MĂDĂLINA PANTEA

editor

Cultural Texts and Contexts in the English Speaking World

(VIII)

CULTURAL TEXTS AND CONTEXTS IN THE ENGLISH SPEAKING WORLD
(VIII)

CONTENTS

FILM AND DRAMA

TEACHING ENGLIH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

BOOK REVIEWS

Intro

Mădălina PANTEA
University of Oradea

It is with great pleasure that we present the proceedings of the conference Cultural Texts and Contexts in the English-Speaking World, a gathering that brings together a diverse range of perspectives and scholarly inquiries into the rich tapestry of English-language literature and cultural studies. The contributions in this volume reflect the dynamic and multifaceted nature of English-speaking cultures, from British and Commonwealth literature to American narratives, and from critical cultural and gender studies to the practicalities of teaching English as a foreign language.

The section on British and Commonwealth Literature opens with Irina-Ana Drobot's insightful analysis of resonance in Graham Swift's poem *Another*, exploring the intricate layers of meaning that connect personal experience with broader cultural echoes. Dorel-Aurel Mureșan then delves into the intersecting themes of race and class in Zadie Smith's *On Beauty*, shedding light on the nuanced social commentary embedded in Smith's work.

In the American Literature section, Erick Sierra examines the concept of post-otherness in Tony Kushner's *Angels in America*, offering a fresh perspective on identity and recognition in this landmark play. Ioana Cistelecan's study of Bernard Malamud's *The Jewbird* tackles the complexities of identity and coping mechanisms within the Jewish-American experience. Xiaorui Du's exploration of Hester Prynne as a communitarian figure revisits Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* with a focus on social belonging and moral resilience. Olga Kajtar's discussion of Pinjung: Guantanamo Narrative as a Genre investigates the emerging narrative forms that address the complexities of Guantanamo Bay's detention practices.

The Cultural and Gender Studies section features a wide-ranging exploration of identities and social structures. Senior Lecturer Marinău Andrada PhD provides a detailed examination of the Templar Knights, discussing their rules and sense of community. Delia-Maria Radu's work on the challenges of identity resonance offers a critical lens on the difficulties of finding personal and collective identity in a globalized world.

Mona Ashour's compelling study, Global Fantasies of Violence Against Women in Climate Fiction, addresses the intersection of gender, violence, and environmental crisis, highlighting the urgent need for gender-sensitive perspectives in literary and cultural discourse.

In the Film and Drama section, Gábor Patkós analyzes Bong Joon-Ho's *Parasite* (2019), focusing on the paradox of enclosed spaciousness and metaphors of resonance, thus contributing to the ongoing discussion on space and social stratification in contemporary cinema.

The Teaching English as a Foreign Language section is dedicated to practical approaches and pedagogical tools for effective language instruction. Dileta Jatautaite and Vaiva Zuzevičiūtė discuss the use of electronic visual learning aids in fostering metacognitive learning. Kevin Martens Wong's study of Kristang culture in Singapore provides insights into the preservation and teaching of indigenous languages. Giulia Suciu addresses the perennial challenge of balancing identity with native-likeness in teaching English pronunciation. Finally, Mădălina Pantea explores the validity of subtitling as a pedagogical tool, presenting a classroom experiment using *The Undatable* to enhance language learning and translation skills.

This volume also includes a Book Review by Amalia Drăgălănescu, who offers a critical appraisal of Jason Ānanda Josephson Storm's *Metamodernism: The Future of Theory*, an essential read for anyone interested in contemporary theoretical debates.

Together, these papers reflect the vibrant and interdisciplinary nature of English-language studies, offering fresh insights and fostering dialogue across various fields of inquiry. We hope that the ideas and discussions captured in these proceedings will inspire further research and collaboration among scholars and practitioners in the years to come.

BRITISH AND COMMONWEALTH LITERATURE

RESONANCE IN GRAHAM SWIFT'S POEM *ANOTHER*

Irina-Ana DROBOT
Technical University of Civil Engineering Bucharest

Abstract: *The purpose of this paper is to apply Rosa's theory of resonance to the poem Another by Graham Swift, which was published in his volume of autobiographical writings Making an Elephant: Writing from Within (2009). In this poem, the notions of self and other can be regarded as closely connected, in the sense that the self can regard the other as a projection, or as what is common with both self and other. We could claim that human nature can be similar, and that it is based on this theory that we are not as different from one another as we are similar. This is one reason why we can establish relationships with one another, and this is also a reason why poetry can appeal to us. Poetry is based on universal features of human nature, and on what we can resonate with at all times. Sympathy between the poetic persona and the reader could be regarded as the basis of the appeal and relevance of poems. We enjoy poems as they can describe, coincidentally, similarly lived experiences. We can identify with the poetic persona just as we can identify with certain characters in novels. Real life experiences are not so much different. They can be based on the same process of identification and shared experiences. The paper will be based on literary, as well as psychological and sociological analysis.*

Keywords: *sympathy, human nature, universality, shared experiences, emotions.*

Introduction

Poetry is based on establishing a relationship of sympathy and of dialogue with the reader. A poem could, thus, become a means of communicating a shared emotional experience. The author of the poem can use figurative, lyrical language in order to make the reader resonate all the more with the emotions and the experience described, as well as the musicality of various rhythm and rhyme patterns, which can create an effect of incantation.

Graham Swift describes, in his poem titled *Another*, from *Making an Elephant: Writing from Within* (2009), a book which contains poems and autobiographical essays, the very experience of this dialogue between poet and reader, but not only, of sympathizing with another person, when we find we share common personality traits, feelings, and similar ways of

seeing the world. This experience of sympathizing is visible right from the first line: "To see ourselves as others see us" (Swift 2009: 185). This poem leads us, in fact, beyond the experience of sympathizing with one another: it prompts us to distance ourselves from our own perspective about ourselves, and to start thinking about how the others could feel about and perceive us. By doing so, we place ourselves in their shoes, so that we can understand their own perspective, related, in this case, to us. What is more, we can also understand them better, through this understanding of ourselves from a different perspective. All this change in perspectives can be related, by readers that are knowledgeable of Swift's novels, to the telling of the story from several perspectives, of several characters, without a narrator that could control everything and present the story from a so-called objective point of view. Readers that know Swift's previous work can immediately think about novels such as *Last Orders* and *Out of This World*, which are structured based on monologues, titled with the names of the characters telling their portion of the story. In these two examples, we see the characters from the perspective of the others, just as they are presented in the accounts offered by each of them holding monologues. The reader is the only one having access to all of the characters' confessions in Swift's book. According to Malcolm (2023: 14), Swift, thus, handles over to the reader the role that had been, until then, that of the all-knowing, omniscient narrator. The reader assists to what is going on, he/ she can resonate with the characters due to the confessional mode, suggesting a story told in all honesty by each and every character, and can feel, however, influenced by their stories, in order to put everything together after reading each account. The reader is left with the task of going over and over the story made up of those told by the characters, and complete it by using his/ her intuition and way of relating to each character. Swift's novels are all about the way characters can relate to each other, and the reader, in turn, relates to all the characters, in his/ her attempt to make sense of what has happened in their relationships. Just like in Romantic poetry, Swift activates the device of the readers' sympathy for the characters' experience. The connection between Swift's novels and Romantic poetry is all the more obvious through the use of lyrical language, references to Romantic poetry elements, intertextual references, as well as through nature settings (Drobot, 2014). The appeal to sympathy is visible as a theme in the entire poem *Another* by Graham Swift:

> To see ourselves as others see us:
> That's one thing.
> But to see others when they don't see us,
> When they aren't just part of our own grey penumbra,

In their own sweet, bright, unshadowed space:
That's another. (Swift 2009: 185)

The poem is made of two parts, presenting two sides of sympathy: understanding ourselves based on the way others perceive us, and understanding others, without making assumptions based on what we project negatively from sides of our personalities that we do not know, do not like or fear. This poem tries to prompt us to see others not through projection, but to truly understand another person for what they really are. Poetry can be understood as a means to connect emotionally to the others. The link between poetry and emotion is made visible in cases when poetry is seen as emotional support through difficult times. The way we relate to the others has a similar function to that of poetry: we connect to the others, we relate to them, and we also rely on their support when we are going through difficult time in our personal lives or at the level of public history.

According to Swift's poem *Another*, we need, for our relationships to work well, to understand the others' perspective on us, as well as to reach a deep, honest understanding of the others. We need to go deeper than what we assume about them at superficial level, during social meetings, when everyone is subjected to obeying certain rules. We need to be, after all, honest with each other and go beyond what is supposed to do according to society's demands.

All this honesty will help us build true relationships. The need to feel close to another person is a fundamental part in the modern world, when alienation is so frequent. We find loneliness and isolation as parts of the modern world, since due to the industrialization process came the movement of the population from rural to urban areas. The city is a place of freedom, to some extent, since it ensures anonymity, but it can also lead to each individual feeling isolated. We do not find the same sense of community and social closeness as in rural areas in the city. The city became a symbol of individualism, of freedom, but also of alienation in modern and postmodern literary works. The need for human relationships and closeness has remained and, perhaps, in an attempt to restore it, we have witnessed calling our contemporary age "communication age" (Lull 2002: 1). According to the theories of Rosa Hartmut, the opposite of alienation is resonance, the latter being defined as an aspect which "lies at the basis of all conceptions of the good life" (Lijster et al 2019). We could go as far as to claim that resonance is a fundamental characteristic of humanity (Schiermer 2020: 3). What is more, when we think about life, "we must consider our relationship to, or resonance with the world" (Rosa 2019). Part of the relationship between ourselves and the world includes relationships with the other people, as well

as with ourselves and with the way we share or not certain beliefs, values, and ways of thinking with the society we live in.

Relationships: A Means of Feeling Connected or Isolated

One fundamental characteristic of the contemporary world is "the acceleration of life" (Rosa, 2019). Since "it does not make us happier" (Rosa, 2019), we need to find a solution to this crisis of the contemporary world. Rosa (2019) proposes, as a solution, resonance.

