyond a nationalistic sentiment but denotes "many small walls" raised "to the point of transforming communities into fortresses" due to "that general contamination that is globalization" (Esposito, 2020: 77). However, Lux does not regard being English as a grace or emblem of cultural superiority offered to her and remains true to herself despite impersonating Charlotte, a symbolic, fake identity ascribed to her: "Thanks […] But I'm not. English" (Smith, 2018: 113). Yet, due to the girl's intimate relationship with her son, the old woman insists that Lux is one of *us* by "put[ting] her hand in the air to stop further remonstration that she is to [Sophia]" (2018: 113–114). Thus, as a lower-class lesbian immigrant, Lux's thrice otherized position has not easily changed in the course of the novel, although her perfect command of the English language and cultural heritage of the country amazes Art: "How could she know more about his own culture than he did, and such interesting things, and not just know them but know them so well that she could make jokes, make jokes about a culture that isn't her culture and in a

language that isn't her first language?" (2018: 303). Nonetheless, regarding Sophia's persistence in labelling Lux as the Other, the subversion of the immunising paradigm is evidently not that easy. Despite accepting her food offers, Sophia still refers to Lux as "[t]he foreign girl" while pondering the household (2018: 152). However, the girl leads a slow yet lasting change in the old woman whose growing sympathy for the girl signals that one cannot hate another, "even one's worst enemy, when each participates in what is constitutively shared commune" (Esposito, 2010: 60). As for Lux, she never yearns for Sophia's affirmation but owns her Croatian origin. When the old woman greets her as Charlotte stating that she will always be Charlotte to herself whoever she is, Lux declines to deny her true self or affirm Sophia's offer to be *us*: "I'm not Charlotte, I'm Lux […] Who I am to myself is what in the language of English cliché is called a clever clogs egghead smartypants brainiac nerd, who started a university course here three years ago but ran out of money and now can't afford to complete it" (Smith, 2018: 246). On the other hand, Sophia and Iris's shellshocked father never had the opportunity to "participate in […] shared commune" in the postwar world, thus "inherited an abiding hatred of people from particular other countries, from his time in the war" (2018: 113). Sophia recollects the day Iris secretly took her to a movie in which "Elvis is a soldier" in Germany. Their father hated Germans and if he "knew they were watching something in which Germans are seen as people," he would certainly be "as furious as when he stamped on the Springfields record and threw the pieces into the dustbin" for including "all the flowers gone song in German on it" (2018: 26). Thus, just as one of the many lives ruined on battlefields, their father illustrates how wars plant the seed of long-lasting enmities among communities:

> The Second World War […] accented his life. If anyone came on television or on the radio speaking a language or a particularly accented English, or if anyone from somewhere he abhorred came into a room he happened to be in, he'd leave the room. He hated Germans. He hated the French for collaborating. Even hearing a certain singer sing was enough to reduce him to rage (Smith, 2018: 113).

As an anonymous figure, their father is rendered an every-veteran whose life is shaped by "heady hatreds of particular races and ethnicities" (Smith, 2018: 113). As Esposito also notes, "[t]he community can survive the violence that traverses it only by shifting violence onto an enemy that is able to attract it" (2010: 33). Brainwashed by biopolitical discourses about the internal and external adversaries of the nation, the father was reduced to a body due to the horrors of the war. A figure that conjures up Woolf's Septimus Warren in *Mrs. Dalloway*, the father feels the burden of the war on

his shoulders owing to "[s]omething […] had happened to him in the war" (Smith, 2018: 166). One day, he "dived for the ground, threw his hands over the back of his head like a bomb had gone off" when a couple of crates of bottles tipped and fell off the back" of a lorry and "hit the pavement" (2018: 166). Thus, while the enemy created by immunising mechanisms incarnates as the for the father, it is personified as immigrants and non-English communities for Sophia. In this sense, the enemy for the father and daughter makes them a community that "constitutes them as beings-in-common, as being-there-with" (Esposito, 2013: 18). In other words, immunisation as a biopolitical technology designates communities targeted by political enmities as unworthy of living to consolidate society. Hence, while chronicling the personal (hi)stories of the characters, *Winter* skilfully merges their personal experiences with the recent socio-political history of the country and casts light onto the tremendous impact of prevailing discourses, political tendencies and collective traumas of the society on the subjectivity of the individual.

Therefore, *Winter* is by no means a tender drama of a fraught family but addresses grave concerns. While focusing on the broken family ties of Sophie, Iris and Art, the novel sets forth the Cleves as a microcosm of society and communicates critical political scandals, social crises and protests in British history. In this sense, not only the characters but also social and political impasses play major roles in the novel which offers almost a catalogue of scandals and protest demonstrations in the social and political scenery of the country such as the public embarrassment that took place in the British Parliament. In the House of Common, a female MP with Pakistani origin from the opposition is questioning the British Foreign Secretary about "a British Prime Minister's show of friendly demeanour" and "special relationship with an American President, who has a habit of likening women to dogs" and plans to "prohibit entry into the United States of America […] based on their faith and ethnicity" (Smith, 2018: 90). A male MP barks at her while she is "bringing up the impact of this planned ruling on the refugee crisis and on people in forced exile from the war in Syria" (2018: 90). His insult which denotes how immunitary practices penetrated all the strata of society caused "five million people, mostly women, [to] take part in marches all across the world to protest against misogyny in power" (2018: 89). After he claims that his remarks are intended as "lighthearted banter", the woman MP accepts his apology (2018: 90). The narrator ironically notes that "[b]oth are gracious about it" despite the

rally of many women for her (2018: 91). Through referring to the scandal between MPs Tasmina Ahmed-Sheikh and Sir Nicholas Soames on 30 January 2017, the novel deftly mirrors the absurdity of facts to illuminate how reality can be improbable and nonsensical compared to fiction. Above all, *Winter* reveals how this collage of scandals, systematic racism, misogyny and xenophobia has been the new normal of modern public space and desensitized the masses over and over through public embarrassments and hate speech.

As the last intruder Other, Iris who has been long excluded from the Cleves immediately texts back after Art's call and brings "at 2 am […] a huge box full of fresh things floating by itself in the air, [p]otatoes, parnships, carrots, sprouts, onions" to Chei Bres, which denotes her attempts to bring life to the grave-like house (Smith, 2018: 155). For her nephew, Iris is actually "like a myth of the bounteous world" that revitalizes the house by bringing "more and more lovely things, bags and bags of them, butter, grapes, cheeses, bottles of wine" (2018: 157). Regarding Sophia's psychotic relation to food, in Smith's winter tale, food stands for life, closeness, compassion and connection. That is why Sophia resembles the fridge, which is "full of food" in a scene from "a film about ideal everyday family life" for whose "brightness" and "freshness" she is not yet ready (2018: 115). Iris has not only brought the possibility of a different existence, rebirth and zest for life with her arrival but also the Christmas spirit with a Christmas tree:

> She picked up the tree in its pot and put it into Art's arms, heavy […] Now he […] marvels at how doing nothing more than holding a tree inside a house, not even the right Christmas kind of tree, just a live tree, in a pot full of earth, but inside a house, had felt weirdly symbolic, maybe even made him feel bounteous (Smith, 2018: 157).

For Art, his aunt who brings spring to the wintry house and creates that bounteous reality, is an outcast, the "legendary black sheep" of the Cleves (Smith, 2018: 155). Her mother told him that Iris "didn't come home for years. She wasn't welcome. [Their father] was too angry with her" (2018: 173). Although he doesn't "know her well", they crossed paths a couple of years ago thanks to social media (2018: 155). For Art, his aunt is friendly and benevolent woman concerned for everyone, including himself: "She's the kind of person who calls people darling when she doesn't know them, not like an upper class person or a theatre person, I mean the working class way. Not that she was ever working class" (2018: 155). Due to their "[d]ifferences" and"[i]ncompatible" "[w]orld views," Sophia and Iris do not talk to each other for years

(Smith, 2018: 156). Besides, his mother blames her sister for not "even turn[ing] up to [his] grandmother's, [her] mother's, funeral" and defines Iris as "a hopeless mythologizer," "[d]eranged" and "[p]sychotic" as "[n]obody who isn't deranged can live like she does" and "[p]sychotic people see the world in terms of their illusions and delusions" (2018: 173, 155). She also tells her son that he "can't expect the world to accommodate [him] on [his] own terms like she does" or "expect to live in the world like the world's [his] private myth" (2018: 155–156). On the other hand, the "private myth" of Iris is by no means being a docile daughter, a good student or an obedient citizen who would comply with her gender role, marry, have children and work as a secretary. She is a rebellious woman who has challenged her secondary positions in the public and private domains in times when women were to be the *angels in the house*.

> Iris is supposed to be going to secretarial school to learn to have a useful career for the years before she gets married. But letters have been coming from the secretarial school saying she's been *consistently absent and has not been attending*. […] When father waved it over the dinner table at Iris, Iris took it, read it, pointed out first a mistake in spelling and then an inconsistency in marginal spacing, both of which proved, she said, that she knew more than they knew at secretarial college and therefore no longer needed attend (Smith, 2018: 238).

Hence, Iris has made a choice for herself, built her authentic existence as a feminist, altruistic, environmentalist, anti-war and anti-nuke activist and follows her ideals. All her life, she has helped the underprivileged and resisted the governing powers that oppress and even exterminate communities with biological weapons. Sophia remembers that "ever since Iris […] heard a thing on the radio about a gas place somewhere in England she's been like "a one-person protest march about it, writing to the papers, putting up posters in the town square in the middle of the night, the police coming round because they've caught her painting over advertising hoardings on the sides of buildings with slogans" (Smith, 2018: 138). Her worries extend to "seals found dead on" distant beaches with eye injuries, "the weapons being made in factories" and "the harm done to the students' eyes in Paris and the people in Northern Ireland" with "poisonous" gas (2018: 138–139). Upon Sophia's opposition to her sister that "[n]one of these things is happening here" but "all happening far away, elsewhere," Iris remarks that this does not change anything as "they may as well be" and adds that "here" is nothing but "[e]verywhere" (Smith, 2018: 139). Due to her refusal to lead a *normal* life, Iris is eventually banished from her familial home and society by the patriarchy. Sophia recollects the day she came back from college and found her sister with her belongings on the street outside their home: "a small crowd of people watching Iris on the

pavement, their father standing square at the front gate, the front gate closed […]. Their mother is at the front door, half looking from the doorframe. The suitcase on the ground at Iris's feet is Sophia's suitcase" (2018: 137–138). Her exclusion from home due to her rebellious stance unveils the immunised state of her parents and community, which "empt[ies]" the abnormal "out until it has been completely left bare" (Esposito, 2010: 12). That is why her sister sees Iris as a troublemaker who breaks up their family and inflicts everyone nothing but pain:

> Iris: a bloody liability. Trouble. Wasting her life. Warned and warned again. Reputation. Known to the authorities. Police record. Their father crying soundlessly into his supper. Their mother saying her usual downcast nothing, looking down at the nothing in her hands. I'll write. I'll phone you at your college. Iris walking down the street with the suitcase. All the neighbours watching her (Smith, 2018: 139).

Neither Sophia nor the reader can learn what happened the night Iris left. However, she did not return home, see her parents again to Sophia's knowledge, or attend their mother's funeral. Furthermore, Sophia remembers a Christmas Day in Chei Bres in 1977, when she was living with Iris and a "bunch of foreigners and layabouts" that pay "no rent to anyone – squatting" (Smith, 2018: 115, 116). Iris's activist friends who are risky anomalies to the social body for Sophia deny the long-lasting beliefs and traditions like Christmas, which "is probably too bourgeois" for them, and thus spend Christmas as an ordinary day (Smith, 2018: 117): "two of the (God knows how many, it feels like fifty but it is truthfully closer to fifteen) dropouts Iris now lives with are asleep in here, […] it's possible they've been here since last night, […] haven't gone to bed or taken clothes off or anything that normal people do" (Smith, 2018: 117). Thus, Sophia disdainfully remembers that she could not have a usual Christmas morning in Chei Bres due to the "[i]llegal dirty hippy-hangover pseudo-romantic squat" (2018: 117). As "her father is in fucking New Zealand and her mother is fucking dead," Sophia is to put up with those people (2018: 117). While regarding the *"[e]thical alternative anarchic living"* of the "[c]*ommune*. Squat" as a "[w]eak excuse for living irresponsibly," Sophia was also scared of them (2018: 117): "I was thinking, I'll get murdered, I'll get attacked, I'll get lost and it'll serve her, serve them all, right" (2018: 249). She does, however, acknowledge that occasionally these people actually help the sisters. One of her friends gets the generator working, providing much-needed electricity in the freezing house. Sophia, who began a business while still in college and found early success with Afghan coats, draws inspiration for her next market venture from an intriguing Chinese cotton jacket worn by one of these people. Iris's friends

have a positive impact on Sophia's career although she is resentful of their stances against social inequalities, anti-immigrant policies, nuclear armament and environmental pollution. Sophia also remembers the day she saw Iris on TV after years of estrangement. Her sister criticizes an industry that she claims is "the offspring […] of the Second World War" that has slowly poisoned the locals with pesticides, made them suffer from "[d]epression, anxiety, confusion" and "placed in mental hospitals […] because medical system ignorance leads to misdiagnosis" (2018: 129, 128). According to her activist sister, there has been "[n]o recognition of the wide range of symptoms" such as "[d]ifficulty in using language. Hallucination. Headaches. Joint pains," which also reflects how biopolitical power focuses merely on population for its economic and political interests and regards its subjects as expendable (2018: 128–129). Besides, as the "expert in the studio tells the newsreader that everything that Iris said is laughable and untrue," Sophie sighs that "[w]e all mine and undermine and landmine ourselves, in our own ways, in our own time," which suggests the share of everyone who turns a blind eye in the oppression and unrighteousness in the world (2018: 129).

As these memories reveal, Iris has long been absent from Sophia's life, "there is no mentioning" of her "at home" and thus exists just a distant image or a ghost from the past (Smith, 2018: 123). However, very much like Lux, Iris with her arrival brings life to her sister's non-human, lonely and apathetic existence. Even in the memories, Iris has always strived to reach and warm her frozen heart. On a Christmas night when Iris stayed with her friends in Chei Bres, Sophia "had gone up to her freezing room […], arctic after the fires downstairs; she'd been trying to warm herself under her coat when Iris had knocked on the door of it, she'd brought an electric fire up. Knew you'd be feeling the cold, she said" (2018: 124). She then kisses Sophia good night after "plug[ing] the electric fire," which hints at Sophia's unreliability as a narrator as Iris has never been a distanced sister as she thinks (2018: 124).

Furthermore, in her voyage to the past, Sophia also confronts her traumatic memories that evoke the thanatopolitical practises of biopower. "[S]ometime in the early 80s," she is harassed by a man who has stalked her and "asks her if she'll mind getting in beside him for a moment to discuss a pressing matter" (Smith, 2018: 131). Although she ignores him and "walks right past him," the stalker keeps "driving at a crawl next to her out in the open street" and "calling across her" to discuss a very "important" issue, "a matter of life and death" (2018: 131). Due to his persistent

demands for “just stepping into the car and having a quiet word with him,” she “keeps walking as if he’s not there” and finally hides in a department store till he leaves (2018: 131). Even though she informs the police about “the man and the registration number on his MG” later that day, nobody calls her back (2018: 131). Besides, a few days later, a “quite different man” breaks into her flat to get every piece of information about Iris (2018: 130). She finds him “sitting at the table in the dining room” of her house and “giv[ing] a little wave hello as if they’re friends” and it were his house (2018: 132). The intruder “pats the chair next to him” and asks for “a few minutes of [her] time” to show her some photocopies and photographs containing graphic images that are scattered on the kitchen table” (2018: 132):

> They seem to be of people who’re still alive but who’ve been shot or hurt. One man is bleeding all down his legs. Another man has been shot in what was once his face. Then he shows her a photograph of what looks like a black cave of a room. She sees a hand connected to nothing in the foreground, just lying on the floor like a glove, and then, under a table by itself, a shape that looks like it might be a head (Smith, 2018: 132–133).

He asks for “know[ing] simple things, [w]hens, wheres, whos, [p]erfectly innocent” so that the brutalities in the photos will not happen anymore (Smith, 2018: 133). The governing power needs the cooperation of its subjects like Sophia to manage the population and preserve itself: “We need your help […] We know already what kind of a person you are in the world. We’d like ourselves and others all across the country, all across the world, to benefit from what we know to be your very good sense” (2018: 133). His remarks about “a trusted system of monitoring persons of interest” which is “one of the ways of avoiding atrocities like the ones in the photographs” point out the biopolitical surveillance and monitoring of individuals in the name of preventing atrocities and safeguarding the nation (2018: 133). Nonetheless, *Winter* does not solely mediate on the violation of privacy by biopolitical regimes to keep individuals in line. Through the broken ties of these close sisters, the novel also mirrors the inhuman strategy of biopower; to singularize and isolate individuals to control and manipulate them easily. As this mysterious man underlines, “monitoring generally helps to keep things clean and neat” (2018: 133). On the other hand, his attempts to force her to report Iris turn out to be the reason for her sister’s resentment towards Sophia. Iris thinks that her little sister collaborated with those men, yet Sophia did not submit to the man’s demand but questioned his actual designs to monitor Iris. His absolutely thought-provoking response reveals that for the man, Sophia is the kind of person who “knows

that there is such thing as truth" and thus must be aware that "the gentle monitoring of those close to us who may or may not be charting anywhere on a fairly wide scale from person of interest to radical activist can sometimes be crucial in disproving their involvement in certain circumstances" (2018: 133). Hence, surveillance as a biopolitical technology not only targets identifying each subject's acts and potential moves to prevent the unpredictable and uncontrollable but also aims to keep subjects manageable, compliant and unresisting as these technologies force individuals to police themselves due to the panoptic, incessant gaze of the biopower. Furthermore, the man asks her about the "answer to life's mysteries" and replies to the question himself by claiming that it is "[i]nto whose myth do we choose to buy?," which underpins the central theme of the quartet; the essentiality of attaining one's own truths rather than "buying" the "myths" of the powerful (2018: 134). Thus, besides predicating on the individual's search for meaning, the question also sheds light onto the mythos that shapes every age and creates absolute truths that sway the masses against the recusants, radicals or minorities throughout human history. In this sense, the novel reconfigures the Other as the one who challenges the mythos of his age.

Additionally, Sophia recollects how she either "loses her balance" and falls off or the man "pushes her […] or both" while showing him the way (Smith, 2018: 135). Then, he "holds her very steadily by the sore arm," "looks her in the eyes" and says pretentiously: "Oh God […] Do be careful" (2018: 135). After the man leaves by scaring Sophia half to death and makes sure she understands this as a warning, she locks all the doors and windows and "closes all the curtains in all four rooms," yet after a short while, she realizes that his main purpose is to inflict fear upon her and thus, pulls herself together (2018: 136):

> she sees her own hand in the act of pulling the blind down and she snorts out a laugh. She lets go, lets the blind flick back up again on its own. She takes the chain off the front door on the way to the bathroom. They can come in if they like. She goes and gets that little card and tucks it behind the carriage clock on the mantelpiece. She runs a bath (Smith, 2018: 136).

Thus, regarding Esposito's claim that "the modern state not only does not eliminate fear from which it is originally generated but is founded precisely on fear so as to make it the motor and the guarantee of the state's proper functioning," Sophia can defy the power that designs to control her and make her spy on her sister by overcoming her fear (2010: 25). Thus, as much as experiencing these epiphanies, recollecting the suppressed memories also enlivens and encourages Sophia to cope with her fear of

living. In a sense, the past she has long tried to escape gradually reminds her who she is, which designates the past as a central element of *Winter* that shows, shocks, teaches and transforms the indifferent, self-righteous subject into an authentic individual.

In Chei Bres, Sophia is not the only character who embarks on an internal journey and confronts herself. Concerning the distinction between the simulacra of modern existence and the reality conveyed via the fictional realm of art, Art feels his pretentious self to his bones, which is hinted through his dialogue with Iris who comments on his fake tweets: "Unless you're not you […] and the real you is elsewhere tweeting. Well? Are you you? I'm me all right, Art says. I'm more me than I care to admit" (Smith, 2018: 183). Furthermore, when his aunt defines Art's generation as "selfish" and "like a president" or "a fake president," he feels horrible as he thinks that "[e]verybody knows how fake" he is (2018: 183). Through a postmodern reading, Art's recognition of his unnatural and factitious existence signifies the metafictional quality of *Winter*. Similarly, Lux also senses his inauthenticity when she reads his post in "Art in Nature": "It doesn't seem very like you […] You don't seem so ponderous in real life […] In real life you seem detached, but not impossible […] Not like this piece of writing is […] What I mean is, it doesn't read like the real you" (2018: 186–187). In that regard, his fake identity communicated through these false memories in the blog surfaces his spurious existence both for Lux and the reader. He admits that what he puts in the post "is not a personal memory" he has, "specifically, no" but also claims that "it's a good general sort of invented shareable memory for the people who'll read the blog" (2018: 187). Disappointed for the falsity of everything she's "just read," Lux "says [he's] not the real thing too" as Charlotte would have said, yet clarifies that she refers to "this [memory] not being real" rather than his "being" (2018: 188). However, he insists that he cannot write his true memories that are "way too real" to "put it online" in this virtual world (2018: 189). Concerning Lux's comments on his post, it is beyond doubt that Art lives in the mythos of biopower like his mother; yet Lux, very much like Iris, requests the truth instead of conceding this collective illusion.

On the other hand, upon recognition of his fictionality and artificiality, Art attempts to construct an uncontrolled, unrestrained and independent subjectivity like Iris and Lux and thus seeks not only to build his true identity but free himself from the biopolitical power; namely the anonymous narrator. His voyage to his true self is portrayed through a dream in which "he is being chased by giant monstrous flowers"

(Smith, 2018: 151). As the representative of the present generation in the country, Art is haunted by his repressed fears, anxieties and restlessness rather than the ghosts of the past. In his nightmare, he hides inside a tomb to escape from the flowers chasing to eat him alive and "[t]here. He has metamorphosed into a memorial knight in an armour of stone" (2018: 152). Despite his relief of dodging the flowers, Art feels trapped all of a sudden. He "can hardly move" in his "armour made of stone" and "addresses the flower monsters through a mouth he can himself no longer open, stony and shut" (2018: 152). His muted, lifeless and incarcerated self suggests the silenced and apathetic majority that has been immunised, passivized and forced into a nostalgia designated by the myth of Englishness. Immunisation, as Esposito notes, "forces life into a sort of cage where we risk not only losing our freedom but also the very meaning of our individual and collective existence, […] what protects the body, both personal and social, can also block its development" (2020: 77). Hence, it is this prevailing inertia, indolence, insensitivity and submissiveness Charlotte has so severely criticized and this nightmare reveals, which is also disclosed in his appeal to the flowers which open their mouths and stamens to swallow him: "Stop bullying me. I *am* political" (Smith, 2018: 152). Concerning his remarks, Art feels restless not only due to his disinterest in environmental pollution, climate change, Brexit or the refugee crisis but also owing to his denunciation by the alter ego of the author and thus feels stuck not just in his dream, in his armour made up of stone or in the tomb but in the psyche of the author that pictures him as a fake persona far from being political or nonconformist in his self-centredness. Furthermore, when Lux expresses her concerns for Art's hallucinatory experience at dinner and questions his sanity as "Art is seeing things," Iris assures her that the habit of "seeing things" is "a great description of what art is" and adds: "it wasn't surprising you were seeing things and that we're living in strange times" (2018: 286). Hence, after years of turning a blind eye to the dehumanization of minorities and resigning himself to the simulacra of biopolitical power, namely the SA4A, Art begins to *see* in his journey to self-discovery, gradually makes his inner world unknown and undirected, and thus rewrites *Winter* as his autobiofiction.

On the other hand, Lux's part in the creation of these life stories is ineffable. The authentic personality of "the stranger" inspires both the mother and son to look within themselves and embrace their truths (Smith, 2018: 153). As a modern-day Iris, Lux is always honest with herself and others although she is to pose as Charlotte in Cornwall.

That is why, when asked why she does not stay at Art's place, she ironically reveals "[t]he truth" which "is, [they] haven't come that far in [their] relationship yet" and adds "[she's] not that Charlotte" (2018: 202). Moreover, her further remarks fully disclose her real identity to the sisters: "I was shy to come to Christmas here as a family guest so early in our knowing each other […] I don't really think of myself as Charlotte. In fact, I'd prefer it if you'd all call me the name everyone in my own family calls me […] Lux" (2018: 203). To Art's surprise, "his mother's face goes unexpectedly soft" with the girl's frankness, which suggests the growing ties between the two (2018: 203). Lux's faith in a "bounteous" world in which "what we believe is happening" inspires not only Sophia and her son but the reader to open up themselves for the possibilities of existence offered to every human being that is no one but an artist creating his reality as well as his authentic identity (2018: 164). Therefore, like a mythical being dissipating darkness, Lux has brought spring to the wintry lives of the mother and son and helped them reconnect to life. Besides, she even acts as a host, cooks, serves and helps Sophia sell the old souvenirs to the birdwatchers, "found the bedding" and "sorted a room for Iris" (2018: 153). In short, the Other makes Chei Bres a home and reunites the family, as Art also thinks with envy: "although she's a total stranger, she rather too much presumed to think she'd know better than he does how to deal with his mother" and "annoyingly, did know better last night how to handle his mother" (2018: 153–154). This is the reason Sophia lets Lux use her personal computer and even tells the girl her password, as she just "asked," even though his mother "has never let" Art use her computer, "not once. [His] whole life" (2018: 180). When he resents his mother, Lux urges him to face his estranged relationship with her and rightly suggests that [p]erhaps, [he] never asked" (2018: 180). On the other hand, as the only person the old woman truly trusts, Lux encourages Sophia who "had been revealed as frighteningly thin" to eat again and turn back to life (2018: 153). When Iris "holds out a basket of bread" at dinner, her sister "doesn't take a piece"; then Art "holds it in front of his mother, who still doesn't take a piece" (2018: 197). Finally, it is Lux, an eccentric immigrant that Sophia can count on and "immediately takes a piece" (2018: 197). Thus, while helping the family members understand and communicate with one another by turning over a new leaf, Lux particularly encourages Art to restore his relationship with his mother and thus, reclaim his (his)story:

> If I were you, she says, I'd stay here in the house with her a bit longer, till the start of the year maybe, and do like I've been doing. Get up and cook something in the middle of the night. She'll come down and eat

with you if you do. She'd never do that, he says. She'd send me away. […] Just talk with her, she says. Talk to her (Smith, 2018: 311).

Art, meanwhile, feels that they have "[n]othing in common" and that it is impossible to communicate with her mother (Smith, 2018: 311). Regarding the different generations in Chei Bres, which is the microcosm of Britain, Art signifies the present generation that has been cut off from the collective memory of the nation symbolized on the one hand through his mother Sophia, who represents the official historiography, and on the other via his aunt Iris, who stands for the unofficial histories of the subaltern and anti-authority protests in the country. Hence Lux, by encouraging Art to nurture his family ties, inspires him to reflect on his past and discover who he is, which also highlights the necessity for British society to own its collective history to maintain its identity as a nation:

Everything in common, […]. She's your history. That's the other difference between meat and humans. I don't mean between animals and humans. They know how to evolve. We're more gifted than them, the chance to know where we came from. To forget it, to forget what made us, where it might take us, it's like, I don't know. Forgetting your own head (Smith, 2018: 311–312).

Thus, *Winter* characterizes history as a mirror that, via its teachings, offers the individual the opportunity to transcend their status as a subject, build an authentic existence in solidarity with others, and make the world a better place. Although Art is hopeless about his severed ties with his mother and believes that "[he] can't do anything for her" as he is "family," Lux heartens him to "[t]ry" at least "given [their] histories" and also promises herself to reconnect with her roots she has been fleeing from (Smith, 2018: 312). It is at that moment that Art begins to awaken from his paralyzed state and feel again for the first time in years: "Something a bit higher than his penis, something up in his chest, lifts. Ha. Is that it, his spirit? Might we?" (2018: 312). Lux's sincere concern for the mother and son inspires them to go beyond their biopolitical borders, prejudices and fears of others to create a genuinely humane life.

On the other hand, Geoffrey whom Art assumes is his biological father is a marginalized figure like Lux and Iris as a gay TV star and stands in for LGBT people undermined, stereotyped and ridiculed both on the street and on stage. Art introduces him to Lux by playing a "BBC sitcom from the early 70s" on his mother's computer (Smith, 2018: 180). However, she finds it quite annoying that "[t]the invisible audience laughs off camera" "every time the camera does a close up on Geoffrey" or he utters a

word (2018: 181, 180). Lux does not quite understand why “the laughter is thick as a mallet” whenever “he says even just a part of his catchphrase” (2018: 181). For Iris, it is the “sacrifice” of the gay actor who has to endure humiliation to earn his living” (2018: 181). She tells them more of that idiosyncratic man whose “real name was Ray, Raymond Ponds” and who was actually “a very nice bloke,” “very intelligent man” that “knew exactly what he was doing” as “there’s good money in humiliation” (2018: 181). Besides, he had to make a fake marriage with Sophia so that “the papers pretty much left him alone” (2018: 182). Through Geoffrey’s sacrifice of himself, *Winter* also illuminates the pandemic of humiliation normalized in the media and provoked by demagogue politicians and populist leaders as Iris remarks: “[a]nd now for our entertainment when we want humiliation we’ve got reality TV instead […]. And soon instead of reality TV we’ll have the President of the United States” (2018: 182). While illuminating how little has changed for minorities in the last fifty years, the novel also suggests how media has become a source of public entertainment to degrade the Other whereas the internet has become a free domain for both the deployment of and resistance to biopolitical technologies. The discriminatory discourses prompted by biological power and the long muted voice of underprivileged communities appear side by side in this new, borderless virtual arena. In this sense, the internet has turned into the modern-day means of freedom of speech as the long censored 1940s notice Iris has found on the net points out par excellence. Handed out to schoolchildren “to learn off by heart to help them recognize what they might be breathing into their lungs in a gas attack,” the notice furthers its warnings against biological warfare and weapons of mass destruction, which shows how the subjects, even children can be discarded for the sake of preservation of political body (2018: 194): “If you get a choking feeling and a smell of musty hay, you can bet your bottom dollar that there’s phosgene on the way. But the smell of bleaching powder will inevitably mean that the enemy you’re meeting is a gas we call chlorine…” (2018: 194). Designating the internet as a heterodox and unbound archive against hegemonic historiography, Smith’s *Seasonal Quartet* stands out as a similar archive of facts and fiction, a distinctly alike domain in which multiple truths, ideologies and viewpoints; the oppressed, the powerful and the silenced coexist and speak up equally. *Winter*, through allusions to Shakespeare’s *Cymbeline*, offers a sharp critique of post-Brexit Britain while rendering art a lens that shows a timeless and undistorted image of reality: “A play about a kingdom subsumed in chaos, lies, powermongering, division and a great deal of poisoning and self-poisoning. Where

everybody is pretending to be someone or something else […]. And you can't see […] how any of it will resolve in the end" (2018: 200). Lux's comments, in a similar vein, signify the segregated and detached post-Brexit society in which divisive strategies result in alienated and isolated subjects who fail to exist as a nation:

> it's like the people in the play are living in the same world but separately from each other, like their worlds have somehow become disjointed or broken off each other's worlds. But if they could just step out of themselves, or just hear and see what's happening right next to their ears and eyes, they'd see it's the same play they're all in, the same world, that they're all part of the same story (Smith, 2018: 200–201).

