

## ALIENATING THE WORKING CLASS: A SOCIAL CLASS DISCRIMINATION IN DONNA TARTT'S *THE SECRET HISTORY*

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**ABSTRACT.** This research aims to show how the issue of alienation is portrayed and classified in Donna Tartt's novel *The Secret History* (1992). The issue of alienation in this research refers to the concept of alienation in literature that was established by Mary Horton, Nancy Gray Diaz, and Jennifer McClinton-Temple. In this research, the concept of alienation in the novel is analysed through the narrative aspects of focalization and space based on Mieke Bal's theory of narratology. Through the narrative strategy in the novel, the main character—portrayed as the working class—who also serves as the focalizer as well as narrator is presented to express his sense of isolation and disconnection from his surroundings. This research concludes that due to his social class, the main character in the novel is presented to be alienated from his closer connections, his physical environment, and his epoch. Therefore, we argue that the portrayal of alienation in the novel represents a social class discrimination.

**Keywords:** Alienation, Focalization, Narrative Space, Social Class Discrimination, Working Class

## MENGASINGKAN KELAS PEKERJA: PERBEDAAN KELAS SOSIAL DALAM *THE SECRET HISTORY* KARYA DONNA TARTT

**ABSTRAK.** Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menunjukkan bagaimana isu alienasi disajikan dan diklasifikasi dalam novel *The Secret History* (1992) karya Donna Tartt. Isu alienasi dalam penelitian ini merujuk pada konsep alienasi dalam kesusastraan yang dibentuk oleh Mary Horton, Nancy Gray Diaz, dan Jennifer McClinton-Temple. Dalam penelitian ini, konsep alienasi dalam novel dianalisis melalui aspek-aspek naratif seperti fokusasi dan ruang yang didasarkan pada teori naratologi susunan Mieke Bal. Melalui strategi naratif dalam novel, tokoh utama—digambarkan sebagai kelas pekerja—yang juga berperan sebagai fokusor sekaligus narator ditampilkan mengekspresikan perasaan isolasi dan diskoneksi dari sekitarnya. Simpulan dari penelitian ini adalah karena latar belakang sosialnya, tokoh utama dalam novel, dialienasi dari hubungan terdekatnya, lingkungan fisiknya, dan masa ia hidup saat itu. Karena itu, kami berargumentasi bahwa penyajian alienasi dalam novel merepresentasikan perbedaan kelas sosial.

**Kata-kata kunci:** Alienasi, Fokusasi, Ruang Naratif, Perbedaan Kelas Sosial, Kelas Pekerja

### INTRODUCTION

Not many pieces of literature published in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century deal with the concept of alienation. Donna Tartt is one of the few authors that still explores the issue in her works. In Tartt's works, especially in her debut novel *The Secret History* (1992), the depiction of characters who do not belong to any society or have trouble fitting in it seems to be the recurring subject matter. Regardless of whether it is deliberate on Tartt's part or not, the sense of isolation seeps into her works because her characters are portrayed as having a somewhat limited relationship with the things around them, and the relationships and interactions they have with other people are shallow and emotionally distanced. Furthermore, it is not surprising that the issue of alienation or isolation from one's surroundings can be seen in Tartt's works; the author herself is known as a mysterious and elusive literary figure. Despite the fact

that her debut novel *The Secret History* garnered recognition and praise from critics and public alike when it was first published in 1992, Tartt remained private and media-shy. Being a published author in an era where social media presence is one of the most important things to have in the industry, Tartt is somewhat of a recluse who distances herself from other people. Tartt is not very accessible in that she does not really have a close relationship and interaction with her fanbase. In addition to not having any social media presence, Tartt publishes one book once every decade, only gives interviews when she has a new book coming out, and disappears during the years in between. In an interview with Carrie Doyle (2013), Tartt labels herself as a lone wolf, which in turn implies her individualist nature.