Indeed, due to the fast pace of life in today's world, we feel that we do not have enough time for ourselves. We do not have enough time to reflect on what we want, and also, we feel that we do not have enough time to spend with the persons that mean a lot to us and to understand them. We do not truly listen to them. Swift notices this aspect and illustrates it in his novels. The characters speak through their monologues, which are only visible to and listened to by the readers. Generally, the other characters do not take the time to listen, or simply do not truly communicate. Everyone often seems to be trapped in their own loneliness and isolation. In *The Sweetshop Owner*, for example, William Chapman has hoped his entire life to receive affection from his wife, Irene, and afterwards from their daughter, Dorry. However, he ends up dying alone, as the novel suggests, since the reader, after witnessing their story, remains with the detail of William still hoping for his daughter to come and see him during his last days. Irene had been physically and emotionally distant after a trauma she lived with the man her family wanted her to marry. She chose William as a husband simply as a means to escape from the demands of her family. Eventually, they both ended up isolated in their own worlds. There was no mutual connection, and thus, no resonance between them. This novel exemplifies the issue of alienation and the solution of resonance proposed by Rosa (2019) could be beneficial. Human beings are social, and in need of affection from the others. This is what they search for in relationships of all kinds, in couples, in family relationships, in relationships between children and parents. The novel *Shuttlecock* exemplifies the issue of isolation from the family of a father, Prentis, who wishes to find out the truth about his own father, meaning whether he was a hero or deserter during a war. The truth is not easy to find, and eventually Prentis decides to put this search aside. He then becomes again connected with his family. Swift, thus, has examples of both estrangement and reconnection, reaching resonance again, in his novels. Examples where the characters go through a crisis, where they isolate themselves from the relationships with their

family and then reconnect, or reconcile, can be found in the father – daughter relationship between Harry Beach and his daughter Sophie in *Out of This World*, as well as in the relationship between husband and wife in *Wish You Were Here*, where the husband feels connected with the ghost of his young brother killed during the war, not accepting his loss, until he makes up with his wife. The characters can feel out of resonance with the world around them, in the sense that they cannot connect with others and also cannot accept their situation, e.g. the main character in the novel *Here We Are* starts off as a young boy whose mother leaves his father, and he can no longer connect emotionally with her since he does not feel safe. Instead, he manages to connect with an old couple that have the attitude of parents to him, while they take care of him during the war. The old man teaches him magic. Then, as a young man, he falls in love with a girl he takes as his assistant in his magic act, but then she marries his best friend. In an act that is both magic and real, he disappears for good both on stage and in real life from all those that had known him. This disappearance act shows that he no longer felt in resonance with the world around him. In *Waterland*, the teacher, in his teenage years, had felt resonance with Mary, now his wife. Yet, at present, they are estranged, as a consequence of Mary's inability to have children after an abortion performed by an old woman in the Fens. The teacher seeks resonance with his pupils, as, during the History classes, he starts talking to them about his youth in the Fens, and reflects philosophically as how events are interconnected in both public and private histories. Detective George Webb, recently left by his wife, find himself deeply connected emotionally to Sarah, a woman who had stabbed her husband to death, as she had been jealous of his affair with a young refugee, who was her student. She had felt out of resonance with her husband, as she found that the relationship between them could no longer be the same. Sarah herself had resonated with her refugee student, since she noticed she was alone, and had no place to go. Perhaps this was a reflection of her own self. Throughout Swift's works, resonance appears as a common element, and characters either search for, eventually achieve it, or, if they do not, the ending is felt as tragic by the readers. The poem *Another* appears to sum up the theory of resonance, as Rosa (2019) has created it, and as it can be applied to Swift's work, due to the fact that it runs through all the lives of his characters. This is a sign that Swift's work is a reflection of the modern world, where alienation is a constant presence or a constant threat, which can be cured by resonance, just as Rosa (2019) has proposed.

Closeness to other people and affection is what we human beings feel inclined to look for. We need protection, and we also need to stick together if we need to survive or to live in comfortable conditions. Even if nowadays,

the countries offer enough resources and ensure basic needs of survival, we still wish for affection and to feel comfortable in our environment.

According to Rosa (2019), "The quality of a human life cannot be measured simply in terms of resources, options, and moments of happiness." We need to take, apparently, the entire context of our surroundings: this is what we do when we look at "our relationship to, and our resonance with, the world." We can have control over the way we relate to the world by the way "establish our relationship to the world." This relationship that we establish can include the following elements: existing there, by the simple "act of breathing", by adopting "culturally distinct worldviews," as well as by searching for resonance in "the realms of concrete experience and action – family and politics, work and sports, religion and art." We also need to consider "the great crises of modern society – the environmental crisis, the crisis of democracy, the psychological crisis," which "can […] be understood and analyzed in terms of resonance and our broken relationship to the world around us."

A relationship of unease with the world around is frequently found in Graham Swift's work. This problem can be fixed temporarily, through moments of illumination, or moments of revelation, when the characters feel united with and part of the world, surrounding them. Such moments can happen in nature or even in the city. For Swift's character, the London suburbs function as a means for them to feel connected to their surroundings. Virginia Woolf had referred to similar moments, which she called moments of being. Such moments are present in Romantic poetry, when the poetic persona feels a deep connection with nature. Woolf adapted these moments to the city and, especially, to the city of London. Mrs Dalloway, the main character in the novel with the same title, feels a deep connection with the streets and places in London, as well as with the crowds there. Walking in the streets in suburbs is, for Swift's characters, an occasion to connect with themselves. The same can hold true for a nature setting. According to Rosa (2019), we cannot be happy in this modern world and living this modern lifestyle: "The pace of modern life is undoubtedly speeding up, yet this acceleration does not seem to have made us any happier or more content." We could see in this speed technological development which has laid down the basic survival needs resources, yet, affection in human relationships is indispensable, together with our feeling at ease with the values of the world and culture around us. In *The Sweetshop Owner*, William feels that his wife Irene focused on material objects, believing that it is things that remain. This sounds like a materialistic perspective on the world, which is in contrast to William's needs and beliefs. This can be a reason why he feels out of place and not understood in his family.

In the modern world, we have faced the crises brought by the questioning of everything, until nothing was left, including traditions, values, religion, and science. The belief that there was no unique, objective truth led to a thrust of subjectivity in fiction, such as Swift's characters' monologues. The omniscient narrator disappeared, just as beliefs in religion and institutions were shattered. Existentialism led to a sense of confusion and despair. We do have basic needs resources, such as the ones brought by the comfort of industrialization and city life, yet by questioning age-old traditions and beliefs individuals can feel that they live chaotic, unstable lives, with nothing to hang on to and with nothing to look forward to. Life was arranged by what we could call a template in rural, agrarian societies: they would work to ensure their living, rely on agricultural crops for food, share them with the community, live depending of natural conditions, work hard every day (perhaps not much different from what we do today, yet in different circumstances and settings), and then connecting with their families in the mornings and evenings, during their meals together. Young people would get married early, start a family and work hard together. Everything was about survival, and they would follow certain stages in their lives. They would also participate during periodic festivals, where they would celebrate and socialize together, especially in relation to the seasons and various works they could do in their gardens and in their fields. Nowadays we do different types of work, not so much physically, in general, and we look constantly forward to free days and entertainment. Yet, life in the city means isolation, and, coupled with the questioning of previous habits, such as marrying at an early age and starting a family, or remaining in a marriage that is unhappy, has changed the way individuals view happiness. Families have gotten smaller and smaller. Fear of loneliness is frequent. We still do have phases in life to follow, such as going to school, going to college, university, achieving a PhD degree, developing a beautiful career, falling in love, and so on. However, such phases in life can be changed, and nowadays psychologists and therapists try to tell their clients that they should not feel depressed due to social pressure and that they should not succumb to it. Instead, they should focus on what they themselves want and not feel the need to apply society's expectations to their lives. Such a way of thinking on the part of psychologists and therapists fits in the ideology of individualism (Hofstede 2011) and liberalism (Crittenden 1992), with focus on the individuals' wishes and achievements. The result is "the liberal self," which refers to the "autonomous self," defined as "an independent chooser, operating according to principles of rationality" (Crittenden 1992: 6). Respect for different values and ways of life comes hand in hand with respect for other

cultures and tolerance for difference. Popular psychology and self-help books try to show individuals that what they had been taught in the family and in society may not be the only way to think and live, as well as to understand themselves as unique personalities. Any person has the right to make his/ her own choices in order to be happy and to understand who they truly are beyond the way society and family has moulded them. This is another example of questioning the correctness and uniqueness of perspectives on life offered by what we have seen around. If we do not resonate with what family and society expects from us, then we are free to do whatever makes us happy. Swift's poem *Another* tries to present, if we consider these perspectives, the way the individual is viewed by society, friends, family, and anyone else, as well as the way the individual understand who the others truly are, beyond his/ her expectations of them.

Social rules, expectations and pressures may be there as a form of organization of life, and as a means of preventing chaos and confusion. At the same time, if some individuals cannot resonate with them and do not feel adapted to them, it is beneficial for them to be accepted as they truly are. Otherwise, as we see in psychology articles nowadays, we can get various life crises if we have not achieved certain landmarks in our lives until certain ages, such as graduating highschool, university, getting a job, having a good career, having friends, having fun, living in a couple, buying a house, having children, and so on. Some individuals may not resonate with these pressures and may not wish to live in this way, preferring, instead, as in American culture, to have a free year when young people travel and think about what they would like to study at university and about what job they would like for the future. They may try several universities until they settle for one, as well as several workplaces.

"What is happiness?" can be, nowadays, correlated with other questions, such as "What is it that I want?" and "Who am I?" The poem *Another* by Graham Swift has been proposed as an example of showing how we can shake off the way we have been taught about how others and how ourselves should be like, in private, and with respect to our real selves. When looking at ourselves from the others' perspective, we could find out more about ourselves, like in the case of a feedback. When we see the others in their "unshadowed space" (Swift 2009: 185), we could understand that we see the real persons, not what society makes them to be or what us have been taught by society to see in them. It is a poem when both ourselves and the others can be seen in all honesty, and nothing more.