Thus, the characters in *Cymbeline* and *Winter* echo the immunised modern subjects who are estranged from one another and, as Esposito puts it, who attempt to "become that, the perfectly individual, the 'absolute' individual, bordered in such a way that they are isolated and protected" by being emancipated "in advance from the 'debt' that binds them one to the other" or "relieved of that contact, which threatens their identity, exposing them to possible conflict with their neighbor, exposing them to the contagion of the relation with others" (2010: 13). Accordingly, what Lux suggests about the play not only puts forth the detached life of the modern subject but also the distanced, lonely states of the Cleves in Chei Bres. Ironically, in this disconnected world, Lux, as the outsider, is the one who helps them "step out of themselves" and bond (Smith, 2018: 201). Thanks to the Other, Sophia and Art gradually walk out of their immunised states, the sisters leave their resentments behind and rebuild their family ties by recollecting their mutual past and childhood memories which make "both laugh at the same time" (2018: 204).

Besides allusions to *Cymbeline* that revisit the notions of fact and fiction, the novel involves a story told by an anonymous adult to a child about a kid lost in the snowy weather. Before introducing his story, the storyteller problematizes the division between reality and illusion by defining "verifiable" as "things we can prove are true because of facts that exist in the world about them" (Smith, 2018: 96). Furthermore, the child in the story is portrayed as an outsider who intrudes and brings warmth and life to the deadly underworld like Lux. The lost kid finds himself in the palace of the god of the underworld who begins to lose its kingdom with the child's arrival as this little, vulnerable human regenerates the frozen world: "the child shoots through that underworld like hot blood through the veins of every cold dead person who grew up to be lost in the snow, and there are millions of them, and the child passes like warm blood through them all" (2018: 101). When the "great god of underworld, towering above on

his throne of ice" throws the child on to its floor, the kid stands up and realizes that "its feet have disappeared. It is ankle-deep in water. The child is melting through the floor" (2018: 103). The kid makes the god of ice lose its authority and greatness: "The god begins to panic. He loses his grip on his own slippery throne. He flails around on it at the head of the great hall of ice. *Stop that right now*, the god shouts" (2018: 104). Thus, the Other once more trespasses, breaks the routine, defies the long-seated dominion of the power and rebuilds a humanly existence.

In addition to the stories conveying the regenerative impact of welcoming the Other, Smith's *Winter* tale also dwells on the plight of the marginalized to make the ignored seen. The remarks of Iris's father about the government policy aftermath of World War II point out the biopolitical mechanisms at play, which categorize war veterans as expendable and distorting truths in the pursuit of state interests:

> I remember father telling me, […] [t]hat the government after that war took to lying to huge numbers of people who'd been victims of the mustard gas attacks, and to their families, telling them that it wasn't the gas that was making them ill but that they had tuberculosis, […] so the state wouldn't have to pay all those wounded men and their families a war pension (Smith, 2018: 297).

The British public after World War II, very much like post-Brexit society, was divided into two communities: on the one hand, a powerful, dominant superrace worthy of living and human dignity and on the other; minorities or subraces undeserving of life. While wars are particularly the times this distinction surfaces and crystallizes more, the savageries of war are not limited to war-weary people but drilled into generation after generation. Nobody as Iris remarks, "not even" Sophia, "with all [her] powers of wisdom, all [her] business acumen and all [her] natural intelligence, can make something not be true just by declaring it's not true" (Smith, 2018: 297). Thus, the novel suggests that despite the official history that purposefully suppresses micro-histories in the post-truth era, the truth will eventually come to light, even if it is first proclaimed by artists. As a reflection of the responsibility of art to tell the human truth boldly rather than being the voice of the status quo, *Winter* challenges anti-immigrant tendencies in the public space via Lux whose own experiences as an immigrant display their struggle against deportation, poverty, hunger and homelessness. After she came to Britain for a degree in English Literature, she could not afford to complete her education or find a long-term job after Brexit due to her immigrant status as "nobody knows if [she]'ll still be able to be here this time next year or when they'll decide [the non-British people] have to go" (2018: 247). Eventually, as an everyimmigrant, Lux has

attempted to survive by working in temporary jobs with very little wages and "keep[ing]" herself "below the radar" (2018: 247). Her former job also denotes how immigrants are rendered bodies exploited and driven to underpaid and uninsured jobs: "Cleangreen started employing the African people the boss brings over because he doesn't have to pay them anything (2018: 202).

However, as Lux suggests, the grim reality of the migrant crisis is not limited to their working conditions: "It is strange […] to think of anyone in this country ever talking about a room of the future when people like so much to buy new things that look like old things, and the only room I'm used to hearing people talk about is the no room, the no more room" (Smith, 2018: 205). The novel also accommodates conflicting opinions of the Leavers and Remainers on migrant issue and sets forth Sophia's overgeneralization of immigrants as all "economic migrants" who "want better lives" and for whom "[t]here *is* no more room" (2018: 205). Her claims illuminate the immunisation of Brexiteers to protect themselves: "[t]hey're coming here because they want our lives" and "[t]he so-called vote […] was a vote to free our country from inheriting the troubles of other countries, as well as from having to have laws that weren't made here for people like us by people like us" (2018: 206). Concerning the anti-immigrant and xenophobic sentiments that predicate the paradigm of immunisation, Esposito notes:

> The more the 'self ' tends to make itself 'global', the more the self must struggle to include inside from what is outside; the more the self tries to introject every form of negativity, the more negativity is reproduced […] What matters most is limiting an excess of circulation and therefore of potential contamination (Esposito, 2013: 60).

As an individual "liv[ing] alone in a house that has fifteen bedrooms" and still complaining about the lack of more room, Sophia, in Esposito's terms, dreads "the violent loss of borders, which awarding identity to [her], ensures [her] subsistence" as a political subject (Smith, 2018: 205; Esposito, 2010: 8). Besides, her nonconformist sister needles Sophia's Foucauldian design to *defend the society* as a Leaver whose votes have given way to social segregation, the rise of racism and hostility towards immigrants: "you're such a good girl […] Thinking exactly what the government and the tabloids tell you to think […] And they're only running away from home for fun. Because that's why people leave home, isn't it? For fun" (Smith, 2018: 207). In this sense, their dispute is beyond a familial conflict but mirrors how Brexit has surfaced the impulse of the community to immunize itself from the "obligation" of "I owe you

something" rather than "you owe me something" (Esposito, 2010: 6). Thus, their disagreements mirror the current conflicting views in Western public opinion and designate their personal histories as embodiments of the collective consciousness of British society torn between the Leavers and Remainers. In order to give both her sister and the reader a pause for thought, Iris highlights the biopolitically constructed schisms that create a society of docile subjects and the enemies of the nation, namely *them*: "Depends whether you think there's a them and an us […], or just an us. Given that DNA's let us know we're all pretty much family" (Smith, 2018: 206). Although Sophia insists that "there is most definitely a them […] In everything," the true voice of *them* in *Winter* is spoken up by Lux, an immigrant herself who addresses rhetorical questions to the old woman to set her thinking (2018: 207):

> But what will the world do, though, Mrs Cleves, […] if we can't solve the problem of the millions and millions of people with no home to go to or whose homes aren't good enough, except by saying go away and building fences and walls? It isn't a good enough answer, that one group of people can be in charge of the destinies of another group of people and choose whether to exclude them or include them. Human beings have to be more ingenious than this, and more generous. We've got to come up with a better answer (Smith, 2018: 206).

From a biopolitical standpoint, her queries illuminate "[t]he spiralling fear of 'aliens in our midst' [which] seems to necessitate ever stricter criteria of membership, reactivating the worst forms of racist, religious, and ethnic discrimination" (Bird & Short, 2013: 7). These strict requirements for the membership of the superrace lead Sophia to criticize her sister for being "a seasoned protester against the powers that be," wasting her life in "[a] work of endless futility" and ruining their family for the sake of utopic ideals and such paranoia as "nuclear war" (Smith, 2018: 207, 208). She continues to blame Iris for being "quite psychotic about banning the bomb" and her "tendency to want to put the blame elsewhere for the inadequacies of her own life" and "talk herself up and [Britain] down" (Smith, 2018: 209, 208, 297). She also posits her sister as the black sheep of the family who "know[s] nothing about" their father and "ha[s] no right to speak about either of" their parents who hated her "for what she did to the family" (2018: 210). However, for Iris, their "father didn't hate [her], he hated what had happened to him," which suggests how the public and the political irreversibly shape the personal (2018: 213). According to her sister, Sophia has long allowed the collective illusion of dominant discourses to blind her to the truth about their parents: "Our mother hated a regime that put money into weapons of any sort after the war she'd lived

through, in fact she hated it so much that she withheld in her tax payments the percentage that'd go to any manufacture of weapons" (2018: 213).

Besides the broken family ties of the Cleves, people's distanced and estranged states in the village also shed light on the singularization and alienation of the subjects in the country. Iris remarks: "I passed so many people, closed faces, on the streets. Did one single one of them say Merry Christmas to me? […] I can't help but worry for old England" (Smith, 2018: 208). Accordingly, the novel includes excerpts from the news which "say that a poll has found that citizens of this country oppose a unilateral guarantee for the citizens who live here and who are originally from a lot of other countries to be able to stay here with full rights of residents after a certain date. Panic. Attack. Exclude" (2018: 219–220). Thus, in the tale of the divided nation of *Winter*, the Cleves sisters have "had their own visions and divisions" like the country (2018: 209). As a reflection of their worlds apart, Sophia thinks Iris's visits to Greece were for "[h]oliday" or staying in her "[s]econd home," which annoys her sister and leads her to reproach Sophia for her ignorance in the face of the sufferings of the Other. Her remarks also reflect the critique the novel offers of the indifference of the masses:

> Thousands of holidaymakers arriving every day from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, for city-break holidays in Turkey and Greece. And the people from Yemen who've nothing to eat, they head for their holidays into Africa, where there's loads to go round for everybody especially in the countries where people are already starving, though the more sub-Saharan holidaymakers tend to head for Italy and Spain, also popular resorts with the people running away from Libya (Smith, 2018: 232).

In addition to wrongly accusing Sophia of her collaboration with intelligence agents and "[her] friends in their high places," Iris continues to refer to the traumatic experiences of refugees degraded into stateless and disenfranchised bodies whose deaths do not count for the public's opinion (Smith, 2018: 233): "Tell them about people risking their lives, about people whose lives are all they've got left. Tell them about what torture does to a life, […] how it makes people unable to dare to explain to themselves, never mind to other people, what's happened to them" (2018: 233). She also refers to "the small children who arrive there" and the experience of statelessness "as citizens of nowhere", thereby designating them as nonhuman (2018: 233). Sophia eventually convinces her sister that "[she has] not told anyone anything" (Smith, 2018: 233–234). As a reflection of their reconciliation by opening up to one another, the sisters sleep on Iris' bed at night, which also points out the emphasis of the novel on the urgency of dialogue among the incompatible worldviews in British society. On the other

hand, *Winter* also reflects the collective traumas that pass on to the next generation through Lux's war-ridden family that has failed to let go of their traumatic memories and forced migration from their homeland. As a girl of Croatian origin, Lux "was born there," yet "[her] family moved to Canada" when she "was quite small" (Smith, 2018: 246). However, what her family underwent has never let them go. her family "is war-wounded however far away [they] go" although none of her family members "died" or "physically wounded" in the war which was before her birth(2018: 246). Nevertheless, for Lux, they all suffered emotional wounds. Due to the emotional scars resurfacing, Lux left her family for Britain. Her escape from her family haunted by painful memories of the civil war reflects the burden of collective trauma on individuals. Accordingly, she tells Art about a delusion she had years ago to communicate the heavy load of her past created by the horrible downside of war, which unveils that wars not only ruin nations' present but also leave marks on their future as well:

> when I was seventeen, walking along a street in Toronto and I stopped and just stood there in the middle of Queen Street because the day went dark all round me even though it was the middle of the day, and I knew for the first time I was, I am, carrying on my head, like a washerwoman […], not just one container or basket, but hundreds of baskets all balanced on each other, full to their tops with bones, high as a skyscraper, and they were so heavy on my head and shoulders that either I was going to have to offload them or they were going to drive me down through the pavement into the ground (Smith, 2018: 287).

She has just wished for a "torch" or "just a box of matches" "in the dark" to "be able to see where to put [her] feet, get a grip, so [she] can balance and put these things [she's] carrying down and look into each basket, offer it respect, do it justice" (Smith, 2018: 288). Her strive to liberate herself from the mental weight of her history without denying or disrespecting her roots signifies the stress the novel lays upon the necessity to come to terms with the collective past, which is but individuals' intertwined personal lives. Furthermore, Lux claims what she felt was real despite her awareness of the hallucinatory nature of experience: "[t]hey were. There," that is, "here" (2018: 288). Thus, as her family escaped to Canada, Lux also ran away from her traumatized family and her shared past to seek order and beauty in Britain, which gave birth to Shakespeare. In this sense, art is the bottom line of her liberation, and literature appears to be the "torch" she is seeking in this regard. Similarly, Sophia has long denied both her past and Art's history by lying to her son about his biological father. Confiding in Lux about this mysterious man "because of what [the girl] told [her] about wounds, and about families," Sophia says that she broke up with Art's father as she did not want the man's past to be a part of hers and Art's: "the love of my life had a history to which I

could never have reconciled my own family […] I didn't want his history to be my son's inheritance" (2018: 253–254). Thus, as her son "knows nothing about it […] he has inherited none of it (2018: 254).

On the other hand, as another recurring pattern of the quartet, each chapter of *Winter* begins like a journal with references to time and setting while addressing immunising practices in contemporary Britain like migrant crises and social schisms. Through its opening with the narrator's claim that "it's about real things really happening in the real world involving real people in real time on the real earth," the novel goes beyond highlighting the actuality of its fictional world and addresses the misconception about the superiority of truths over the lies of art (2018: 5). Accordingly, at the 2018 Edinburgh Book Festival Smith discusses the notion of fictional truth:

> We are living in a culture that insists on lying as its delivery of how we are living […] It insists on telling us information about which we are left wondering whether it is true or not … Fiction and lies are the opposite of each other. Lies go out of the way to distort and turn you away from the truth. But fiction is one of our ways of telling the truth (Smith in Armitstead, 2019).

Winter, like *Autumn*, preoccupies with the distinction between fact and fiction and presents a collage of extracts from the news on environmental pollution, climate change and the political scandals of the last eighty years with such headlines as "plastic in the earth's seas and on its shores" and the "attack taking place on MPs by MPs of the same party who don't agree with them" (Smith, 2018: 219–220). The novel sets forth literature as a lens that clarifies the rapidly changing reality of modernity by offering current news and previous political scandals in the country. Nonetheless, like the other three novels of the *Seasonal Quartet*, *Winter* is by no means a pessimistic novel passing on desperation but hopeful and inspiring. While communicating despair just after its downhearted, gloomy beginning, the novel hints that there is still life in hand, which suggests infinite possibilities. Against the dissolution of all human constructs, artistic creations, ideologies and humane feelings; "[l]ife," "[r]evolution" and "[r]acial equality" still survive (2018: 3). Regarding its ethical and humanitarian stance, *Winter* illustrates what Foucault calls the "counter-conduct" which is a manifestation of a self "for an ethical and aesthetic self-creation" (Frost, 2022: 45). Thus, that ethical stance in the novel takes shape by two particular challenges to biopolitical power. The first is manifested through Sophia and Art's resistance via recollecting and coming to terms with their shared past, connecting to the Other and liberating themselves from the mindsets created by biopower. The second challenge is suggested via the characters'

overall insubordination to the narrator as a biopolitical power that no longer have access to the inner worlds of the characters or are allowed to speak for or control them.

Regarding Sophia and Art's defiance of biopolitical oppression, they acquire "'auto-tolerance' or tolerance of self" against "autoimmunity, with all its lethal consequences, including death" by stepping out of themselves and meeting with such otherized figures as Lux and Iris (Esposito, 2011: 164). Esposito illustrates his idea of autotolerance through pregnancy which is "a product of immunity rather than as an unraveling or a deficiency of the system" (2011: 17–18). The philosopher elaborates that "the genetic heterogeneity of the fetus rather than its genetic similarity is what encourages the mother's immune system to accept it"; thus, "the immune system cannot be reduced to the simple function of rejecting all things foreign" (2011: 18). Furthermore, according to Esposito, "[c]ontrary to the metaphor of a fight to the death, what takes place in the mother's womb is a fight "to life," proving that difference and conflict are not necessarily destructive" (2011: 171). Accordingly, Lux's sincerity and honesty about her true identity inspire Sophia who has long been a closed book to find a will to life to open herself to the Other for the first time in her life. She discloses the greatest secret of her life about Art's father who appears to be Daniel Glück from *Autumn*. She first met him during a walk on a Christmas night while staying in Chei Bres with Iris and her friends and ran into Daniel in London years later. They then decided to go to Paris to see the house of Barbara Hepworth; the favourite sculptor of Daniel who "had a piece of her sculpture at his house" (Smith, 2018: 251). Sophia depicts the artwork as "two round" "strikingly beautiful stones" "in two pieces" that "were meant to fit together" although "[Daniel] and her "didn't fit" (2018: 251). Besides, the novel reveals that Sophia secretly took one of the pieces of the sculpture from the man's house as a token from him and hid it in her bedroom in Chei Bres. Later that night, she takes the stone from where she has hidden it and thinks that everything belonging to her and "[t]his house could fall away to nothing, and when it did, at the centre of its wreckage? The stone, beautiful, unchanged" (2018: 269). It is the only reality in her hands as the remembrance of the most genuine feelings of her life. In that regard, it becomes clear that the floating head following her in the first chapters is the stone, the part of Hepworth's statue. Thence, the stone which is one of the two pieces of the statue of mother-child stands not only for the timeless and universal nature of art but also for human intimacy, affection and love between the self and the

mother/lover/friend/Other. Thus, as Ley (2020) also claims, “Smith’s characters are led to understand themselves and their world through their encounters with and reflections upon art,” which is also suggested by Sophia’s first impressions of the statue. For Sophia, the artwork “*makes* you walk round it […] makes you look through it from different sides, see things from different positions” (Smith, 2018: 273). In this sense, the stone manifests the eternality of art, connection, empathy and love that erases the biopolitical borders dividing the self from the Other.

Hence, despite the burden of traumatic memories, racist sentiments and populist discourses prevailing in society, the characters of *Winter* do not end up destitute. On the contrary, the novel ends up with self-contentedness and restored order through the strengthened familial bonds of the Cleves, which suggests the call of the novel for “an opening to [immunity’s] converse, community” against “the self-destructive revolt of immunity against itself”; a mode of existence “in which every person is exposed to every form of otherness; a ‘lives-in-common’” (Esposito, 2011: 141; Frost, 2022: 46). However, *Winter* not only foregrounds the personal triumphs over the collective but also chronicles the resistance and solidarity of almost 30,000 women in Greenham, whose mass disobedience and nationwide outcries made a difference. As the narrative voice conveys, RAF Greenham Common was “the piece of English common land fenced off by the American military in agreement with the British military” in Berkshire in which a series of protest camps started against nuclear weapons with the arrival of a group of women to the main gate in September 1981 (Smith, 2018: 143): “The woman comes straight over to the policeman standing at the gate of the airbase […] unfolds a piece of paper, holds it up and begins to read from it. While she does, some more women, one of them quite old, are running across the neat cut grass towards the fence” (2018: 143). The policeman who has thought the protestors were daily cleaners tells one of them that she is “early today” and gets shocked when she “points to the four women at the fence” and “tells him they’ve chained themselves to it in an act of protest and that she’s here to read him an open statement about this” (2018: 144). Thus, for both the reader and the narrator, the beginning of the protests is by no means close to the real, but just as in “a sitcom on the BBC” in which “the audience would be laughing like anything” (2018: 143). These idealistic women “attached themselves to the main gate part of the fence by four little padlocks” to resist the nuclear armament of their country (2018: 144). Their public statement also signifies their surreal courage against the

1970's Cold War-driven world: "*We have had enough of our military and political leaders who squander vast sums of money and human resources on weapons of mass destruction while we can hear in our hearts the millions of human beings throughout the world whose needs cry out to be met*" (2018: 144). The protesters later report that they could not sleep on the first night "thinking about what might happen to them for doing this" and "everything they can be charged for, from disturbing the peace all the way to treason," but "at the least […] thrown in a cell, taken to court" and lose their job (2018: 145). Despite hunger, thirst and cold, they maintain the protest against the "missiles soon to be brought [t]here" and endure them all just like the suffragettes (2018: 145). Their protest soon comes off the hinges and begins "arrests, […] court appearances, […] attacks in the press […], regular destruction of everything in the camp by the bailiffs, […] a rising level of police violence, […] regular middle of the night visits from the local thugs …" (2018: 148). *Winter* continues to reflect the protestors' perseverance in the Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp and pictures them as "goddesses" and "mythical beings" through the locals' eyes due to the flowers they "garlanded themselves" while "passing" the villages (2018: 149). Rather than *angels in the house*, they were *mad women in the attic* who have inspired thousands and "changed the world" (2018: 208):

> it began with thirty six women, several children and a straggle of supporters of both sexes, walking 120 miles in ten days […] the powers don't imagine this protest is going to make a difference to anything, never mind be such a big part of the shifting political opinion about nuclear weaponry which will culminate in international policy, within a decade, altering considerably (2018: 148–149).

Thus, as a manifestation of the "open model of community," the protest signifies "affirmative freedom/liberty" with the resistance of the women against nuclear weapons regardless of their social classes, occupations or identities (Bird & Short, 2013: 9). In other words, Greenham illustrates that "[r]ather than appeal to an immunizing 'enclosure' locking subjects inside themselves, either on an individualistic or collective basis, community is experienced in and through an opening and exposure that 'turns individuals inside out, freeing them to their exteriority'" (2013: 9). In this sense, normative identity divisions do not hinder the demonstrators or their supporters from forming such a nationwide protest. Furthermore, when the military authorities began flattening the camp under the cover of building a sewage system underneath in 1981, the protestors continued their resistance in solidarity: "[s]ome of the camp members sit down on the ground in front of and behind the digger. They refuse to move. The work

stops" (Smith, 2018: 277). Besides, there is a strong collaboration between the local community and protestors: "Some local people have been kind and have made available their bathrooms to the protesters; this was crucial when the base command turned off the water main across the road" (2018: 277). Thus, the protest that began with twelve people has become a mass action with "the numbers of protesters [that] rise beyond anything imagined" and it has "soon […] become a women's protest only" (2018: 277–278). The women did not give up: "they'll be cutting holes in the perimeter fence […] and breaking into the base almost every night then being sent to court to be charged with breaching the peace then back to the camp after fines and imprisonments and cutting the holes in the fence again" (Smith, 2018: 278–279). Hence, "[t]he military and the police will soon discover that there's not much action they can take, in stopping a protest by a group of singing women, that doesn't reveal the shame and the core brutality in the action they take" (2018: 279). Without violence, the women achieve to raise public awareness against all the odds: "[i]n just under a year from now on a sleety December Sunday more than 30,000 women from all across the country, all across the world, will line up round the base fence, nine miles of fence and nine miles of people. They'll join hands in a human fence (2018: 279). With the motto; "[c]lose your eyes and you're dead" to warn "the world [about] the urgency of what they're doing," the women with their disobedience mark a stark contrast with today's docile, indifferent society (Smith, 2018: 279-280). Despite being a part of history, these protests sound almost unreal and illustrate that:

> freedom can only be experienced in an open model of community that 'resists immunization'. This is a community that internalizes its exteriority while remaining open to difference. In this open and free community, individuals are exposed to alterity, pluralized, and thus prevented from appropriating differences (Bird & Short, 2013: 9).

Apart from challenging the borders between illusion and reality and re-conceptualizing the fact in contrast to its fictionality, *Winter* also highlights solidarity as a prerequisite for a humane world where people can live in dignity not only through Greenham women and Iris's activist friends but also via the refugees that help elderly Iris who has come to aid them: "even the people I've gone there to be a help to, are always going out of their way to find me a bed. When nobody else has one. Or to make me one if there isn't one, out of whatever they've got" (Smith, 2018: 230). Similarly, the youth movements of the 1970s also communicate the sense of unity, belonging and togetherness in the novel. While talking about the past, Iris recollects how they were "a

lucky generation, […] to have had all those angry summers, all that strength of feeling, the summers of such love" (Smith, 2018: 301). For Iris, as today's youth lack this greater feeling of being part of a collective endeavour and the urge to struggle for noble causes, Art's generation is the "[s]ummer of Scrooge. And the winter of Scrooge, and the spring, and the autumn" (2018: 301). Contrary to today's world of misanthropy, greed and self-righteousness, the Cleves sisters hail from a time of optimism, benevolence and humanitarianism: "We knew not to want a world with war in it, Iris says. We worked for something else, his mother says. We were ourselves the vanguard, Iris says. We pitted our own bodies against the machines. We knew our hearts were made of other stuff, his mother says" (2018: 301). Then, as a manifestation of their reconciliation, "a curious thing happens" and "his mother and his aunt start to sing. They fall together naturally into a song in another language. They sing it sweetly together at first, for the first couple of lines, then they break into harmony" (2018: 301). In that regard, recollecting their shared values from back then is what makes them re-experience the sisterhood they have long deprived themselves of. Their reunion, which manifests through songs, also denotes Esposito's contention that the self is not "original, complete, intact" and "made once and for all" but

> rather, it constantly makes itself from one minute to the next, depending on the situation and encounters that determine its development. Its boundaries do not lock it up inside a closed world; on the contrary, they create its margin, […] permeable in its relationship with that which, while still located outside it, from the beginning traverses and alters it […] every time [the immune system] goes into action, the body is modified with respect to how it was before (Esposito, 2011: 169).

Because the self constantly evolves through exposure to the Other, Sophia and Art's meeting with Lux and Iris ultimately results in their self-realization and emancipation. As a result of his awakening from his dehumanised, ignorant state, Art, like his mother, gets on with the Other, which bestows him his true identity. The reader finds him "in London a few days into the new year" at the book's closure (Smith, 2018: 281). The past allows him to reflect on his mistakes and admit his lack of empathy for Charlotte, especially on those mornings when she has that recurring nightmare in which she sees "herself cut open at the chest with the chicken scissors" (2018: 281). He is so sure that

> [t]hat particular uselessness, of all his many uselessnesses, will haunt him. It will, yes, cut him open. He will wish he'd got up from behind the screen he was looking at and crossed the room and just hugged her whenever she'd told him that dream. Just a hug, right then, would've been better than the nothing he did, the worse-than-nothing he did, the despising her because she'd felt something, because she'd tried to give it words, give it an image (Smith, 2018: 281–282).

After reflecting on his envy of Charlotte, who, unlike himself, was not overcome by alienation or apathy, he writes her to offer his blog. Charlotte takes him up on the offer and transforms it into a more well-known, outspoken, and politically and environmentally conscious website that addresses a variety of issues, such as the "ubiquity of plastic microbeads in everything from clothes to salvia" and "sexism in parliament" (Smith, 2018: 283). "Art in Nature" soon develops into "a co-written blog by a communal group of writers" in which Art is also "asked to help write July," which stands out as another manifestation of the open community (2018: 283). Art's transition into an authentic, politically engaged, and environmentally conscious person echoes Esposito's assertion that the immune subject can become a unique individual by expanding beyond the boundaries of his self: "[t]he identification of man, […] the preservation of his identity, is one with his alienation. He is able to remain subject only if he is capable of objectifying himself in something other than himself: to submit himself to something that deprives him of his subjectivity or substitutes for it" (2011: 85). Besides his reconciliation with Charlotte, Art attempts to contact SA4A Entertainment Division "to ask […] to meet someone from the organization to have a chat, person to person, […] about the company and his role in it" (Smith, 2018: 283). He refuses to be a cog in the machinery of oppression and surveillance by insisting on speaking with authorised individuals in person. The absurdity of modern society, which has been turned into a semi-open jail with people as lifelong captives by the security technology of governments and organisations like SA4A, is also suggested by what Iris saw that day on the street. She has witnessed four heavily armed policemen, offering assistance to an elderly people examining a map. The stark contrast in size and presence between the police and these old, frail people has struck her, leading her to contemplate, "either I'm seeing things or the world is crazy" (2018: 286). The world ruled by the reign of terror reveals that "the risk from which the protection is meant to defend is actually created by the protection itself" (Esposito, 2011: 141). Through Iris who admires the power of nature that defies boundaries, divisions and limits incarcerating people, *Winter* offers a critique of the politics of security, still haunting the current social and political atmosphere. Regarding "those signs that say keep out, access forbidden, CCTV in operation", Iris realizes that "[she]'d be quite content just to be a bit of moss in the sun and the rain and the time passing, […] the moss that takes hold on the surfaces of those signs and greens itself over their words" (Smith, 2018: 297–298).

These systems that Iris refers to and Art has long been a part of are the repercussions of the "negative immunization systems" as "devices of prohibition, control and exclusion" and "apparatuses that excessively reduce our freedom, our sociability, our curiosity towards others" (Esposito, 2020: 78). Thus, Art frees himself from being a part of these apparatuses by giving up his job in SA4A. Upon his inquiry about the possibility of a personal meeting with his employers through a written request, he receives the typical reply from the SA4A bot, along with a link to contact the SA4A Entertainment Division. He visits the website and "click on CONTACT US," which provides him with the email address of the same bot he has been communicating with (Smith, 2018: 283).

Winter ends with a peaceful scene from Boxing Day. Chei Bres, on this day of Christmastide, is pictured as if frozen in the flow of time and communicates a sense of serenity, fulfilment and harmony:

> Boxing Day later afternoon; the light is gone outside, which makes it evening; the room is a winter dream of warmth. Art is dozing in a chair. Lux is sitting on the floor leaning against his legs like a girlfriend or real partner in front of the open fire in the lounge. It all almost feels like an imagined Christmas might. His mother is talking (quite rationally) to his aunt about the programmes used to be on all the TV channels (Smith, 2018: 295).

Despite years of resentment and estrangement in the Cleves family, Lux makes this warm *Winter* scene possible. Thus, the analogy between the girl and the mysterious Canadian Warbler is not a coincidence. Both trespass boundaries by deconstructing preconceived ideas and freely go between different lands and lives. After seeing Lux off and coming back to London, Art attempts to find the girl who can "disappear so completely in such an age of everything tracked and known" (Smith, 2018: 319). He compares Lux to a bird that flies away from his hands: "he'll have said to himself. Snap out of it. One flown bird doesn't stop the whole kingdom of birds from singing. It's just one gone bird" (2018: 295). However, she is not an ordinary woman but a unique and miraculous being for Art: "there was a bird, a rare bird, involved, and one he never got to see" (2018: 295). On the other hand, the novel like a cinematic work takes the reader to months later, to a summer day: "Close your eyes and open them. It's high summer now" (2018: 312). Now a more politically involved and sensitive individual, Art has left his old self-centred life behind. While "crossing a sombre London," he comes across "the burnt out building at the heart of the city" in which the lower class, mostly immigrant people lost their lives or were let die systematically by the governing power (2018: 313):

> It looks like a terrible mirage, a hallucination. But it's real. The building has gone up in flames so fast in the first place because it's been shoddily renovated, not being for the use or the residence of people with a lot of money. Many people died. There will be an argument happening all across politics and the media about how many people died because nobody can say for sure how many people were in the building that night, it being a place where a lot of people under the radar have been living (Smith, 2018: 313).