Studies on Tartt's novel *The Secret History* have been conducted by some researchers. One of which is an analysis by Rader (2015) that evaluates

the way Tartt uses a confessional writing that also serves as a device to uncover both “truths” and “lies” about the self that narrates the story. She examines how Richard as the narrator in *The Secret History* presents his story as a fictitious self-portrait (Rader, 2015). By using a first-person perspective, Tartt is able to grant the readers access to events that have been carefully selected by the narrator. Moreover, this access to information that is given by the narrator is closely connected to the sense of alienation seen in the novel.

In another essay, Gresty (2021) discusses how three of Tartt’s characters’ ambitions and identities impact their ideas of belonging. Her argument is that Richard Pape, Camilla Macaulay, and Bunny Corcoran create a fantasy self in order to belong to their friendship group (Gresty, 2021). But by the end of the novel, Gresty (2021) claims, their “fantasy self” no longer serves them the way they want it to, and because of this, their desire to belong becomes detrimental for them. This notion of ‘belonging’ is related to the concept of alienation. Yet the essay has not touched upon this particular issue in depth; thus, it can be used as a starting point in building my arguments in this research.

To discuss the concept of alienation, we refer to Horton, Diaz, and McClinton-Temple. McHorton (1978) establishes the framework in which the issue of alienation can be investigated by looking at the depiction of the theme itself in various literary works. Horton divides the common themes of alienation into six levels, which are sorted “in order of increasing portrayal of sickness or disorder” (1978: 200). This indicates that there is a scale to distinguish the severity of the sense of alienation that is experienced by the characters. Horton’s six themes include The Insider, The Outsider, The Detached Man, The Hollow Man, The Waste-Land, and The Possessed. Horton suggests that the first five of the themes are connected to the concept of dispossession, specifically that of “freedom, territory, autonomy, identity,” while the last one is related to the concept of being possessed by “masters, gods, devils, knowledge, or power” (1978: 200). She also claims that the first three can be called social alienation, and the last three are individual alienation (Horton, 1978).

The first theme of alienation, which Horton refers to as the Insider, is a condition of the over-conformist, namely an individual who only chooses to do things “in terms of the expectations of others, with the accompanying loss of spontaneity and authenticity” (1978: 200). The theme of the Insider suggests the character’s willingness to comply with

the rules and values that are implemented by the people around them in order to become a part of them. As the result of this desire to conform, they lose the sense of authenticity of their identity. The second theme appears to be the opposite, since she calls it The Outsider. This indicates that instead of conforming to the expectations of others in order to fit in, the individual does not belong to their surroundings at all. In this theme, alienation is described as the state of apprehension of the society in which an individual does not feel like they belong to. The third theme is that of the Detached Man, which is described as the experience of detachment and involves “the awareness and expression of the denial reciprocity” (1978: 203). For the fourth theme, she states that the most crucial attribute in the Hollow Man “is that of inauthenticity itself — even inauthenticity in being inauthentic” (1978: 206). This theme, then, can be seen as an individual’s inclination to being spiritually or morally empty. The fifth theme is that of the Wasteland, the defining attribute is incommunicability (Horton, 1978). In the Wasteland, the state of separation is “thought to be inherent” (1978: 206), besides an individual may feel a state of apathy towards the things that surround them when they are immersed in this condition. The last theme proposed is the Possessed. According to her, this is alienation in the true sense of ‘belonging to another’ (Horton, 1978).

A decade after Horton’s theory regarding alienation in literary works, Diaz proposes that in literature, alienation can be defined as “the estrangement of the literary character or persona from something with which he/she has been, should be, or would like to be in conformity and consonance” (Diaz, 1988: 31). She asserts that there are six basic types of alienation in literature, which can be categorized based on which entity the character is alienated from. The first type is when the literary character is alienated from the physical environment that surrounds them (Diaz, 1988). The second one is the alienation of a literary character “from their own epoch” (Diaz, 1988: 31). This gives the sense of the character’s estrangement from the age or era in which they live. The third type of alienation in literature is when a character is estranged or alienated from “the community of others and/or the values and mores of their society” (Diaz, 1988: 31). The fourth one is if a character is alienated or separated from “the Creator and the cosmic order” (Diaz, 1988: 32), which can be seen when the character is estranged from God. The fifth type of alienation is if a character is alienated from the self. This can be considered as the divided

self, and in literature, this type is often presented “by devices as the soliloquy and, symbolically, by doubling or metamorphosis” (Diaz, 1988: 32). The final type is when a literary character is alienated from “the condition of being human” (Diaz, 1988: 32).