What Rosa (in Lijster et al 2019) does is a "critique of modernity," seen as "a process of acceleration," from three points of view: "technical acceleration, acceleration of social change, and acceleration of the pace of

life." Rosa (in Lijster et al 2019) poses the following question: what does a "good life" mean? This researcher believes that "modernity" could be understood as "a broken promise," since "the very technology and social revolutions that were supposed to lead to an increase in autonomy are now becoming increasingly oppressive." Rosa (2010: 80) goes on, explaining: "The powers of acceleration no longer are experienced as a liberating force, but as an actually enslaving pressure instead." Acceleration is, according to Rosa (2010: 80), "the primary contemporary source of alienation." While the acceleration has meant offering a comfortable lifestyle and a possibility for independence, it has also brought up disadvantages, alienation being a word that sums them up. People cannot escape from acceleration, to the point where we become its prisoners. Technology may be felt as allowing us to do certain actions ourselves, by using machines, yet, at the same time, it made certain jobs disappear. While we do not need to rely on others for various services, we also communicate less and less, since we are absorbed in using the respective machines to complete our tasks. This is just an example. We could also consider how socializing has been reduced, once people no longer felt any need to go to cinemas, since they were no longer attractive due to the apparition of alternative technology, such as television, with cable, then with Internet television, as well as home cinema systems. However, the reaction against this did not take long to appear. Going out is currently a popular activity in cities, and city halls try to create a sense of communion for those living in the city, through establishing cinemas based on old films placed in the city center, various street shows and boulevard portions closed for traffic during weekends. Acceleration can also include certain fixed mindsets, values, beliefs into which people are caught and are simply believed to be acting as robots, being told what to do and not stopping to think about why or what they are doing. We can make analogies with the cartoons and memes circulating on social media, picturing lots of people not communicating among themselves but instead being stuck with their eyes on the mobile phones, in public transport or even at home, in the family setting. At some point, a cartoon showing people in a café with a sign saying that they had no wi-fi Internet connection and that the clients would need to talk to each other.

Indeed, Rosa (in Lijster et al 2019) completes the picture of the alienation in the modern world with "the three axes famously described by Marx in the fragment on *Estranged Labour*: alienation of people from themselves, from their fellow human beings, and from the world of things." What is going on could be described as follows: "While we feel the constant pressure of having to do *more* in *less* time, there also seems to be a shared feeling of a loss of control over our own life and the world, and therefore of losing contact with it.

These types of alienation could be the reason why Swift, in the poem *Another*, since the author tries to bring to the readers' attention these two important aspects: "alienation of people from themselves," as well as "from their fellow human beings" (Rosa, in Lijster et al 2019). The alienation from ourselves and from the others can find a feeling of compensation, or a solution, offered by Swift's poem. This poem can be understood as looking like a solution to the issue of alienation brought up about the larger context of the modern world, as well as to the isolation experienced at personal level. The profession of psychologists and various therapies, from individually-oriented, group therapy, to family therapy is more and more frequently encountered and more and more needed. Psychologists have been organizing workshops for people to get in touch with their own emotions, e.g. through theatre workshops, or mindfulness techniques, which have been borrowing from Zen Buddhist meditations. Such therapies can be understood as ensuring the need for spirituality, which apparently has been lost in a world dominated by technology and consumerism, and where human relationships with the others and with ourselves, first of all, have been deteriorating. Self-help and motivation books could be understood as being part of the same trying to find solutions with respect to the idea of resonance proposed by Rosa (2019). Books inspired by Japanese culture's relationship with the world, such as the one based on the concept of "ichigo ichie" have been published, by Garcia and Miralles (2019). This concept refers to enjoying the present, just as Japanese culture preaches, through the teachings of Zen Buddhism. This can be a solution to falling out of resonance with the world.

Swift proposed in his poem *Another* two solutions: the first one can be related, by analogy with the frequency of therapy situation, with receiving feedback by the patient or client from the therapist about his/ her actions, way of thinking, and values. In the ancient world, "Know thyself" was a well-known aforism. Self-knowledge was done through philosophy back then. Nowadays, it can be achieved through therapy sessions or even through self-analysis, the latter having been introduced and practiced by the psychoanalysis Sigmund Freud. Leaving the idea of alienation in the modern world aside, people go through various life stages where they experience crises and need to, as is frequently put, find themselves, such as during their teenage years or mid-life. It is during such moments that they need to distance themselves from their own persons and do the following: "To see ourselves as others see us" (Swift 2009: 185). Another aspect they need to take into account in order to no longer be alienated from the others is "to see others when they don't see us,/ When they aren't just part of our own grey penumbra,/ In their own sweet, bright, unshadowed space" (Swift

2009: 185). Developing capacity for empathy means understanding the others and taking their emotions, wishes and needs into account. This can help us better relate to them.

The need for friendship and socializing transcends all technological development and all historical ages, and it cannot be solved through technological development and even not ignored. No matter how autonomous we can be due to technology development, it is impossible for us to ignore our wish to feel accepted in a social circle and to feel understood emotionally by someone else. In our modern world, it seems we need to do additional efforts and to deal with the stress of the structure of today's society. It is part of our human nature to wish to feel understood by the others and also to connect to the others, through shared emotional experience. Human relationships and our need for them, not necessarily at material and basic survival level any more in today's world, but at emotional level, can be understood as universal.

Conclusions

The present paper has shown how Rosa's (2019) concept of resonance can describe the way today's world goes on, by applying it to all of Swift's writings, in order to provide a context and examples of concrete situations for the poem *Another*. The characters in Swift's works search for the solution of resonance, proposed by Rosa, to the alienation of the modern world. Sometimes they succeed, sometimes not. However, resonance is their goal and their need, in an otherwise unstable world, which makes them in itself to feel ill at ease.

Graham Swift's poem *Another* sounds, to some extent, as a philosophical argument put briefly, showing, by implication, what we need to do in order to feel resonance with our world today. Namely, we need to take a step back and understand how the others feel about us and perceive us. In this way, we get to see their own point of view, which may be different from our own. Perhaps we intend to do something, yet our action is perceived differently. In order to understand if we really do what we believe we are doing, we need to receive some feedback from the other person or persons, in order to become more understanding and more sympathetic towards them. Feedback nowadays is a constant part of our culture, e.g. in public relations, so that the institutional staff can improve their attitude towards their clients, as well as in the relationship teacher – students, where the current practice is to ask students to evaluate their teachers and their courses at university studies level, so that the teachers

can improve their teaching activity. Therapists and popular psychology books encourage us to explore various sides of ourselves, as well as various sides of our relationship with the world. The goal of establishing a good relationship with the world, encouraged by self-help and motivational books is the same as that of resonance. In the second part of the poem, Swift encourages us to better understand the others, when they are not making efforts to act according to what is expected of them. By being honest with one another, everything should go on smoothly. The two parts of Swift's poem Another explore two aspects of alientation, from ourselves and from others, as well as the third, which is achieved by combining the other first two: by relating to us and to the others, we understand the way we relate, positively or not, to today's world. We, together with the others, hold various worldviews, and these are part of our relationship with our contemporary world. These worldviews shows whether we resonate with the world today or not, through the way we relate to the others and to ourselves, as well as through the way the others relate to us.

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RACE AND CLASS IN ZADIE SMITH'S *ON BEAUTY*

Dorel-Aurel MUREŞAN
Emanuel University of Oradea

Abstract: *Zadie Smith's On Beauty is a novel that tackles issues such as politics, class, race, nationality, gender, and religion, while also focusing on the importance of art and the multiple ways of approaching it, from the emotionally sterile method of theoreticians, to the emotionally rich approach of the uneducated naives. Moreover, Smith's novel abounds in complex characters that are unable to properly relate to each other because of the aforementioned issues. However, the issue of class is one of the main factors that prevent true bonding in the novel. Thus, the paper analyzes the issues of race and class, pointing out that the basic racial dichotomy is long gone and that otherness and the lack of resonance have more to do with social class than with the colour of one's skin.*

Key words: *Zadie Smith, On Beauty, race, class, connection, art, beauty.*

Zadie Smith's fame began with her first novel and, according to scholar Fiona Tolan (2006: 128), "*On Beauty* continues and develops much of the successful formula of her first, […] widely celebrated *White Teeth*". However, for Laila Amine "Zadie Smith's first novel, *White Teeth*, 'gives the impression that it has frozen in time and consists mainly of white British, new Commonwealth immigrants from Asia, Africa, or the Caribbean, and their offspring'" (Laila Amine as quoted in Grmelová 2012: 80). Nonetheless, Grmelová (2012: 80) points out that in her third novel Smith "includes issues of new immigrants to the U.S.", which obviously answer the previously mentioned drawback while also increasing the novel's complexity. According to Selejan (2015: 45), Zadie Smith's novel is "'burdened' with a wealth of issues". Worth mentioning are issues such as politics and identity, which includes gender, nationality, race and class, but also religion. Moreover, *On Beauty* deals with art's role in connecting people and in granting them the opportunity to know and be known, to build bridges and cross huge gaps. For Carbajal (2013: 38-9), Smith's novel sets out to find ways of connecting people whose approach to art is different, emphasising the opposition between "intellectual and intuitive approaches to art", while also stressing the fundamental role of personal relations.

Much has been said about *On Beauty*'s connection to *Howards End*, but for the purpose of this article, Ulka Anjaria's (2008: 39) point of view is important since it deals with the problem of class. The scholar's argument is that the connection between Smith and Forster is based on their "respective concern with the problem posed by aesthetic norms to individuals who seek human connection beyond the confines of their exclusive social milieux". Nonetheless, it becomes clear for any reader that Smith's novel deals not only with different social classes, but also with racial differences. However, what complicates a simple analysis is the presence of the novel's "muddled" characters, since, as it becomes obvious from the first pages of the novel, there is no clear distinction between black and white, neither in the area of race, nor in other aspects of life.

Zadie Smith's novel is set in a fictional college town in New England, and the story revolves around the lives of two feuding families: the Belseys, a liberal, middle-class, mixed-race family, and the Kippses, a conservative, working-class, African-American family. The novel delves into the complexities of these characters' lives, their aspirations, and their struggles, ultimately providing a rich and nuanced examination of cultural and personal identity. The book is a thought-provoking exploration of human relationships and the pursuit of beauty, both in the aesthetic and ideological sense.

On Beauty opens with a depiction of the problematic relationship between Jerome Belsey and Howard Belsey. Jerome is the eldest child of Howard and Kiki Belsey, and he plays a significant role in the story, since his complicated relationship with his father, which also becomes strained over the course of the novel due to their differing beliefs and values, actually sets the scene for most of the issues addressed in the novel. Therefore, the beginning conflict is actually a microcosm of the entire novel, with its complex entanglements.

The reader discovers the father-son conflict from a series of e-mails that Jerome sends to his father, letting Howard know that he has found a home in the house of Professor Monty Kipps, his father's sworn enemy. Not only that, but Jerome has also fallen in love with the atmosphere of the family and their values, as well as Monty's daughter, Victoria Kipps. Shocked by the latest news, that Jerome wants to marry Victoria, but without taking the time to talk to his son, Howard goes to London to solve what he considers a huge problem, creating a scandal by shedding light on what was an already consumed and failed affair, resulting in Jerome's return home in a state of profound desolation. Nonetheless, things escalate when the Belseys find out that the Kippses move into town, switching the focus from Jerome's real pain to Howard and Zora's imaginary suffering, which leads to Kiki, the matriarch of the family, starting a huge argument

that creates a lasting tension in the Belseys' household. In order to ease things up, Jerome gets out of his hopelessness and organizes a family evening at a Mozart concert, an important episode in the economy of the novel, since it offers a glimpse into the issues of race and class that Smith looks at through the general themes of art and beauty.