As a common cliché in biopolitical discourses, the "invisible enemies" Art refers to are the marginalized communities in society, since in times of "autoprotection," "humans feel the need to build artificial immunity devices to protect themselves from evils, conflicts, and also from the news that threaten or disturb them" (Esposito, 2020: 74). Thus, immigrants like Lux attempt to live "under the radar" so as not to be deported and turn back to imprisonment, violence, civil war or extreme poverty in their homelands. It is also crucial to note that the things that capture Art's attention seem to have changed after last Christmas. He feels shocked and horrified upon reading "a piece of writing about how people are crowdfunding, raising thousands of pounds, to fund a boat that intercepts and waylays the rescue boats sent out from the Italian mainland to help the migrants in trouble in the sea" (Smith, 2018: 313). After rereading the article for the third time, he cannot help wondering about the mindsets of the "people paying money to scupper other people's safety" and "feels sick to his stomach" (2018: 313).

However, as a novel communicating hope above all, *Winter* suggests an optimistic future and the arrival of spring after the dead of winter through recurring allusions to *Cymbeline*. Art goes to the British Library to see the imprint of a flower on the manuscript of the play, which Lux has previously defined as the most beautiful thing she has ever seen in her life. His comments on the play to the Shakespeare expert hint at Smith's trust in the future of the country: "Cymbeline, […] The one about poison, mess, bitterness, then the balance coming back. The lies revealed. The losses compensated" (Smith, 2018: 315). Furthermore, through the trace of the flower on the manuscript, the novel illuminates the immortalizing power of art that has eternalized "the ghost of a flower not yet open on its stem, the real thing long gone, but look, still there, the mark of the life of it reaching across the words on the page" (2018: 319). Besides standing out a means of resistance to the passage of time, art is also rendered as a humanitarian domain that grants the subject an authentic existence free from the control of the governing power. As Ley (2020) also contends, *Winter* designates art as "a way of looking beyond and thus resisting the present, or at very least placing oneself at a remove from its more egregious corruptions". Arthur also suggests the power of art to

awaken the individual into a reality untainted by the concerns of the past, present and future: "how, whatever being alive is, with all its pasts and presents and futures, it is most itself in the moments when you surface from a depth of numbness or forgetfulness that you didn't even know you were at, and break the surface" (Smith, 2018: 226). In that regard, "one of the things stories and books can do" is that "they can make more than one time possible at once (2018: 224). Hence, as it tears down the walls of time, erases the boundaries between *us* and *them*, between self and the other, and inside and outside, art is the last but the most significant intruder in *Winter*. Similar to the head which turns out to be a part of Hepworth's artwork, art corresponds to Esposito's notion of "the other [which] is the form the self takes where inside intersects with outside, the proper with the common, immunity with community" (2011: 171).

Symbolically, the character Art also offers a balance between Sophia, who stands for the idea of immunity, and Iris, the representative of Esposito's community, assumes the role of a mediator between the sisters and provokes them to argue thanks to "a good Charlotte-like question" to keep them in contact (Smith, 2018: 224, 317): "He's got into the habit of thinking up something conceptual or metaphysical to ask them both every week or so. He copies them both into everything he sends them. This infuriates them. […] the fury keeps them in touch with one another as well as with him (2018: 316). Last week, the question he thought up is also an inquiry not only addressed to the sisters but to the reader: "*What's the difference between politics and art?*" (Smith, 2018: 317). Thereby, *Winter* assigns the reader the responsibility to contemplate the social and political issues as well as art's function in our post-truth world. Sophie responds with a message merely sent to Art: "*Dear Arthur, Politics and Art are polar opposites. As a very fine poet once said, we hate poetry that has a palpable design upon us*" (2018: 317). These messages not only allude to the novel's polyphonic and heteroglossic structure but also to its status as a work of art. According to Sophia, true art by no means serves didactic, political, or moral aims. She thus stands out as the representative of modern artists and writers who avoid taking sides, ignore political and social issues out of fear of coming out as didactic, substandard, or politically involved, and as a result, intentionally or unintentionally, serve the status quo. On the other hand, the response of Iris points out the critique the novel offers of the passivity of British authors and artists towards human rights abuses, migrant issue, Brexit and the rise of ethno-nationalism. In her message, she elaborates on the educational background,

distinguished character and career of John Keats whom Sophia has quoted to refute her claim that art and politics are opposite domains:

> Keats was an anomaly, no Eton or Harrow or Oxbridge for him and that therefore every word Keats wrote and managed to publish was bloody well politicized all right *& th diff dear Neph is more betwn artist and politician – endlss enemies coz they both knw THE HUMAN will alwys srface in art no mtter its politics, & THE HUMAN wll hv t be absent or repressed in mst politics no mtter its art x Ire* (Smith, 2018: 317).

Iris's message signifies the manifesto of the quartet, literature or art that sides with the human, which Montesdeoca Cubas also highlights in her discussion of *Winter*: "capitalising THE HUMAN is a powerful visual resource to draw our attention to the human values and rights we are largely neglecting" (2019: 81). On the other hand, politics is rendered as a strategy to silence and efface the individual's humane self to consolidate society, as Esposito also notes:

> When politics takes life as an object of direct intervention, it ends up reducing it to a state of absolute immediacy. In this case, […] any "form of life," even the possibility of a "right life" or a "common life," is excluded. [...] It is as if politics needed to deprive life of any qualitative dimension, to render it "only life," "pure life," or "bare life" in order to relate to it (Esposito, 2011: 14).

Art, on the contrary, unveils, encourages and nourishes the humane side of the individual. Thus, while assuring Lux of Art's sanity despite his hallucinatory experience, Iris suggests how art makes the invisible visible and silenced heard in the simulacra of the dystopic modern condition: "where would we be without our ability to see beyond what it is we're supposed to be seeing?" (Smith, 2018: 287). Thus, rather than calling for taking sides "between art and politics, or even the mythical and the realistic," the novel "pose[s] a much trickier political question": "Into whose myth do we choose to buy?" (Ley, 2020; Smith, 2018: 134). In this regard, although Sophia, in the following messages, tells her son to "*stop sharing [her] private messages with [his] aunt*," she then asks her sister when she will return from Greece, which proves that "[t]he human will always surface" despite all the differences, resentments, opposing political views or ideologies (Smith, 2018: 318). At the end of the stories of the Cleves, Art invites both the sisters and the reader to think about the people in the news he has read today: "*Hi, it's me, your son and nephew. Why is it, what is it in us, in our natures, that means that people would want to pay actual money to make it difficult for other people not just to live but to be literally saved from dying?*" (2018: 318). Leaving the answer to the reader, *Winter* in its closure mediates on the statements of the former president of the USA he made at the beginning of July and promised his electorates to

regain their Christian customs and say Merry Christmas again: "An American President is making a speech in Washington at a rally to celebrate war veterans. […] I remind you that we're going to start saying Merry Christmas again. Then he talks about the words that are written on American money as if it's money itself that's the prayer" (2018: 321). Nonetheless, the narrator also reminds that at the 2007 National Scout Jamboree, the same president "is encouraging the Scouts of America […] to boo the last President and to boo the name of his own opponent in last year's election" and repeats his promise of saying Merry Christmas at the end of July (2018: 322): "*by the way, under the Trump administration, he says, you'll be saying Merry Christmas again when you go shopping, believe me. Merry Christmas. They've been downplaying that little beautiful phrase. You're going to be saying Merry Christmas again, folks*" (2018: 322). As Byrne also notes; Trump's speech not only "mobilises far-right discourses that operate around a politics of white supremacism, where whiteness is depicted as under duress, understood through a poetics of loss characterised as multicultural and multi-faith assaults on Christian festivals," but also designates "whiteness as a minoritized culture, besieged by immigration and globalization" (2020:91). Hence, the US president, with his speech, denotes Esposito's designation of "new sovereignisms" "as a sort of immunitarian rejection of that general contamination that is globalization" which has gradually turned communities "into fortresses" (2020:77). Thus, the novel provides a warning for the future by ending with Trump's promise for oncoming years while unreservedly providing the free realm of art against biopolitical discourses: "In the middle of summer it's winter. White Christmas. God help us, every one" (Smith, 2018: 322).

While blurring the line between fact and fiction in its journal-like and fragmented structure, *Winter* intertwines the characteristics of political, societal, Brexit and postmodern fiction through by addressing political scandals and protests with the complexity and profanity of the human condition. This experimental and outspoken tale, which incorporates "the formal and political preoccupations of postmodernism," provides a colourful mosaic of the last two centuries with intertextual references to Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*, Dickens's *A Christmas Carol*, children's stories and Christmas songs (Horton & Germanà, 2013: 4). In that regard, the novel offers another snapshot of post-Brexit society through entangled images of the local and the universal as well as the contemporary and timeless. The skilful use of abrupt shifts of time and

setting, flashbacks, free indirect discourses, stream of consciousness, polyphony, equally significant and equally sympathetic narrative voices, and an authorial voice with a second-person narrative point of view provide an anti-traditional, anti-authoritarian representation of the post-millennial world from the standpoint of the Other rather than the status quo. As Frankova also suggests; the novel offers "ambiguous merging of voices, compounded by the absence of quotation marks for direct speech, floating across temporal zones without bounds, from recent events to distant memories and back to the present or even glimpses of the (hypothetical?) future" (2019: 91). Thus, regarding "all of these voices" which "are unarguably postmodern" with "their constantly shifting playfulness," *Winter* like the other novels of *Seasonal Quartet* is the literary manifestation of the counter discourse (2019: 91). In this vein, the novel illustrates auto-tolerance and offers a direct critique of immunisation, racism, technological surveillance, oppression and other marginalizing and dehumanizing practices of biopower. Smith's work mirrors Esposito's affirmative model of biopolitics, "which is as much political, as it is ethical, as it is communal" and calls for a "shared individuality or a sharing of individuality" regarding "the enigma of immunity" (Bird & Short, 2013: 10; Esposito, 2011: 177).

On the other hand, postmodern elements like self-reflexivity, intertextuality, faction, fragmentation, playfulness, deconstruction of metanarratives and objective reality, and the emphasis on contingent, subjective, partial truths and a decentred and fragmented reality render *Winter* an autobiofiction. Smith's work not only deconstructs the mimetic representation of the world but also displays the reconstruction of characters' truths, realities and autonomy over their existences and thus suggests its fictional realm as a universe with its own rules free from biopolitical norms or truths. Besides, characters realize themselves by revisiting their personal histories moulded by the history of the country, using their imagination, telling stories, dreaming and seeing things that the majority cannot see, thus creating their realities untainted by biopower. Furthermore, they attach their interpretation to the world after embracing their truths. In other words, by searching for and embracing their authentic selves, Sophia and Art, thanks to Lux and Iris, liberate themselves from biopolitical power, that is, the narrator, and recreate their realities by telling their own stories as much as and as detailed as they wish. That is why the narrator cannot go into the minds of the otherized figures like Iris and Lux but learn about them via Sophia and Art, and the narrative voice does not give

any information about Iris or Lux apart from the viewpoints of the mother and son. Thus, neither the narrator nor the conformist characters have a say over the Other in *Winter*. Accordingly, Warner also suggests that Smith takes on the role 'as stenographer, as secretary of her characters, as taking dictation from the beings in the book and passing them on down a live wire' (2013: vii). In that sense, the Other represented through the head, Lux, Iris, the female protestors of Greenham and Iris' activist friends are free from biopolitical discourses. Thus, the mystery about the marginal cannot be dissolved, as Iris and Lux do not open their inner worlds or personal (her) stories to the narrator. Milada Franková (2019) in her "Omniscient Narrative Revisited by Ali Smith and Kate Atkinson" also claims:

> In Smith's novels, the would-be omniscient glimpses illuminate only some of the predominantly nebulous areas of ambiguity about the characters and their lives. There remain huge gaps and vast plains of which we never learn, or the narrator does not know or (intentionally) does not disclose and sometimes only hints at (Franková, 2019: 93).

In that regard, *Winter* like the other novels of the quartet is an autobiofiction with its characters that either create their realities like Sophia and Art or have already created their *bios* as Iris and Lux who keep their stories to themselves and build their own existences rather than resigning to the control or the simulacra of biopower: "The texts are alive with characters […] creating the rich narrative landscape of Smith's permeable voices" (Franková, 2019: 99). On the other hand, as *Winter* provides an alternative reality by deconstructing the biopolitically shaped reality and constructing a disordered and politically conscious view of the world with its postmodern elements, the novel illustrates how art unifies while biopolitics segregates and divides, and how the novel genre can reveal the human out of the political. Smith's work designates art as a site of resistance against singularization and the disconnectedness of individuals rather than a mirror of disguised or distorted reality. Thus, besides revealing that everything is political and modern individuals are manipulated by the hegemonic discourses of biopolitical regimes and organizations, the novel calls for comprehensive, non-divisive rhetoric against dehumanization, isolation and mechanization of the human given that "one cannot be free" but "can only become free" (Esposito, 2013: 54).

CHAPTER FIVE
SPRING TO LIFE: BARE LIVES, HOMO SACERS AND CAMPS IN *SPRING*

Despite its promising title, the third novel of *Seasonal Quartet* provides rather an unsettling picture of modern Britain. Regarded as "[t]he most political book thus far in this earthy and humane series," *Spring* incorporates individual passages from the news and social media along with the intersecting tales of three fictional figures that communicate the political tone of the novel (Gardner, 2019). As a "timeless novel burns with moral urgency" and "bursts with the bruised hope of redemption," *Spring* is a book of opposites, incorporating a passage from despair and darkness to rebirth, hope and light much more vividly than *Autumn* and *Winter* (Redford, 2019, paras. 3, 1). The novel reveals its political and ethical commitment by addressing the current migrant crisis and systematic marginalization of minorities in the Western political sphere through Brittany Hall who as a custodial officer at an immigration detention facility witnesses the inhuman treatment of asylum seekers, Florence Green who is a black 12-year-old girl in a secret quest to find her undocumented immigrant mother and the filmmaker Richard Lease caught in an existential crisis after the loss of his dear friend Paddy, which all provide a thought-provoking biopolitical discussion of otherness in the light of Giorgio Agamben's theories of bare life, homo sacer, Muselmann, sovereign state, state of exception and the camp.

In his *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (1995), Agamben traces the birth of biopolitics back to antiquity and calls sovereign power into question by introducing homo sacer, a figure based on the distinction between *zoe* and *bios* in classical thought. He underlines that ancient Greeks "used two terms" to "express […] the word 'life'" (Agamben, 1998: 9): "zoē, which expressed the simple fact of living common to all living beings (animals, men, or gods), and bios, which indicated the form or way of living proper to an individual or a group" (1998: 9). In other words, zoe stands for "bare life" or "simple natural life," excluded from the polis and restrained to domestic life with no political function, whereas bios signifies "a qualified life, a particular way of life" defined by one's existence in society (1998: 9). For Agamben, all political systems produce *bare life* by reducing their subjects into living bodies without bios. Furthermore, as "the production of a biopolitical body is the original activity of

sovereign power," "the Modern State" which "plac[es] biological life at the center of its calculations" inevitably "bring[s] to light the secret tie uniting power and bare life" (1998: 11). Thus, while defining biopower as an expansion of the already-existing biopolitical imperative of the state, Agamben designates modernity as an era in which "exclusion and inclusion, outside and inside, *bios* and *zoē*, right and fact, enter into a zone of irreducible indistinction" and "the realm of bare life […] gradually begins to coincide with the political realm" as "the exception everywhere becomes the rule" (1998: 12). Furthermore, the philosopher elaborates on the intersection between bare life and sovereignty in Western politics through an archaic figure from Roman law: homo sacer (sacred man) who was the person expelled from society and whose citizenship privileges were taken away because he committed a specific kind of crime. As the hidden and yet "originary element of sovereign power," homo sacer was robbed of his bios and left with his bare life due to his banishment, and thus became a living body that could "be killed and yet not sacrificed, outside both human and divine law" (1998: 48, 55). On the other hand, through a discussion of Carl Schmitt's idea of sovereignty, Agamben, in his *State of Exception* (2005), addresses the sovereign who posits himself both inside and outside the law simultaneously. Although the sovereign can decide on the suspension of the law, he is still bound by it and subject to punishment for such crimes as treason. In this sense, the subjects in the state of exception are stripped of their bios and excluded from the realm of the law that "is suspended and obliterated" yet not repealed (2005:29). Agamben furthers his claims by suggesting that the state of exception is a "hidden foundation on which the entire political system rested" and the constitutive feature of contemporary state power, and he sets forth the term *sovereign state* to refer to democratic governments that exhibit sovereign character by declaring a state of emergency (2005:12).

When a state of exception becomes the rule, particular discourses are simply recognized as norms and certain communities are rendered privileged over others. The marginalized are approached with suspicion, stripped of legal protections yet still included as political targets and exposed to constant monitoring. In this sense, *Spring*, through an Agambenian reading, can be regarded as the modern epic of homo sacers, pictured as interned refugees undermined in the name of cleansing the abnormal from the country, and bare lives delineated as modern subjects reduced to their zoe and posited outside the legal system if perceived as a threat to the nation. In that regard,

Spring at the very opening suggests the production of homo sacers and bare lives with the proclamation of modern sovereign power, which designates the contemporary age as an epoch of control and manipulation in the hands of multinational companies, mass media and demagogue politicians: “Now what we don’t want is Facts. […] What we want is repetition. What we want is people in power saying the truth is not the truth” (Smith, 2020:3). It is a post-truth age designed by the art of lying: “We need news to be what we say it is. We need words to mean what we say they mean. We need to deny what we’re saying while we’re saying it” (2020:5-6). Through its preoccupation with the formation of truth in contemporary world shaped by claims without any basis, the novel not only attempts to refute absolute truths but also unveils the sovereign nature of modern states. The sovereign power incarnated through the chorus with its first person plural narrative voice sheds an uncensored light upon the promotion of bigotry, xenophobia and racism by modern biopolitical governments which appear to have so much in common with the totalitarian Nazi regime regarding their hate speech: “What we want is elected members of parliament saying knife getting heated stuck in her front and twisted things like bring your own noose we want governing members of parliament in the house of commons shouting kill yourself at opposition members of parliament” (2020:3).

While the remarks of the choric voice parallel Agamben’s claims that “all life becomes sacred and all politics becomes the exception” today, the asylum seekers and immigrants designated as threats to the wellbeing of the superrace by the sovereign power are also evocative of homo sacers in the Roman Empire, the doomed of Middle Age, Nazi prisoners and the Gulags of USSR (Agamben, 1998, ps. 11, 86). The reference to the newspaper article of the former British Prime Minster Boris Johnson who compared Muslim women wearing burkas to letterboxes also denotes the publicly humiliation and othering of minority women as modern homo sacers in the country and suggests how “it is possible to state in public what the Nazi biopoliticians did not dare to say” in the modern political climate (1998:94): “we want muslim women a joke in a newspaper column we want the laugh we want the sound of that laugh behind them everywhere they go” (Smith, 2020:3). The choric voice also communicates the ongoing discriminatory rhetoric that gives way to the oppression and disenfranchisement of migrants: “We want the people we call foreign to feel foreign we need to make it clear they can’t have rights unless we say so” (2020:3). The othering of women, religious and

ethnic minorities and immigrants signifies that the sovereign right to kill has been undertaken by the white supremacist communities and illustrates that "the fundamental categorical pair of Western politics is not that of friend/enemy but that of bare life/political existence, zoé/bios, exclusion/inclusion (Agamben, 1998:12). Furthermore, as "citizens whose very politics is at issue in their natural body," modern subjects in *Spring* are either privileged to lay claim to "thinking" and "knowledge" or feel "disenfranchised" and "left behind" in the postmillennial world (Agamben, 1998:105; Smith, 2020:4). Besides, the fear of so-called internal and external enemies is systematically prompted by sovereign states to consolidate the masses and employ their security policies: "What we need is panic we want subconscious panic we want conscious panic too. […] We need all that patriotic stuff. […] we want outrage […] Ban New Migrants Gunships To Stop Migrants […] we want zero tolerance (Smith, 2020:4). The institutionalized fear-mongering incorporated into social media towards immigrants suggests how modern states put the humanity of certain communities into question by equating their fundamental human rights to their citizenship. Hence, the demands of the sovereign voice signify the meticulous designation of humans and less humans by modern Western political thought and recall Agamben's contention:

> the very rights of man that once made sense as the presupposition of the rights of the citizen are now progressively separated from and used outside the context of citizenship, for the sake of the supposed representation and protection of a bare life that is more and more driven to the margins of the nation-states, ultimately to be recodified into a new national identity (Agamben, 1998:78).

In the reproduction of that post-millennial national identity, technological surveillance and the media stand out as critical apparatuses of modern sovereign states that standardize, isolate and subjugate individuals into docile bodies: "We need more newsfeed shock come on quick next newsfeed shock pull the finger out we want torture images" (Smith, 2020:4). Cyberbullying and social media lynching of underprivileged groups also manifest the biopolitical construction of otherness by the sovereign power that determines which subjects are unworthy of living: "we need them to think we can get to them get the word lynching to anyone not white. […] We need to suggest the enemy within. […] we want the people we decide to call enemies of the people (2020: 4-5). To shed light on the recurring themes of racist and xenophobic biopolitical discourses in popular culture and politics—which stand out as more metanarratives than prejudices of modernity—*Spring* voices the assault of hate speech directed at minorities on social media. The social media comments packed with vitriol, threats, racism,

homophobia and misogyny offer “140 seconds of cutting edge realism” in the form of lynch mobs (Smith, 2020:223): “you are typical muslim black faGGot you are simplY unforgivable beyond the pail people like You are destroying the Western World […] you flithy queer immigrant” (2020:223). As the voice of the sovereign power embedded in modern governments, media, and multinational tech companies, the chorus demands to control how people perceive the world by continuously monitoring them to foresee and manage their actions:

> We want to know everything about you […]. We want to count every step you take […]. We want you to take our fun psychological personality test to find out what kind of person you really are and who you’ll vote for in elections. We want to be able to categorize you precisely for helpful input for other people’s fun projects as well as our own (Smith, 2020:119-120).

The practices of the sovereign power to regulate public opinion through round-the-clock technological surveillance signify the systematic erasure of “the classical distinction between zoē and bios, between man as a simple living being at home in the house and man’s political existence in the city” (Agamben, 1998:105). Hence *Spring* highlights how individual’s freedom is at stake by unlimited means of technology that controls virtually all aspects of public and private life: “We want to hear what you say every time you look at a screen. We want to be able to see you through that screen while you’re looking at something entirely other than us. We want to know what you say to each other in every room in your house” (Smith, 2020:121). Furthermore, the divisive, isolationist strategies prompted by the enemy language are the foremost implementations of the sovereign power that segregates the population in terms of ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation and political stance and renders freedom of speech a privilege to particular communities: “We want the black and Latino people who work for us to feel a little less important and protected and able to rise in the company hierarchy than the white people. […] We want to stand up for freedom of speech, especially for powerful rich white people” (2020:121-122). Social media corporations also serve the biopolitical management of populations by encouraging people to comply with its standards and marginalize those who do not: “We want to help millions of people to read posts by trolls. We want to help with government propaganda and to help people skew elections, and not to hinder people organizing and promoting ethnic cleansing, all as helpful by products of being there 24/7 for you” (2020:122). These demands also reveal how people’s zoes are politicized and how the human body has become a matter of political operations and exposed to an unrestricted

power of death in the hands of sovereign power. While carrying out the most drastic and compelling operations of control when it comes to the manipulation of subjects, these companies also collect every piece of information about individuals not only to track the shared political tendencies and potential voter responses but also to spy on certain communities by using facial recognition technology: "We want your face and the faces of everyone you photograph and the faces of all your friends and the faces of the people they photograph recorded online on our sites for our fun data archive and research" (2020:122). Ironically, many people assume that these companies are unable to access the user's personal information without consent. Yet, as the speaking voice implies, privacy is just a matter of money: "We want you to know we respect and protect your privacy. We want you to know we believe privacy is a human right and a civil liberty, especially if you can afford it […] We want you to know you have full access to your information – you and anyone who shadows you (2020:122).

Furthermore, *Spring* highlights the isolated modern individuals who have fewer face-to-face social interactions. Thus, these technologies create sedated and apathetic subjects that are easily kept under control by the sovereign power besides encouraging impulsive behaviours, social media lynching and consumerism: "We want to be the only connection that matters. […] We want you not to associate us with lynch mobs, witchhunts or purges unless they're your lynch mobs, […]. We want your pasts and your presents because we want your futures too. We want all of you" (2020:122-123). By providing the subdued voice of the refugee who speaks out, *Spring* offers alternative views for debate rather than taking a fundamentally monological or authoritative standpoint: "Take my face. I'm not surprised you want my face. It's the face of now. What I mean by my face is the face on this A4 photocopy, the proof I exist. Without it I officially don't. Even though I'm bodily here, without this piece of paper I'm not" (Smith, 2020:125). Due to their statelessness as modern homo sacers, refugees are excluded from the political and legal spheres, stripped of their basic human rights and abandoned to a disenfranchised, corporeal life. Thus, the experience of asylum seekers points out their "production" as "biopolitical bodies" through their "inclusive exclusion" (Agamben, 1998:11, 12). While migrants and minorities are posited on the underprivileged side of an unethical political binary, the governing power legitimizes itself through a privileged community and a polarized population. In this sense, the exclusion of these communities from the juridico-political order designates the

recognized community as fully human with rights by birth: “My being ineligible makes you all the more eligible. No worries. Happy to help” (Smith, 2020:126). As a manifestation of their othering, these groups are stereotyped as criminals and codified as a threat in the collective consciousness of the nation: “you’ll notice this face resembles the drawings on the posters that tell you to report anything you think looks suspicious. Tell the police if you see anyone who looks like me, because my face is of urgent matter to your nation. Not at all (2020:126). Thus, the criminalized face of refugee stands for the face of nobody, the inhuman:

> And it’s this face, like the faces on the poster-lorry the white man in the suit posed in front of, of a great queue of people, I mean non-people, at a border, which proved once and for all that all the people on the poster were faceless nobodies while his was the face of a somebody. He had the only face that matters (Smith, 2020:125).

That inhuman image of the mute, faceless Other in popular culture serves to dehumanize them as homo sacers in public space, which also renders the superrace worthy of living: “My face is all about you. My face trodden in mud. My face bloated by sea. What my face means is not your face. By all means. You’re welcome” (Smith, 2020:125-126). Similar to the voice of the refugee that is set forth as a counter-discourse to the biopolitical frameworks of normativity constructed by modern sovereign power; the novel also speaks up about the ignored voice of nature. While hosting those different, conflicting voices incorporated in a kind of dialogue in and with the narrative with its “radical polyvocality,” *Spring* puts forth nature as a character claiming to be heard rather than a setting (Byrne, 2020:88). Coming to life after its long-seated destruction, nature provides an enduring and timeless challenge to ideologies and regimes: “That time again, is it? (Shrugs.) None of it touches me. […] You’re nothing but bonedust and water” (Smith, 2020:7). Contrary to the self-righteous human civilisation, nature abides with “[t]he plants shift beneath you regardless” and threatens to avenge humanity (2020:7-8): “Mess up my climate, I’ll fuck with your lives. Your lives are a nothing to me” (2020:8). Besides highlighting the destructive power of nature whose potency marks a sharp contrast with the vulnerability of human beings, the novel also delineates the nature as a shelter for Richard Lease who embarks on a journey from urban London to the solitariness of northern Scotland after the loss of his friend and mentor, Patricia Heal. The sovereign power that speaks up in the opening chapter now appears as the anonymous narrator that introduces Richard Lease in a way that suggests its control over him:

> Richard Lease, the TV and film director, a man most people will best remember for several, well, okay, a couple of, critically acclaimed Play for Today productions in the 1970s but also many other things over the years, I mean you're bound to have seen something he did if you've lived long enough, is standing on a train platform somewhere in the north of Scotland (Smith, 2020:11).

While the narrator, as a storyteller, addresses rhetorical questions to tell Richard's story, Richard turns out to be fed up with stories and thus tells the narrator that he neither has a story to tell nor wants to be a part of one:

> Why is he here? That's the wrong kind of question. It implies there's a story. There's no story. He's had it with story. He is removing himself from story, more specifically from story concerning: Katherine Mansfield, Rainer Maria Rilke, a homeless woman he saw yesterday […], and over and above all of these, the death of his friend (Smith, 2020:11).

Suffering from a psychological crisis after Paddy's death that led him to leave everything behind, Richard resents the narrator's power over his mind and resists being fictionalized: "he thinks of his own place in London. Dust particles will be hanging in the sun coming through the cracks in the blinds, if it's sunny in London right now. Look at him, storying his own absence. Storying his own dust. Stop it. He's a man leaning on a pillar in a station. That's all" (Smith, 2020:13-14). With his claim for autonomy against being "storyed," he stepped off the train at the Kinggussie station after noticing the mountains, which "had something about them that accepted the fact of themselves" (2020:14):

> Story of mountains. Story of myself avoiding stories. Story of myself getting off a fucking train. […] He was a man on a railway platform. There was no story. Except, there is. There always fucking is. Why was he on a station platform? Was he waiting for a train? No. Was he going somewhere? For what reason? Was he meeting someone off a train? No. Then why was the man on the railway platform at all if it's not about getting or waiting for a train? He just was, okay? (Smith, 2020:15).

Richard's refusal to be a part of the narrator's story suggests his challenge for a life of his own rather than complying with the tale created by the narrator. Thus, *Spring* with its characters defying the control of the sovereign power manifested via the narrator renders itself an autobiofiction constructed by the characters themselves against the biopoliticization of their existences. As a manifestation of that resistance, Richard reconfigures himself as an everyman whose decision to take up this journey has stripped him of all his socially constructed identities and turned him into "just a man at a station" all alone in Kinggussie where he isn't looking for anyone "and nobody's looking for him, nobody that matters" (Smith, 2020:12). Having thrown his mobile to a waste bin in London, Richard no longer cares about the texts asking for his absence in the planned

meeting with Martin Terp with whom he has been assigned as a director of the adaptation of *April* which is a "novel about the two writers who happen by coincidence both to live in and around the same small Swiss town in 1922 but don't ever meet each other" (2020:33). *Spring* not only calls the line between historical fact and fiction via *April* but also suggests the rift between the self and other through Katherine Mansfield and Rainer Maria Rilke who reside at the same hotel and cross one another at the corridors. Mansfield, battling tuberculosis, is about to finish her life's work at the hotel while Rilke has completed his earlier that year and has left the hotel, though still dines there. For Paddy, the project is quite promising:

> Real people in the same place by chance, and not knowing, not meeting. Passing each other so close. Inches. That's brilliant in itself. But one's lost a brother to the war machine, the other's nearly lost his mind to it. And what they write, it changes everything. They break the mould. They're the modern. […] the two great homeless writers, the great outliers (Smith, 2020:42).