In 2011, McClinton-Temple in *Encyclopedia of Themes in Literature* proposes her own formulation of the concept of alienation. She asserts that alienation is basically the struggle of feeling “disconnected from, shunned by, and unrelated to other human beings and the societal institutions that shape and guide us” (McClinton-Temple, 2011: 3).

According to her, the concept (especially in literature) is associated with the 20th century and the modernist movement. The central theme in modernism is the notion that in the modern era, “with its increased reliance on science and technology, and the gradual removal of the individual from rural community into urban isolation, the individual and society are at odds with one another” (McClinton-Temple, 2011: 3). Modernist movement inspects the way human beings’ relationships with each other and with their social institutions have grown weaker, and lead them to be increasingly individualistic and apathetic, and thus, estranged from the things around them (McClinton-Temple, 2011).

In the essay, McClinton-Temple insists that the sense of alienation in literature can manifest in four ways. The first one is literary characters who “feel alienated from their own communities” or their society (McClinton-Temple, 2011: 3). The second one is characters who are alienated from “their closer connections, including family members and loved ones” (McClinton-Temple, 2011: 3), or in other words, from the people around them. The last one is characters who are alienated “from everything with which he comes into contact: his family, his society, and the whole of modern life” (McClinton-Temple, 2011: 3). According to McClinton-Temple, this is the most severe form of alienation (2011: 3). McClinton-Temple’s interpretation of the different ways alienation may manifest, then, can be used as a basis to categorize the types of alienation in literature.

## METHOD

In analyzing the issue of alienation within the novel, the narrative aspects of focalization and space can be used as a lens through which we see the depiction of alienation by Tartt. The term focalization, Bal asserts, refers to “the relation between the vision and that which is ‘seen’” (1997: 142). Whenever an event is presented in the narrative, it is always depicted from within a certain ‘vision.’ Through

focalization, the readers see things from the character’s eyes and thus will “be inclined to accept the vision presented by that character” (Bal, 1997: 146). Space, on the other hand, refers to the places that are seen or linked in relation to certain points of perception (Bal, 1997). This point of perception may perhaps be a character in the story, for they are situated in a space, observe it, and react to it (Bal, 1997). Thus, in which character the focalization lies as well as the way they view the space around them will be taken into consideration when analyzing the issue of alienation portrayed in the novel.

## DISCUSSION

The narrator and primary focalizer in *The Secret History* is 28-year-old Richard Pape, who recounts the story of his time as a student in a liberal arts college in Vermont, New England. At the beginning of his narration, Richard reveals how alienated he was from his friends—Henry Winter, Francis Abernathy, Camilla and Charles Macaulay, and Edmund ‘Bunny’ Corcoran. He acknowledges how different his life was from theirs, and because of this difference, he cannot think of himself as entirely a part of the group. Right after admitting his inability to reconcile his life to his friends’ lives, Richard continues to describe and reveal information regarding his friends, which includes his friends’ home situation and wealth. In the story level, Richard serves as the focalizer who “perceives” other characters: it is through his eyes the readers gather information about his friends. However, Richard also seems to warn the implied readers that what he thinks of his friends’ lives is solely his perception:

I suppose it’s not odd, then, that I have trouble reconciling my life to those of my friends, or at least to their lives as I perceive them to be (Tartt, 1992: 6).