Despite her lack of formal education, Kiki Belsey is a middle class, highly sociable, affective and intuitive black woman whose status blinds her from truly understanding the intricacies of race and class. While attending the concert, Kiki falls into some sort of reverie, as her emotions are stirred both by the music that she does not truly understand, but she enjoys, as well as the sight of Jerome, who is crying:

> "Yet surely no one among these white people could be more musical than Jerome, who, Kiki now noticed, was crying. She opened her mouth with genuine surprise and then, fearful of breaking some spell, closed it again. The tears were silent and plentiful. Kiki felt moved, and then another feeling interceded: pride. *I* don't understand, she thought, but *he* does. A young black man of intelligence and sensibility, and *I* have raised him. After all, how many other young black men would even come to an event like this – I bet there isn't one in this entire crowd, thought Kiki, and then checked and was mildly annoyed to find that indeed there was one, a tall young man with an elegant neck, sitting next to her daughter. Undeterred, Kiki continued her imaginary speech to the imaginary guild of black American mothers: *And there's no big secret, not at all, you just need to have faith, I guess, and you need to counter the dismal self-image that black men receive as their birthright from America – that's essential – and, I don't know . . . get involved in after-school activities, have books around the house, and sure, have a little money, and a house with outdoor . . .(emphasis in original)*" (Smith 2006: 70-1)

Although unaware of it, Kiki's train of thought sheds light on issues of race and class, since her racial prejudices are exposed together with her social status. The passage abounds in racial clichés such as the artistic nature of black people, their natural talent for music, but also the negative ones pertaining to the low chances of black people to become educated and to have a bright future. What needs to be emphasized is that Kiki agrees to the positive half of the clichés, while arguing that she has fought against the negative one. The entire scene is ironic, not only due to the character's ambivalence, but also because of "her imaginary speech to the imaginary guild of black American mothers" that sounds more like an excellent list of pieces of advice from a women's magazine. Therefore, the passage emphasizes Kiki's social status more than it does her skin colour, since what Kiki fails to understand is that Jerome's access to education has to do

precisely with the social status of his family. Education, thus, becomes a middle-class symbol that creates a gap between same race people from different social backgrounds.

Moreover, access to higher education, a privilege of the rich, can actually lead to general desensitization as well as a specific one concerning racial struggles, which the concert scene clearly depict. While Kiki looks around, she notices two other members of her family, her husband and her daughter, both of whom are disengaged from the concert. On the one hand, Howard, as a white man and a representative of higher education, sleeps throughout the concert, while on the other hand, "poor Zora – she lived through footnotes" (70), was focusing on having more of a learning experience than an emotional one. As an intellectual, Howard sees it fit to be emotionally detached from the experiential side of art, "I just prefer music which isn't trying to fake me into some metaphysical idea by the back door." (72), while Zora, a student in the same fictional campus, follows on her father's footsteps "to the point of caricature". (Grmelová 2012: 78)

The only family member that is absent in the scene is Levi, the youngest son of Howard and Kiki, whose characterization separates him from both sides of the family. A liminal character, according to Carbajal (2013: 46), Levi rejects the middle-class culture that he is part of and attempts to connect to the lower class, by his preference for hip-hop music, thus, being uninterested in participating in the concert, which he associates with highbrow culture. Therefore, hip-hop music becomes relevant in understanding the intertwining of race and culture in the novel. According to Grmelová (2012: 79), "as hip-hop music corresponds to a particular lifestyle and values, a formal connection of the two (classical music and hip-hop) is also the novelist's attempt at a thematic connection: bringing together people of different classes and social backgrounds." Moreover, Grmelová argues that Levi's identification with hip-hop subculture is connected with his self-consciousness as a black man living in a privileged, mostly white, middle-class environment." (80)

Grmelová's statements can be supported by what Alexs Pate explains in his book *In the Heart of the Beat: The Poetry of Rap* concerning rap poetry. For Pate (2010: 25), this genre can be described as "idealistic. Ethical. Multicultural. Inclusive. Competitive. Youth oriented. Essentially positive.", but also very "attractive because rap spoke a kind of 'perceived' truth and because the speakers were perceived as truth tellers. They were poets from the locus of the most intense disaffection" (27). Therefore, music, art, and in this scene Mozart's *Requiem*, brings different classes together, but not without exposing their social class and their prejudices.

Levi's rejection of highbrow culture and his attraction towards the lowbrow one require a multifaceted analysis. On the one hand, Levi resembles his mother, since he is moved by music, he has an affective response to it. Moreover, just like Kiki, Levi fails to see that his access to options and opinions is the result of his social class, and, thus, of his access to a good education. It is true that hip-hop is what first sparks Levi's interest in the Haitian community, but reading is what opens his mind to the reality of race and class:

> "This was the book about Haiti. […] If asked to write a book report, he'd have to say that the main impression he'd gleaned from it so far was that there's this little country, a country real close to America that you never hear about, where thousands of black people have been enslaved, have struggled and died in the streets for their freedom, have had their eyes gouged out and their testicles burned off, have been macheted and lynched, raped and tortured, oppressed and suppressed and every other kind of pressed . . . and all so some guy can live in the only decent-looking house in the whole country, a big white house on a hill. He couldn't say if that was the real message of the book – but that's how it seemed to Levi. […] The experience of reading both books had wounded him. Levi had been raised soft and open, with a liberal susceptibility to the pain of others. While all the Belseys shared something of this trait, in Levi – who knew nothing of history or economics, of philosophy or anthropology, who had no hard ideological shell to protect him – it was particularly pronounced. He was overwhelmed by the evil that men do to each other. That white men do to black. How does this shit happen! Each time he returned to the Haiti book he felt impassioned; he wanted to stop Haitians on the streets of Wellington and make it better for them somehow. And, conversely, he wanted to stop the American traffic, stand in front of the American cars, and demand that somebody do something about this wretched, blood-stained little island a mere hour's boat trip from Florida.[…] It all became a haze of history to him. He retained only the searing, unwelcome awareness that somewhere, not far from him, a people were suffering greatly." (355-6)

Levi is faced with the idea of capitalism as well as with issues of race and colonialism, that he cannot grasp since these realities make him incredibly uncomfortable, as he finds himself a black man, living in the white house at the expense of other black people. However, as Carbajal (2013: 48) points out, "Levi's book on Haiti belongs to the library of his prestigious secondary school", emphasizing once more that education makes it possible for the young Belsey to observe reality from a different perspective. Moreover, unlike Kiki, Levi attempts to make a difference by befriending some Haitians and getting entangled in illegal activities. Such

actions suggest Levi's rejection of status and his identification with his Haitian brothers. When, eventually, Levi ends up stealing an important painting from Monty Kipps' office, Kiki identifies with her class more than her skin colour, interpreting Levi's act as an attempt to "to be cool, show you the big man around a load of *no-good Negroes*". (428; emphasis in original) Carbajal (2013: 51) explains that Kiki's reaction demonstrates that her disagreement to Levi's relationship with the Haitians, as she perceives them as a "bad influence" on her son. On the other hand, Carbajal insists that Levi's actions emphasize his "efforts at feeling black by socializing with working-class black men" (51). Grmelová (2012: 79-80) agrees, stating that:

> "Levi's identification with hip-hop subculture is connected with his self-consciousness as a black man living in a privileged, mostly white, middle-class environment. Both emotionally and intellectually he is drawn to black identity and therefore identifies with Haitian immigrants, their moving political music, their life in the street and their political struggle. He is ashamed of his posh background and therefore mystifies his new friends about the street he lives in. He gives up his part-time job at the music mega store to be able to join them selling illegally produced DVDs in the street."

Nonetheless, the concert scene depicts another layer of the interconnectedness of race and class in the novel, as embodied through the character of Carl, a young black self-taught street poet. Kiki and Levi introduce him to the reader, the former indirectly, when noticing there is another black man at the concert, while the latter directly, when introducing Carl to his family. Carl's view on education is obvious: on the one hand, he is a keen learner since he states: "I get my culture where I can, you know – going to free shit like tonight, for example. Anything happening that's free in this city and might teach me something, I'm there." (76) On the other hand, higher education, which is inaccessible for him, is seen as a waste of money that he does not have: "That's college, right? That's what you paying all that money for – just so you get to talk to other people about that shit. That's all you're paying for.' He nodded his head authoritatively. 'That's it.'" (137)

In her article, "*On Beauty* and the Politics of Academic Institutionality", Briana Brickley (2017) discusses the unusual mixture of curiosity, desire for learning and dislike of the academia in the life of Carl, considering that his status of otherness in comparison to the intellectuals of the novel is what recommends him for the role of an objective critic. Brickley states:

"Indeed, Carl models from the figurative and literal outside what the best version of a critic might look like: moved by genuine aesthetic experience and driven by intellectual curiosity, the critic can discern beauty while nevertheless interrogating histories of racism and colonialism, mobilizing class- and gender-based critique, and residing in the contradictions that mark intellectual labor in the neoliberal present. If Carl's race and class cast him as an outsider—to Wellington, to events like Mozart in the park, and to aesthetic philosophy—it is this status that allows him to glimpse a different, intersectional version of aesthetics, both as critic and a dynamic spoken word poet." (82)

However, throughout the novel, Levi is the only character whose liminal status helps him maintain a deeper understanding concerning the issue of formal education in the context of race and class. Therefore, when Levi introduces Carl to his father and Howard tries to remember where he had previously seen his face, asking the street poet if he is a student at Wellington and involuntarily embarrassing both Carl and Levi, the young Belsey responds: "'Not everybody goes to your stupid college,' countered Levi, blushing. 'People do other shit than go to college. He's a street poet.'" (76) Moreover, while returning home from work and thinking about the party that his parents are organizing at home, Levi feels incarcerated by the academic environment:

"The pristine white spires of the college seemed to him like the watchtowers of a prison to which he was returning. He sloped towards home, walking up the final hill, listening to his music. The fate of the young man in his earphones, who faced a jail cell that very night, did not seem such a world away from his own predicament: an anniversary party full of academics." (79-0)

In addition, while at the party, Victoria Kipps plays some hip-hop music, to which the academic audience is horrified to such an extent that some of the guests leave the party early. The rejection of this form of culture that does not fit their class is just another depiction of the huge gap that exists between social classes, whose view on matters such as culture and education completely oppose each other.