Although Richard has been fascinated by the coincidental presence of these two rebellious authors at the same resort, Terp has offered a populist direction for the adaptation. Despite Richard's strong objections, his scenario about the secret affair of the two writers is favoured by the people funding the film although "Mansfield had fully developed TB by 1922" and died less than a year later (2020:36). Thus, the novel unveils how the masses are systematically benumbed and disconnected from reality via the mainstream and media which all stand out as effective apparatuses of an overall biopolitical strategy. However, *Spring* cherishes nonconformity through the analogy between Mansfield and her counterpart in Smith's fictional universe. Paddy, who is a ground-breaking Irish screenwriter herself, defines Mansfield as "an adventurer" rather than a "Victorian, a thin spinstery sort of person" (2020:38): "Sexual adventurer, aesthetic adventurer, social adventurer. A real world-traveller. A life of all sorts of loves, very risqué for her time, […] she was fearless. […] She shocked into distaste all those people who thought they were the social revolutionaries" (38-9). Like Mansfield, Paddy is a rebel who has been terminally ill. For Richard, she is "a dying species" that "nobody out there thinks is relevant any more. Books. Knowledge. Years of reading" (Smith, 2020:39). Besides her intellectual profundity and a strong grasp of political history, Paddy never gives up attacking the systematic othering and annihilation of minorities in the juridico-political space and speaks out against the divisive operations of the government "[m]essing with the ancient hatreds" for Brexit referendum even when her health has deteriorated. Through allusions to the scandals of Windrush and

Grenfell in recent British history, she criticizes not just the people in power who have let refugees, immigrants, the lower class and ethnic minorities die systematically, but also the society for their indifference: “What’s happened to all the good people of this country? […] That’s people walking about with dead souls” (2020:66-67). The novel reflects how modern western democracies exhibit totalitarian tendencies when it comes to migrants, designating them as modern homo sacers isolated in ghettos, doomed to poverty, stripped of political rights and even exposed to death. Besides, the British that have turned into “people walking about with dead souls” also reminds Agamben’s daunting insight (2020:67): “If today there is no longer any one clear figure of the sacred man, it is perhaps because we are all virtually homines sacri” (1998:68).

While mirroring how “the news and all the papers” and “the god we call the internet” have “[l]egitimized division” and racism to produce lives that could be “killed to an unprecedented degree,” *Spring* also attacks Brexit as the latest manifestation of these exclusionary biopolitical technologies (Smith, 2020:67; Agamben, 1998:68). For Paddy, Brexit has transformed the society into a mass governed by the discriminatory impulse of the superrace rather than a moral compass: “I know people are divided. […] People always were. But people weren’t, and aren’t, unfair. Even British racism used to give way when it came to unfairness” (Smith, 2020:67). She also communicates her lifelong marginalization as an Irish subject in the country: “I’m Irish. I was Irish in the 1950s. I was Irish when being Irish in London was like being black and being a dog. I know the British people inside out. I was Irish in the 1970s” (2020:67). Thus, her life has been posited on the margins, exposed to the thanatopolitical operations of the British state, and in Agamben’s terms, “politicized only through an abandonment to an unconditional power of death” (1998:56). In that sense, her experiences evoke the predicaments of migrants in today’s world. Besides, the scriptwriter also criticizes “calling it migrant crisis,” as what is at stake is “people. It’s an individual person crossing the world against the odds. Multiplied by 60 million, all individual people, all crossing the world, against odds that worsen by the day” (Smith, 2020:68). Through her critique, the novel highlights the dehumanization of refugees by exclusionary biopolitical discourses that designate them as biological facts and living bodies rather than humans. Even “in the delirium of the drip,” Paddy envisions that the plights of migrants will have immense global repercussions as the first spark of a greater social crisis: “[w]hat they’re all forgetting about Windrush is that it’s a river, and a river more

often than not'll grow from a source and lead to more rivers then to something the size of an ocean" (2020:69). Regarding Richard's memories of her, it is clear that Paddy was more than just a friend to him; rather, she served as a source of inspiration for Richard who has built a successful directive career with her scripts that "made" the films "[r]eal" (2020: 21). Furthermore, she inspires him to lead a free, genuine and meaningful life by encouraging him to use his imaginative powers to reinvent himself. Thus, grief-stricken after Paddy's death, Richard has become a living body without a soul; a "hollow man" who has lost not only his mentor and soul-mate but also his ability "to love, literally be in love with, be at actual soul level happily infatuated with something like the simplicity of a lemon" (2020:16):

> imagine someone or something, some force or other, bearing down on you head first and going through you from head to foot with, with an apple-corer, so that you're still standing there as if nothing's happened whereas actually something has, what's happened is you're a hollow man, there's a hole all through you where the core of you once was (Smith, 2020:16).

Declining his constructed existence surveilled and storied by the narrator, Richard, with a mindfulness of his fictionality, expresses his deep grief to the reader for finalizing his story: "Richard is sorry too. He'd like to apologize. He knows he is being as clichéd as a character in a Terp drama. But what can he say? He is sorry, sorry, sorry" (Smith, 2020:107). However, upon his attempt to commit suicide by lying in front of a train, "a girl, […] the one who'd just got off this train," convinces him "not to do that" (2020:111-112). It is Florence, with her hopeful intrusion, who saves his life and starts a new story for Richard.

In its second part, the novel shifts to the story of Brittany Hall whose impressions as a detention centre officer reflect the grim reality of refugees in the post-millennial world. The inhuman treatment of the detainees and the appalling conditions of the detention centre correspond to Agamben's idea of camp per excellence. For the philosopher, the camp, as "the hidden matrix and nomos of the political space in which we are still living," reveals the "inner solidarity between democracy and totalitarianism" (Agamben, 1998:95,13). His claims signify the analogy between the concentration camps of the earlier century and today's immigration detention centers where asylum seekers are deprived of their basic rights very much like the prisoners of camps and thus designate the Spring DC as "the camp" which is "the hidden paradigm of the political space of modernity" (1998:73). Britt's description of her workplace as "a kind of underworld" and a "place of the living dead" designates the detention centre as a

microcosm of contemporary biopolitical space where the state of exception has become the rule but also parallels Agamben's account of the camp (Smith, 2020:132). According to the philosopher, "[t]hose who are sentenced to death and those who dwelt in the camps" are "homines sacres" as lives bereft of "all the rights and expectations that we customarily attribute to human existence, and yet were still biologically alive" and "they came to be situated in a limit zone between life and death, inside and outside, in which they were no longer anything but bare life" (Agamben, 1998: 91). Besides the portrayals of the horrid experiences of refugees as the predicaments of modern homo sacers, the novel also suggests their degradation into corporal lives through the nickname "deet" which signifies an active ingredient in repellent products. Regarding the detainees "insect repellent" also "makes" the workers "insects" or "the bloodsuckers," Torq who is a co-worker of Britt, explains why they give them such a name (Smith, 2020:134): "Everything about this job is repellent. And you got to be careful with Deet. Your speech can get slurred, you can feel really sick, […] Numbness, coma. Just warning you early on so you can monitor yourself for the signs, Britannia" (2020:134). Thus, the staff has to be emotionally sterile and physically detached from the detainees so as not to be overwhelmed by the reality of the detention centre in which detainees' human dignity is trodden underfoot every day. The workers might question the violence against the asylum seekers and refuse to comply with the operation of the institution. That is why, a Syrian refugee "congratulate[s]" both Britt and himself for being there for "four months" as newcomers and they are "not dead" yet (2020:131).

As the desolate realm of the Spring DC gradually turns the workers into versions of detainees, namely homo sacers on different sides of the bars, another experienced officer advises Britt to model the staff and draw boundaries to perform her task efficiently without hesitation, remorse or compassion: "There were lines you had to draw. […] On the one hand there was laugh and say something funny back, on the other there was how dare you talk to me like that. It depended" (2020:131). Therefore borders, as the ultimate expression of biopolitical sovereignty, are drawn not only via the walls of detention centres but also among people as humans and bare lives and thus between the self and the other. As a reflection of the abandonment of bare lives to inhumane conditions, Britt once finds her co-worker Russell "laughing like a drain at the empty bowl someone's left outside the Kurdish guy who's on hunger strike's door. He is pretending that Brit ate something then left the bowl outside empty to taunt the

Kurdish deet" (2020:319). After her first week at the centre, she senses her transformation into a cog in the dehumanizing machine of the sovereign power founded upon its right to let particular communities die. Upon her mother's inquiry about her new job, she responds like a machine bereft of empathy: "I'm a DCO at one of the IRCs employed by the private security firm SA4A who on behalf of the HO run the Spring, the Field, the Worth, the Valley, the Oak, the Berry, the Garland, the Grove, the Meander, the Wood and one or two others too" (2020:133). Despite the physical and psychological violence inflicted upon the detainees, Britt, like her co-workers, begins to tell them to be thankful for being there: "It's a room, not a cell. And you're lucky you've got anywhere to sleep at all" (2020:133). Yet, the Vietnamese detainee Hero bitterly asks "what is like to breathe real air" (2020:160).

> [One deet] was staring from this angle upside down at something through the bars and the perspex high above his head. Why can't we open window in this prison? he said. Open a window, she said, And this isn't a prison, it's a purpose-built Immigration Removal Centre with a prison design. When you're live in Immigration Removal Centre with a prison design you dream air, the deet said. […] His casenotes said he'd got here by being sealed in a haulage container for seven weeks (Smith, 2020:160).

As a reflection of the staff's apathetic attitude towards the detainees, the officers can speak about the weather "while they're holding someone in headlock or four of [them] are sitting on someone to calm him" and treat them like animals "without thinking much about it" (Smith, 2020:166). Thus, Spring DC dehumanizes not just the refugees but also the workers. Britt, for instance, could just say: "we're not a hotel. If you don't like it here go home. How dare you ask for a blanket" (2020:166). However, she starts to realize that a part of her is dying day by day: "The day she heard herself say that last one she knew something terrible was happening, but by now the terrible thing, as terrible as a death, felt quite far away, as if not really happening to her, as if happening beyond perspex" (2020:166). Furthermore, her mechanized, apathetic self has put up walls between Britt and her mother who has also been held away from "the real world" through the 24-hour news channel (2020:135). Her mother as the representative of the masses numbed and consolidated by the fabricated truths of the mass media believes that "the news mattered," yet for her daughter she "hadn't a clue about the real world" as "[e]veryone knew nowadays it wasn't what you watched to find out what was really happening" (2020:135). In that regard, both Britt and her mother are sedated and isolated by different apparatuses of sovereign power, which draw boundaries not just between Britt and the detainees or her mother and reality but also

between mother and daughter. Similarly, Britt's gradual depersonalization leads her to break up with her boyfriend Josh and cut herself off more. Josh, in Britt's first months as a detention centre officer, criticizes her indifference, yet attributes her "self-righteous" manners to her new job which "mak[es]" Britt "go even more mad than the rest of [them]" (2020:157, 158). For him, her job as a detention centre officer manifests "the illusion" of the "security" narrative on "keeping people out" and "being British," which eventually "wall[s] ourselves in" and "shoot ourselves in the foot" (2020:158). His remarks reveal the underlying critique of the *Seasonal Quartet* towards the divisionary political rhetoric and isolationist policies of the governments that have erected physical and metaphorical walls to safeguard the country from its so-called inner and outer enemies. Their disagreement also points out the societal implications of the referendum, in which "people everywhere had been bright red with rage" and blamed one another (2020:162). Accordingly, in response to a BBC reporter's question in a street interview, she reflects on the repercussions of Brexit on the country where anti-immigrant sentiments have been legitimized as patriotic fervour: "She thought […] how much harder it was to get anyone to listen to anything welfare-based about deets […] everyone from everywhere else was an immigrant too and legal immigrants were just as unpopular with the media and the general public as illegals" (2020:162). Concerning her symbolic name, Brittany, like post-Brexit Britain, has been systematically isolated and rendered apathetic owing to the paralyzing and divisive politics of modern sovereign power. Her walled-off existence as a detention centre officer also suggests the current tendencies of Western countries to intern each person who crosses their borders for an indefinite period of time. In this sense, her mother's advice on "hard work" and "laughter" is nonsensical to Britt because laughter means something inhuman and ominous in a detention centre (2020:162): "There was the laughing from deets that sounded like something had broken, and the laughing at deets from certain DCOs, laughter closer to the bone, threat-laughter. There was a lot of noise generally: laughing, crying, banging doors, thumping doors, shouting. It was a noisy job (2020:162). Thus, it is not just the borders in the political, judicial and public spheres that the refugee trespasses, but those between sanity and insanity in the cells of the centre. Caught in a kind of social limbo, the refugee who is not dead yet by no means feels alive is posited in a deadlock that renders the very definitions of being human meaningless. Their depersonalization and dehumanization echo Agamben's assertion that "whoever entered the camp moved in a zone of indistinction between outside and

inside, exception and rule, licit and illicit, in which the very concepts of subjective right and juridical protection no longer made any sense" (1998:97). Furthermore, "built for 72-hour detention at the most," the detention centre is delineated as an appalling place worse than prison as the modern camp (Smith, 2020:135): "there were people in here […] for years, years and years. […] Most of them in here'd been in at least a couple of months" (2020:135). The unwritten rules Brit "learned in her first two weeks as a DCO at a UK IRC" describe the hellish atmosphere of Spring DC (2020:149):

> [1] How to turn her body cam off until a deet was really about to lose his cool. […] but you have to learn to sense when he'll get to about ten seconds off battering his head against the wall, and then you switch it on. […] No, he's fine. […] He's just doing it to annoy us. [2] How there was isolation for kicking off. No bedding, lights on 24/7, security checks every 15 mins 24/7 (Smith, 2020:149-150).

Over and above the insults of the officers who call the detainees "pigbollocks, penis and prick," the refugees with major health conditions also cannot receive adequate medical care (Smith, 2020:150). As if it were not already ruthless enough, the "management was thinking of putting a third bed in every room" designed for two people (2020:151). The detainees are also denied basic privacy, as in Britt's terms, "[w]hat privacy meant" is being human, a status granted merely to those who are not detainees (2020:165). In those cell-like rooms, "[t]here were toilets" which "had no lids and most of them were in the room with no screen or anything between them and the beds" (2020:151). She thinks that "[t]his had a good knock-on effect of a lot of deets not eating much, given that nobody unless they're insane wants to shit in front of anyone else" (2020:151). The disenfranchisement of detainees deprived of their most fundamental human rights suggests the equation of human dignity with citizenship, which corresponds to Agamben's contentions about the nationalization of citizenship today: "In the system of the nation-state, the so-called sacred and inalienable rights of man show themselves to lack every protection and reality at the moment in which they can no longer take the form of rights belonging to citizens of a state" (1998:75). Through Britt's remarks, the novel also signals the alarming numbers of detainees in the country and suggests the financial interests behind the sheer volume of those arrests: "there were 30,000 people detained in this country at any one time, and that was the level of interned deets across detention estate that kept SA4A salaries stable" (Smith, 2020:151). In this sense, the parallelism between the systematically bestialized detainees of Spring DC and Agamben's Muselmann is worth reflecting on. A Jewish figure in the Nazi concentration camps, Muselmann is "a being from whom humiliation,

horror, and fear had so taken away all consciousness and all personality as to make him absolutely apathetic" (Agamben, 1998:103). Muselmann is not just "excluded from the political and social context to which he once belonged" and "destined to a future more or less close to death. He no longer belongs to the world of men in any way […]. Mute and absolutely alone, he has passed into another world without memory and without grief" (1998:103-104). Britt's testimony reveals that some detainees have been turned into modern Muselmanns as living bodies degraded into animalistic life and having lost both their hopes and humanity due to their inhuman treatment:

> the deets wandered the wings like they were jetlagged. They got more jetlagged the longer they were detained. They'd arrive for the first time and make friends with the people they'd something in common with, place of origin, religion, language. Then that friendship just died, […] they really now had in common was […] being stuck in here in indefinite detention, which means no way of knowing when you'll be out of here or […] how long it'll be before you're right back in again (Smith, 2020:165-166).

Besides their exclusion from public space, the detainees are not allowed to "touch or sit next to anybody" in "the room" during the visits since "[s]itting next to family is forbidden" (Smith, 2020:139). Worse off than convicts, the detainees are robbed of even the rights of prisoners as disenfranchised bodies in the camp which is, for Agamben, a modern biopolitical space "topologically different from a simple space of confinement" "[a]s the absolute space of exception" (1998:19). A refugee named Pascal who has become not only stateless but also selfless due to his traumatic past and the cruel conditions of the centre is portrayed as a modern Muselmann whose life has been irrevocably shaped in the modern camp: "the South Sudan deet, Pascal, eyes down, head low on his neck, saying nothing. His casenotes said he claimed he'd been made not just to watch his father and brother both decapitated but been forced to choose which head he'd play football with, and to do it too" (Smith, 2020:142). Britt confronts many refugees like Pascal whose tragic histories and current internments have dehumanized them into Muselmann: "One of the deets in constant watch had been throwing [his stool]. He did it all the time, to get attention. It didn't matter how many times you washed your hands of it, or whether people cleaned it up or not. It was still everywhere" (2020:159). Like Spring DC, Woods Detention Centre for female refugees also produces homo sacers and Muselmanns. Infamous for being "rough on the women there, like living in a shower room with a bunch of strangers," the Woods is another manifestation of the modern camp in *Spring* (2020:143):

> Worse, the body searches. The assaults that never make it to report. The story goes, rapes. Plus, the women who'd been sex trafficked across the world and ended up at the Wood all swore it. Detention there was worse than any of the rest of what had happened to them (Smith, 2020:143).

The suffering and confinement of the detainees in both detention centres reveal how they are rendered as homo sacers with no rights or voice "for the crime of being a migrant" (2020:159). On the other hand, the detainees born and raised in Britain are worse off than other internees and manifest the racist operations of biopolitical sovereignty in the country. For Britt, the "deets who'd been brought up in the UK were the most depressed and could be particularly troublesome, partly because none of the others would make friends with them" (2020:151). Laurie who was in the "same class" with the detention officer Russell "all through primary and secondary" is one of them (2020:151). His plight illustrates how every minority is a potential refugee in the contemporary world: "I got stop and searched outside a supermarket, I was standing too close to a Porsche. They took me into a station God knows where, then in the middle of the night woke me up, put the cuffs on and brought me here" (2020:151-152). His internment also suggests the designation of citizenship as white, Anglo-Saxon subjecthood and the institutionalized biopoliticization of people of colour in the public space. Furthermore, Laurie gets a real shock when he learns that he "was about to be deported to Ghana, literally next morning" (2020:152): "Ghana? […] I don't know nothing about Ghana. I never been to Ghana. I don't even know where Ghana is" (2020:152). Thus, the novel also highlights the distinction between the superrace and subraces abandoned to the constant risk of disenfranchisement and even death as a biopolitical strategy through the dehumanization of detainees by the staff. That is why "[a] lot of DCOs laughed to the deet who'd been put on a plane before he had a chance to find out that the papers saying he could stay had arrived at the centre" (2020:152). Contrary to the officers who take pleasure from the detainees' misery, Brittany's satirical laughs allude to the fabrication of truths by the sovereign power to perpetuate itself: "Detention is the key to maintaining an effective immigration system. HO. Nobody is detained indefinitely and regular reviews of detention are undertaken to ensure that it remains lawful and proportionate. HO HO HO" (2020:167).

Nevertheless, the illusion created by the biopolitical machine is shattered by the arrival of "some schoolkid [who] got into the centre and […] got management to clean up the toilets" (Smith, 2020:129). Despite the large number of "designated adult who were plainly still kids, thirteen, fourteen" in the institution, it is still a mystery how "[a]

girl," "[t]welve or thirteen" could enter "a male-only centre," convince the manager to get "[a]ll of the toilets" cleaned and walk out of the building (2020:129). To Britt's surprise, she "apparently just *walked into* the centre" despite the procedures to "be searched, checked, photographed, checked, assigned the visitor lanyard, checked, scanned, checked again, then security gates, doors, fences, doors, three more checks then wing recep final check" (2020:136). Thus, the girl has come up like "Brigid of Kildare" in Irish folklore, bringing life and spring to the underworld and awakening both the detainees and the staff from their lifeless, everyday existence (2020:114). After her intrusion, "the whole place was different. It was weird-quiet. Nobody laughed. Nobody cried. Nobody, deets or DCOs, banged the doors (2020:114). Britt heard that "this kid had also walked in – and out – at four other IRCs" and "rung a doorbell on one of the knocking houses in Woolwich, had got in there, and had come out again alive and unhad" (2020:136-137). Furthermore, the owners beg the police to "come and get her" as the girl is "ruining [them]" (2020:137): "Because she'd got in there and […] had gone through several rooms persuading clients out of doing what they were in the middle of doing, […] and then she'd made the guy on the front door unlock it and fifteen teenage and younger girls got free and ran for it, ran for their lives" (2020:137). Thus, *Spring*, by foregrounding the regenerating impact of the girl, not only associates her with springtime but also pictures her as a modern-day heroine and a mythical figure whose miracles are fed by the testimonies of the Other:

> [O]ne of the self-harmer deets, an Eritrean on C wing, […] had looked up and found the girl in his room just standing there like a vision like the fucking Virgin Mary (Russell). The Eritrean self harmer had said to her, this place they are keeping me in is like living in hopelessness, so why would I live? Only pain is keeping me alive. Then the schoolgirl'd said something back to him, though he wouldn't tell anyone what, and now he was like a new man (Smith, 2020:137-138).

Described as some sort of unearthly, supernatural being by the workers like Russell who believes that with her "wings," she "flew like an angel […] as far as C wing with nobody throwing her out," the girl as an anomaly puts a spanner in the works of the detention centre (Smith, 2020:138). Yet regardless of her wonders, she is still an Other as the daughter of an undocumented immigrant woman whose story unveils how modern democracies, with their states of exception, manifest totalitarian impulses to eradicate an entire group of citizens that cannot be assimilated into the political system: "the girl's mother was a deet in the Wood, that her mother'd been picked up by the HO because she'd applied to do a course at a uni, she'd grown up here but she'd no passport

and the HO picked her up off the street" (2020:138). After her mother "had been in a few weeks," the girl "had got herself into the Wood" and "stood there telling the guys on the gate to sort it that night, get the DCOs to unlock her mother's room and then unlock the unit and then shut off the system and let her mother out" (2020:138). Furthermore, Sandra, who is the secretary in Spring DC, also tells Britt that the girl "walked right past [the security guards] no trouble, they hadn't stopped her, she walked past them as easy as she walked right past [Sandra] herself" who "didn't stop her, […] didn't want to," then went into the manager's room and eventually "five, ten minutes later, she comes out of the office" (2020:139-140). Afterwards, the manager tells Sandra to call the cleaners and "get them in ASAP" (2020:140). She also adds that "this girl had been visiting several other IRCs and persuading people to do all sorts of unorthodox things like cleaning toilets properly" (2020:140). Interestingly, almost everyone in the centre claims to know her. While some workers assert to knowing "about the girl, that she went to a Co-op academy with a friend of someone else at work's kids," the stories of detainees are more tragic (2020:141): "She'd survived a dinghy and come up from Greece. No, she'd crossed a desert past skeletons who hadn't made it, kept herself alive by drinking her own urine. […] They said they knew her mother, that she'd been drowned in a boat off Italy (2020:141-142).

One morning, Brittany meets the girl "sitting on one of the metal seats outside the station" and learns that her name is Florence, which "makes" Britt "the machine" but "not necessarily [the girl's] machine" (Smith, 2020:171). She seems to be awaiting an adult to assist her in her travel to a destination she does not know yet, but hidden in an "old-looking" postcard "postmarked decades ago" and noted "KINGUSSIE" at its bottom (2020:171). As the girl wants "to travel with no footprint," yet "needs an adult to buy [herself] a ticket," Florence asks for Britt's help to accompany her to Scotland (2020:173, 174). Seeing her reluctance, Florence, all of a sudden, rushes to the station by calling out for her to come quickly and, to Britt's amazement, "the man who looked after the barriers […] opened the barriers" for the girl who gets into the station in a flash (2020:178). After a moment's hesitation, Britt finds herself on a train to Scotland, conversing with the girl about the first microscope and the hidden cosmos beyond human perception. In those moments, Britt feels joy for the first time in a long while: "If Brit could thumb back through all the weeks of her time on earth so far, every one of its Mondays, she'd still end up 100% sure that she's never been happier on a Monday

afternoon than she is right now" (2020:183). Her self-reflection suggests that the girl gradually re-humanizes Britt's mechanized self and wakes her from her mundane, benumbed life. Similar to the transformative impacts of Daniel in *Autumn* and Lux in *Winter*, Florence as an intruder Other breathes life into the characters' isolated lives. She also has some sort of magical invisibility in the public sphere, which she embraces as her power against the oppressive biopolitical order. Regarding Masters' claim that the invisibility of the Other is one of Smith's "stylistic devices for expressions for all people rendered invisible" and "those rejected by the system or deemed other," Florence's ghostly presence is also portrayed as her power enabling her to free the migrant women and captive girls, improve the inhuman conditions in the detention centres and eventually find her mother (2021:983). Still, the girl insists that she "didn't do anything" even when the ticket inspector passes her without looking at her and allows Britt to purchase a ticket without any penalty (Smith, 2020:192):

> Sometimes I am invisible, […]. In certain shops or restaurants or ticket queues or supermarkets, or even places when I'm actually speaking out loud, like asking for information in a station or something. People can look right through me. Certain white people in particular can look right through young people and also black and mixed race people like we aren't here (Smith, 2020:192-193).

While rendering the systematically otherized communities visible in its fictional realm, *Spring* offers Florence's ghostly presence as a metaphor for the confinement of minorities to certain ghettos, social classes, statuses and stereotypes that render them unseen in society. Regarding these stereotypes, Florence tells Britt about the advertising slogan "refugee chic" she saw in a magazine and "wonder[s] what it would be like to never know what was going to happen to you next, or to have no way of getting yourself clean or of knowing whether you'd have a clean place to rest, before it all started again the next day" (Smith, 2020:308). Through the girl's reflections, the novel calls for empathy towards migrants, with the underlying idea that everyone could become a refugee one day. Given that the immigrant's life on the margins of the political and legal community leads modern states to establish themselves as sovereign powers, *Spring* turns this symbiotic relationship upside down through Florence's ability to be invisible and designates the girl as a deviation from biopolitical rationality and order, namely *a subject of exception* who suspends the authority of modern sovereign states. Hence, against the narrator who assumes the biased voice of the sovereign power, the novel offers itself as a non-biopolitical space by making the Other visible and articulate on their own terms. In this autonomous domain, Florence uses her invisibility

as a power to bypass biopolitical institutions. Thus, what she has achieved in Spring "is not supposed to be humanly possible" (2020:193). Yet, Britt is now certain that "the story about the sex house is easily true" (2020:312-313). With the "typical Florence concussion effect," this wonder girl "could definitely easily have walked into the sex house and got right up their noses, making them feel and act like they've never acted before and making them stop what they're doing and open the locked doors […] and look the other way while all those girls got out of there" (2020:313). Thus, *Spring*, by offering unique and politically articulate stories of the Other against the biopolitically constructed narratives and stereotypes through Florence and Paddy, provides the marginalized with the power of fiction by telling their own life (her)stories in their own voices as much as they wish rather than resigning themselves to the story of the powerful. Hence, as in *Autumn* and *Winter*, the struggle of the otherized figures for autonomy also signals their resistance to the narrator who is unable to get into the minds of Florence, Alda and the detainees as it infiltrates the consciousness of Richard who has lost his autonomy after Paddy's death and Brittany who jokingly introduces herself as a kind of machine; namely a cog in the machine of the sovereign power. That is why the girl remains silent when Britt insistently asks about her trick of making people do whatever she wants and refuses to let Britt or the narrator learn about herself.

As another underlying theme of the quartet, borderization is also problematized via Florence's confusion on her journey to Scotland. Seeing her panic about not having a passport the moment the train is announced to arrive in Berwick-upon-Tweed, Scotland, Britt calms the girl by explaining that "[she does] not need one. Not for this border. Not yet, anyway" although "Scotland and England" are two "[d]ifferent countries" (Smith, 2020:195). When Florence is perplexed for not "see[ing] any border" or "difference" even if they are "already […] in Scotland," Britt refers to the invisible borders separating nations "in history […] when passports didn't exist at all, for anywhere" and "[p]eople could go anywhere" (2020:195). Thus, *Spring* suggests boundaries as biopolitically constructed instruments drawn in the collective consciousness of nations. Accordingly, the girl comes up with a rhetorical inquiry that calls the borderization of people into question: What if, […]. Instead of saying, this border divides these places. We said, this border unites these places. This border holds together these two really interesting different places" and "where […] when you crossed them, you yourself became doubly possible" (2020: 196). Ali Smith's remarks in her

interview for the *Paris Review* also correspond to Florence's reconfiguration of borders as sites of freedom and unfulfilled possibilities rather than problematic tools to segregate and antagonise people: "[e]verything is possible at the edge. It's where the opposites meet, the different states and elements come together. […] I don't like borders. I like edges, but not borders (*The Art of Fiction No. 236*, 2017)**.** In this sense, the novel addresses "our relationship to otherness" for "an easing of the boundary between self and other" through its "multi-perspectivalism" by "shifting angles of vision" (Masters, 2021:989). Thus, art and literature are designated "as a means of thinking through […] borders that can be overflowed or traversed in different directions" (2021:989). Nonetheless, Brit, as an apparatus of the biopolitical machine, regards Florence as simply naïve as she believes that nothing, with or without borders, can stop people from waging war against one another: "The wars against people who can roll their tongues due to a genetic disposition[…]. Attacked by the people who genetically can't. And/or vice versa. One way or another there'd be war. […] It can come down to something as genetically random as that" (Smith, 2020:197). Beyond reflecting the never-ending wars in human history, Britt's remarks also render the human body the long-standing border defining one's enmity or patriotism. On the other hand, in response to the girl's criticism about her "pessimistic" and "inhuman" stance that "veto[es] all [her] imaginative plans," she confesses that "it's [her] job" that is inhuman but refuses Florence's suggestion to change her job as one "can't teach an old machine new tricks" (2020:197). Yet for the girl, she "will rust" and become obsolete like a machine if she resists the change, thus she will "oil," "adapt," and "upgrade [Britt] to a new way of working" so that "[w]e'll begin anew" and "we'll revolve" (2020:198). As her remarks reveal, Florence stands out as the mouthpiece for new generation and otherized communities demanding to "revolve […] as in revolution" and "do it all differently" rather than yielding to the current political order (2020:197).