At the beginning of the first chapter, Richard alternately uses both present and past tense as he prepares to tell the story of his past. In this particular passage, though, he uses the present tense. The usage of present tense here indicates that the beginning of Richard’s narration is told at the current time. Almost a decade after his time at Hampden College, Richard reflects on his past, including the situation leading to his friend’s death. From the story’s beginning, it is clear that Richard has not been able to fully adapt to his friends’ way of life since he is aware of how different his life is from them. This shows a failure to conform on Richard’s part, which resulted in his alienation from his friends. Though Richard was in

close contact with them for a year and eventually became part of the group, he remains to be alienated from them. However, at least at this point, it is still unclear whether Richard's alienation is caused by his friends' unwillingness to accept him into the group entirely or his own inability to adapt. Richard as the narrator/focalizer here acknowledges his limitation on certain information. Richard does not have the complete picture when it comes to the lives of his friends, and what he knows and then depicts about them is processed through his viewpoint, which may be clouded by his judgments and biases.

Despite being the primary narrator/focalizer, Richard still lacks access and is alienated. Richard's estrangement from his community appears as he starts telling the beginning of his story and the narration moves back to the past, during Richard's first weeks in Hampden College. This can be seen by the usage of the past tense in his narration. At this point, Richard is also doing his job as the focalizer; through his eyes, the implied readers see the people who will eventually become his friends:

The degree of truth in any of this was, of course, unknowable but the more I heard about him, the more interested I became, and I began to watch for him and his little group of pupils around campus. Four boys and a girl, they were nothing so unusual at a distance. At close range, though, they were an arresting party – at least to me, who had never seen anything like them, and to whom they suggested a variety of picturesque and fictive qualities (Tartt, 1992: 17).

After transferring to Hampden College, Richard decides that he wants to study Greek. Unfortunately, he is rejected by the teacher because he only takes a limited number of students in his classes every year. This rejection only makes Richard's desire in becoming a part of them grow. Richard has been asking around about the man who teaches Greek in the Classics Department and been given many intriguing yet contradictory information about him. Richard becomes fascinated by this group of students from the department and starts to observe them. According to Richard, these people have "picturesque and fictive qualities," which suggests that he views them through rose-colored glasses. Julian (the teacher)'s refusal to accept Richard into the department establishes a sense of alienation between Richard and them because, in a way, Julian refuses to grant Richard access to his group. While at the same time, Richard seems keen to gain access to the group;

this indicates his desire to diminish his sense of alienation from them. Since at this point Richard has not yet become a part of the department, his alienation is different in that this time it is caused by his lack of access to the group.

Moreover, Richard's initial lack of access to the group also causes him not to see them as real people. Because Richard sees them from a distanced position, he can choose to either see their "fictive qualities" or see them as real people. Yet Richard is denied access to them and therefore is denied the opportunity to interact and communicate with them directly. As a consequence, he cannot help but focus more on his initial assumptions about them and is unable to treat them as human beings. Richard's first impression of these people implies that he perceives their personalities and lives as something that can be shaped to fit into his imagination. Richard's narration is not objective since his perception is prone to be clouded by his own biases.

In addition to Richard's lack of access, his estrangement is also caused by the relationships that he has with his closer connections. The first instance of Richard's alienation from his closer connections, which corresponds to McClinton- Temple's idea regarding the issue of alienation in literature, appears at the beginning of his narration. When present-day Richard starts telling about what happened between him and his friends, Richard acknowledges that, in retrospect, he never had and still does not have any similarities to his friends except for their knowledge of the Greek language and the year he spent in their company. The most noticeable distinction between them is the fact that Richard comes from a working-class family. Richard confesses, "I do not now nor did I ever have anything in common with any of them" (Tartt, 1992: 7). Here, Richard uses both present and past tense to highlight the fact that years after their friendship began and ended, he still does not have any similarities to them. This indicates that even at the time of the narration, Richard remains alienated from his own friends. Even almost a decade later, Richard is still unable to diminish his sense of alienation.