The most striking example of the academic environment's negative influence is that of Carl, who becomes symbolically entrapped in the music library of the university. With the help of Claire Malcom, Carl becomes a student in her poetry class, where he initially feels very unconformable. However, Monty Kipps disagrees with her admission process and as a result Carl is not allowed to attend anymore. Nonetheless, Carl is given the choice to stay in campus by working in the music library, which he agrees to and learns to enjoy. Unfortunately, while being in this environment, Carl

is changes by it. He stops composing and just as his job, Carl is an archive of what he used to be. Moreover, Carl's annoyance with the Haitians who are protesting and are disturbing him from archiving hip-hop music highlight the character's transformation that only Levi notices: "And it was so strange to stand next to this ex-Carl, this played-out fool, this shell of a brother in whom all that was beautiful and thrilling and true had utterly evaporated" (389).

Smith's *On Beauty* also emphasizes the intricate relationship between race and class through the idea of physical appearance, of physical beauty, since the idea of race cannot be separated by the topic of skin colour. According to Grmelová (2012: 83) *On Beauty* "mainly celebrates the physical beauty of the black characters; Kiki and Carl who are Afro-Americans and Victoria Kipps who is of Caribbean parentage." Interestingly enough, Smith makes a clear distinction between the beauty of black people and that of white ones: "Kiki stopped. The same thing that had distracted Mrs Kipps distracted her. Just passing by the gate five white teenage girls, barely dressed, were going by. They had rolled-up towels under their arms and wet hair, stuck together in long sopping ropes, like the Medusa. They were all speaking at once." (94) For the black women, whiteness is closely connected to the myth of Medusa; it petrifies the two women, but it has a similar effect on men as well. Unfortunately, this type of beauty is destructive, as Howard's affair with Claire Malcom demonstrates.

Kiki's beauty is closely related to her exoticism, of which she is aware: "In response, Kiki's face resolved itself into impassive blackness. It was this sphinx-like expression that sometimes induced their American friends to imagine a more exotic provenance for her than she actually possessed. In fact she was from simple Florida country stock." (8) Her striking description in the beginning of the novel corresponds to the clichés of blackness: she is a fat woman, wearing bright colours and her hair tied up. However, the novel discloses that her weight has been accumulated along the years and it is what Howard uses as an excuse for his infidelity. Nonetheless, Kiki's awareness of her exotic beauty paired with her the pain of being cheated on by her husband place the black woman in an awkward situation when she tries to flirt with the Haitian black man:

> "Kiki stopped at a stall selling sterling silver – earrings, bracelets, necklaces. The stallholder was a black man, exceptionally skinny, in a green string vest and grubby blue jeans. No shoes at all. His bloodshot eyes widened as Kiki picked up some hoop earrings. She had only this brief glimpse of him, but Kiki suspected already that this would be one of those familiar exchanges in which her enormous spellbinding bosom

would play a subtle (or not so subtle, depending on the person) silent third role in the conversation. Women bent away from it out of politeness; men – more comfortably for Kiki – sometimes remarked on it in order to get on and over it, as it were. The size was sexual and at the same time more than sexual: sex was only one small element of its symbolic range. If she were white, maybe it would refer only to sex, but she was not. And so her chest gave off a mass of signals beyond her direct control: sassy, sisterly, predatory, motherly, threatening, comforting – it was a mirror-world she had stepped into in her mid-forties, a strange fabulation of the person she believed she was. She could no longer be meek or shy. Her body had directed her to a new personality; people expected new things of her, some of them good, some not. And she had been a tiny thing for years and years! How does it happen?
Excuse me, brother – a few inches higher with that – *Thank* you – *they* don't wear jewellery – sorry 'bout that. Just the ears.'" (47)

The episode emphasizes Kiki's desire to be noticed as well as her racial prejudices, since, because of the man's lack of interest, the black woman starts an impolite conversation:

"Aside from her money, the guy seemed barely concerned with her, neither as a person nor as an idea. He did not call Kiki 'sister', make any assumptions or take any liberties. Obscurely disappointed, as we sometimes are when the things we profess to dislike don't happen, she looked up abruptly and smiled at him. 'You're from Africa?' she asked sweetly, and picked up a charm bracelet with tiny replicas of international totems hanging from it" (48)

However, Kiki becomes aware of the difference between them when she almost tells the man that her cleaner is from the same country as he is, feeling ashamed of the evolution of the conversation, especially since she is forced to face the reality that the idea of racial equality is undermined by one's social status.

Unlike his mother, Levi struggles to get in touch with his blackness by rejecting his middle class status. Before actually joining the Haitian gang and getting involved in illegal activities, the boy's first attempt at relating to the black lower class is by adapting both his speech and his appearance to fit his black "brothers". Therefore, Levi uses a "faux Brooklyn accent" (11) and dresses like a "brother":

'What's the deal with this?' asked Howard, flipping the interrogation round and touching Levi's head. 'Is it a political thing?'

Levi rubbed his eyes. He put both arms behind his back, held hands with himself and stretched downwards, expanding his chest hugely. 'Nothin', Dad. It's just what it is,' he said gnomically. He bit his thumb.

 'So then . . .' said Howard, trying to translate, 'it's an aesthetic thing. For looks only.'

'I guess,' Levi said and shrugged. 'Yeah. Just what it is, just a thing that I wear. You know. Keeps my head warm, man. Practical and shit.'" (22)

As he is questioned by his father about the way he dresses, Levi's answer betrays his naïve motives. For the young Belsey, his actions are not meant to be political in the original sense, and he neither dresses like that for fashion related reasons; Levi acts in the most practical manner, emphasizing his alterity in a middle class environment that he needs and enjoys, but disapproves of and denounces. Nonetheless, the conversation between Howard and Levi demonstrates the connection that exists between politics and aesthetics, suggesting that the role of beauty is political, aesthetic and ethical.

Grmelová (2012: 83) points out that "not only the beauty of black women […] is highlighted in the novel", but also that of black men, especially that of Carl, who Zora falls in love with, as she cannot help herself:

"And all the time, while he spoke, and she tried, bewilderedly, to listen, his face was doing its silent voodoo on her, just as it seemed to work on everybody passing by him in this archway. Zora could clearly see people stealing a look, and lingering, not wanting to release the imprint of Carl from their retinas, especially if it was only to be replaced by something as mundane as a tree or the library or two kids playing cards in the yard. What a thing he was to look at!" (137)

However, the first impression Zora has concerning Carl is enforced by her racial bias. When Levi introduces Carl to everyone at the Mozart concert, Zora accuses him of stealing and Levi, using her language against her, tells his entire family that he is the black poet whose Discman his sister has stolen. As Grmelová (2012: 80-1) correctly observes, Zora "repeatedly suspects Carl of stealing" due to "her unconscious prejudice, her bad faith towards the less privileged" , just as her father, who "reacts similarly when he declines Carl access to the Belsey party although Carl has been invited by both Kiki and Levi."

Despite their different reasons, as members of the middle class, both Howard and Zora objectify Carl. Carbajal (2013: 41) points out that "Carl is objectified as he is transformed into a painting that Howard can behold, label, and finally dismiss." Moreover, referring to Zora, the same scholar

states that her "fascination with Carl's appearance aligns Zora with the intellectual superficiality of her father", but in the case of the young woman it is her "sensual interest in Carl" what "casts him as an object of mere aesthetic beauty." In addition, Carbajal states that what makes Carl "not an interesting member of the urban black working class with life experiences compellingly different from her own but a wonderful 'thing . . . to look at'" is Zora's self-centeredness.

Zadie Smith's *On Beauty* intricately weaves together the themes of race and class, offering a nuanced exploration of the complexities inherent in these social constructs. Through the lens of her "muddled" characters, Smith navigates the terrain of cultural and personal identity, providing a thought-provoking examination of human relationships and the pursuit of beauty, both aesthetically and ideologically. In the end, *On Beauty* invites readers to reflect on the interconnectedness of race and class, challenging preconceived notions and shedding light on the multifaceted nature of identity. Moreover, Zadie Smith encourages a deeper understanding of the social dynamics that shape our perceptions of beauty, both personal and societal.

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AMERICAN LITERATURE

"A BLUE STREAK OF RECOGNITION": POST-OTHERNESS IN TONY KUSHNER'S *ANGELS IN AMERICA*

Erick SIERRA
Trinity Christian College

Abstract: *As I describe in an earlier journal article of mine, a strain of late 20th-Century American literature contests representation of human selfhood as "buffered" (to use Charles Taylor's description) within the circumference of the physical body. Instead, these narratives, typically referred to as "post-secular," represent human subjectivity as open, porous, and energetic—like vibrational sound waves communicating through open space. We can situate Tony Kushner's 1993 play "Angels in America" in this space, for it depicts corporeality as constituted in free-flowing energy extending characters into and out of one another's daydreams, bodies, spaces of solitude, even hallucinations. These depictions ultimately push characters not only beyond the body, but beyond ideological/identitarian formations that lock them in relationships of mutual hostility, even violence, with one another. Deep energetic encounters with the Other—experienced as a vulnerable entity vibrating beyond, and all throughout, the self—draw characters into postures of human caretaking.*

Keywords: *otherness, Tony Kushner, selfhood, depictions, energetic encounters.*

Literary scholars such as John McClure and Amy Hungerford have described a body of recent American literature that they call "post-secular," in that it strives to re-imagine the world outside of strictly secular-materialist frameworks. To do so, such writers as Don DeLillo, Marilynne Robinson, and Toni Morrison make recourse to religiously inflected imaginaries, like premodern Catholic mysticisms and Buddhism. In my own research in this area, I have focused specifically on bodily selfhood, asking: How does this post-secular literature contest conceptualizations of human selfhood as "buffered" (to use Charles Taylor's description) within the hard circumference of the physical body. I have argued that these narratives instead represent human subjectivity as open, porous,

energetic—like vibrational sound waves communicating through open space. We can situate Tony Kushner's 1993 play *Angels in America* in this discursive space, for it depicts corporeality as constituted in free-flowing energy extending characters into and out of one another's daydreams, bodies, spaces of solitude, even hallucinations. Individual identity here becomes open, porous.