Concerning her endeavours for that revolution, Florence as an intruder Other awakens Britt's ability to feel empathy and love for others, much like Daniel in *Autumn* and Lux in *Winter*. When the girl drifts off to sleep, Britt senses the change within herself following the dull months in the "underworld" (Smith, 2020:199): "look at Brittany Hall. She literally can't believe her own life. She is clever again. She is witty and entertaining" (2020:199). Furthermore, the girl, now asleep against Brit's right arm, evokes an unanticipated sense of protectiveness from Brit who realizes that she can still

"feel about anyone or anything" (2020:199). Britt's gradual reconnection with her repressed humane self by building an emotional bond with Florence illuminates how the quartet, as Byrne claims, underpins "modes of kinship beyond blood relations and normative nuclear families, as well as a radical openness to strangers all held within an exploration of the importance of storying, memory and forgetfulness to ethical and meaningful models of identity, community and society" (2020:88). However, the re-humanization of her mechanized self does not happen overnight. The night they stay at the hotel, Brit questions her decision to help a stranger girl and come so far away from home as her "private security guard" (2020:309). She thinks that Florence is "fine in the world" and needs no guard thanks to her ability to influence people: "You do your thing and it all just opens like fucking flowers for you. You don't need me" (2020:309). However, the girl insists that she needs Britt to disrupt the operation of the SA4A machine by humanizing it with its own apparatus as she believes that it is humans who make it possible for the machine to work. Besides attempting to transform Britt into an ethically conscious and empathetic individual by leading her to help others in need, Florence also intends to "write about [her]" in her future book (2020:310). Thus, the girl as an Other aspires to be the author of her own life as well as the narrator of the machine and its apparatus rather than resigning herself to her part in the story told by the sovereign voice of the narrator. In this sense, like Elisabeth, Hannah and Lux in the earlier instalments of the tetralogy, Florence is portrayed as an autonomous and smart girl who does not fit into the stereotype of the powerless, victimized Other. Despite being posited by the foster families, Florence is more powerful than the sovereign machine thanks to her gift to affect, awaken, change and re-humanize people. That is why Britt is sure that the owners of the brothel "will have been changed by it, and by her – properly changed, changed at life level" after Florence's intrusion (2020:313). With the awareness of the girl's similar impact on herself, Britt fears change coming from being "so close to fairy tale" (2020:201): "Is she enchanted?[…] Is she the guardian of something really precious? Is she wicked, or good?" (2020:201).

Nevertheless, Florence is not just a mythical figure evoking revival and hope; but every refugee kid flesh and blood in the news: "The girl is like someone or something out of a legend or a story, the kind of story that on the one hand isn't really about real life but on the other is the only way you ever really understand anything about real life" (Smith, 2020:314). Thus, as the embodiment of the harsh realities of

today's world and an optimistic vision of tomorrow, Florence puts a spanner in the works of sovereign power with her concern for others and the world. When Brit jokes about her gift that could lead her to "conquer the world," she makes it plain that she is "not interested in conquering anything" (2020:28). In that regard, *Spring* offers solidarity against self-righteousness and otherization prompted by biopolitical discourses through this brave immigrant girl who, without a second thought, saves Richard's life at the Kinggussie Station at the expense of drawing undue attention from the SA4A while running away to find her mother. Besides, thanks to her testimony to the security officers, Richard can avoid a custodial sentence for putting himself and others in danger. When the officers refuse to believe that he has gone below the train to look for a pen "of great sentimental," Florence tells them to "let him go now" and miraculously "[t]he two men holding him let go of the man's arms. Then they look a little surprised at the fact that they've just done that" (2020:210, 211). Furthermore, seeing that the woman officer is about to call the police, Florence assures her that "no harm done" (2020:211). The officer in turn "looks bewildered at hearing herself say" that she believes that no harm has been done in this case. Thus, the girl's influence on the officers, ticket inspectors and the staff of the Spring and the Woods DCs stems from her unique ability to reach the human essence within the robotized subjects of the biopolitical machine.

On the other hand, at the Kinggussie station Richard, Brittany, and Florence meet a lady working at the coffee van named Alda, and, to Britt's amazement, she seems to know both the girl and the location on the postcard as the town librarian. Thus, the journey of the four characters, which also represents a voyage into the collective consciousness of the nation, begins when Alda offers them a drive to their destination. When Richard asks for her suggestion on a special place on their way to say farewell to his deceased friend, Alda recommends Ruthven Barracks which, for the librarian, has a history marked by "the systematic controlling of peoples by other peoples" and the collective traumas of "the fight, the destruction, the defeat" in the Battle of Culloden (Smith, 2020:235). After outlining the colonization and de-territorialisation of the Scots by the English government which "first built the barracks after the Act of Union" to "make more money out of their new land," "militarized it […] for about a century" and then built "sporting estates," Alda refers to the banishment of her ancestors from their lands with "the Clearances" (2020:235-236):

> when the English ruling class, with the help of the corrupt clan chief landowners, systematically cut down the population of the Highlands, […] and by systematically cut down I mean they treated people much like you'd cut down brushwood or gorse, and then wrote in the papers that they were improving the area, pacifying its wild savages (Smith, 2020:237).

Besides drawing an analogy between today's immigrants and yesterday's "wild unbridled savages," the novel also touches on the oppression of Irish people during the Troubles via Paddy's childhood (Smith, 2020:237). On their journey, Richard has a dream about the thirteen-year-old Paddy, who is "so thin he can see right through her" while "sitting by an empty grate holding a book" in a library (2020:250). His dream is a reimagination of his memory of Paddy who told him about her moments of desperation dimmed with a story of Charles Dickens in her childhood. Yet, in his dream, little Paddy is not alone in her destitution:

> Behind her there's a line of children that goes so far back it never stops. They're in clothes as ragged as suits of dead leaves. Their hands are the only things small enough to reach inside the industrial machines and clean out the oily gunk and the fibres, of which their lungs are already full. But no hand can go inside and clean out their lungs (Smith, 2020:250).

Upon Richard's relief that "those days" of the chimney sweeps and climbing boys "are over" and "it's better in the world right now," little Paddy reminds him of the kids who are "down the mines right now," "sitting in slave labour sheds," "eating rubbish on landfill mountains," trafficked "for sex money" and "locked in freezing cold warehouses in the US" with no news from their parents (Smith, 2020:250-251). She also recalls the children "by themselves all over this country, who get there by crossing the world then just disappear," the kids suffering "in a whole new version of the same old British poverty" and "thousand thousand thousand of [them]" (2020:251). Her remarks not only expose the myth of human progress considering the exploitation of children in the contemporary world but also recall Florence, who is as downtrodden, otherized, influential and rebellious as her counterpart.

The journey of these four characters eventually ends when Alda and Florence run away together to meet the girl's mother once they have stopped to drop Richard off. To Brittany's shock, "the coffee truck woman" turns out to be a member of an underground organization assisting refugees to live under the radar and reunite their families. After realising that the two have tricked her, Britt calls SA4A and gets mother and daughter detained as revenge for being treated as a side-character (Smith, 2020:317): "because it was never about her. Because she was never a real part of the

story. She was just an extra in it. She was the hired help" (2020:317). Thus, after their short reunion, the girl and her mother are caught on the battlefield by the SA4A, which concludes the shared quest of Richard, Florence and Brittany. While delineating the separation of mother and daughter, the novel highlights the absurdity of "a small mob of people in uniform" rushing to the battlefield and arresting the woman and the child as if they were criminals, which points out the biopolitical designation of migrants as nonhumans deemed as threats to the social body by the common sovereign impulses of authoritarian and democratic states*:* "there are so many people running with such fierceness at a woman and a child. It's not hard for the uniforms to surround them […] The people in the uniforms separate the woman and the child. […] The child is placed in […] one van and the woman, who they handcuff, in the other (2020:332). However, the tourists and the crew of a famous TV serial videotape the way SA4A takes the woman and the child as if there were a terror attack. Thus, thanks to the public pressure created on social media after that day, Florence's mother is "let out on indefinite in case of media attention," which suggests the effectiveness of raising a collective voice and public response against injustices (2020:320). On the other hand, Britt turns back to her work at Spring DC without getting any promotion although, "SA4A top level were very grateful at the time for her phonecall, particularly because they couldn't get the facial rec tech to work on the girl's face […] because of angles and age and ethnicity" (2020:320). In this sense, while serving the systematic control of the population, surveillance technologies of the sovereign power also ruin the lives of people of colour, as "facial rec doesn't work on black people very well, which means people get arrested who aren't the right people" (2020:320). Accordingly, these technologies operate vis-à-vis the stereotypes in popular culture and monitor certain ethnic groups as people of interest, which results in their unjust detentions. Nevertheless, the Other has moved beyond the gaze of the sovereign power in *Spring* given the future lives of Florence and her mother unknown to Britt, the staff, the reader or the narrator. Rumour has it that Florence's mother was "picked up, kept in for two months, got let out on indefinite in case of media attention" (2020:320). On the other hand, the girl "can't be picked up, dep'd or anything till she's eighteen" due to legal reasons and she "legally becomes a citizen, or not, depending on whether she's got legal papers" (2020:321). Thus, although her attempts to humanize the machine at the cost of losing her mother seem to fail, Florence can put an end to the power of SA4A and biopolitical sovereignty over

her life with her prospective citizenship. In the same vein, she does not allow the author or the narrator to tell her future story, which will be created and told by herself alone as the power of her own existence.

On the other hand, while Britt hides the girl's Hot Air Book to read in admiration of the dialogue among the pieces of writing that speak for themselves in the notebook, Richard has found a new purpose in life thanks to Florence. After resigning from his last project with Terp, he starts a documentary entitled *A Thousand Thousand People*, which introduces the countrywide secret network called Auld Alliance, founded by volunteers to help immigrant families come together and lead a life free from the radar of SA4A. In his interviews with the volunteers who have taken "the name Alda or Aldo Lyons" "for anonymity," Richard asks a volunteer in "the shape of Alda" whether the townspeople become suspicious of the immigrants brought there (Smith, 2020:269-270). Her response reveals the predicament of being a migrant today:

> for the most part, folk here are kind. And if anyone's abrasive, well, if you've crossed the world already and survived, got yourself all the way here under God knows what duress, then any local abrasion, wherever you are, is likely to feel like nothing more than midges (Smith, 2020:270).

In another interview with an Alda who is "one of the people originally helped by Auld Alliance and who now in turn works for Auld Alliance helping other people," she says that they have helped more than "235 people escape or outwit detention estate" (Smith, 2020:271). For the interviewee, who speaks from her experience, being a refugee means being no one, nonhuman devoid of political or civil rights as the nonhuman: "We move from one invisibility to another. I had no rights. I still have no rights. I carried fear on my shoulders all the way across the world to this country you call yours. I still carry the fear on my shoulders" (2020:271). Regarding fear as "one of [her] belongings" and "will always be a part of [her] belonging", Alda conveys that being a refugee is the real battle she has had to fight (2020:271).

> I fought hard, to get here to your country. And the first thing you did when I arrived was hand me a letter saying, Welcome to a country in which you are not welcome. You are now a designated unwelcome person with whom we will do as we please. Never mind the hundred battles I'd fought to get here. This was the lowest time for my soul. And that's the very time at which my battle really began (Smith, 2020:272).

Her testimony reveals the bitterness of the refugee experience and the suffering they have undergone in the host countries as modern homo sacers whose lives are rendered *expandable* by sovereign power. Despite all, the refugee Alda considers

herself “lucky” thanks to the support of the network that has assisted her in using her ghostly presence like Florence (Smith, 2020:272): “There are different ways to be a nobody. There are different kinds of invisibility. Some are more equal than others (2020:272). Upon Richard’s objection to this “vicious circle” in which “[they]’re disappearing people from a system which has already disappeared them,” she remarks that the Auld Alliance helps the migrants use their invisibility to their advantage and rebuild their lives rather than submitting to a rightless and inarticulate existence ascribed by biopolitical sovereignty (2020:272). Thus, they “are letting people take back control of their own hegemony” and “working for, not against, the people that other people have designated invisible” (2020:272-273). Furthermore, the volunteers do “what they can” and support Auld Alliance with their donations with the belief that “there’s always a way” (2020:274). For the original Alda, it is not just a matter of money but a collective desire to make a change for the oppressed: “Sometimes it goes really wrong. But we sort it. We generally find other resources. One of us remortgaged a house recently. That cut us some slack. When it runs out we’ll think again” (2020:274). She also asserts that “it’s not against the law […] to help people who need help,” yet legal accusations will make “no difference” either (2020:275): “Volunteers all across the country. Countrywide we’re trying to change the impossible, to move things an inch at a time all those thousands of miles towards the possible, and […] there are a thousand thousand people, to borrow your title, ready to help” (2020:275). Thus, she believes that Auld Alliance will create a backlash against the systematic othering of underprivileged groups as “a lot of people really don’t like the way that other people are being treated” and “want to do something to remedy it” (2020:275).

Alda’s response to Richard’s objection about the impossibility of “hav[ing] unrecorded lives” is also worth considering regarding the novel’s emphasis on the necessity to bear testimony to the stories of otherized communities, namely, counter histories that decline to be assimilated into the dominant framing of history. Not only the network but also Richard’s documentary record the narratives of the subaltern and generate a counter-history that renders the Other visible: “We’re working to make the act of recording lives different. [..] You are too. That’s why you’re here recording me” (Smith, 2020:275). Like the Auld Alliance and *A Thousand Thousand Lives,* which bear witness to the story of the Other in the fictional universe of the novel, *Spring* also represents the stories of marginalized communities and thus breaks the dominant, one-

sided history down into diverse, alternative narratives. Despite her awareness of the fact that their mission is "a story for children," "a pipe dream" and they "are a fairy story" or "folk tale," Alda still claims that "those stories are deeply serious, all about transformation" on "how we're changed by things. Or made to change. Or have to learn to change. And that's what [they]'re working on, change" (2020:276). Concerning the analogy between their operations and fairy tales, she also defines Florence's mother as an exception for getting out of the system after being captured and, thus, a symbol of hope against that long-standing, powerful machine:

> That girl's mother. People don't usually get out again after the system's swallowed them. You experienced an aberration that day. But then, sometimes there's an improbability, a moment against the odds, and the door opens, the thinnest of cracks. We helped a whole group of women who that child came to the aid of. God knows how she did, […] what are the chances? They're the chances (Smith, 2020:276).

Like Florence, the women she has rescued are all *aberrations*. In other words, her mother and other women detainees of the Woods and the teenage girls in the brothel are all *women of exception* challenging the oppressive and dehumanizing states of exception created by the sovereign power. Accordingly, while wondering how she "got her mother, or those other women, out of where they were," Richard often thinks of that exceptional girl who, despite "carrying such a weight. The weight of her own story," did not hesitate "to help [him] with [his]" (Smith, 2020:277). When they finally meet years after their fateful encounter in Kingussie, he shows Florence, who is "now a young woman," the Holiday Inn pen he has carried in "every jacket or coat he wears for the rest of his life" (2020:277). Like Florence, the Auld Alliance has given Richard courage and belief for a new start (2020:270-271). Upon his visit to Clava to commemorate Paddy, Richard tells his dear friend how his new documentary on the network has made him feel like an entirely different person: "This project's making me feel, all right. […] I'm spending all this time in a place I don't know, and I feel like I'm home. I meet people all the time who are risking themselves and they fill me with their confidence" (2020:287). As a manifestation of his reconnection to life and others, Richard attempts to get in touch with his long-estranged daughter after thirty years and searches for her "slightly unusual name" on the net, which "[h]e has never dared. He has told himself she wouldn't want him to" (2020:289). To his amazement, the name Elisabeth "comes straight up, a picture of a woman who will be her. It is surely her. […] She works at a university in London" (2020:290). Thus, Elisabeth from *Autumn* turns out to be Richard's daughter, which renders the novel a colourful part of the quartet.

On the other hand, *Spring*, similar to the earlier novels, offers art and storytelling as the foremost means to liberate from biopolitical control and voice the silenced Other. In her Hot Air Book, Florence uses the power of art to build herself as an autonomous individual against the biopolitically designed subjectivities by designating herself as an author who tells her own tale in her unique voice without any need for a narrator to tell her story or fictionalize her existence. The "handwriting" on its "front page" reveals that the notebook has been given to her by her mother who wishes Florence to "RISE" "ABOVE" with the ideas and dreams written on these pages (Smith, 2020:194). Thereby, Hot Air Book suggests the emancipatory power of imagination and artistic creativity that leads individuals to transcend their isolated, everyday lives and liberate underprivileged subjects from their suppressed and walled-off existences. Very much like *Spring* itself, "Hot Air" provides pieces of writing such as "a paragraph written like a wall, of the obscene kinds of twitter language" and "a fairy story, about a girl who refuses to dance herself to death" (2020:199-200). Thus, *Spring* involves fragments and stories from the girl's notebook which discloses "a microcosmic mirror of Smith's own working practices" and "renders the natural/cultural shocks of the present into art" (Byrne, 2020:91). In this sense, the portrayal of Florence as the co-author of *Spring* renders the novel an autobiofiction in which the otherized characters tell and write their own life stories rather than submitting to being objectified and fictionalized by the narrator. Her mother's comments on her notebook denote the emancipatory and exalting power of art:

> RISE MY DAUGHTER ABOVE […] *All through your life people will be ready and waiting to tell you that what you are speaking is a lot of hot air. This is because people like to put people down. But I want you to write your thoughts and ideas in this book, because then this book and what you write in it will help lift your feet off the ground and even to fly like you are a bird, since hot air rises and can not just carry us but help us rise above* (Smith, 2020:324).

Thus, Florence's writing signifies an immigrant girl's personal revolution to the system and her transformation into the power of her life through art. Like Florence's Hot Air Book, Alda's folk songs also suggest art as an autonomous site for the oppressed to be seen and heard. While driving to Inverness, she sings a song about a group of refugees in her local language and explains that the song is

> about an empty house next to a lake, and some ghosts of people who once lived there and were made to leave it when landlords burned them out are sitting in the snow […] it turns out that they're not ghosts at all, they're real people sitting in that snow, and that now they're across the sea in Canada and can't stop thinking of the time they sat in the snow in what had once been their house (Smith, 2020:299-300).

Following the song that portrays the refugees as ghosts, which points out the invisibility of displaced people throughout history, Alda begins another song about a man walking in the snow and hearing footsteps behind him. While telling the tale of the second song, Britt realizes that the woman talks "like she's speaking to an audience somewhere and not just some people she's driving, one of whom is asleep and isn't listening anyway" (Smith, 2020:300). Thus, the novel sets forth Alda as an autonomous storyteller herself telling the tales of the marginalized free from the control of the narrator like Paddy and Florence. According to Alda, that song conveys the "ghostly presence" of the Grey Man that signifies the silenced "people anywhere in the world who've been wronged" (2020:300): "A man "starts to be followed by the sound of his own footsteps, but much louder and larger sounding than the footprints his own boots are making in the snow. And when he looks round he finds he's being followed by a huge grey man, called The Grey Man" (Sp, 2019: 300). Thus, her folk songs bring the invisible into view and make their voices heard across centuries and cultures. On the other hand, imagination appears to be a way for Richard out of isolation and desperation. While he was feeling purposeless and "very depressed […] for quite some time" after his wife took their daughter and disappeared without a trace, Paddy encouraged him to "take [his] child to see some theatre shows or films, or take her on holiday, or to see an art exhibition" by using his "imagination" (Smith, 2020:74). Thus, she helps him construct his own reality thanks to his imaginative powers: "Take her to see things. Believe me your child will be imagining you too wherever she is in the world. So meet each other imaginatively" (2020:74-75). Richard "to his surprise, […] found [him]self doing just that, 'taking' an imaginary daughter to things [he]'d never have gone to otherwise […] [he] did none of it alone, thanks to the gift of [his] imagination" (2020:75). Since then "[i]n honour of his real daughter, wherever she is in the world," he has been conversing with his imaginary daughter who "has been about eleven years old now in his head for a couple of decades" and thus still resonates in him (2020:75, 28). Hence, his imaginative powers liberate Richard from his caged existence controlled by sovereign power and lead him to go beyond the limits of outer reality for a unique view of the world. On one of those trips, he comes across one of the most impressive artworks of his life:

> one whole wall, also chalk and slate, was a mountain picture so huge that the wall became mountain and the mountain became a kind of wall. There was an avalanche coming down the mountain picture towards anyone looking at it, an avalanche that had been stilled for just that moment so that whoever saw it had time to comprehend it (Smith, 2020:78).

Much like *Autumn* incorporates references to the life and works of the pop artist Pauline Boty and *Winter* foregrounds the sculptor Barbara Hepworth, *Spring* features Tacita Dean as the female artist who inspires the characters. Her works, notably *The Montafon Letter* transforms reality into art and art into reality for Richard. Following his experience with the exhibition, he undergoes a profound shift in his perspective on life. The picture has made a change in his outlook on life:

> [The picture] had made something else happen, something he didn't realize till later, till he'd left the room, come out of the gallery and on to the street. […] the real clouds above London looked different, like they were something you could read as breathing space. This made something happen too to the buildings below them […] the ways in which people were passing each other in the street, all of it part of a structure that didn't know it was a structure, but was one all the same (Smith, 2020:78-79).

Hence, the novel mediates upon Richard's emancipation as a character from the sovereign control of the narrator via his imagination and art which can uncover the distorted human condition without any claim of truth with its idiosyncratic and autonomous universe and thus stand out as means for authentic and free existence. Through the contradiction between art suggesting truth through lies and the rampant falsity offered as truth by politicians and mass media, *Spring* offers a critique of modernity in which individuals are systematically disconnected from reality. Thus, Richard's endeavours to fictionalize his existence via his imagination and art in *Spring* signify his pursuit to de-fictionalize his predefined and premeditated life and make his existence his own in the standardizing biopolitical world.

On the other hand, Paddy's films also manifest her attempts to liberate herself and the marginalized from biopolitical sovereignty. As a powerful and authentic female figure rather than a victim of her gender identity or ethnic background, Paddy, like Alda and Florence, challenges her state of otherness with her artistic creativity and gift of storytelling. As a brave and nonconformist woman, Paddy resists oppressive regimes, patriarchy and superficiality in art with her docudramas *Sea of Troubles* and *Andy Hoffnung* that portray how sovereign states produce bare life that "now dwells in the biological body of every living being" (Agamben, 1998:81). As "one of the first ever of its kind," *Sea of Troubles* pictures the Irish "via fragments of the life of the real places they lived and the everyday things they said" (Smith, 2020:58). The film was a revolution itself since "up until then there'd been almost nothing about Northern Ireland" as it was "too risky" (2020:58). Mirroring the designation and oppression of

Irish people as homo sacers in the public space without words, the docudrama "foresaw Bloody Sunday" (2020: 59): "A soldier patted down the legs of a longhaired teenage boy in jeans and a shirt. A soldier waved a metal stick at a group of eight or nine women. A child's legs crossed a road in the distance beyond barbed wire" (2020:59). The camera portrays the Irish as alive yet not living through the gaze of an outsider and surfaces how their cities have turned into camps in the state of exception during The Troubles. Thus, *Sea of Troubles* showcases how biopower may easily turn into a power over death. As Agamben claims: "If there is a line in every modern state marking the point at which the decision on life becomes a decision on death, and biopolitics can turn into thanatopolitics, this line no longer appears today as a stable border dividing two clearly distinct zones" (1998:72). In that regard, *Andy Hoffnung* highlights the thanatopolitical practices of biopolitical states during World War II. Paddy took the inspiration for the film from a man who appears to be Daniel Gluck from *Autum*n. She met him at a Beethoven concert in the late 1960s and became fascinated by the man who "was half German, half English. He'd been shafted by the worst of both. He'd lost a lot at the hands of both, family, friends, home, all gone, and so on" (Smith, 2020:59). The war transformed him from a political subject into a homo sacer banished from both societies. For Paddy, he was so hopeless that the man himself stood for hope without any cause as "the most hopeful man [she's] ever met" (2020:59). Thus, she "realized, talking with him, that true hope's actually a matter of the absence of hope" (2020:59-60). She attempted to transform the hope Daniel conveyed into the hope art offers and wrote the "ingenious" script of the docudrama, which "told the story by not telling it" and communicates the horrors of war through a wounded man wandering on London streets (2020:61). The postcard he has taken from a concentration camp is the only time the brutal reality of war surfaces:

> It's sent from someone in some camp or other in the war. It's fine here, the actor playing Andy Hoffnung says to camera. He is reading what it says on the postcard. But then, see, he says, what she writes is, *but I wish I were with cousin Eury*. Eury was a code between us for hell. Eurydice, a dead soul. She's saying she'd rather be dead. It's the only moment the war surfaces in the script (Smith, 2020:61).

Thus, the analogy between Andy Hoffnung disclosing the ferocity of war through concentration camps and *Spring* which addresses the sense of otherness and plight of refugees in the detention centres points out the power of the art that speaks up the voice of the inarticulate Other and reflects the true human condition in its own terms. Paddy's inspiring films also set forth the unifying power of art that

communicates empathy, togetherness and hope against sovereign power that divides and undermines. In that sense, art is suggested as a path to go beyond the zones of exception and trespass the borders between the self and the other. *Spring* foregrounds art as a hopeful, liberating and humane site that brings out the true human condition, evokes imagination and inspires an unbounded, authentic existence in solidarity beyond the designated existence of the governing power. Accordingly, Paddy's Andy Hoffnung has become a source of inspiration for the Auld Alliance which got its name from the film in which she "made words that mean dedicated to hope into an actual person" (Smith, 2020:271). Similarly, Paddy's desolate life as a thirteen-year-old Irish girl underwent a great change thanks to a story of Charles Dickens: "my life right then had no possibles. My father was newly dead, there was no money, we had to go out to work […] the police were brutal fuckers. It was a brutal time" (2020:248). She thought she had "next to no chance" till reading *The Story of Richard Doubledick* (2020:248):

> I sit with the book in my hands and I think to myself, this is maybe the last day I'll ever have the chance to sit and hold a book. We'd no books of our own. […] I'd picked the first that came to hand off the shelf. […] But time's factory's a secret place, that's Charles Dickens again […] With a bit of help and a bit of luck, we get to be more than the one thing or the nothing that history'd have us be. We're only here by the grace and the work of others. […] Here's to those others who helped, […] and may I be such an other to a good many myself (Sp, 2019: 249).

As Paddy's remarks suggest, the novel offers art as a bridge between *I* and *you*, and the past and the future against biopolitical singularization. Her film *Panharmonicon* also discloses her attempt to build that bridge among the communities turned against one another by exclusionary biopolitical discourses. The film highlights the social schisms through a striking allegory and pictures "an argument between the two sides of the road in an English village, about" the "right to the grass verge in the middle" and "what happens when one side of the road takes what it calls control" (Smith, 2020:257). *Panharmonicon* reflects not only the timelessness of art in mirroring the escalated social divisions of today but also offers art as an antidote to those schisms promoted by sovereign regimes. When the girl and boy from different sides of the road meet on a hill and "watch the smoke rise from the burning cars," they first argue about the rightness of "their own side" but then start to laugh and sing together "watching the neighbours on both sides throwing rocks at the houses opposite" (2020:258): "she starts to sing a tune, and he plays a different tune, and then the two tunes match up and become one tune", which makes "the people stop throwing their stones and all turn and stare at them and listen" for a while, yet after a short while, they continue to throw rocks to one another

(2020:258). Furthermore, their love and empathy make the couple reunite in a train carriage departing from the village after their parents "drag them off to the different sides of the road they live on" (2020:259). In that last scene, the audience cannot hear what they say to each other. Like the otherized figures of *Spring*, the couple has freed themselves from the audience, scripter and director: "The door's closed, you can't hear what they're saying through the glass, it's private to them now, they look out to check nobody's on to them or following them, then the train shunts forward" (2020:259). Thus, both *Panharmonicon* and *Spring* reveal the portrayal of art as a borderless, unifying and humanizing site against divisions and boundaries, which Ley, in his review, also notes: "[the quartet] takes aim at all those arbitrary rules about identity and belonging that have as their underlying aim the suppression or denial of humanity. And the proof that these strict delineations are false is to be found in the realities of art, which does not and has never respected borders" (2020, par. 21). A Charlie Chaplin film also magically transforms the inhuman atmosphere of the detention centre and brings the officers and detainees together on the common ground of being human. Torq tells Britt that upon his sixth week at the centre, they heard a "*weird noise through the wing*" (Smith, 2020:145). They realized that "*it was the deets laughing. […] It wasn't crazy laughing or drug laughing or fight laughing, it was a whole different kind of laughing*" (2020:145). Stunned by their laughs, the staff "*got into riot gear*" yet finds the detainees "*crammed into every room with a working TV"* watching a Chaplin's film (2020:145). The officers soon laugh with the detainees, suggesting how art, as the language of humanity, renders borders and identity divisions obsolete:

> *There was all this laughing, […] and us, laughing. Deets in here I've never seen laugh before or since, deets I've never actually heard speak, the ones who can't speak English and never say anything, the violent ones. The fucked-up Iranian guy usually in isolation, even he was laughing, everyone was, they were like kids. […]After it this place was like I've never seen. People in tears at the end of it. People wandered round the wing after it like we were all normal* (Smith, 2020:146-147).

The laughs of the detainees and officers illustrate how humanity takes hold and surfaces with the power of art. Despite turning to their *normality* afterwards, Chaplin's film has unified them even for a short time, which Torq resembles "Christmas Day in the trenches […] in the video for the Paul McCartney Christmas song, when they played football with each other and gave each other their rations of smokes and their chocolate" (Smith, 2020:147). Thus, *Spring* designates itself as the modern epic of the divided, dehumanized communities that may build a better future through connecting to their

humane selves and others via art. On the other hand, Charles Dickens's *The Seven Poor Travellers* Paddy read as a kid also lays out the call of the novel for building ethical relations with others rather than embracing the righteousness of a recognized social identity. As she outlines, the main character of *The Story of Richard Doubledick* is enlisted as a soldier after a challenging upbringing and becomes a fighting machine thanks to an officer who "befriends" and helps him to "sort himself out" (2020:247). Yet, after the officer is killed, Richard swears revenge on his murderer. In time, he falls in love and marries a woman who turns out to be a relative of the officer's murderer. For Paddy, his decision to move on instead of taking his revenge makes the story great:

> He lets go of the bitterness. He decides to let bygones be bygones. And the story ends prophetically, in a vision of the son of one side of the family fighting alongside the son of the other side of the family on the same side against a common enemy […]. War won't stop, the story says. But enmity can. […] what looks fixed and pinned and closed in a life can change and open, and what's unthinkable and impossible at one time will be easily possible in another (Smith, 2020:247-248).

Besides instilling hope, *The Story of Richard Doubledick* calls for taking a different path for a more humane existence and leaving past enmities behind. Florence's story in her Hot Air Book also invites the reader to reflect on the mistakes of the past to build a better future. Set in "the time of the year when everything was dead," this symbolic tale renders nature all "ungiving" (Smith, 2020:225). Terrified of the oncoming famine, the villagers gather to sacrifice a maiden to gods to restore life to the lifeless world (2020:225). To their shock, the girl who is supposed to "dance herself to death" refuses to dance and tells out that she is not a character they can make live or let die (2020:226): "I'm not your symbol. Go and lose yourself or find yourself in some other story. Whatever you're looking for, you're not going to find it by making me or anyone like me do some dance for you" (2020:227). Thus, the similarity between the maiden and Florence is striking as both refuse to be the victims of the discriminatory and oppressive order designating their lives as disposable for the well-being of the superrace. In that sense, very much like the maiden who firmly states that she is not a character in the story of the villagers or her creator Florence, Florence as a character herself defies the control of the narrator through her Hot Air Book. Besides, as a reflection of the superiority claims of the majority over minorities and the systematic hatred propagated by sovereign states, the maiden's outspoken and bold attitude makes some villagers confused, some "aghast," some "bored" and some maidens "panicked" for the risk of replacing the girl as the next victim (2020:227). Nevertheless, the maiden

is as brave and articulate as Florence and calls the villagers to take a more ethical and peaceful path to bring the world back to life as "there are much less bloody ways to hope for spring" and to "work fruitfully with the climate and the seasons, than by sacrificing people to them" (2020:227-228). She boldly exclaims that the villagers are sacrificing her as "some of [them] get off on the brutality" and "the rest […] are worried that if [they] don't do what everybody else is doing then the ones who get off on it might decide to choose [them] for the next sacrifice" (2020:228). Thus, Florence's story is more than a fairy tale, but a manifestation of the novel's political and ethical commitment to equality and freedom.