Furthermore, Richard in his narration also seems to emphasize the importance of wealth. Through Richard's descriptions of his friends, it can be seen that their wealth and upbringing set them apart. It is worth noting that every time Richard describes his friends, he makes comments about their financial situation: according to him, Henry Winter is a linguistic genius who "was said to be wealthy" (1992: 19), Francis Abernathy is from Boston and

“quite wealthy” (1992: 19), and Charles and Camilla Macaulay are twins and “had an apartment off campus” (1992: 19), which implies that they have money. Richard also finds out from Georges Laforgue, his academic counselor, that their Greek teacher Julian Morrow is a wealthy man who “refuses payment for his work” (1992: 14) and “donates his salary to the college” (1992: 14). Richard, on the other hand, comes from a working-class background: his father runs a gas station in their hometown of Plano, California and his mother works answering phones in an office in a chip factory. Moreover, his clothes are cheap and the fights he has with his parents are either about school or money. Before choosing to change his major to literature, Richard was majoring in pre-med since “money, you see, was the only way to improve my fortunes” (1992: 7). Even from the beginning, there is an emphasis on the social class disparity between Richard and his friend. Richard, admitting that he is “sick of being poor” (1992: 26), shows that he puts value on financial success and wealth. Because Richard and his friends have so little in common, this distance between them alienates Richard from them. His estrangement here is similar to what has been discussed about the depiction of alienated characters in literary works published in the 20th-century. According to McClinton- Temple, these works may represent figures who, despite close daily proximity, are disconnected or detached from one another (McClinton-Temple, 2011). In Richard’s case, despite his close daily proximity with the rest of the group, he remains to be alienated from them due to his social background. Richard’s difference and eventual estrangement from his friends indicate that Richard puts value on wealth and is simultaneously alienated from his friends because he comes from a different social background than them and has not been able to improve his life and fortunes.

The wealth disparity between Richard and his friends is highlighted during Richard’s first winter in New England. At this point, Richard has befriended the other students in the Classics department. Richard decides to stay in town during the winter break when all his friends have left Hampden. Richard cannot afford to go home or take vacations, unlike his wealthy friends. He realizes that he needs money if he wants to come back to continue his study in Hampden college in the spring. Richard then decides to take a low-paying job on campus with the dean of the Psychology department, Dr Roland. But even with his salary, he still cannot afford to rent a decent apartment during the winter break. For weeks, Richard has no one to talk to except Dr Roland and slowly succumbs

to loneliness and social isolation. As the focalizer, Richard observes how invisible he has become to the people around him by revealing that he is now “an expert at making [himself] invisible.” (1992: 130). By describing himself as an ‘expert,’ it is implied that Richard is the one who refuses to make contact with others. It can be concluded that, at this point, it is his own refusal to socialize with other people that alienates him from the things around him. But Richard eventually realizes that not having anyone see or interact with him costs him something, which is a mental darkness that descends upon him. Still, he seems proud of the way he cuts other people off because he does not think that he needs to make contact with other people who are not a part of his friend group. Richard even goes so far as to compare himself to the *Invisible Man*, which in turn highlights his sense of alienation:

But, like the *Invisible Man* in H. G. Wells, I discovered that my gift had its price, which took the form of, in my case as in his, a sort of mental darkness. It seemed that people failed to meet my eye, made as if to walk through me; my superstitions began to transform themselves into something like mania (Tartt, 1992: 130).

From his point of perception, the people around him are unable to see him. Richard’s struggle with feeling unseen corresponds to McClinton-Temple’s idea of alienation regarding an alienated character that may feel disconnected from and ignored by other human beings (McClinton-Temple, 2011). Richard, too, finds himself disconnected from and ignored by people. His disconnection from other people indicates Richard’s inability to make meaningful contact with other people outside of the group of people in the Classic department. After the death of Bunny, Richard reveals that his financial struggle plays a part in the disintegration of his friendship with the group. At this point, Richard has spent almost every day in his friends’ company and has officially become a part of their group. Sometime after Bunny’s death, Julian discovers that his students are the murderers. Julian then leaves the college and tells the Dean of Studies that he will not return. The Greek department’s future is undetermined since they need to find a substitute for Julian. Because of the ordeal, the dean tells the students that they might have to stay for a couple more semesters. Richard, who financially cannot afford extra semesters, is distraught. Richard worries about the money he needs to survive one more year in Hampden. In his panic, Richard shows his resentment

towards his wealthy friends because “none of the others seemed to care” (Tartt, 1992: 583). Richard grows bitter about his unfortunate condition and compares himself to his friends’ more fortunate situations:

They had trust funds, allowances, dividend checks, doting grandmas, well-connected uncles, loving families. College for them was only a way station, a sort of youthful diversion. But this was my main chance, the only one (Tartt, 1992: 583).

Richard details the things his friends have that he does not. This list of the ways he differs from his friends suggests that he still cannot relate to the people closest to him, which emphasizes his sense of alienation. Despite having established a close friendship with these people, Richard continues to be alienated from them. At this point of their friendship, Richard acknowledges that he is alienated from his friends because of his working-class background. This is the second time Richard admits this in his narration. Unlike his friends, Richard’s social background does not allow him to have a safety net if he were to take extra semesters in Hampden. Richard’s narration suggests that his alienation does not diminish despite being accepted and welcomed into the group. This time, Richard’s alienation is highlighted by the wealth disparity between him and the rest of the group.

The second instance of Richard’s alienation that is related to McClinton’s idea concerning a character’s alienation from their own community can be seen from Richard’s obsession with the Classics department’s exclusivity and his desire to become a part of it. After inadvertently helping the Greek students with their homework, Richard is admitted into the Greek department on the condition that he drops his other classes and that he agrees to have all of his classes except for French to be taught by Julian Morrow. His academic counselor, Laforgue, warns him that if he does this, his contact with the other Humanities departments will be extremely limited. This emphasizes the Classics department’s exclusivity, suggesting that it is estranged from other departments. Richard consciously chooses to be a part of that exclusivity, knowing perfectly well that it will also alienate him from the rest of the people in the college. Consequently, the theme of alienation that is apparent in Richard’s case is that of the Insider, which is proposed by Horton (1978). As has been discussed before, the Insider is described as the figure who attempts to conform to the expectations of others (Horton, 1978). In Richard’s case, he is prepared to

alienate himself from the rest of the people in the campus as long as he becomes a part of the elite group. This shows that, in the novel, Richard serves as an overconformist character who is willing to do everything to fit in.

In no time, Richard has become completely absorbed in his obsession with the people in the Classics department. Though he has yet to interact directly with any of them, Richard’s eyes concentrate on their movements and he notices that “they shared a certain coolness, a cruel, mannered charm” (Tartt, 1992: 32). He admits that he both finds them attractive and envies them, but these people’s “strange quality, far from being natural, gave every indication of having been intensely cultivated” (Tartt, 1992: 32-33). His attraction and jealousy toward them prompt his desire to become one of them. He realizes, though, that the qualities that attract him are most likely obtained by nurture instead of by nature.

Despite his attempt to become a part of the department, Richard finds it challenging to fully win them over. As Richard starts getting to know his classmates, he is invited to dinner at Camilla and Charles’ apartment after going on a late afternoon walk with them. As it turns out, Henry, Francis, and Bunny are all also invited, and the dinner goes unsuccessful. Throughout the dinner, Richard talks very little and becomes dejected. Soon after, Richard becomes disillusioned with everything, including his classes and his classmates. The day after the dinner, Richard suspects that his classmates are giving him the cold shoulder; he notices “their crisp air of solidarity, the cool way their eyes seemed to look right through [him]” (1992: 76). Richard realizes that while there had been “an opening in their ranks” (1992: 77), for some unknown reason, it has now been closed and he is back to where he began. This shows that even after being admitted into the department, Richard has not fully integrated with the rest of the group and is still alienated from them.