A good part of this paper focuses on the playing of a scene in the play that I think speaks for itself. Here are some things to notice as we watch. First, Kushner's larger play studies characters who are enraptured in grand abstract ideologies of the world: from right-wing conservatism to left-wing liberalism, from academic Marxism to the Mormonism of Salt Lake City, Utah. The play then works to show how these constructs prevent characters from countenancing the singular most important aspect of the world staring them in the face: the human being.

The second thing to notice in the scene to come: The character Prior is a gay male living in 1980s NYC who undergoes the heartbreak of discovering he has AIDS, and then watching his partner walk out on him precisely because this partner holds an idealized, abstracted view of the world. Namely, he adheres to strict modern rationalism that leaves no place for Prior's mortal human condition.

And finally, the scene takes Prior and catapults him into radical interface with "Harper": a woman whose husband has abandoned her under the influence of is own abstract ideals—in his case, the high dogma of the Mormon church. Prior and Harper have never met before, they are total strangers, but they have one crucial thing in common: they are both in pain, and have been abandoned by partners committed to ideological abstractions that ill-equip them for authentic human caretaking. The scene reads:

> Scene 7
> *Mutual dream scene. Prior is at a fantastic makeup table, having a dream, applying the face. Harper is having a pill-induced hallucination. She has these from time to time. For some reason, Prior has appeared in this one. Or Harper has appeared in Priors dream. It is bewildering.*
> Prior (*Alone, putting on makeup, then examining the results in the mirror; to the audience*): "I'm ready for my closeup, Mr. DeMille."
> One wants to move through life with elegance and grace, blossoming infrequently but with exquisite taste, and perfect timing, like a rare bloom, a zebra orchid. . . . One wants. . . . But one so seldom gets what one wants, does one? No. One does not. One gets fucked. Over. One . . . dies at thirty, robbed of. . . decades of majesty.
> Fuck this shit. Fuck this shit.

(*He almost crumbles; he pulls himself together; he studies his handiwork in the mirror*)

I look like a corpse. A corpsette. Oh my queen; you know you've hit rock-bottom when even drag is a drag.

(*Harper appears.*)

Harper: Are you. . . . Who are you?

Prior: Who are you?

Harper: What are you doing in my hallucination? Prior: I'm not in your hallucination. You're in my dream. Harper: You're wearing makeup.

Prior: So are you.

Harper: But you're a man.

Prior (*Feigning dismay, shock, he mimes slashing his throat with his lipstick and dies, fabulously tragic. Then*): The hands and feet give it away.

Harper: There must be some mistake here. I don't recognize you. You're not.. . . Are you my. . . some sort of imaginary friend?

Prior: No. Aren't you too old to have imaginary friends?

Harper: I have emotional problems. I took too many pills. Why are you wearing makeup?

Prior: I was in the process of applying the face, trying to make myself feel better—I swiped the new fall colors at the Clinique counter at Macy's. (*Showing her*)

Harper: You stole these?

Prior: I was out of cash; it was an emotional emergency!

Harper: Joe will be so angry. I promised him. No more pills. Prior: These pills you keep alluding to?

Harper: Valium. I take Valium. Lots of Valium.

Prior: And you're dancing as fast as you can.

Harper: I'm not *addicted*. I don't believe in addiction, and I never . . . well, I *never* drink. And I *never* take drugs.

Prior: Well, smell you., Nancy Drew.

Harper: Except Valium.

Prior: Except Valium; in wee fistfuls.

Harper: It's terrible. Mormons are not supposed to be addicted to anything. I'm a Mormon.

Prior: I'm a homosexual.

Harper: Oh! In my church we don't believe in homosexuals.

Prior: In my church we don't believe in Mormons.

Harper: What church do . . . oh! (*She laughs*) I get it.

I don't understand this. If I didn't ever see you before and I don't think I did then I don't think you should be here, in this hallucination, because in my experience the mind, which is where hallucinations come from, shouldn't be able to make up anything that wasn't there to start with, that didn't enter it from experience, from the real world. Imagination can't create anything new, can it? It only recycles bits and

pieces from the world and reassembles them into visions. . . . Am I making sense right now?

Prior: Given the circumstances, yes.

Harper: So when we think we've escaped the unbearable ordinariness and, well, untruthfulness of our lives, it's really only the same old ordinariness and falseness rearranged into the appearance of novelty and truth. Nothing unknown is knowable. Don't you think it's depressing?

Prior: The limitations of the imagination?

Harper: Yes.

Prior: It's something you learn after your second theme party: It's All Been Done Before.

Harper: The world. Finite. Terribly, terribly. . . . Well . . . This is the most depressing hallucination I've ever had.

Prior: Apologies. I do try to be amusing.

Harper: Oh, well, don't apologize, you. ... I can't expect someone who's really sick to entertain me.

Prior: How on earth did you know . . .

Harper: Oh that happens. This is the very threshold of revelation sometimes. You can see things . . . how sick you are. Do you see anything about me?

Prior: Yes. Harper: What?

Prior: You are amazingly unhappy.

Harper: Oh big deal. You meet a Valium addict and you figure out she's unhappy. That doesn't count. Of course I. . . . Something else. Something surprising.

Prior: Something surprising. Harper: Yes.

Prior: Your husband's a homo.

(*Pause.*)

Harper: Oh, ridiculous.

(*Pause, then very quietly*)

Really?

Prior (*Shrugs*): Threshold of revelation.

Harper: Well I don't like your revelations. I don't think you intuit well at all. Joe's a very normal man, he . . .

Oh God. Oh God. He.... Do homos take, like, lots of long walks?

Prior: Yes. We do. In stretch pants with lavender coifs. I just looked at you, and there was . . .

Harper: A sort of blue streak of recognition.

Prior: Yes.

Harper: Like you knew me incredibly well.

Prior: Yes.

Harper: Yes.

I have to go now, get back, something just . . . fell apart.

Oh God, I feel so sad . . .
Prior: I . . . I'm sorry. I usually say, "Fuck the truth," but mostly, the truth fucks you. Harper: I see something else about you . . .
Prior: Oh?
Harper: Deep inside you, there's a part of you, the most inner part, entirely free of disease. 1 can see that.
Prior: Is that. . . . That isn't true.
Harper: Threshold of revelation.

(*She vanishes*.) (Kushner 1: 30-34)

This scene does a few things that I'd like to point out. First, as per our conference theme, it releases characters from the confines of the physical body, rewriting subjectivity as open, porous, interpenetrative; and this then enables the characters to enter into a space of radical proximity with human otherness. Where else or when else would a conservative Mormon woman and a liberal gay male come to such a close interface?

Within this space, both Prior and Harper are able to relate in a way that might have been otherwise foreclosed by their respective "churches." Both these "churches" might take the other person to be a species of "evil," a pariah perhaps worthy of abandonment. But this mystical encounter weakens their ideological commitments, which fade and blur as Harper and Prior find themselves incapable of adjudicating whose "church" is, finally, authoritatively right. It simply doesn't matter in this space. All that matters here is living breathing otherness that appears as a luminous revelation, an exteriority irradiating my world, demanding my attention.

Finally, this space enables intuitive forms of interpersonal knowing foreclosed within grand ideological constructs. Harper and Prior can now see and know aspects of the other that their former "churches" had blinded them to. At this "threshold of revelation," she says, "You can see things…[like] how sick you are." Even though they'd never met before, Prior says, "I just looked at you, and there was…." Harper then finishes his sentence: "A sort of blue streak of recognition…Like you knew me incredibly well." Then, at this, Harper gives Prior the most life-giving revelation of all: "Deep inside you, there's a part of you, the most inner part, entirely free of disease. I can see that."

In this way, Tony Kushner's *Angels in America* draws characters out of the ideological enclosures that produce the Other and into active participation in human otherness. Through recourse to depictions of subjectivity as porous, it pushes toward a form of post-otherness that

reveals the Other as a luminous vulnerability at the borders of the self. At the "Threshold of revelation."

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COPING WITH IDENTITY.
BERNARD MALAMUD'S *THE JEWBIRD*

Ioana CISTELECAN
University of Oradea

Abstract: *The present paper intends to focus on the allegory of Jewish self-hatred as revealed in B. Malamud's story, "The Jewbird". B. Malamud's fiction is usually organized around moral dilemmas and crises of identity growth; the author frequently examines in his fiction the changing attitudes Jews display about their religion and their heritage. The story underlines a given reality: Jews hurting other Jews, when living in the same society; it symbolizes the great danger such hatred and consequently violence have on the existence of individuals in cultural groups.*

Keywords: *Jewish tradition/ inheritance, individuality/ cultural group, identity, Anti-Semites.*

Jewish American literature has both recorded and paralleled the Jewish American inheritance and progress. It essentially describes the endeavours of immigrant life, the steady but also estranged middle-class existence and also the specific demands of any cultural adoption process: the absorption and the reawakening of tradition.

There are many fiction pieces that accurately and mostly metaphorically portray and focus on the life of the Jewish cultural group/ individuality. The heroes of these works tend to be young men or boys who are trying to establish financial viability in the New World while fighting with the inner demons of traditional Jewish life and family.

Bernard Malamud, Saul Bellow and Philip Roth are the masters of Jewish American fiction. They covered the issues of Jews rooted in America, who nonetheless suffer from alienation. Like his predecessors, some of B. Malamud's main characters are immigrants. B. Malamud's fiction is usually organized around moral dilemmas and crises of growth. He combines realism and symbolism, as well as tragedy and comedy, often with the help of mythological and archetypal underpinnings. He employs fantasy that is occasionally supernatural but which more often, as in *The Assistant*, gives a quality of magic and ritual to realistic happenings.

Out of his Jewish heritage, B. Malamud perpetuates a resentful humor that often comes out in the self-ridicule of his protagonists, but it is as well absolvitory of the individual and of the others. His humane poetic sensitivity blends with a state of grace attained through pain. The author himself has proclaimed that "All men are Jews"[1], which undoubtedly functions as a metaphor for the universality of alienation, suffering and the moral obsession for men to make the very best of their lives within the limitations and ambiguities of human existence. This moral compulsion actually represents a religious task in that it demands an equal labor for the salvation of oneself and others. However, B. Malamud has rarely created specific Jewish social contexts, usually preferring to examine the particular tensions of Jews adrift in gentile surroundings. For B. Malamud the most important element in fiction is form, a belief that appropriately reinforces his thematic beliefs. He reasons that the writer's duty "is to create the architecture, the form". The very core of this particular form, says B. Malamud, is "story, story, story. Writers who can't invent stories often pursue other strategies, even substituting style for narrative. I feel that story is the basic element of fiction"[2]. B. Malamud's stories develop out of fictional character. Often enough, the emblematic protagonist is the schlemiel (commonly Jewish, although Italian now and then). According to the author himself, "A Malamud character is someone who fears his fate, is caught up in it, yet manages to outrun it. He's the subject and object of laughter and pity"[3].