On the other hand, the story reveals that the ritual is a theatrical play viewed by an audience. In this sense, the maiden is a character of the play within a story written by Florence who, as a character herself, is gazed upon by the anonymous narrator and created by Ali Smith. Hence, *Spring* not only highlights the fictionality of its own cosmos but also offers itself as a free site for the nonconformist Other to defy the biopolitical control of narrators, readers and the audience: "Some of the audience, out beyond the villagers in the rows of seats in the theatre, were also getting pretty angry. They'd come to see a classic. […] Critics wrote furiously on their screens with their little iPad pens" (Smith, 2020:228). Hence, the dancer as the character in the play and Florence's story and Florence as the character in *Spring* resist becoming the homo sacers of the authors, readers or audience and instead attempt to forge their own identities and bios, which designates the novel as autobiofiction. Furthermore, the maiden and the villagers appear to be watched by gods that "laughed" at her challenge and made a trick to help her (2020:228). While "no villagers, no audience, even noticed it happen," one of the gods "transformed her into herself" by giving her "an armour that sealed itself round her" (2020:228). Then "the girl felt real strength go through her like a god-breath" (2020:228). Nevertheless, against the invincibility of the maiden, the voice of the sovereign power is spoken by a "300-year-old woman" who "stepped forward" with the claim to know "how to deal with this" (2020:229). When she asks the girl to talk a bit about herself, the maiden responds with a laugh: "As you well know, old lady, that'd be the first step towards me vanishing altogether. […] Because as soon as you all hear me say anything about myself, I'll stop meaning me. I'll start meaning you" (2020:229). The dancer's refusal to talk about herself recalls Florence's silence about herself towards Britt's inquiries, which indicates the conscious attempt of the

marginalized to protect themselves from the discursive control of biopolitical power and becoming a part of its narratives. As her remarks further reflect, the Other defies being defined, categorized and kept in line by sovereign power by keeping their stories to themselves: "My mother told me, they'll want you to tell them your story […]. My mother said, don't. You are not anyone's story" (2020:229). Thus, neither Florence nor the maiden want their stories to be written or told by the narrator or the author but aspire to become the authors of their life stories and write their autobiofictions. Furthermore, when the old woman threatens the girl to "sacrifice [her] anyway" "regardless of how willing or unwilling" she is, the maiden, far from stepping back, stands up to them by saying that they can kill her, yet cannot change the fact that she is "older and wiser right now than [the old woman] has ever been" (2020:229). The story concludes with her bold exclamation that sets forth her challenge: "Do your worst. See if it makes things better" (2020:229). Florence's tale allegorizes the resistance of the marginalized for a more humane world by representing the village as the microcosm of the contemporary world; the villagers as the global community; the audience as the reader; the critics as the narrator; the gods as the author; and lastly, the maiden as the undermined and expandable Other.

Spring, in parallel to its title, suggests hope and rebirth through an adolescent immigrant girl that breathes a new life in characters. As the author herself remarks: "[spring]'s the open eye of the year, and children are the open eyes of the world" (Butler in Armitstead, 2019, par. 25). In this sense, the portrayal of 12-year-old Florence as a central character that awakens, gives hope and transforms the characters very much like the springtime reveals the underlying analogy in the *Quartet*, which suggests the cyclical nature of time and compares human life to seasons; birth and childhood to spring, adulthood to summer, agedness to autumn and death to winter. On the other hand, the novel brings out political and ethical commitments through its critiques of escalating technological surveillance, social divisions, racism and the current migrant crisis while calling for saying new things on those unresolved issues. Thus, Smith, without positing art as a propagandist means of a political cause, continues to explore the political possibilities of literature in her *Spring* to make the Other heard and seen. However, *Seasonal Quartet* goes beyond incorporating different voices. Through its polyphonic structure and with allusions to the story of Charles Dickens, films, folk songs, mythical stories, social media comments, recent humanitarian

tragedies and political statements in post-Brexit Britain, the novel offers an alternate, authentic reality constructed by different genres and viewpoints against hegemonic biopolitical discourses and normativity. Furthermore, the uncensored portrayal of the modern human condition in *Spring* also mirrors the vulnerability of being human, which points out that each and everyone is a potential Other and every child is a potential Florence. Besides, the novel foregrounds symbolic characters to address the contemporary socio-political atmosphere of the country. While Brittany symbolizes the country, Florence signifies young generations whose potential is discouraged by Brexit policies and discriminatory practices. Florence, as the posterity, traverses boundaries with no commitment to any ethnic or social identities and feels a strong sense of responsibility towards the oppressed and nature. Thus, the novel conveys "a belief in the possibility of transformation, and a confidence that the world can and will be saved by children like Florence" (Armitstead, 2019). Hence, rather than a fantastic character, Florence is the embodiment of Smith's faith in the youth that will make a change with their reverence for life.

Although *Spring* is a book of hope more than any other novel in the quartet, it is also by far the darkest one. Through a biopolitical reading, the horrid portrayals of the interned refugees suggest how democracies are intrinsically totalitarian regimes with their power over life and death. Thus, *Spring* centralizes Britain to address modern democratic regimes that grant equality merely to its citizens and render migrants vulnerable to inhuman treatment and institutionalized racism. Accordingly, the novel traces back to the Clearances and the Troubles while illuminating the ongoing invisibility of people of colour in the public space to mirror a world in which some have always been rendered more equal than others. Regarding the most oppressed of those *unequal* subjects, the refugees are designated as homo sacers unlawfully detained and inflicted violence in the modern camp manifested through the Spring Detention Centre, which has also made some detainees lose their humanity and turned them into modern Muselmanns. However, modern sovereign power with its oppressive practices and states of exception inadvertently creates such *women of exception* as Florence, Alda and Paddy, who suspend the authority and control of biopolitical sovereignty with their art, nonconformity and solidarity with the Other.

While shedding light on the underrepresented refugee condition, *Spring* also sets forth language as an apparatus of the sovereign power to shape the political and

cultural space and thus presents the silence of the Other as a manifestation of their resistance to being defined and controlled. Thus, the defiance of the characters to the sovereign control of the narrator renders *Spring* an autobiofiction created by the characters themselves against their biopoliticization as bare lives. Furthermore, the novel, as a free space for autonomous and disparate voices, bears witness to the (life) stories of the marginalized to generate a counter-history that renders the Other visible and articulate. Besides its humanizing power that reconnects the mechanized individuals to their human selves, the novel also designates art as a borderless and unifying site against walls, divisions and boundaries. Against the borderization in the modern socio-political sphere manifested through the walls of detention centres and biopolitical divisions among people as humans and bare lives, the novel evokes a sense of togetherness through our inseparability and interconnectivity and highlights the urgency for dialogue among different communities for a humane and dignified existence. As the dialogue among conflicting voices forms the novel, the opposing forces of nature create life itself. That is why, while beginning with grim portrayals in the fall, *Spring* ends in April with a hopeful passage from an overwhelming present to a future that holds infinite possibilities.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMERTIME SADNESS: UNGRIEVABLE SUBJECTS AND PRECARIOUS LIVES IN *SUMMER*

As the final instalment of *Seasonal Quartet*, *Summer* (2020) serves as "a time-capsule", shedding light on "the mood of Britain during this turbulent time" and presents a world grappling with COVID-19 pandemic, extended shutdown measures, social disruptions, and the climate crisis (Stuart et al., 2021). Awarded the Orwell Prize for the 2021 Political Fiction Book, *Summer* is acclaimed as "the first serious coronavirus novel" that, like the other works in the quartet, seeks to "reach through the specific and towards the universal" (Preston, 2020). The novel facilitates ethical and political discussions on current issues by offering conflicting voices and different viewpoints through Grace Greenlaw, her two adolescent children Sacha and Robert, as well as recurring characters like Daniel, Elisabeth and Hannah from *Autumn*; Art, Charlotte and Iris from *Winter*; and Hero from *Spring.* The protagonists of *Summer* all work towards finding their way out of their personal crises that intertwine with broader impasses in the collective. Thus, rather than depicting a family drama, the novel stands out as the last part of a complex, interconnected collage framing the contemporary human condition and presents "an intergenerational patchwork illustrating both the trends of our times and a meditation on time itself" (Hartman, 2020). In this regard, the quartet underpins a temporal and spatial circle that begins in the aftermath of Brexit in 2016 and finalizes in July 2020 in pandemic-stricken Britain still overwhelmed with racism, social disintegration, curtailed freedoms, technological surveillance, cyberbullying, borderization and the detainment of asylum seekers. By highlighting the challenges faced by underprivileged groups in times of pandemic and portraying the ordeals of enemy aliens in British internment camps and Jews under the Nazi regime in wartime Europe, *Summer* provides fertile ground upon which to discuss biopolitical otherness within the framework of Judith Butler's theories of precarity, precariousness, normative violence and grievability.

The coronavirus pandemic, with its overall societal consequences, is not merely a dystopic backdrop to the frame narrative of the novel but mirrored particularly in its devastating effects on underprivileged groups and communities. *Summer* highlights the unequal distribution of vulnerability within the social fabric, a concept resonating with

Judith Butler's exploration of the precariousness of life and ungrievable lives in her works *Precarious Life* (2004), which delves into the post-9/11 political discourse and its potential consequences, and *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* (2009), which offers a critical analysis of the verbal and visual narratives surrounding the war on terror. Butler asserts that sovereignty and governmentality coexist in today's political landscape, with sovereignty resurfacing "under emergency conditions in which the rule of law is suspended […] in the context of governmentality with the vengeance of an anachronism that refuses to die" (2004:53, 54). In her analysis of these anachronisms, Butler explores the hierarchical disparities within modern societies and "offers a sustained reflection on the constitution, production, and reproduction of marginality" within the framework of "the norms of Western liberal democracy" (Watson, 2012). She introduced the concepts of "precarity" and "precariousness" to examine the exclusionary states and unequal living conditions of marginalized communities. Precarity, for Butler, is a "politically induced condition in which certain populations suffer from failing social and economic networks of support and become differentially exposed to injury, violence, and death" (2009:25). The notion suggests that "there are 'subjects' who are not quite recognizable as subjects, and there are 'lives' that are not quite—or, indeed, are never-recognized as lives" (2009:4). Thus, as a state of vulnerability, uncertainty and insecurity, precarity signifies the states of communities like minorities and immigrants that "are at heightened risk of disease, poverty, starvation, displacement, and of exposure to violence without protection" (2009:25–26).

A related notion to precarity, precariousness as a status "implies living socially, that is, the fact that one's life is always in some sense in the hands of the other" and "implies exposure both to those we know and to those we do not know; a dependency on people we know, or barely know, or know not at all" (Butler, 2009: 14). We are precarious due to our dependence on "what is outside ourselves, on others, on institutions, and on sustained and sustainable environments" to survive as social and biological beings and thus "in need of protection through multilateral and global agreements based on the recognition of a shared precariousness" (2009: 23, 43). In other words, "life requires support and enabling conditions in order to be livable life" (2009: 21). Thus, our vulnerability to "being subjugated and exploited" designates human interdependency as a prerequisite for survival and a humane way of existence as "being bound up with others […] also establishes the possibility of being relieved of suffering,

of knowing justice and even love" (2009: 61). According to Butler, recognizing "shared precariousness" leads to a strong commitment to equality and broader universalization of rights to "address basic human needs for food, shelter, and other conditions for persisting and flourishing" (2009: 28–29). In this regard, it is our ethical and "political responsibility" to enhance "the conditions that make life possible," minimize the precarity of some lives with respect to others and "re-create social and political conditions on more sustaining grounds" (2009: 23; 2004: 17–18). Furthermore, she questions the frames through which we recognize life. In her examination of social and political othering, she explores the mechanisms of power, including norms, discourses and institutions that work towards maximizing the condition of precariousness for a group or population while leaving others in a state of precarity. Given their "link with broader norms that determine what will and will not be a grievable life," the frames, for Butler, "permit for the representability of the human" and thereby shape not only our responses towards "the suffering at distance" but also our ability to "become ethically responsive" and "formulat[e] a set of precepts to safeguard lives in their fragility and precariousness" (2009: 64, 63).

Considering Butler's discussions on biopolitics, *Summer* offers manifestations of lives in precarity with its portrayals of immigrants, workers and lower classes. Rendered more vulnerable to COVID-19 and its socio-political repercussions, these communities are designated as expandable and systematically exposed to death, much like the interned Germans in wartime Britain and the Jews under Nazi rule. By drawing a parallel between the pandemic-stricken postmillennial world and the World War II experience of the past century, the novel explores fundamental inquiries about what defines a life deserving of preservation and whose lives count as living. In Butler's terms, Summer represents the persistent "precaritization" of minorities "acclimatized […] to insecurity" (Butler & Athanasiou, 2013: 43). Similar to *Spring*, Summer opens with a choric voice setting the political and ethical stage for the narrative and addressing the violence inherent in the exclusion of particular communities from societal and political structures. Highlighting the "so what" trend, a pandemic of widespread indifference and collective apathy towards lives that do not count as life, the chorus voices the segregation of "groups of people" based on "their religion, ethnicity, sexuality, intellectual or political dissent" by "people in power," which points out how "the differential distribution of norms of recognition directly implies the differential

allocation of precarity" (Smith, 2021: 4; Butler, 2013: 89). The pandemic has not only crystallized those biopolitical frames and exacerbated identity divisions fostered by the "[t]hugs and showmen in power" but also raised a pivotal question, as articulated by Daniel: "What's worth more, people or money?" (2021: 160). This query illuminates how "radical inequality, nationalism, and capitalist exploitation find ways to reproduce and strengthen themselves within pandemic zones" (Butler, 2020).

The choric voice also communicates the deteriorating socio-political status of migrants who already suffer from economic and social disadvantages. Amidst the pandemic, immigrants' lives have become more unrecognizable and ungrievable: "people who'd lived in this country all their lives or most of their lives started to get arrested and threatened with deportation or deported" (Smith, 2021: 3–4). The plight of Hero, a detained asylum seeker in the previous novel, illustrates the experiences of undocumented immigrants in detention centres who have been left to their fate with the onset of the pandemic. On their visit to the immigration removal centre in the early days of the coronavirus outbreak, Charlotte and Art from *Winter* have met this "clever and thoughtful young virologist being held indefinitely there" (2021: 341). Hero has told them that "if the virus happened to get into this centre […] all the detainees would catch it" due to the lack of "openable" windows and proper ventilation (2021: 341). His warning highlights the stark reality of biopolitical power, which has not only designated the refugees as "bodies" that "appear more precariously than others" due to their failure to fit into the "versions of the body" defined by "the normative frames" but also let them die (Butler, 2009: 53). Thus, the pandemic unfolds that not all lives are equally considered worthy of "protecting, sheltering, living, mourning" (2009: 53). COVID-19 has disproportionately impacted different communities, maximizing the precarity of those already marginalized and trapped in poverty. Meanwhile, those with culturally and politically recognized identities—the superrace—can easily isolate themselves in detached houses. In this sense, rather than "a politics that erases social and racial inequalities by reminding us of our common belonging to the same biological species," modern biopolitical power, as Lorenzini notes, "is always a politics of differential vulnerability" that "relies on the establishment of hierarchies in the value of lives, producing and multiplying vulnerability as a means of governing people" (2021: 44). *Summer*, in the same vein, explores the challenges faced by migrants and ethnic minorities and casts a light on the societal divisions exacerbated by the coronavirus

pandemic, unevenly affecting frontline workers. In her letter to Hero, Sacha mentions Sam who, as one of the real heroes of the country, has continued to work during lockdowns as a postman, potentially contracting COVID-19 and unable to get tested, preventing him from visiting his elderly parents. For Sacha, many share a similar fate, but with a crucial distinction: some are abandoned to death within the walls.

> We also know more than fifty people in all who have had what sounds like it symptom-wise, but couldn't get tested by anyone. So they don't know, and they were really ill at home, like Sam, and scared, and no one helped them, and no official body has listed them in any statistics.[…] they were just left on their own thinking they were dying. And some of them did die (Smith, 2021: 246).

During the pandemic, the elderly in nursing homes have also been profoundly affected and even lost their lives due to the biopolitical impulses of the government. Since the outbreak of the disease, 101-year-old Daniel has stayed with his lifelong friend and neighbour, Elisabeth since "the care home he was in this time last year has a lot of people very sick in it" (Smith, 2021: 325). According to his caregiver, "nobody's been tested there" (2021: 325). Even though "[h]is carer comes in every day" and "sees quite a few people in the course of a day, not just him," she is not permitted to wear masks and gloves and thus, puts the masks she has bought on discreetly at her workplace's front door because the management banned their use, as no official supplies were provided. Her experiences point out the government' stance that seems to place both the elderly residents and those caring for them "all equally in danger" intentionally, treating them as disposable (2021: 325). In that regard, the novel challenges the conventional notion of heroes by portraying them as the ones who persevere despite being trapped in a state of precarity, primarily due to their failure to conform to the normative frames that determine whose life is considered *life*. Those who attempt to survive in detention centres, work on the frontlines during the pandemic or speak out against the dehumanizing and racist governmental practices and environmental destruction are the heroes of *Summer*: "Hero, you along with all the key workers in the NHS and the people working so hard keeping things going, like Sam, are my heroes, along with the people fighting to protect climate, and every single person protesting what happened to George Floyd" (2021: 247). Like Sacha, Art's activist aunt from *Spring* also identifies "[t]he health workers and the everydayers, the deliverers, the postmen and women, the people working in the factories, the supermarkets, the ones holding all our lives in their hands" as the real heroes of the pandemic-stricken world since; "[as] people who've never been properly valued," they "are all holding this

country together" and play pivotal roles in sustaining society (2021: 336–337). Iris also suggests how the biopolitical management of the population against a virus unveils the designation of subjects as nothing but numbers by the authorities who "are saying twenty thousand deaths will be good" nonchalantly (2021: 336). The novel also criticizes the "too-late response" of "the useless and distracted government" that aims to "be in power, making lots of money for themselves and their pals" rather than ensuring the well-being of people, resulting in a high number of deaths (2021: 335).

On the other hand, The Greenlaws not only navigate the challenges posed by the pandemic but also grapple with the repercussions of the Brexit divisions in their family. Grace, as a former actress and single mother, puts the blame for her dysfunctional family on the referendum that has intensified the rifts in both society and her family:

> What had they all wanted from each other in that vote, say, the one that had split the country, split her own family as if with a cheesewire, sliced right through the everyday to a bitterness nobody knew what to do with, one so many people used to hurt people with, whichever way they'd voted, a vote that could now be so anathema to one of her own kids and so like a permission to be foul to others for the other… (Smith, 2021: 312).

Grace is a Leaver unlike her ex-husband Jeff, who "voted *remain*" but turned out to be "the one who literally had to […] *[l]eave*" to the next door with his French girlfriend (Smith, 2021: 80). As the representative of the English community defined as a political norm by the biopolitical regime, Grace, for her son, is "an educated elite" who "thinks books are her thing, her personal possession that nobody else has the same right to as she does" (2021: 93). However, their encounter with Art and Charlotte gradually shifts their outlooks on life. When the estranged couple finds Sacha on Brighton Beach, her hand superglued to an egg timer by her brother, they bring her home where they meet Grace and Robert. During their conversation, Charlotte, on the repercussions of the referendum on the country's future, claims that Brexit has ultimately revealed a need for comprehensive transformation in British society. Art, like his friend, also emphasizes the inevitability of change and the necessity to adapt and make the most of it: "[y]ou can't stop change. […] Change just comes […]. It comes of necessity. You have to go with it and make something of what it makes of you" (2021: 82). Grace's 16-year-old daughter, Sacha, voices the younger generations' demands for the aforesaid change, particularly in the context of nature conservation with an unwavering commitment to a more humane, equal world. Sacha and Robert, like Elisabeth and Florence from the earlier novels of the tetralogy, are Smith's brilliant

adolescent children that cast a new and undistorted light on contemporary issues and illuminate the author's conviction that the "child state is a state of moral understanding, where you really are discriminating the rights and wrongs, the goods from the bads, and you are also encountering grey in-between" (Beer, 2013: 152). As the disenchanted individualist child of the Greenlaws, Robert is, unlike his sister, "the kind of boy who gets sent home for saying things in class like *why is there anything wrong anyway with saying a black person has a watermelon smile?*" (Smith, 2021: 34). Despite his right-wing tendencies, he acknowledges that the referendum has rendered "the people who voted leave were sort of also issuing a command" as the owners of the country (2021: 81). His chauvinist views become evident when he objects Sacha's critique of Mercy Bucks, a fraud manipulating people exploiting religious sentiments for Donald Trump's campaign with the claim of being "hotlined to God" (2021: 21): "Are you calling our prime minister and other political leaders bigots? [...]. Stop talking down our great country. We should be standing up for Britain. Anything less is treason" (2021: 35). Furthermore, he refers to political statements about the educational entitlements of the lower classes, thereby illuminating the pervasive corruption in the current political climate as well as the hierarchies established by biopolitical power condemning financially vulnerable communities to lives in precarity:

> I simply noted, like our prime minister's chief adviser wrote in his blog, that children who come from poverty or grow up in it aren't worth educating because they're just not up to it, […], they're never going to be able to learn anything so there's no point in the state paying for them to have an education they're always going to be congenitally unable to use (Smith, 2021: 35).

On the other hand, racism, whether subtle or overt, is central to *Summer* as in the earlier novels of the quartet. While *Autumn*, *Winter* and *Spring* address escalating racial discrimination after the Brexit referendum and represent the refugee and migrant experience, *Summer* portrays how the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated pre-existing social schisms and fuelled racism in the political and social sphere. In the early days of the pandemic, Sacha's best friend Melanie texts her to share her distress at having to stay at home with closed blinds after the racist insults towards her Chinese mother, who is told by a woman not to "breathe near her children" (Smith, 2021:40). From a Butlerian perspective, the otherization of Melanie's family suggests the role of our "interpretative framework" constructed upon "certain culturally specific notions about what the culturally recognizable human is" (Butler, 2009: 42). This framework guides individuals to perceive certain communities as those "on whom [their] existence

depend[s]" while categorizing others as "those populations who represent a direct threat" to their lives (2009: 42). Accordingly "when a population" is perceived "as a direct threat to [one's] life, they do not appear as 'lives,' but as the threat to life" (2009: 42). The ethnic identity of Melanie's family posits them at the margin of society as being Chinese has become the norm of being diseased and infective during the pandemic. Hence, what the family grapples with is "normative violence," a form of violence "done within the formation of subjectivity" (Chamber, 2007:47). This violence manifests in the unjust equation of Chinese ethnicity with virulence, an attribution that, in itself, constitutes a form of violence and, alarmingly, serves to legitimize violent actions directed at individuals of Chinese ethnicity during the outbreak. Even their eating habits are used to label them as aberrations and deviations from Western norms. Accordingly, the social media videos on "the eating snakes thing is" as Sacha suggests, "a racist way to link the virus to racism and being used as a slur against Chinese people" (Smith, 2021: 40). Melanie and her family have "been racistly done over" not only by the racist insults in the street but also by the covert racism in everyday life, including the use of "racist emojis" (2021: 41). While their lives are rendered ungrievable and more precarious than those of white individuals, they are demonized and dehumanized "for the production of the human to the extent that a 'Western' civilization defines itself over and against" (Butler, 2009: 91).

Thus, biopolitical regimes often attempt to justify their authorities and restrictive regulations by placing the blame for the multitude of deaths and pandemic-related socio-economic crises on Chinese people. As a reflection of the institutionalized racism against Asians, Grace makes xenophobic jokes upon the outbreak of the pandemic and tells her guests that "probably someone somewhere is eating [a skunk] right now and starting a new Asian virus" (Smith, 2021:94). Described by her children as "racist," Grace, upon hearing about the British internment camps, goes further, arguing that there must have been a necessity to intern people of German origin during World War II (2021:94): "I suppose if [Daniel] was a German […] they had to. For everybody's safety" (2021:273). Similarly, Jeff's girlfriend Ashley's book, based on the power of words and "lexicons […] in politics," also traces the veiled social inequalities and racist and misogynist frames in contemporary socio-political space (2021:84). Entitled *The Immoral Imagination*, the book explores "what the iconic British letterbox means right now in the updated lexicon", alluding to the unfortunate article of Boris Johnson that

was "a backbench MP […] who just under a year later would become UK prime minister" (2021: 90). In his 2018 article in the *Evening Standard*, Johnson

> personally declared himself not intolerant enough to believe Muslim women who wore full face veil burqas should be banned from wearing what their religion often required of them, all the same he thought it ridiculous of Muslim women to choose to go around looking like letterboxes. Their choice of clothing, he said, didn't just make them resemble letterboxes but also bank robbers (Smith, 2021: 90).

His article reflects the otherization of Muslim women by the "normative violence" rooted in the intersection of gender, race and religious identity and elucidates how this "violence of norms" as "a primary form of violence," not only "facilitates typical, physical violence" but also "renders such violence invisible" (Chambers, 2007: 43). Unsurprisingly, the article was considered "as the reason for a quadrupling of anti-Muslim attacks and incidents in the UK" shortly after its publication (Smith, 2021: 91). Johnson's Islamophobic and misogynist rhetoric serve to highlight the dominant white, heterosexual male identity that underpins the normative frame of being fully human in contemporary public and political spheres. As Grace's neighbour's male chauvinist manners and the xenophobic attack on a teacher at Robert's school illustrate, the discriminatory discourses in politics also resonate with society. Despite her remarks that she is "in charge of [her] garden, not [her] husband," Grace is ignored and rendered less human as a woman by her neighbour, who refuses to engage with her, insisting on talking to her ex-husband instead (2021: 108). When Jeff finally arrives, the man "shouted past [Grace] to him, though [she] was standing there too" and tells him to cut down the tress in their garden as he "do[es]n't want to look out of [his] window and see trees that aren't [his]" (2021: 108–109). Similarly, at Robert's school, a parent reproaches a teacher for "teaching [their] offspring foreign words" and "hit" the woman "in the head with a brick after yelling that she has no "right to use words from other languages" (2021: 96–97).

Amidst the surge in ethno-nationalist, xenophobic, and chauvinistic sentiments that intensified during the pandemic, *Summer* presents the Vietnamese asylum seeker Hero from *Spring* through the letters exchanged between Sacha and the detainee, shedding light on his harrowing journey. He has been interned by the SA4A upon his arrival in Britain after "being sealed inside a box in transit for more than six weeks". As a "qualified as a microbiologist" and a political dissenter, Hero fled his home country after being "beaten up by government thugs" due to his critical blog posts on governmental matters and hearing "they were coming to kill him for writing a second

blog about being beaten up by government thugs" (Smith, 2021: 117, 103). His traumatic past, inhuman journey and unjust incarceration underline how the refugee crisis remains an ethical and political issue before humanity. For Art "the person called Hero is truly heroic in the way he deals with being imprisoned though he's innocent" (2021:103). Like Smith's other marginalized characters, Hero is portrayed as an exceptional figure true to his name. He "taught [him]self English from" a pocket-size dictionary and clings to life with his passion for "birds and wildlife" even though "the window in [his] cell" is "opaque plastic, not glass, and doesn't open" (2021: 118). Through a Butlerian lens, Hero's stateless existence walled off and stripped of fundamental human rights discloses the asylum seekers' "politically induced condition of maximized precariousness" and their "expos[ure] to arbitrary state violence", that is "the very state from which they need protection" (2009: 26).

Furthermore, the novel reveals the ironic outcome of the COVID-19, which has led to the mandatory release of detained immigrants like Hero who is "one of the detainees let out because of health reasons" (Smith, 2021: 117–118). Sacha underlines that "the thing that gets people let out of illegal indefinite detention when they are innocent in the first place is a virus—not a more kindly human nature, or understanding, or a good law" (2021:248). However, this newfound freedom often results in homelessness, leaving people "with nowhere to go or no money to survive on" (2021: 248). In any case, the migrant's "demand to be protected against injury or death is not […] heard or recognized" as "there is no public commitment to protecting certain lives from injury or death" (Butler, 2018:1). While the immigrants are rendered homeless on the one hand, many homeless, according to the news, "have been given rooms in hotels" on the other (Smith, 2021: 248). Before the pandemic, some homeless people were put on buses into the city where "people tend to give more money here than they do in some other places, which means the government doesn't have so many dead people on the streets" (2021: 105–106). Thus, the pandemic not only reveals that "our society structurally relies on the incessant production of differential vulnerability and social inequalities" but also offers the potential for a more humane social and political order by recognising these disparities as "the pandemic is making walls and borders and passports as meaningless as nature knows they are" (Lorenzini, 2021: 44; Smith, 2021: 345). Concerning the pandemic that has turned everything upside down and surfaced the precariousness of all, the novel highlights the need for empathy towards underprivileged

groups, drawing parallels between those whose freedom of movement is restricted during lockdowns and migrants unjustly detained in immigration detention centres for extended periods. Nevertheless, for Sacha, "lockdown is nothing compared to the unfairness of life for people who are already being treated unfairly," which aligns with the novel's designation of the pandemic as an opportunity to see *them* (Smith, 2021: 121). Thus, as Sacha's letter also suggests, *Summer* calls for building an ethical relation to the Other grounded in our shared precariousness and responding ethically to their suffering within this shattering exclusionist order: "what has happened here and all over the world in these few months with the lockdown has given us all a very mild dose of what it is like every day for you. I know it is not at all the same, nothing like being kept in prison conditions – and this when you are not a criminal" (2021: 248).

The novel also underlines the necessity to establish an ethical relationship with the Other through allusions to Albert Einstein's theories based on human connectivity. Robert is intrigued with the scientist's compulsory stay in a nearby town during World War II, a time when he received death threats from Nazis who "distribute[d] posters with his picture on them and the words Not Yet Hanged underneath" not just "because of him being so Jewish" but also due to his "call for civil rights" against chauvinist governments (Smith, 2021: 369, 52). In line with his anti-war stance, Einstein "warned against the nuclear bomb and said if he'd known they would use what he discovered about quantum and relativity the way they used it he'd have become a cobbler and mended people's shoes all his life instead" (2021: 52). Thus, he became the object of "a particular fury" of Nazis for "truly stand[ing] for what they most dislike, […] intellectualist, individualist, supernationalist, pacifist" (2021:53–54). Just in previous novels drawing analogies between 1940s concentration camps and modern immigration detention centres, *Summer* present the former British prime minister's attempts at press censorship and media restrictions as reminiscent of the Nazi propaganda machine:

> Yesterday the blond beast prime minister tried, like the Americans, banning some journalists and not others from being let into Downing St. Some were told to stand on one side of the carpet and the others to stand on the other side of the carpet. On the one side they were going to be permitted. On the other they weren't (Smith, 2021: 54).