Even by the end of the novel, Richard’s estrangement from his closer connections remains. Each member of the group has started to unravel: Francis suffers from panic attacks and Charles develops alcoholism while also becoming abusive towards his twin sister, Camilla, Henry dies by suicide to make sure that the group’s involvement in the murders of Bunny and the farmer is kept hidden. With Henry’s death, their friendship ultimately falls apart and drifts apart. Richard addresses the implied readers, “You would think, after all we’d been through, that Francis and the twins and I would have kept in better touch over the years.” (Tartt, 1992: 614).

Richard himself expects that Henry's death should have brought them even closer than ever.

However, this is certainly not the case; Richard admits that the group is no longer in contact and that the thread that binds them all has been severed permanently. At this point of his narration, Richard is no longer a part of this exclusive group since the friendship has ended. Once again, Richard is alienated from what he thinks are his closer connections. It is the third time this particular type of alienation according to McClinton-Temple occurs in Richard's narration. Despite going through the same things, Richard and the people he considers his close friends eventually lost touch. This indicates that by the end of Richard's story, his estrangement comes in full circle; he is right back where he started, which is that he is not a part of that exclusive group.

In addition to estrangement from his closer connections, the novel's character-bound narrator/focalizer is also alienated from his physical environment. Richard's alienation from his physical environment can be seen from the customs distinction between Richard's hometown of Plano, California and Hampden, Vermont. The "novelty" of being a part of the Greek department and a newcomer to this town has diminished, especially now that the realization of the foreignness and unfamiliarity of Hampden has finally sunk in. Richard, who is "Californian by birth, and by nature" (1992: 5), finds himself transplanted to the other side of the continent, and unable to conform to what is deemed as acceptable in unfamiliar new town. For example, Richard is surprised to find their professor Julian taking Henry's hands while talking and Henry kissing Julian's cheek as he leaves, which indicates that the relationship between Henry and Julian is closer and more intimate than what Richard is accustomed to. Since Richard has officially relocated to Hampden, he has also now become a part of Hampden's community. Richard's situation at this moment is similar to what Diaz proposes about the alienated character in literature, which is that the sense of alienation may manifest when the character is alienated from their own society or community (Diaz, 1988). In Richard's case, even after attaining his desire, he is still unable to fully immerse himself in his new community and remains alienated from the things around him. Richard reveals:

I suppose I was only a little depressed, now the novelty of it had worn off, at the wildly alien character of the place in which I found myself; a strange land with strange customs and peoples and unpredictable weathers (Tartt, 1992: 78).

Richard focalizes the unfamiliar space around him; by using words such as 'alien' and 'strange,' it is implied that Vermont is entirely different from Richard's hometown in California. Because of this, his unfamiliarity with the customs and the people in it is emphasized. At the same time, Richard's description of Vermont as a "strange land with strange customs and peoples" further suggests Richard's alienation. More specifically, Richard's alienation corresponds to Diaz's first and third types of alienation in that Richard is estranged from his physical environment as well as the community, values, and mores of the society he is living in (Diaz, 1988). Richard's perpetual alienation indicates that, despite his desire and efforts to become a part of this new community, he is unable to adapt to the weather and conform to the customs of the town he currently lives in.

Another instance of alienation in the novel can be seen in Richard and his friends' alienation from the modern world, which has everything to do with the exclusive community that Richard is a part of. After confronting Henry about a bacchanal ritual and the subsequent blackmail, Richard returns to his room. Richard is still in shock about Henry's admission about what happened that night and chooses to distract himself with his Greek Prose Composition homework. While writing his essay, Richard remembers Julian's warning never to translate his thoughts in English word by word into Greek. This is because when they write and speak in a different language, they begin to think in a different way, too. Richard's narration continues with him agreeing with Julian's caution and giving the implied readers an example of an untranslatable Greek word.