A typical Malamud story, thus, is an initiation story, preserving the classic American pattern. The writer admits that his American literary roots lie in Stephen Crane, Ernest Hemingway, and Sherwood Anderson. The story usually begins with a youth or an older man with arrested personality development who has led an unfulfilled life because of vestigial emotions, failed relationships and questionable morality; this protagonist then encounters a father figure who guides him through his odyssey by prodding him to ask the right questions, teaching him the meaning of suffering and spirituality and ultimately by persuading him to accept the responsibility for his own life.

Since B. Malamud is of Jewish descent, his protagonists are usually Jewish as well. The author himself admits: "I write about Jews because I

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[1] See Lawrence Lasher ed., *Conversations with Bernard Malamud*, University Press of Mississippi, 1991.
[2] According to Lawrence Lasher ed., *Conversations with Bernard Malamud,* quoted edition.
[3] According to idem.

know them. But more important, I write about them because Jews are absolutely the very stuff of drama". B. Malamud is not preoccupied with the uniqueness of the Jewish experience; his Jew character is rather a metaphor for all human beings. "Jewishness is important to me", the writer asserts, "but I don't consider myself only a Jewish writer. I have interests beyond that, and I feel I am writing for all men"[4]. B. Malamud's method is thus synecdochic: by detailing the plight of his Jews, he actually reveals the human's common humanity.

The Jewbird[5] story has been frequently approached as an allegory on Jewish self-hatred. Harry and Edie Cohen, a lower-middle-class Jewish couple, live with their ten-year-old son, Morris/ Maurie, in a small top-floor apartment on the Lower East Side of New York City. Cohen, a frozen-foods sales representative, is angry and frustrated by his relative poverty, by his dying mother in the Bronx and by the general mediocrity of his family and his life. When the story begins, the Cohen family is sitting down to dinner on a hot August night; their recent attempt at a holiday was cut short because Harry's mother had suddenly become ill, forcing them to return to the city. While this less-than-happy family is eating, an agitated blackbird comes flying through the open window and drops down on their table in the middle of their food. Harry curses and hits the bird, which flutters to the top of the kitchen door and surprises them by speaking both in Yiddish and English. The bird explains that he is hungry and is running (meaning flying) from what he calls "Anti-Semeets" (anti-Semites); he further explains that he is not a crow but a "Jewbird" and he proves this by instantly beginning to passionately pray a prayer Edie and Maurie join, but not Harry. The Jewbird's name is Schwartz and he asks for a piece of herring and some rye bread rather than the lamb chop the family is eating. Harry insists that the bird should eat on the balcony, so Maurie takes him there to feed him and asks his father if the bird can stay. Harry says that Schwartz can remain only for the night, but softens the next morning after Maurie cries at the chance of losing his new friend. The precarious armistice between Schwartz and Harry is threatened by Schwartz's requests for Jewish food and a Jewish newspaper and also by his general talkativeness. Harry dislikes the bird and the fact that Schwartz calls himself Jewish. Harry makes Schwartz stay on the balcony in a wooden birdhouse even though the bird much prefers being inside with the family, where he can be warm and he can smell the cooking. When Harry brings home a bird feeder

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[4] According to idem.
[5] It was first published in *The Reporter* in 1963 and then collected in *Idiots First*, the same year.

full of corn, Schwartz rejects it, explaining later to Edie that his digestive system has degenerated with his old age; he prefers herring. In the fall, Maurie returns to school and Schwartz becomes his tutor, helping him with his lessons. He becomes the boy's companion and friend, encouraging him to do his homework, listening and coaching as Maurie struggles with his violin; he's also playing dominoes with Maurie when his tasks are finished. When Maurie is sick, Schwartz even reads comic books to him, although the bird actually dislikes comics. Maurie's school grades improve and Edie gives Schwartz credit for the improvement, but the bird denies the suggestion that he really had anything to do with Maurie's rising academic status. Schwartz's appearance continues to bother Harry until one night he picks a quarrel with the bird, complaining about the way it smells and about its snoring. Harry curses the bird and he is just about to grab it when Maurie comes in and thus the argument ends. Schwartz then avoids Harry by sleeping in his birdhouse on the balcony but longing to spend more time inside with the family. As winter approaches, Schwartz's rheumatism bothers him more and more; he awakens immobile, barely able to move his wings. Harry wants the Jewbird to fly off for the winter and he begins a secret campaign of harassment. Harry puts cat food in the bird's herring and pops paper bags on the balcony at night to keep Schwartz awake. As a final stroke, he buys a cat, something Maurie has always wanted, but the cat spends its days terrorizing Schwartz. The bird suffers from all this torment, losing feathers and becoming ever more nervous, but he somehow endures everything. The end comes on the day after Harry's unwell mother dies in her apartment in the Bronx. While Maurie and Edie are out at Maurie's violin lesson, Harry chases Schwartz with a broom. Harry grabs the bird and begins swinging it around his head; fighting for his life, Schwartz is able to bite Harry on the nose before Harry furiously pitches him out the window into the street below. Harry throws the birdhouse and feeder after him, then sits waiting with the broom, his nose throbbing painfully, for Schwartz's reappearance. However, the Jewbird does not return and when Edie and Maurie get back home, Harry lies about what has happened, saying that Schwartz bit him on the nose so he threw the bird out and it flew away. Edie and Maurie reluctantly accept Harry's version of the incident. In the spring, after the snow has melted, Maurie looks for Schwartz and finds the bird's broken body. "Who did it to you, Mr. Schwartz?" he cries; "Anti-Semeets," his mother tells him later.

Bernard Malamud, like many other Jewish writers, frequently examines in his fiction the changing attitudes Jews display about their religion and their heritage. In this story, the readers are introduced to a Jewish family that is moving away from the orthodox Jewish traditions.

Schwartz, who says he is a Jewbird, actually represents those traditions: his black colour resembles the dark clothing traditionally worn by rabbis; he instantly falls into prayer on his arrival; he eats traditional Jewish food and generally scorns the meals the Cohens serve. Schwartz's values reflect the values of orthodox Judaism, values that Harry Cohen has forgotten or rather trying to forget. Schwartz becomes the equivalent of an ageing Jewish relative: a grandfather or an uncle for Maurie, a Jewish father for Harry, basically a parental substitute. Ironically enough, Harry's real mother (Maurie's grandmother) is slowly dying in her own apartment, constantly ignored, except for the moment when her illness basically interrupts Harry's life. If she were brought into their household and cared for, she would have probably helped Maurie the way Schwartz did; presumably she would also irritate Harry in the same way the Jewbird did. Schwartz tells the Cohens that he is fleeing from anti-Semites, people who persecute Jews because of their religion and traditions. Edie Cohen's remark that anti-Semites killed Schwartz actually suggests that Harry Cohen is a kind of anti-Semite himself, although he is probably not aware of it. He has turned his back on his religion[6].

   B. Malamud subtly builds his story towards the final paragraphs' climax. The fact that Harry Cohen's mother is ill, yet living alone nearby, is mentioned in the very first paragraph but allowed to remain in the background until the very end of the story, when Harry attacks the bird the day after the death of his mother. Presumably Schwartz is at that point a symbol of the Jewish parent Harry has essentially ignored and allowed to die alone. By throwing the bird out the window, Harry is able to exorcise the guilt he may be feeling about his treatment of his mother.

   B. Malamud uses dialogue to establish Schwartz's Jewishness ("If you haven't got matjes, I'll take schmaltz") and to make this talking bird seem perfectly human. The fact that Schwartz can read comic books, play dominoes or even coach Maurie on the violin seems quite plausible because of the bird's conversational abilities. When Schwartz is being urged to take a bath, he simply seems to be one of the family, an elderly relative and not a bird at all. His politeness ("Mr. Cohen, if you'll pardon me") only accentuates his human qualities. Conversely, Harry's language, his profanity and his basic rudeness ("One false move and he's out on his drumsticks"), underscores his own lack of humanity. There is no logical reason for his intense hatred of Schwartz, as there is no reason to call the bird names and swear at it the way he does. Schwartz brings much to Maurie's life and asks only for a little food and warmth in return. It is

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[6] See Harold Bloom, ed., *Bernard Malamud,* New York: Chelsea House, 2000.

through Harry's anger and his begrudging attitude towards Schwartz that B. Malamud actually displays the real character of this Jewish salesperson, a man who has lost his heritage and consequently ignored the cries for help of his own people.

In the story's final paragraphs, the hints B. Malamud has progressively been dropping fall rightfully into place: Edie Cohen finally realizes that although Schwartz told them he was fleeing from "Anti-Semeets", his death was the very result of such an encounter with anti-Semites - the Cohen family itself. Edie and Maurie, the more sensitive members of this family, would eventually recognize and regret their failings; Harry Cohen will presumably never again recognize the lessons of his faith, whether they are delivered by humans or by birds with human souls.

The notion of Jews hurting other Jews, when living in the same society, is brought into its climax in the death of Schwartz and in Edie's last words. It symbolizes the great danger such hatred and consequently violence have on the existence of individuals in cultural groups. Ironically, Cohen treats Schwartz as an unwanted guest in his house and his community, although he himself had experienced immigration directly or as an immigrant descendent. On one hand, he seems he has forgotten this experience and he lives his daily life as if he has no connection to the Jewish inheritance and to their struggle to adapt or to fit in America. On the other hand, this particular experience would come back and haunt him from the moment Schwartz, with his Yiddish talk, black appearance and fear of "anti-Semeetes", unexpectedly and abruptly walks into his life. The focus on the multilingual discourse in this society is precious, because it ultimately reveals a sense of both xenophobia and self-hatred within the culture[7]. Cohen hates the Jewbird as much as he hates the fact that he has a connection to the Jewish immigration and, perhaps, due to that, he is unwilling to deal with this experience consciously.