Summer also compares contemporary politicians with the fascist leaders of the last century through the prime minister's adviser, who, according to Robert, "knows full well that Stalin and Hitler were possible even though everyone in old-style politics looks aghast when anyone suggests it's possible to act the ways they did" (Smith, 2021:

54). Thus, these parallelisms not only suggest the totalitarian tendencies inherent in modern democracies but also shed light on pragmatist politicians who justify every means to stay in power as "geniuses of manipulation" that "get away with talking about patriotism with all the fervour of 12-year-olds" (2021: 54–55). The critical representation of the current political landscape continues with the insights of Robert, who contrasts Albert Einstein with the British Prime Minister, who not only "looks like he doesn't know what he's doing" but also excels in "the brilliant application of lies" (2021: 55). Furthermore, the two figures' ideas on heroism signify the contradiction between warmongering biopolitical discourses and pacifist counter-rhetoric. While the scientist "passionately" opposes "[h]eroism on command, senseless violence, and all the loathsome nonsense that goes by the name of patriotism," the prime minister expresses admiration for "the mayor in Jaws" who "was proved catastrophically wrong in his judgement" for "keep[ing] the beaches open,[…] but his instincts were right" (2021: 56). His remarks hint at the prime minister's strategies to preserve the status quo at the expense of lives during the pandemic.

While the Nazi threats led Albert Einstein to flee from his country, the social and political turmoil of contemporary Britain made Ashley lose her voice. For Grace, she not "just stopped" speaking but "[c]an't make any sounds at all," signifying something more profound "than just losing her voice" (2021: 67). Sacha resembles her silence to the "state of shock when [Greta Thunberg] realized what was happening to the earth, and she actually stopped being able to speak" as a kid (2021: 69). However, Greta "realized the whole point was that she had to speak. That she had to use her voice" (2021: 69). Ashley's silence, despite her prior eloquence in addressing injustices, symbolizes her subjugation to a dehumanizing and oppressive system, which suggests the novel's call for alternative voices to speak up. Once an articulate girl, Ashley told Robert that "[i]n times of injustice you always have to be ready to speak up, to speak out loudly against it" (2021: 69). Despite the possibility of further oppression, she believes that "if enough people speak out, […] [i]t won't come to that" (2021: 69). For Ashley, even "if she is killed, there'll be so many more who'll come after [her] to speak out just as loud" and "[j]ustice will always win" (2021: 69–70). Yet, Robert contends that justice as a matter of power has always been in the monopoly of a privileged community: "that totally depends on what the people who make the laws decide to define justice as" (2021: 70). His recollection of Ashley, who had a voice and called for

raising voices against injustices, stands in stark contrast with the girl's present silence, which suggests the despair and the disillusionment of marginalized communities with the current political atmosphere. Although he "knows there is no point in making lists of the lies a PM or POTUS tells", Robert is still intrigued by *The Immoral Imagination* the book Ashley was working on before her silence (2021:70).

> *language distorted, used as tool of taking control of a populace by sloganeering and emotional manipulation, is in fact the opposite of giving back control to populace blah. use of classical references and display of knowledge as rhetorical power-tools are surreptitiously also used as a marker of class and of who owns culture, who owns knowledge bla. truth gives way to the authentic lie, in other words what the voter emotionally supports, or emotional truth, which is where factual truth stops mattering, which leads in turn to total collapse of integrity and to tribalism blah* (Smith, 2021: 71).

Like *Seasonal Quartet,* Ashley's work explores the intricate connections between language, political discourse, ethics, and the reconfiguration of truths and mirrors our contemporary post-truth era characterized by the manipulation of public opinion in politics and media through lies and emotional appeals. The book also delves into "the meanings and histories of words", highlighting "how people in politics talk about what's happening in World War II terms all the time to make people be loyal and take sides and get with the patriotic spirit" (Smith, 2021: 84–85). Furthermore, *The Immoral Imagination* presents language as an apparatus for constructing a biopolitical society, in line with the quartet's overreaching theme of democratic states giving rise to fascist practices and regimes in the last century.

As a part of these critical reflections on the past, the novel incorporates two Nazi home movies that Ashley watched in "a programme about WW2 home movies" (2021: 72). One of the home movies captures a Nazi town's summer festival, with floats parading through the streets with women and children in national costumes. However, the final image in the movie shows a caricature of a Jewish person looking out of a prison truck's window, being driven away to jail, while the crowd laughs and waves goodbye (2021: 72). The movie normalizing the Jew's captivity and the townspeople's joy and celebration within this ideological frame illustrate how "[f]orms of racism instituted and active at the level of perception tend to produce iconic versions of populations who are eminently grievable, and others whose loss is no loss, and who remain ungrievable" (Butler, 2009: 24). The ungrievability of the Jewish figure signifies the construction of biopolitical otherness in culture through cinema, valued by Nazis as a highly effective propaganda tool for shaping collective narratives in German society. Similarly, "the other movie of a country fair" revolves around the exclusion of Jews

from the public space as nonhuman lives and features "people dressed as German citizens acting like they're sweeping the streets, with huge cartoon-sized brooms" while "what they're sweeping off the streets is people dressed in costumes of Jewish caricatures" (2021: 72). Ashley realizes that "it was such a caricature time then and it's such a caricature time again," highlighting the persisting precarity of minorities in the hands of sovereign power that "works by differentiating populations on the basis of ethnicity and race" and "the systematic management and derealization of populations" (Smith, 2021: 73; Butler, 2004: 68).

In addition to the Nazi movies, *Summer* traverses through time and space, shifting from modern Brighton to wartime France and British internment camps during World War II. While Grace recalls a single day from her acting career in Brighton thirty years ago and Daniel relives his traumatic experiences during his internment on the Isle of Man through his dreams, Hannah is portrayed as a member of a secret organization working against the Nazis in German-occupied France. As in previous works of *Seasonal Quartet*, *Summer* engages in time travel to address collective traumas and humanitarian tragedies in war-torn Europe, shedding light on contemporary societal and political challenges. Daniel's recollections of being an enemy alien in Britain mirror the plight of individuals of German origin in wartime Britain. Born in Britain during World War I, he was sent to Germany with his mother after the internment of his father. Following the war, he "was schooled and grew up" in Britain but visited his mother and sister in Germany every summer (Smith, 2021: 155). Having been "born an Englishman, whelped as a German, and after the age of six became an Englishman again", Daniel eventually found himself interned in the British camp during World War II (2021: 155). Thus, the two world wars not only shattered his family but also rendered him a homeless outsider banished from both societies as a potential traitor. He vividly recalls the day the officers arrived to take his father, a British German who "grew up in England from infancy" but "never got the papers" (2021: 140). Classified as "category C" according to "Statutory Rules in Respect of the Aliens in Protected Areas," his father "had been interned for near six years, the whole first war," which "[r]uined his health" and left him "mad, very weak, bleak" and "[s]ick man the rest of his life" (2021: 133, 164). Witnessing his father's "shaking body" and "hands" out of horror, Daniel decides to accompany him (2021: 133). As they were all being "loaded" onto "army trucks," Daniel sees many "men and boys" who "had no luggage" or coat, or the opportunity to

say “a proper goodbye to his wife” (2021: 135–136). Upon their arrival on the Isle of Man, they are all “shepherded […] to a stone building” turned into “[a]nimal stalls” where “[t]hey winter the livestock” (2021: 137). The officers refer to them as “aliens” and claim that their internment is “for [their] our own good” (2021: 135). After being awakened by a “[r]eveille” to discover that “everything” around them is “filthy” the following morning, the internees are later relocated from Ascot to Douglas, where they encounter a “barbed wire palisade and double fence at the Hutchinson gate” (2021: 141, 146). In the Hutchinson Camp of Douglas, there are “[o]ld and young everywhere, all the ages under the sun,” made to sleep in mattresses filled with straw and given the “choice of walking the length of the new barbed wire fence in the sun” or “standing about in the sun near the bunk buildings” (2021: 138, 130). Thus, the individuals of German origin, in Butler’s terms, are designated as “lose-able” lives (2009: 31):

> Such populations […] can be forfeited, precisely because they are framed as being already lost or forfeited; they are cast as threats to human life […]. Consequently, when such lives are lost they are not grievable since in the twisted logic that rationalizes their death, the loss of such populations is deemed necessary to protect the lives of “the living.” (Butler, 2009: 31).

Those communities “cast as threats to human life” are represented through the internees like the “retired professor of medieval French” and the man who had “no other clothes with him” as “he was brought in off a building site” to the Isle of Man (Smith, 2021: 145–146). Thus, not only the inhuman conditions in the camp but also the way the internees were brought there unveiled their stigmatization as inner enemies from whom *society must be defended*:

> a man in his forties told Daniel how the CID had picked him up from Hampstead Public Library by arriving in the morning and shouting in the Reading Room all enemy aliens to the front desk now. Then they went round looking in everybody else’s faces deciding who looked Jewish but hadn’t reported to the front desk. Even on the way to the police station they kept halting the group and making them wait while they stopped people in the street they thought looked likely and asked for their papers (Smith, 2021: 147).

The internees, from a Butlerian perspective, are “de-subjectified”, becoming “[t]he subject who is no subject,” who “is neither alive nor dead, neither fully constituted as a subject nor fully deconstituted in death” (2006: 98). As a reflection of their de-subjectification as “enemy aliens”, “the local island people lining the road […] were watching them with their mouths hanging open” during their march, perceiving them as “Nazi prisoners of war” (Smith, 2021: 147). When an officer expresses surprise that “there’d be so many of [them] Jews who was Nazis,” Daniel explains that “[they]’re not Nazis” and he “couldn’t get more opposite from Nazis” (2021: 147). As

another internee also remarks, they are “the ones who thought [they]’d got away from the Nazis” as a group of “doctors, teachers, chemists, shopkeepers, labourers, factory workers” (2021: 147–148). Their segregation and demonization by the state raises the internees’ fear of a potential Nazi “invasion” following the occupation of France, Belgium and Holland as they are “an island of men, mostly Jews and people the fascists want dead, ready parcelled up to be handed over, lock and stock” (2021: 150).

Furthermore, he sadly remembers a teenage girl punished for her kindness to Daniel. She saw Daniel trying to reach for meadowsweet, “came over through the bushes and picked it and very simply gave [him] it through the wire” (Smith, 2021: 165). Later, he is “particularly told” that “she got three months in the Wakefield Prison” for “[l]oitering in government grounds” and “consorting with the enemy,” illustrating the biopolitical operations of the state aimed at segregating and preventing any meaningful connections with the Other (2021: 165). He frequently reflects on this girl, as her kindness was “a gift” that provided him with strength during those challenging times (2021: 165). Similarly, his encounter with the two boys by the wire illustrates “the forcible action of the norm on circumscribing a grievable life” (Butler, 2009: 163). As they draw near the wire to observe the internees and ask Daniel to “[s]peak some Nazi,” he clarifies that he is “not a Nazi,” the internees are not having “a holiday” and there is no miniature golf in the camp as “Daily Mail says there is” (Smith, 2021: 150). When he suggests switching places so they could have a holiday, one of the boys responds that they “can’t holiday here” as they “are already home,” which reflects the ostracization of not only the asylum seekers fleeing Nazi persecution but also those born and bred in Britain (2021: 150). When asked to “speak some enemy alien”, Daniel with his English surprises the boys and explains that he is English but cannot “[c]ome on out” as “[his] family’s [t]here” (2021: 150–151). Upon their inquiry whether “[his] family’s enemy aliens,” his response illuminates the normative violence inflicted upon the internees: “[i]n a manner of speaking. […] But also not at all” (2021: 151). Due to the political norms that designate them as enemies of the state, Daniel shouts after the running boys to exclaim the truth: “Tell the Daily Mail from me, […] as a representative of us all here, that we’re internees in a prison camp, we’re not enemies, and that a prison is always a prison, even in August when the sky is blue” (2021: 151). Hence, the people in the Hutchinson camp, like the inmates in Nazi concentration camps and the detainees in today’s immigrant detention centres, are all civilians rendered as threats to the

biopolitical sovereignty which, through exclusionary rhetoric, justifies their segregation, silencing and abandonment to death. In Butler's terms, these communities that "fit no dominant frame for the human" are derealized "on the level of discourse" which "then gives rise to a physical violence that in some sense delivers the message of dehumanization that is already at work in the culture" (2004: 34).

On the other hand, the German brothers Daniel meets during a commotion in the camp provide a horrid depiction of the victims of the thanatopolitical regime in Nazi Germany. One of these brothers is Zelig who is "hardly a man, smiles an absent smile whenever his brother laughs" and "always has an eye on the other, is a shadow version of [Cyril], a ghost" (Smith, 2021: 155, 152). When a guard "raise[s] the bayonet" to rescue an old internee whose "long grey beard" is "caught" in the barbed wire fence, Zelig "hollows himself into his own shoulders and somehow goes near invisible, very like vanishing himself by magic" (2021: 152–153). Cyril later reveals that "Zel lost his voice in Germany, in the camp called Dachau" as a fifteen-year-old "political prisoner" and barely survived the Holocaust (2021: 153): "My brother has a fine tenor voice, […] but he no longer sings. He can speak, but now he does not speak a lot. His voice is in hiding. […] He is there for five seasons, fourteen months. What he has seen he cannot peel from the fronts of his eyes (2021: 153–154). According to his brother, Zelig "had the worse time of it" and his memory "is what gets left after a fire has gutted you and everything in you has melted and changed its shape" (2021: 161). Thus, Cyril considers himself "lucky" to have only been "just tormented" as Zelig nearly turned into a living corpse and lost his mind and humanity in the Nazi Concentration Camps (2021: 161):

> They brought him in to headquarters, punched him in the head and the stomach, told him he was a homosexual and would be hanged, told him he'd seduced too many Aryan girls to be allowed to live, death sentence for undesirables like him so he'd be hanged that afternoon in the yard, told him to sit down then pulled the chair away from under him just as he went to, so he fell to the floor, room of laughing brownshirts. Did it again. Again. Again (Smith, 2021: 161–162).

The Nazis trampled on his human dignity by mocking and deriding him while keeping him in constant fear of death. For Cyril, their plights continued even after managing to escape from the country. The brothers found themselves interned in a British internment camp and cut off from any news from their family. Furthermore, before arriving in Douglas, they "were picked up by London Constabulary and taken to a vast London cave, Olympia" alongside many Nazi sailors and "[t]here was very much heil hitlering, very much singing about our blood spurting from knives" (Smith, 2021:

154). They were subsequently moved “in trucks together with these same men to Butlin’s Holiday Camp” where “a pastor stood up on Sunday and asked God for Nazi victory” (2021: 154–155). Thus, they are rendered as threats to the social body by biopolitical sovereignty which does not bother to distinguish Nazi supporters from anti-Nazi luminaries, artists and ordinary people.

In his letter to Hannah, Daniel reflects on his days in the camp, marked by a constant “swing of hope/despair” (Smith, 2021: 184). However, he avoids mentioning his homeless and “forlorn” state, which he describes as feeling like “a bewildered alien corn” and with “the beautiful line” he has thought of: “we have been here behind the wire all through the bright open door of the summer” (2021: 186). In the same vein, he does not recount “how easy it would have been for him or their father to find themselves on a ship to Canada or Australia just by the accident of being in one room or another” or “the boat that was torpedoed” (2021: 186–187). Thus, as Daniel’s line powerfully echoes their “unlivable lives whose legal and political status is suspended,” his burnt letter also renders the novel a testimony to the ordeals of internees in wartime Britain (Butler, 2004: XV).

While Daniel and his father struggle to hold on to life on the Isle of Man, Hannah Gluck, after her mother’s death, dedicates herself to assisting Jews flee from Nazi-occupied France, where “people [are] shot by the planes dead on the sides of the road out of the city” and mothers and their children “executed, shot into the same grave” (Smith, 2021: 220). Her mother, like these unfortunate victims, is an “ungrievable” life that “cannot be mourned because it has never lived, that is, it has never counted as a life at all” (Butler, 2009: 38). The Nazis, despite her critical condition, made her die by forbidding her from receiving “medicines” and “took the flat and everything in it” (Smith, 2021: 221). Following her mother’s tragic loss, Hannah joins an underground resistance group and has a child with Claude, a fellow member she meets within the organization. However, Claude and the other three members disappear, leaving her no choice but to “hope for his sake he is dead” (2021: 226). Hence, Hannah has to relocate to a city “ragged with refugees” and takes up residence in a small hotel owned by Madame Etienne, who recounts stories of Nazi oppression targeting rebels everywhere (2021: 223): “last night at one of the cinemas in the town the authorities had come in and made the staff turn the houselights up! So they could pick out whoever was shouting or throwing things at the screen whenever the Maréchal or Hitler or Mussolini

came on!" (2021: 224). In this turbulent city, Hannah feels like "a broken-oared boat on a sea so wild she already knows any minute she'll be flotsam" but has no idea "what [she will] make of [her] broke broken self?" (2021: 228). In such moments, Hannah also writes to her brother, only to later burn the letter:

> It's that the foulness happening every day round us is a growth without roots. […] The foulness just wants one thing, more of its self. It wants self self self self nothing but self over and over again. I begin to realize that this makes it very like the blowaway moss that spreads fast across everything but can easily be kicked away because its grip is only about surface. Just the act of thinking this kicks it loose and blows it away. Big thoughts (Smith, 2021: 240).

Hannah's remarks not only signify those who lack moral concerns or ethical judgements, often passively endorsing inhuman practices but also highlight the possibility of ending this commonplace evil and organized violence through collective awareness. *Summer*, much like the earlier novels of the quartet, presents art as a means of resistance against the exclusionary, dehumanizing and oppressive sovereign order. Art turns out to be counter-power for Hannah, Zelig and the internees, who all find resilience through their artistic creativity. Hannah, in her letter to her brother Daniel, writes how she realizes that "all the knowledge in [her], all the narratives, all the poems, all the art, all the learning" that she thought she held and "owned" and believed as "the reason for living" as a schoolgirl, instead have kept her alive: "all those things hold me. They hold us all under the sky" (Smith, 2021: 240–241). Accordingly, Zelig's arrest suggests that Nazis were also aware of the empowering impact of art:

> He got taken away when they found books in his satchel they didn't like. Story books. Der Krieg der Welten. Das kunstseidene Mädchen. But they are burned books and he is a Jew. Three crimes. The Nazis hate Jews, they hate the stories of the women who are independent, and they hate the stories of the bacterias that will kill invaders (Smith, 2021: 153–154).

Thus, *Summer* pictures the deep-rooted contest between art and totalitarian regimes due to the impact of artworks on the "normative schemes of intelligibility," which "establish what will and will not be human, what will be a livable life, what will be a grievable death" (Butler, 2004: 146). That old rivalry between art and sovereignty is addressed through the Nazis' control over art and literature, as the regime permitted only works that uphold Nazi ideologies and discouraged any form of dissent. Even if storybooks are banned and burned due to the transformative power of stories, Zelig holds on to life with perseverance thanks to Charlie Chaplin's films.

> Even just that, being punched, insulted, was terrifying. Even just sitting down on a chair that was never there beneath you, and knowing you'd better make to sit down on it though you knew there'd be no chair, because if you didn't they'd kill you then and there, was so terrifying, […] But I keep getting up. Every

time I hit the floor I get up again. I say inside my head, you can do it, you can be like Chaplin. Up. On the feet. That's it. Now. Brush your jacket down (Smith, 2021: 162).

In a similar vein, the artists, including painters, sculptures and musicians interned at the Hutchinson camp, cling to life through their artistic creativities. As one of these artist internees, Mr. Uhlman found himself in Ascot after fleeing from Nazis in France and Spain. His drawings turn into ways of keeping his sanity, sustaining hope and speaking out against the inflicted violence and threats of death. His latest picture "dedicated to his newborn child" communicates how art can instill hope and resilience in the presence of oppression (Smith, 2021: 173). Amidst the nightmarish backdrop of ruined buildings, gallows, and dismembered bodies, a young girl is walking on a path cutting through the picture, holding a balloon above her in seeming detachment from the chaos around her. As the drawings multiply, her presence becomes increasingly powerful. She encounters other children, sharing smiles beneath a scarecrow, a bloated deceased soldier with a small bird perched on his hat, singing. Another artist, Kurt, succumbs to insanity under the Nazi regime. Sleeping "in a basket, […] like a dog" and "bark[ing] like a dog in the evenings", Kurt sculpts with "solidified porridge" that "sprout[s] green hair" (2021: 175, 178). His weird works of art resonate with one of the central themes of *Summer*, in line with Orosz-Reti's contention that "[c]rises and critical situations […] are not regarded as incapacitating, they are rather treated as the raw material to be transformed into something aesthetically pleasing or meaningful" (2021: 62). His unusual performance with a saucer and cup leads the internees feel alive for the first time in a long while. Shouting "LEISE" and "smash[ing] both saucer and cup down hard," Kurt makes the internees "in the room, shocked", leading to "shouting, laughing, angry, happy. All of these at once" (Smith, 2021: 176). This cathartic release of repressed emotions allows the internees including Daniel, uncertain of their fate, to "breath fully for the first time in" a long time "[s]ince before they got arrested" and hold on to life thanks to art (2021: 176).

In Hutchinson camp, literature turns into a means to keep on living for the internees, who read "some old volumes" which "fall more apart the more, more and more people read them" (Smith, 2021: 187). As Daniel writes to his sister, the camp also becomes a cultural hub for scholarly discussions, hosting talks on philosophy, literature and art: "We are fortunate in how many really talented and scholarly people speak here and give lectures, just the other day there was a talk on Goethe, there is a

professor of Plato here, and an expert on Rilke" (2021: 188–189). The camp's commandant "has given the artists studios, given the writers books and paper" and "had two grand pianos shipped in from Liverpool" too (2021: 191). Emphasizing the role of art in the contemporary world, *Summer*, through Daniel's reflections on Hannah's paintings, highlights the transformative impact of art on human perception, shaping both individuals and society: "I am thinking of your pictures a lot too. […] The one with the flowers that I thought had faces discernible, if you looked, in the shapes of their petals, means that now I can't not see a face in all real flowers" (2021: 189). Daniel, like other artists in Hutchinson, strives to hold on to life through artistic creation, endeavouring to "transform crisis into something of value" (Orosz-Réti, 2021: 62). He is "persevering" as "a good singer" and "writing a summer song with [his] friend Mr Klein, [who] is musically talented" (Smith, 2021: 191). The two internees "are planning to record [their] musical notations on the wire [t]here by hanging [their] socks on the fence" (2021: 191). The camp also hosts virtuosos like Mr Landauer and Mr Rawicz, "arrested on their journey home from playing for the King and Queen and brought here to be interned" (2021: 192). Their concert, witnessed by "[t]he fine people of Douglas crowded in their hundreds up against the wire to listen with [the internees]", points out the universal language of art that erases political boundaries, unifying people segregated by politics (2021: 192).

Much like the artist internees in Hutchinson, the Italian film director Lorenza Mazzetti found solace in her artistic creativity following a harrowing past. She stands as the final female artist of the quartet, joining pop artist Pauline Boty in *Autumn*, sculptor Barbara Hepworth in *Winter* and artist Tacita Dean in *Spring*. Raised by her father's sister, Nina, alongside her twin sister Paola; Mazzetti and Paola felt to be "finally home, living with Nina and her husband, Robert Einstein, who was a cousin of Albert Einstein, and their […] cousins, Luce and Anna Maria" (Smith, 2021: 256). However, tragedy struck in the summer of 1944 when a group of Wehrmacht officers arrived at their house in Tuscany. With the Allied forces advancing in Italy, they sought Robert, hiding in the woods. Failing to find him, the Nazi officers killed Nina and her daughters, sparing Lorenza Mazzetti and her sister due to their different surnames. Locked away with other villagers during the massacre, the twins and their uncle returned to a devastating scene of their deceased relatives, which made the uncle take his own life. The carnage denotes the thanatopolitical practices of biopolitical power, categorising

people as human and nonhuman rather than friend or foe. In Butler's terms, this tragedy unveils how the Nazi regime rendered Jews as ungrievable lives derealized and reduced to a state of being "neither alive nor dead, but interminably spectral" (2006: 33-34):

> If violence is done against those who are unreal, then, from the perspective of violence, it fails to injure or negate those lives since those lives are already negated. […] They cannot be mourned because they are always already lost or, rather, never "were," and they must be killed, since they seem to live on, stubbornly, in this state of deadness (Butler, 2004: 33).

Burdened by traumatic memories, Mazzetti arrived in England in her early twenties to assist with farm work alongside other university students,. However, upon reaching Dover, she realizes she is perceived as an alien immigrant and a potential threat to the nation. After a "thorough police search of each person bodily, then of each person's luggage," her passport is "stamped with the words Undesirable and Alien" (Smith, 2021: 255). Haunted by her nightmarish past, Mazzetti finds herself "too weak and too nervy" to fulfil her intended roles on farms or as a maid (2021: 256). On the verge of "a nervous breakdown" due to "ghosts" surrounding her, "standing and sitting and walking all round her, silent, smiling, bleeding from the places the teenage Mazzetti saw the holes the bullets had made in them", she endures a prolonged period of "search of some unhappiness" and "wander[ing] the streets by herself" and eventually gains entry to the Slade School of Art (2021: 257). There, she "makes a short film based on […] Franz Kafka's Metamorphosis," viewing it as a "powerful act of accusation against the daily grind that makes us indifferent to past, present and future injustice" (2021: 258, 259–260). Following the success of "K.", which earns her "an experimental film grant" from The BFI, the director creates "Together", which presents (2021: 260):

> a story about two deaf mutes who live and work in the rubble and the looming old architecture of London's east end, where they walk the streets talking to each other in sign language, about love, about how to keep properly clean and decent in the dusty postwar aftermath and about things they find strange or beautiful. They're often followed around by a crowd of funny and merciless children (2021: 260–261).

Thus, art appears as "a vital coping mechanism" in *Summer* (Orosz-Réti, 2021: 60). Beyond her films, Mazetti writes "a novel called Il Cielo Cade. The Sky Falls," narrating "the murder of her family" and "the religious and political divisions that divide and rule people […] from the point of view of a very young child" (Smith, 2021: 261–262). Her subsequent novel *Con Rabbia* (With Rage, or Angrily) serves as "a sequel to The Sky Falls," offering "the perspective of an adolescent revolutionary soul infuriated by the indifference she sees everywhere after the war regardless of what has

happened to so many people" (2021: 262). In her works, Mazzetti critiques enduring social divisions and collective amnesia, urging readers to confront the possibility of future atrocities, turmoil, and wars—a reflection of the "so what" culture highlighted in the first chapter. Drawing from her inner unrest, Mazzetti courageously warns readers about the tumultuous state of the world: "I couldn't live in calmness and boredom any more. My hand has touched blood and tragedy and I know that while boredom was dozing reality was preparing the apocalypse" (2021: 262). Against the indifference evoked by everydayness, Mazzetti declares her commitment to artistic expression and "will paint, exhibit, write and publish in many forms and make more short film interludes" (2021: 262). As a manifestation of the therapeutic impact of art on human consciousness, the novel recounts how Allied soldiers discovered the "shellshocked" Mazzetti twins "beside some newly filled graves", teaching them to sing some songs, in English" to alleviate their trauma (2021: 264). Besides, the novel underlines the healing power of art on personal and collective traumas with an anonymous quote: "[c]reativity is cultural not because it is derivative of it, but because it aims to heal culture. Art saturated with the unconscious acts like a compensatory dream in the individual: it tries to rebalance and address deep-rooted problems" (2021: 263). As Preston states in his review, the novel works towards "telling future generations what it was to live in these fraught and febrile times, and how, through art, we survived" (2020).

In addition to its therapeutic effect, *Summer* highlights the unifying power of art that erases borders and divisions. As Baricz (2020) asserts, art is rendered "impossible without an acknowledgement of […] 'us'". Barbara Hepworth's two-piece sculpture, 'the mother and child', leads the characters to come together as members of a spiritual extended family. An artwork from *Winter* where Art's mother, Sophia, secretly took 'the child' from Daniel's house, the Hepworth sculpture not only becomes a whole again and returns to its rightful owner but also brings about the union of Arthur and his biological father, both unaware of their familial connection. As Charlotte and Arthur embark on their journey with the Greenlaws to meet the old man, they inadvertently bring his great-grandchildren and Hannah' reincarnated self to Daniel. Upon their meeting, Art also falls in love with Elisabeth, who has been caring for the old man since the onset of the pandemic. Notably, the characters' union through the return of the lost 'child' to 'the mother' signifies a culmination of the tetralogy. When Elisabeth places the 'child' in the sculpture's curve, the order is restored in the fictional quartet universe

and *Quartet* is completed (Smith, 2021: 274). Furthermore, Grace's contemplation of Hepworth's artwork offers an insight into the novels' very definition of art: "When she'd gone to bed, she couldn't get the thought of that piece of stone out of her head. Well, that's what art is, maybe. Something that impresses mysteriously on you and you don't know why" (2021: 275). In line with Grace's reflections, Charlotte defines art as a transforming and liberating experience, awakening individuals to their authentic subjectivities: "It's uh about the moment you're met by and so changed by something you encounter that it uh takes you both into and beyond yourself, gives you back your senses. It's a, a shock that brings us back to ourselves" (2021: 329). Thereby, art, for the young woman, is a power reminding us of our very presence in the world and the gift of being alive: "[w]hat art does is, it exists, […]. And then because we encounter it, we remember we exist too. And that one day we won't" (2021: 330).

Summer, in the same vein, highlights inclusivity and connectivity against the self-centred, isolated self. The novel not only paints a vivid portrayal of a "world" that "is revealed to be the function and result of interdependence" as Baricz (2020) contends but also positions this interdependency as an antidote to prevailing issues of dehumanization, normative violence, precarity and ungrievability. Following Butler's viewpoint, the novel mirrors how "interdependency helps us to understand the equality of lives" and "why enacting or permitting injury or violence against another constitutes an attack on the social relations by which each of are defined" (2018: 2). In that regard, the seasonal titles of the four novels, along with the recurrent characters and themes, suggest our interconnectedness with one another and the world. Our mutual dependency is also suggested via the thematic unity of the quartet, beginning with Daniel Gluck in *Autumn* in 2016 and finalizing with his reunion with his sister and grandchildren in *Summer* in 2020. The frame story of *Seasonal Quartet* completes a Quartet akin to the circularity of seasons, as it ends where it begins and unveils overreaching connections among the characters and their personal metamorphoses corresponding to societal transformations. Similar to the lifelong friendship of Elisabeth and Daniel in *Autumn*, Lux's visit to the Cleves family in *Winter*, Florence's intrusion into the lives of Brittany and Richard in *Spring*, and Art and Charlotte's encounter with the Greenlaws and their visit to Daniel in *Summer* all lead to metamorphic changes in the characters. These encounters illuminate a mode of narrative resistance to the sovereignty of a fixed embedded subjectivity and imply the characters' reciprocal liberations from biopolitical

divisions and segregation by meeting and being exposed to the Other. *Summer* presents a spiritual family formed through the "profound" connections of these once-isolated subjectivities "with art and artists" and "with each other by responding with heart and decency to personal and global crises" (McAlpin, 2020). In her interview with Gillian Beer, Smith elaborates on her preoccupation with "the device of the uninvited guest" (2013: 142).

> As our countries and our world becomes smaller, and yet we're bordered, everything is about the stranger. So if we don't play attention to what the story of the stranger means, and if we forget the goodness of the stranger, the way in which inordinate hospitality was signalled as crucial to survival, never mind to immortality, and also simply to obvious benign-ness. If we don't pay attention to the things that happen when something enters our world from outside, and if every dominant narrative tells us to dislike it, then I don't know how we'll manage to stay human (Butler in Beer, 2013: 142).