Richard admits that that is why he feels connected to his friends. As a result of their familiarity with the Greek language and their knowledge of the Ancient Greek civilization, Richard and his friends think differently than other people outside of their group. He believes that the rest of the students in the Greek department also feel the same way as him; that is, they all feel more at ease with the world in the fifth century that they are studying than the world in the twentieth century that they are currently living in. Richard notices that he and his friends experience the same thing every time they finish reading their books, which is the experience "of looking up from their books with fifth-century eyes and finding the world disconcertingly sluggish and alien, as if it were not their home" (Tartt, 1992: 224). However, this is all just Richard's assumption based on what he perceives. At this point of narration, a new

sign of alienation appears for the first and only time. Richard and the others are alienated from the modernity of the late twentieth century. They do not feel and are incapable of feeling at home in the real world. This echoes Diaz's second type of alienation, which occurs when characters are alienated from their epoch or period of their own lives (Diaz, 1988). In Richard and his friends' case, they are alienated from the age or era in which they live because they are more comfortable 'living' in the ancient world than the modern one they actually occupy. However, it is also important to note that an external factor does not cause their alienation: they are the ones that isolate and distanced themselves from the world. This is shown when Richard recognizes this group is not interested "in anything that went on in the world" (1992: 93). Their alienation suggests that they are unable to live harmoniously with the world of the twentieth century.

Furthermore, in the reading of the novel, the amount of information received by the implied readers also builds a sense of alienation. This time, it is between the readers and the text itself. The narrator's unreliability and lack of access become the main factors of the alienation between the readers and text. Since the narrator in this novel plays the role of a focalizer and is present as a character in the story, every piece of information he relates is based on his perspective. From the beginning of his narration, Richard refers to what he tells as a "story." There is a sense of awareness that there is an audience to his narration. "How to begin." (Tartt, 1992: 7), Richard narrates before he starts his story. This indicates that he treats what he tells as a story and that it does not matter if it is factual or not, only that everything comes from his memory and, in turn, the degree of truth lies in his hands. Richard has all the power with regard to what events in his life to tell. He also alerts the implied readers that he is a liar. He reveals that he has a gift, which is that he is good at "lying on [his] feet" (Tartt, 1992: 26). Richard also presents instances of his lies in his narration; he lies to Dr Roland that he owns a car, and he lies to the people he meets in campus about his childhood. So it is essential not to take Richard's narration at face value. Because Richard has the tendency to lie, the distance between the 'real' events and the implied readers increases and the sense of alienation is highlighted. In the textual level, the implied readers remain outsiders from the story; they have no other choice but to trust this unreliable narrator.

Additionally, it is clear that most of Richard's lack of access in the novel is caused by Henry.

Richard confesses that throughout their friendship, Henry withholds much information from him, and that it is impossible even to try to get to the bottom of anything with him. Richard compares Henry to a propagandist, claiming that he constantly withholds information and "leaking it only when it served his purposes" (1992: 501). Richard also divulges that so much of what he knows—and in turn, what he reveals to the implied readers during his narration—is "only secondhand, so much of it was only what he'd told [him]" (1992: 551). The narrator's admission regarding the secondhand information he receives and hands over to the implied readers emphasizes the sense of alienation in the text.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we found that the sense of alienation is portrayed through the narrative aspects, namely the focalization and space, shows an alienation towards the working class. The perception of events through the focalizer as well as the space he observes builds the sense of alienation. Based on the analysis on the narrative strategies, it can be concluded that the focalizer in the novel is alienated. In the story level, Richard is alienated from his community or society, his closer connections, his physical environment, and from his epoch. Richard shows his sense of alienation from the people around him through his role as an outsider who desires to fit in and feel like he belongs. His alienation is manifested as the lack of access to certain events, the unreliability as a narrator, the wealth disparity between him and his friends, the noticeable difference between the customs in Vermont and his hometown, and the incapability to coexist harmoniously with the modern world. Because of his overconformist nature, the theme of alienation that is evident in Richard's narration is that of the Insider In Richard's case, his social and economic background plays an important role in his narrative. Richard is a character who comes from a working-class family and has the desire to escape his own social class. Therefore, the presentation of the main character's alienation in the novel represents the working class' fear of being ignored by higher social classes, which uncovers the existence of social class discrimination.

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