Meeting Charlotte proves to be a life-altering experience for Robert, as implied by the quote from Einstein that he remembers upon his encounter with the young woman: "*There seems to be a force which bodies, by their very presence, exert upon each other*" (Smith, 2021: 76). When Sacha warns Charlotte about her brother's infatuation and sensitivity during their drive to the "Einstein place" in Roughton Heath, Charlotte shares the story of her "glamorous, funny cousin" who "dramatically" changed her life by accepting her (2021: 361, 363, 364). Through Charlotte's transformative experience, *Summer* signifies the power of establishing a positive relationship with the Other: "If people think you like them, […] well, it can go either way. There's a lot of powerplay in liking and being liked. Such a powerful connection, it's a chance to make the world bigger for someone else. Or smaller. That's always the choice we've got" (2021: 364). Thus, she drives them to Roughton Heath at night to "mak[e] the world bigger for" Robert, who has gone through cyberbullies even "telling him to commit suicide" due to his gift of singing (2021: 364–365). Going through bullying in his new school due to his social media videos as a young local celebrity, Robert confides in Charlotte during their walk at Roughton Heath, expressing his desire not "to live in a world like that" (2021: 373). Her response reflects the emphasis of *Summer* on surfacing our humane essence to resist the world "where the primal and the public have been getting more and more fused together" (2021: 373): "but if we don't attend to the primal stuff inside us all, [….] where will [the world] go? (2021: 373). On the other hand, upon Art and Charlotte's arrival at Daniel's house with the Greenlaws, the old man immediately identifies his sister in Robert as soon as he spots the boy in the window: "What Daniel sees then is his sister. Is it? Hannah? It's Hannah herself

standing there looking in. It is. It's her. It's her young self. It's the copy of her young self. […] it's Hannah, […] there in the room, aged twelve, in the shape of a boy" (2021: 195). From then on, he addresses Robert as if he were his sister: "Where've you been all this time? […] I thought time had quite undone us" (2021: 195). As Robert speaks, Daniel becomes certain that the boy has his sister's soul and he is "really Hannah (2021: 197). Sacha's remarks further confirm Daniel's perception of Robert as Hannah, for it becomes apparent that their great-grandmother is indeed Hannah, a revelation known only to the reader: "We have a war story too […]. Our dad's mother. I'm named after her. Her name was Sacha Albert […]. She was French" (2021: 270). This revelation adds depth to the narrative, disclosing that Hannah sacrificed her life for the ideals she passionately embraced. Sacha recounts the tragic fate of their grandmother's mother, who lost her life during the war when her daughter was at the age of three. The people who raised their grandmother learned about her death from a girl who visited them during the war, sharing the account of how their great-grandmother was shot by a Nazi officer while attempting to help a battered woman...

The novel also addresses the notion of relatedness by referring to Einstein's stone theory based on "how particles meet" (Smith, 2021: 350). As Robert explains to Daniel, "when two meet each other, […] something changes in both of them. And after that, even if the particles are nowhere near each other, if one changes, the other does too" (2021: 350). Thus, Einstein's theory suggests how human interaction and relations lead to a mutual transformation and togetherness undermining exclusionist narratives:

> time and space are what lace us all up together […]. What makes us part of the larger picture. Universally speaking. The problem is, we tend to think we're separate. But it's a delusion. […] He said the only real religion humans can have is the matter of freeing ourselves from the delusion first that we're separate from each other and second that we're separate from the universe, and the only peace of mind we'll ever get, he says, is when we try and overcome this delusion (Smith, 2021: 196).

Robert's insights deepen Daniel's certainty that Hannah has reincarnated and found him across generations, incorporating the underlying theme of human connectivity in *Summer*: "I really am me. And you really are you. But if we follow Einstein's thinking and add together you plus me plus time plus space. […] It makes you and I more than just you or I, […]. It makes us us" (Smith, 2021: 197). Regarding the reunion of the siblings through centuries and cultures *Summer* sets forth solidarity as a prerequisite for resisting the dehumanizing and oppressive practices of biopolitical sovereignty and constructing a more humane and equal world. The novel highlights

relatedness and solidarity against isolation through its emphasis on the etymology of the title "summer", tracing back to "the Old English sumor, from the proto-indo-european root sam, meaning both one and together" (2021: 263). The theme of togetherness is also addressed through Sacha and Hero's letters. Despite being "strangers", Sacha begins to write letters to Hero "to send [him] a friendly word or two" (2021: 117). In her letters, she underlines the need "to stop being poisonous to each other and the world," which points out the call of the novel for building ethical relationships with one another (2021: 247). Sacha also defines "the modern sense of being hero" as those who pursue and speak truths, challenging complacency and vitriol on social media despite prevailing hegemonic narratives and "shining a bright light on things that need to be seen" (2021: 247). Similarly, Art's offer to Charlotte to make daily phone calls during lockdowns and share daily experiences "just as a token, a little door open into each other's day" underscores the vitality of human interaction (2021: 326). Then, they will "write up the thing the other person's told" and "put it online, and people, anyone, can join in with their own comments or thoughts if they want" (2021: 326). Their intention to write down and share each other's experience online for people's comments, described by Art as "giving a gift out to the rest of the world from [their] own isolation every day," reflects one of the central themes of the novel: the crucial role of storytelling in preserving the humane self amidst the walled-off existences of the pandemic (2021: 326). Charlotte recounts the story of his aunt Iris who, as an aged activist aunt defying injustices as a modern-day heroine, delivers aid to marginalized people despite health risks: "She's been cycling to town and back, delivering bags of food and things to people thirty years younger than she is, and yelling hello at everyone she passes, asking them if they need anything or if she can help. […] There's no stopping her" (2021: 331). In Butler's terms, her efforts to foster ethical relations illuminate the critical role of "social bonds and interdependency" in grasping "a non-individualist account of equality" (2018: 2). Iris also urges others to challenge the undemocratic regulations of biopolitical regimes under the guise of COVID-19 measures. In the modern biopolitical political landscape, individuals are reduced to statistics while the working conditions and safety of healthcare and frontline workers are compromised, contrasting with the protection afforded to major players in money-market funds. Thus, she criticizes Charlotte for sending the Art in Nature team members home before the lockdown, as times like these necessitate a collective stand against the

disparities, unfairness and malpractices that have surfaced with the pandemic. Iris calls for taking collective action as a team rather than giving into self-isolation:

> Get on to the team, […]. Get them writing. About how the hedgefunders have made billions already out of what's happening. Billions going into their accounts from other people's losses, while nurses and doctors and cleaners have to wear binliners. […] A government treating them like rubbish. […] , happy to count the heads of their so-called herd, like we're cattle, like they think they own us and have the right to send thousands of us to slaughter to keep the money coming in (Smith, 2021: 336).

Her call resonates with Butler's idea of performativity, which "does take place when the uncounted prove to be reflexive and start to count themselves, not only enumerating who they are but 'appearing' in some way, exercising in that way a 'right' […] to existence" (Butler & Athanasiou, 2013: 101). In that respect, Iris proposes "writing about how many people have died and are going to die in this country because of this government's rank carelessness" (Smith, 2021: 335). Furthermore, according to the activist, "[a] lot of vulnerable innocent people will be homeless soon […] with no money and no family, and they'll desperately need somewhere to stay" (2021: 342). The blog, Iris believes, serves as a platform for the unrecognizable subjects, regulating "the sphere of appearance" to "[re]establish what will count as reality, and what will not" and "whose lives can be marked as lives, and whose deaths will count as deaths" in the public sphere (Butler, 2004: XX–XXI). Her warnings manifest the novel's call for solidarity and collective struggle for equal distribution of precariousness: "we need to get united just as fast, because in my experience the mighty don't like it when the meek get elevated" (Smith, 2021: 337). Her claim also corresponds to the chorus' emphasis on collective resistance against the dehumanizing world order producing biopolitical hierarchies in the value of lives: "Millions and millions, all across the country and all across the world, saw the lying, and the mistreatments of people and the planet, and were vocal about it, on marches, in protests, by writing, by voting, by talking, by activism, […] via social media" (2021: 4). Like Hannah, Iris' actions mirror her ideals, illustrated in her welcome of the asylum seekers released from the detention centre since the government "won't want detained people dying and becoming a bad publicity story" (2021: 341). Hero, one of these detainees, writes to Sacha about Iris, Charlotte and other volunteers who brought them to Iris's home after being left "on to the road in a dark night" (2021: 378). Not just his remarks but also his name, meaning "ANH: brother/ you. KIET: masterpiece" in Vietnamese English signify the centrality of

solidarity, fraternity and connection between the self and other against the uneven distribution of precariousness by biopolitical sovereignty in *Summer* (2021: 378).

His letter highlights how the immigrants turn Chei Bres into a more liveable and homely place, a home. As "a good gardener", Hero himself "help[s] keep neat and flourishing the flowers in the summer garden" (Smith, 2021: 378–379). Regarding Chei Bres, meaning "house of the mind and house of the uterus" in Cornish and signifying the country, the renovated and embellished house suggests the possibility of an equal and ethical relationship with the Other (2021: 343). The residents of Chei Bres illustrate Butler's notion of 'community' founded on vulnerability and loss rather than "nation, territory, language, or culture" (2009: 36). Furthermore, the inhabitants of the house engage in "performative politics" as they "both perform the conditions of life in public – sleeping and living there, taking care of the environment and each other – and exemplify relations of equality that are precisely those that are lacking in the economic and political domain" (Butler & Athanasiou, 2013: 102). On the other hand, Hero's response to Sacha's "bird messages" about the "[b]ird of all nations" underlines the vitality to prioritize shared precariousness over individual identities (Smith, 2021: 379). He draws an analogy between birds from diverse species flying freely in the same sky and humans segregated and antagonized with identity divisions and borders constructed through biopolitical normativity. In his final words, Hero, as Sacha's "friend and brother," offers a ray of hope rooted in the possibility of togetherness, envisioning that "there is more summer to come" (2021: 379).

Lastly, *Summer* points out the ethical responsibility of individuals to make thoughtful choices, aiming to minimize the precarity of the Other and establish a community grounded in equality. The novel asserts this duty as our mindful engagement with the world, further suggested by the cautionary remarks of the choric voice in the opening chapter: "[h]istory's made it clear what happens when we're indifferent, and what the consequences are of the political cultivation of indifference" (Smith, 2021: 5). Sacha, echoing this sentiment, suggests that "poisonous stuff has never stopped happening," yet still "human beings will always have to decide whether to be poisonous to others or not, whether we are in a pandemic or not" (2021: 248). The response of Daniel's father, supported by his son and other internees, illustrates, what Butler calls, the "ongoing struggle to craft aggression" for "non-violence" (2018: 2). On their first night within the camp, when confronted by an old "well-off blackshirt" and "supporter

of the Reich" expressing discomfort about "sleep[ing] next to a Jew," Daniel's father and others assert their Jewish identity, revealing the novel's emphasis on mindful choices to collectively stand up against unfairness, violence, and oppression (Smith, 2021: 139–140). During their visit to Roughton Heath, Charlotte highlights the urgency to make ethical choices rooted in our responsibilities to one another and the world. Her contention that once the humane self "surfaces," then "we have to decide what to do about it" also echoes Einstein's claim that it is up to humanity to create a liveable world or bring about its destruction (2021: 373): "the human species got our best intellectual tools from looking at the stars. But that this doesn't make the stars responsible for what we do with our intellects" (2021: 374). Above all, the novel manifests a profound faith in humanity through its portrayal of summer as a metaphorical journey "towards both light and dark, […] an imagined end" and "the promise that we'll one day soon surely be able to lie back and have summer done to us; one day soon we'll be treated well by the world" (2021: 289).

Ali Smith in *Summer* maintains her engagement with "the acknowledgement of the other within ourselves, the erasure of neat borderlines separating us from the other, and the permeable coexistence of simultaneous identities within the post-millennial self" as in her preceding works (Germanà, 2017: 106). The novel weaves together a collage of stories and viewpoints, presenting a rich tapestry of the modern human condition merged with contemporary impasses, societal traumas and discourses on art. Thus, "Summer isn't just a merry tale. Because there's no merry tale without the darkness" (Smith, 2021: 289). Like the tragic stories of Hannah and Lorenza Mazzetti recounting Nazi atrocities, the novel offers a testimony of British internment camps through Daniel who is "a man for many seasons" that has lived many lives, seen many political turmoil and appears in all the novels of *Seasonal Quartet* (2021: 191). Thus, *Summer* offers a critique of the collective amnesia that leads societies to construct a future without confronting previous errors that have led to those tragedies. While finalizing the testimony of the quartet about the post-Brexit society and the contemporary human condition, the novel not only navigates a journey from darkness to light but also treads a fine line between art on the one hand and socio-political crises, borderization, oppression, control and the biopolitical construction of otherness on the other. Art is rendered more than a means to persevere, take shelter and safeguard the humane self but a unifying power that infiltrates into personal and collective

consciousness and brings people together on the common ground of their precariousness. In other words, art is rendered as a transformative experience that constructs a bond between the self and the other. Regarding the human connectedness communicated and built via art, the novel highlights solidarity and a community predicating equality of a shared preciousness. The portrayal of such smart, self-reliant, sensitive and nonconformist figures as Daniel, Hannah, Sacha, Charlotte and Iris, who responds ethically to the suffering of others, *Summer* underscores the imperative for building a humanitarian world by connecting with the Other against the biopolitically constructed otherness and institutionalized oppression to walk together freely “through the bright open door of the summer” (2021: 186).

CONCLUSION

We live in an age when even the remotest corners of society are not immune to power, which monitors, controls and offers normality as an imperative. As Braidotti suggests in her *Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory*, "The age of biopower is the age of constant normativity" (60). Although taking care of life is at its core, this modern power also distinguishes which lives are life-worthy and which are undeserving and lets them die through multiple means. Biopolitics, coined by Michel Foucault in his examination of modern Western power to refer to the regulation practices of power over life, also finds its reflection in contemporary fiction. A remarkable, real-time account of the contemporary human condition, Ali Smith's *Seasonal Quartet* also adeptly depicts the biopoliticization of human life and the biopolitical construction of otherness through the human landscapes from the recent past and post-Brexit country. In this sense, this doctoral thesis has explored the configuration of biopolitical subjects and states of otherness in *Autumn, Winter, Spring* and *Summer* in light of the biopolitical theories proposed by Michel Foucault, Giorgio Agamben, Roberto Esposito and Judith Butler, and discussed the reduction of modern subjects to biological lives devoid of political agency and the designation of certain bodies as meriting life while leaving others to plight and death.

Written within the months before their publications, the novels capture today's socio-political landscape in its contemporariness and offer micro- and macro-manifestations of biopolitics through the tales of the protagonists which are irrevocably linked to and moulded by the socio-political issues of the time. In this sense, the quartet offers solid ground for addressing the degradation of individuals into biological lives by modern democracies that are intrinsically totalitarian regimes with their power over life and death and their tendency to render underprivileged groups vulnerable to social exclusion, oppression and death. Regarding the portrayals of modern subjects as objects of power, either as the targets of biopolitical othering or its promoters due to an evoked fear of the unknown Other, this dissertation has analyzed the biopolitical configuration of otherness that disintegrates society with an 'us versus them' mentality by marginalizing particular communities through their bodily traits that do not adhere to normative identity definitions and rendering them living-dead bodies. Besides picturing human body as a site of politics, *Seasonal Quartet* represents otherness as a biopolitical

condition manifested via the analogic representations of the plights of the refugees in modern Britain, the enemy aliens in the British internment camps during World War II and the Jews in 1940s Europe. These sorrowful human landscapes of the last eighty years are the reflections of the true pernicious nature—the "let die" tendency—of biopolitical power despite its ostensibly affirmative claims. Furthermore, this thesis has examined the paradigm of borderization deployed as a critical and all-pervasive biopolitical mechanism to control modern societies and manifested via physical boundaries as well as metaphorical borders drawn through normative discourses that render the body a determinant of one's recognition and abandonment.

Through a genre-based biopolitical reading of the novels, it has been also contended that biopolitical power is not exclusively portrayed through the surveillance state and SA4A but also via the anonymous narrator who oversees and consigns the protagonists to unrecognized identities while recounting their tales. However, the quartet offers itself as a counter-discourse, a non-biopolitical domain that de-others the marginalized and deconstructs biopolitical normative frameworks of identity by presenting people of exception who resist the dehumanizing, exclusionary states of exception and control of biopolitical sovereignty over their existences. Thanks to these otherized characters, the compliant characters, likewise, navigate their way out of their personal crises and embrace their humane, self-governing selves free from the biopolitical power/the narrator. Thus, this dissertation has defined *Autumn*, *Winter*, *Spring* and *Summer* as autobiofictions as the protagonists construct the novels by rebuilding their non-biopoliticized, authentic existences, breaking free from the control of the biopower portrayed as the governing power and non-state actors as well as the all-seeing narrator, and becoming autonomous storytellers of their life stories. Instead of resigning to being a character—a biopoliticized subject—in the narrator's story, the characters either appear or develop into authors of their life stories and gradually exclude the narrator from their tales that they tell as detailed as they wish by recollecting their pasts, dreaming, imagining and telling stories. The protagonists become the power of their existences and the intangible creators of *Seasonal Quartet*. In this sense, the narrator does not have a say over Smith's Others whose inner worlds, backstories and plans are left unknown. On the other hand, this thesis has contended that Smith's quartet designates art as a site of resistance to the exclusionary and dehumanizing biopolitical order and highlights the de-othering, re-humanizing and

unifying power of art against social polarization, control and otherization. The novels suggest that in contrast to biopolitics, which segregates and divides, art surfaces the human self and unifies individuals by evoking a free, collective existence bereft of hierarchies. Furthermore, this dissertation has also explored the recurring outsider figure that walks into the isolated, barren lives of the protagonists as the Other and re-humanizes their biopoliticized existences. The Other also introduces them to art or inspires them to imagine, dream, tell stories and reconnect to their hidden selves and the world. Thus, the metamorphic impact of the Other on the characters signifies their liberation from the singularizing biopolitical discourses and suggests human connectedness as a prerequisite for staying human.

In the first chapter, the theoretical framework of biopolitics is discussed through the lens of Michel Foucault, Roberto Esposito, Giorgio Agamben and Judith Butler. The chapter also addresses the manifestations of biopower in contemporary society as well as the new theoretical paradigms in the theory of biopolitics. The second chapter explores how biopolitics finds reflection in the novel genre and introduces Ali Smith and her *Seasonal Quartet*. Given that the point of departure of these philosophers' ideas on biopolitics is the politics of life—the politicization of human life by self-assigned power structures, the constitution and reproduction of othering through socially enforced norms and exclusionary discourses, and the reduction of subjects into bodies designated both as targets and means of interventions of the governing power—each novel is analysed from the standpoint of an individual theorist whose contentions on biopolitics predominate in that particular novel.

In the third chapter, *Autumn* is probed through Foucauldian concepts of biopolitics, biopower and racism, which provide fertile ground to examine the analogy between post-Brexit Britain and 1930s Germany similarly grappling with the rise of racism and social schisms. The protagonists' resistance to the exclusionary discourses via friendship, love and hope bestowed by art is also discussed through Foucault's notion of counter-discourse. In the opening novel of the quartet, borderization is also pictured as an effective means of biopolitical othering and delineated through the escalating xenophobia and polarization of society as Remainers and Leavers. Elisabeth's discriminatory treatment by the townspeople and the postal officers who attempt to question her subtly due to her unusual name and defiant stance all hint at the otherness of her unpictured body and her biopolitical otherness. The hard time the

officers give her in her passport renewal application due to her head which is claimed not to conform to the state's body standards signifies the standardizing operations of the biopolitical power over the individual's body. During his visits to his sister in Germany at the onset of World War II, Daniel is also deemed an outsider due to his foreign appearance as a British. Besides the appropriation of the common land by SA4A and the technological surveillance of society, the majority has resigned to the divisive biopolitical rhetoric for fear of migrants while non-Anglo-Saxon bodies are systematically excluded from the socio-political sphere in *Autumn*. Followed by other novels, *Autumn* also offers a persisting critique of the construction of truths in modernity and, with its journal-like structure and references to the lies of politicians, mainstream and social media, mirrors our post-truth age in which the line between fact and fiction is blurred. In addition to introducing the polyphonic structure of the quartet that skilfully hosts equally significant, disparate and autonomous narrative voices along with an anonymous narrator, the novel also sets forth the lifelong friendship of Daniel and Elisabeth, which transforms the little girl into an autonomous woman and inspires her to be the power of her own existence. The old man with his authentic personality also introduces the works of Pauline Boty—the first of the four female artists addressed in each instalment—to the little girl, which deeply influences Elisabeth who has eventually written her thesis on the artist and become a lecturer in art history. Thus, *Autumn* meditates on the role of art in a dysfunctional society through the protagonists' engagements with art that stir their imaginative powers and enable the two friends to connect with life and find meaning in it.

In the fourth chapter, *Winter* is discussed through Esposito's notions of immunitas, communitas and auto-tolerance which allow a multifaceted analysis of the biopolitical configuration of otherness in the novel. Lux's experiences as an undocumented immigrant, Iris's expulsion from her familial home due to her refusal to conform to her gender role and her surveillance by the state and SA4A as a woman activist illustrate the immunitary mechanisms of society. Sophia's traumatic experiences with the mysterious and ominous agents also point out the objectification of individuals as bodies that require control and regulation. The novel also addresses borderization through the estranged Cleves sisters corresponding to the two opposing groups in the Brexit referendum that left entrenched social schisms behind. On the other hand, like the rare Canadian warbler freely transcending the political borders of the countries, Lux

has emigrated from Canada and lives in Britain under the radar to stay in the country whereas the women challenge boundaries through their protests against the nuclear weapons programme of the government by chaining themselves to the wires of RAF Greenham Common, fuelling a country-wide protest. Thus, all the boundaries in the novels are trespassed by the solidarity and friendship of the nonconformist, autonomous characters. Lux's hopeful intrusion into the Cleves family and her humanizing power restoring their broken family ties and reconnecting Sophia and Art to life further communicate the emphasis of the novel on auto-tolerance and the possibility of collective resistance via engaging in an empathetic and ethical relation with the Other. *Winter* also addresses the transformative impact of art through Sophia's encounter with the sculpture of Barbara Hepworth—the female artist of *Winter*—in Daniel's house. She secretly takes one of the two parts, *the child,* and hides it her whole life as the only remnant of the days she felt alive and human. Art, in a similar vein, searches for a special folio of *Cymbeline* with a page that bears a trace of a flower Lux has previously mentioned with great admiration. He senses a shift in his perception of reality and his view of life the moment he sees the trace. Thus, art becomes a transformative and healing power and a shelter for Sophia and Arthur and helps them transcend their biopolitically constructed selves, reframe reality and reach out to the other.

In the fifth chapter, Agamben's ideas of bare life, homo sacer, camp, Muselmann, sovereign state and state of exception are addressed to explore the representation of the migrant issue in *Spring,* which offers analogous portrayals of the immigrant detention centres and internment camps of World War II and highlights the parallel tragedies of the refugees in the detention centres and the enemy aliens in wartime Britain, who all appear as modern homo sacers caught up in a never-ending, ominous state of exception. Like Daniel, his father, Cyril, Zelig and other enemy aliens in the British internment camps and Hannah in Vichy France, the refugees in the detention centres peppered all over Britain are also not dead yet not fully alive either. For refugees like Pascal and Hero, political existence is unattainable after fleeing their homelands and becoming stateless bodies. Besides suggesting the subjective nature of truth through racist social media posts, political statements and the news, the novel also depicts the reduction of individuals into expandable bodies through SA4A's inhuman conduct towards immigrants, who are dehumanized and bordered by the surrounding walls, security fences and surveillance systems of the immigration detention centres.

Much like the destitution of the Little Paddy as a poor Irish orphan during the Troubles, Florence's desolation and invisibility as a girl separated from her immigrant mother and the detainees' harrowing experiences in modern detention centers also suggest how minorities are systematically pushed to the periphery and let die. On the other hand, like the metamorphic intrusion of Florence into the lives of Brittany and Richard, *Spring* also renders art as a power that awakens and changes the characters. Richard's epiphany upon seeing Tacita Dean's picture, "The Montafon Letter" in the art exhibition alters his mindset and expands his understanding of the world. Florence's Hot Air Book makes a similar impact on Brittany, who reads it over in secret even after having returned to her dehumanizing work as the girl's stories stir her human self that longs to come out. Besides incorporating references to the artist Tacita Dean's works, *Spring* also portrays not only the detainees of Spring Detention Centre who feel normal for the first time in a long while whilst watching a Charlie Chaplin film but also Paddy and Florence who endure and uphold their humanity in the face of oppression and social exclusion thanks to their artistic endeavours.

Based on the last novel of the quartet, the sixth chapter, through Butler's ideas of precarity, precariousness, normative violence and grievability, discusses the portrayals of the abandonment of service workers and refugees in detention centres to the state of extreme precarity during the pandemic as ungrievable lives and examines the parallelism between their predicament and the plights of the refugees from Nazi-occupied Europe interned as enemy aliens by the British government during the World War II. While Daniel and other internees in the Hutchinson camp in wartime Britain and the present-day refugees like Hero in the Spring Detention Centre are robbed of political agencies as lives in precarity and rendered more precarious than the Anglo-Saxon community, Hannah is oppressed and disenfranchised as a Jew in Nazi Germany and killed by a Nazi officer for helping a battered woman in France. Concerning those unliving lives, the novel, thus, mirrors the constitution and reproduction of otherness through their designation as biological lives. Moreover, as a manifestation of these operations, borderization is pictured through the barbed wires of the British internment camps as well as the towering walls of their modernized replications, the immigration detention centres. Furthermore, the novel also reflects the invasion of the private domain by the biopolitical state or non-state actors through Grace's distressing run-in with SA4A officials in her house. However, Butler's call for empathy and political

solidarity for the equal distribution of precariousness is also suggested via the analogy between Hannah's altruistic struggle to help the Jews flee from France and the attempts of Iris, Charlotte, Art and Sacha to contact and reach out for Hero and other refugees upon their release from the detention centre with the outbreak of the pandemic. In the same vein, the encounters of Art and Charlotte with the Greenlaws and their meeting with Daniel all lead to radical shifts in the characters, reflecting how human interaction and relatedness de-border the binary oppositions in mindsets and reconnect *us* and *them*. Besides, the quartet highlights the urgency of connecting with one another and the world through the recurrent figures like Daniel, Elisabeth, Hannah, Art and Charlotte who come together with the Greenlaws and become a spiritual family through the end of the novel. Last but not the least *Summer* designates art as a means to persevere, find solace and stay human through the life and art of the director Lorenza Mazzetti despite her traumatic past. The enemy aliens in the internment camp likewise endure and maintain their humanity in the face of their arbitrary, dehumanizing internment.

Lastly, circularity as a prominent thematic element is suggested in an array of narrative strategies throughout *Seasonal Quartet*. The books, each entitled with a season, signify the cyclical nature of existence and point out a stage in human life. Birth, childhood and youth are associated with spring; adulthood and maturity with summer; agedness and decline with autumn; and decay and death with winter. Accordingly, a title-related character serves as the primary focal point of each novel around which the narrative revolves. In *Autumn*, the meditations and dreams of 101-year-old Daniel take centre stage while *Winter*, in a similar vein, opens with the aged Sophia introduced as a living dead all alone, seeing hallucinations in her grave-like ancient house and traces the protagonist's coming back to life. On the other hand, the journey of the 12-year-old Florence who breathes a new life into the lives of the characters appears as the core of the thematic exploration of *Spring* whereas the redemptive reunion of the characters is central to *Summer*, which, rather than projecting the frame story from the viewpoints of a few characters as in earlier novels, offers multiple viewpoints with Sacha, Robert, Grace, Hannah, Charlotte, Daniel and Hero to communicate a sense of completeness and the oneness of humanity. However, despite the hope conveyed through their reunion and the completeness of the sculpture upon the return of the missing piece, the quartet, by opening with *Autumn* instead of spring which is commonly regarded as the beginning of the seasons, communicates the pessimism of

the author about the future of the post-Brexit country. Given the UK formally departed the EU on January 31, more than three and a half years after the referendum held on 23 June 2016 due to the prolonged negotiations with the EU and oppositions in parliament, it is evident that the titles of the novels trace the challenging journey of the country after the referendum and hint at the author's insights into the prospective future of the United Kingdom following its exit from the EU (Walker, 2023). The novels with their titles also point out the "bitterly divided" nation confronting political instability and civil unrest after the referendum, which has failed to strengthen the national consciousness or make the country "prosperous, dynamic and contented" as the former Prime Minister Boris Johnson claimed (Sandford, 2020; Ziady, 2022). In other words, the author, by starting her tetralogy with the title *Autumn*, foresees that the referendum is literally the beginning of an end and will not liberate the country through a spring-like rebirth ending with perfection and optimism but foreshadows autumn-like hard days. Furthermore, the Quartet referred to in the titles also corresponds to the thematic Quartet of the quartet. Beginning in the past midsummer in the immediate aftermath of the referendum in 2016, when Daniel is dreaming, Elisabeth is at the post office and the country is split between "remain" and "leave" supporters, the quartet finalizes in July 2020 with Daniel's reunion with his sister and son. Elisabeth and the old man also come together with other characters in the pandemic-stricken country still overwhelmed with the issues of 2016 and the ongoing repercussions of Brexit in addition to the extending shutdown measures due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which segregated people, escalated human rights violations and let underprivileged die. Thus, the completeness and perfection envisioned through the seasonal titles are once more undermined through the last novel. Furthermore, as manifestations of the cyclical view of history, the analogies drawn among post-Brexit UK, pre-war Germany in 1930s, wartime Britain and Vichy France suggest that the roots of the recurrent dreadlocks of the modern world lie in the past, which shape our personal and collective present. Similar traumatic experiences of the internees during World War II and today's refugees in the immigration detention centres illustrate the ongoing production of biopolitical otherness by biopolitical regimes. Through Daniel who has lived many lives, seen much political and social turmoil and appears in all the novels, the quartet provides a critique of the collective amnesia of the nation that seeks to forge a better future with Brexit without reflecting on the country's history tightly connected to the continent and learning from its previous deadly errors.

This dissertation, through the biopolitical reading of Ali Smith's quartet, attempts to contribute to the biopolitical discussions of modernity by providing the lens of literature and explores how contemporary fiction responds to the operations of biopolitical mechanisms and portrays the possibility of a non-politicized, uncategorized and uncontrolled life. Despite their grim portrayals, *Autumn*, *Winter*, *Spring* and *Summer* are tales of life, art, love and friendship rather than death and sorrow, calling for new and inclusive stories that welcome others. In that regard, the quartet probes the political possibilities of literature to resist the normalities of *us* and illustrates how the novel genre can reveal the human out of the political with the metamorphic and humanizing power of art that unveils the humane self and constructs a bond between the self and the other. Thus, the novels designate art as a borderless and unifying site of resistance making the marginalized heard and seen against divisive, dehumanizing discourses. S*torying*, in this sense, is rendered as a political act that deconstructs the biopolitical paradigm and bridges social divisions. *Seasonal Quartet* manifests the stratagems of this narrative resistance and counter-storytelling against hegemonic cultural narratives and exclusionary rhetoric serving to the singularization and control of individuals. Hence, if "whoever makes up the story makes up the world," then Ali Smith's *Seasonal Quartet* offers a way out of our biopoliticized, isolated and hierarchized lives with a call for becoming the storytellers of our own tales that always "welcome people into the home of [our] stories" and "give them a choice" even to those "who seem to have no choice at all" (Smith, 2017a: 119-120).

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