The culture portrayed by B. Malamud in *The Jewbird* is located between two traditions: the English and the Yiddish and the Christian and the Jewish. Both main characters are placed within this fusion of traditions, which basically constitutes a new tradition and culture. However, each of the characters plays a different role in the new culture. Cohen is a partly assimilated American Jew, a frozen-foods salesman who has a family and his own house near the lower East River. Schwartz is a migrating Jewbird with no home. He is running from anti-Semites who basically want to hurt him. The life situation of each of these two characters as representatives of

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[7] See L. Lamar Nisly, *Impossible to Say: Representing Religious Mystery in Fiction by Malamud, Percy, Ozick, and O'Connor*, Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2002.

the same cultural paradigm, the Jewish American one, actually underlines their radical differences. Cohen had established his place in this new tradition and most of the time he acts as if he has no connection to the Jewish immigrant experience (except for the moments when he uses Yiddish/ Hebrew words such as "chutzpa", which slightly indicates his relation to the Jewish immigration and accurately suggests the mere fact that he is Jewish). Schwartz, on the other hand, experiences the difficulties of both the immigration to America and his migration as a bird. He is struggling to find food and a shelter in order to survive. Thus, the Jewbird ultimately represents the wandering Jew in the story[8].

However, B. Malamud's beast fable is concerned with more than nebulous guilt over a lost love. On one hand, the tale is lighthearted with a considerable amount of hyperbole, sarcasm and comic banter; on the other hand, *The Jewbird* actually focuses on a denser theme: prejudice. Nevertheless, B. Malamud's story is still more than a mere parable of anti-Semitism; the story reveals the issues surrounding both personal identity and assimilation among American Jews. The dominant thematic encompasses both the human capacity to foster hatred towards those who are different in the form of anti-Semitism and the conflict that exists between Jews who have assimilated into American culture, on one hand and those who have not relinquished their Jewish identity, on the other hand.

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[8] See Begoña Sío-Castiñeira, *The Short Stories of Bernard Malamud: In Search of Jewish Post-immigrant Identity*, New York: Peter Lang, 1998.

HESTER PRYNNE: A COMMUNITARIAN

Du XIAORUI
Guizhou University

Abstract: *Encoded in Nathaniel Hawthorne's novel "The Scarlet Letter" are three competing social philosophies about the relationship between the individual and the community—individualism, constitutionalism and communitarianism. I argue that Hawthorne makes Hester Prynne, the novel's protagonist, undergo two transitions as she navigated her relationship with her community—from an individualist to a constitutionalist and then to a communitarian. This study seeks to explain Hester's communitarianism and her two-phrase transition to a communitarian.*

Keywords: *individualism, constitutionalism, communitarianism, Hester Prynne.*

The Scarlet Letter and Communitarianism

Encoded in Nathaniel Hawthorne's novel *The Scarlet Letter* are three competing social philosophies concerning the relationship between the individual and the community. The first one is reflected in Hawthorne's allusions to Anne Hutchinson, who is known for her Antinomian dissent from the established religious doctrines and practices of the Massachusetts Bay Colony and her eventual exile from the colony. It is an individualist philosophy, whereby the individual is considered to be solely answerable to their own conscience, which, in the case of Anne Hutchinson, had a divine origin. The second social philosophy is the one typified by the Puritan establishment, who ruled the community with a fixed set of moral and legal doctrines encoded in "the Scripture and the statute-book" (Hawthorne 1892: 90). Due to the divine, supreme nature of the Scripture, on which the statute-book was supposed to be based, no dissent from the established doctrines by individual members of the community was permitted or tolerated. I call it a constitutionalist philosophy, due to its stringent adherence to the community's 'constitution', which, according to Lord Bolingbroke (qtd. in Breslin 2004: 118), would include "that assemblage of laws, institutions and customs, derived from certain fixed principles of reason, directed to certain

fixed objects of public good, that compose the general system, according to which the community hath agreed to be governed". The third social philosophy is personified by Hester Prynne, the novel's protagonist. It differs from constitutionalism in that it does not regard impersonal and fixed sources such as the Scripture or an unamendable constitution as the foundation of the community, but rather the express consent and spontaneous sentiments of the community members. It is also different from individualism because it does not consider radical dissent or separation to be in the interest of the individual or the community. As I shall explain, Hawthorne does not see the meaning of individual existence except when it converges with the common good of the community. This philosophy is a communitarian one. It is obviously the social philosophy favored by Hawthorne. Hester, accordingly, was a communitarian.

What is a communitarian? While there have been multiple sets of formulations of what communitarianism connotes (Tam 2019: 3), they seem to have one goal - to underscore the inherent value of the community and the common good. It is particularly done through the repudiation of the liberal-individualist view on the primacy of the individual and its devaluation of the community. Most pertinent to this essay is the formulation of communitarianism that emerged during the 1980s in response to the notion of the atomized individual suggested by John Rawls. Such a formulation puts forth the idea that "a person conceptually stripped of all relational connections with others is not the 'real' person with the utmost clarity of thought, but an isolated entity with no sense of belonging, obligations, or concerns, without which there can be no meaningful moral reflections" (idem: 5). In his definition of the idea, Daniel Bell (2016: par. 1) advocates the mutually reliant relationship between the individual and the community: "Communitarianism is the idea that human identities are largely shaped by different kinds of constitutive communities (or social relations) and that this conception of human nature should inform our moral and political judgments as well as policies and institutions". One may conclude that communitarianism contains both an ontological element and a teleological one, with the former dealing with the source of the self, the latter with its purpose. Communitarianism obviously believes that the community is where both the constitutive source and the purpose of the individual self are found. This sets communitarianism apart from individualism.

However, an understated characteristic of communitarianism is that it also stands against the authoritarian, exploitative dominance of the community over the individual. This point differentiates communitarianism from collectivism, which often deprives the individual of his or her agency or individuality, or requires excessive, one-sided

sacrifice from the individual in the name of common good. The constitutionalist philosophy reflected in *The Scarlet Letter* may well match this characterization of collectivism. Instead of forcing the collective will on the individual, communitarianism promotes a negotiated and reciprocal relationship between the individual and the community. Considering this middle ground that communitarianism tries to take between the will and interest of the individual and that of the community, Tam (2019: 182) calls communitarianism "a counterpoise to the polarizing dichotomy of authoritarian control and anarchic free-for-all".

Hester herself was not a communitarian from the very beginning of the story. Instead, I find that Hawthorne makes her undergo two transitions as she navigated her relationship with her community - first from an individualist to a constitutionalist, and then from a constitutionalist to a communitarian. In other words, Hester had first identified with the individualistic Anne Hutchinson, then with the constitutionalist Puritan establishment, before becoming a communitarian that was able to balance the will and interest of the community and its members. Needless to say, communitarianism for Hawthorne is an acquired social philosophy whose adoption demands goodwill and hard efforts on both an individual and a collective level, rather than a natural state of affairs. But the concord marking Hester's relationship with her community at the end of the story, I contend, repudiates R. V. Young's (2007: 39) pessimistic claim that, to Hawthorne, "tension between individual and the community can never be resolved". Meanwhile, I also believe Hawthorne's emphasis on the cohesion of the community is somewhat incompatible with Sacvan Bercovitch's (2013: xv) notion of "the celebration of high individualism", which he identifies as "a strategy central to American literary tradition". This is not because Hester never exhibited signs of individualism, but because the term individualism does not capture Hester's acknowledgement of the value of the community and the altruism she displayed toward her fellow community members as a communitarian. I now proceed to elucidate Hester's transformations to illustrate how she arrived at communitarianism.

Hester the Individualist

Though only fleetingly mentioned in *The Scarlet Letter*, Anne Hutchinson wields a notable influence over Hester's character and path of life. Early in the story, Hawthorne hints that Hester could have stepped on the path of Hutchinson but did not do so. The parallelism between

Hutchinson and Hester is evident. Hester was sent to the same prison as Hutchinson had been a few years before. Hawthorne (1892: 81-82) notes that on the path to Hester's prison, there was "a wild rosebush, covered, in this month of June, with its delicate gems", which "had sprung up under the footsteps of the sainted Ann Hutchinson". Hester, also at variance with the Puritan community and imprisoned for it, could have simply followed Hutchinson's steps and also become 'sainted'. Hawthorne conjectures later in the book that such a scenario would make her "the foundress of a new religious sect" (idem: 294).

However, an investigation into Hawthorne's knowledge and assessment of Hutchinson reveals that he could hardly be optimistic about the outcome of such an alternative scenario. In 1830, Hawthorne published a biographical sketch entitled "Mrs. Hutchinson", in which he expresses open disapproval of Hutchinson's decision to rebel against her community. Hawthorne (1883: 221) makes no attempt to refute Hutchinson's accusation that the Puritan establishment figures were "unregenerated and uncommissioned men". Yet, he believes that such an accusation, along with Hutchinson's other defiant actions, served to "eat into its [her community's] very existence" (idem: 219). Therefore, Hawthorne would probably agree with John Winthrop's belief that Hutchinson was "a woman not fit for our society" (Hall 1990: 348).

Moreover, through Hutchinson's example, Hawthorne also sees no happy ending to the individual's defiance against the community. After breaking away from the Massachusetts Bay Colony, Hutchinson led her followers to Rhode Island. However, the same discord that plagued her relationship with her Puritan community manifested itself again. Hawthorne (1883: 225) notes that Hutchinson "now grew uneasy away from the Rhode Island colonists, whose liberality towards her, at an era when liberality was not esteemed a Christian virtue, probably arose from a comparative insolicitude on religious matters, more distasteful to Mrs. Hutchinson than even the uncompromising narrowness of the Puritans". It seems that, to Hawthorne, individualistic defiance is not conducive to any good, but would only perpetuate itself and lead to the continuous disintegration of communities. When the community turns against itself, there is also no flourishing of the individual to speak of, either. Therefore, the ending of Hutchinson and her followers is depicted as "a shipwreck, where the shrieks of the victims die unheard, along a desolate sea" (idem: 225). Looking at Hutchinson's life story holistically, one may find that her religious claim to "a purer and more perfect light" produced nothing beneficial to either her community or herself, but only the former's disintegration and a tragic ending to her life. Even if such a claim was true,

Hawthorne (idem: 218-219) believes that there is a grave cost to it: "woman, when she feels the impulse of genius like a command of Heaven within her, should be aware that she is relinquishing a part of the loveliness of her sex".

Like Hutchinson, Hester displayed no shortage of individualism. At her first appearance in the story, when she was taken from the prison to the marketplace by a town-beadle, Hester walked "as if by her own free will" (Hawthorne 1892: 92), indicating a strong-willed and defiant character in her. Her attire could only reinforce such an impression, since its style was "greatly beyond what was allowed by the sumptuary regulations of the colony" (idem: 93). Such a style was actually meant for exhibiting Hester's individuality, because it "had modeled much after her own fancy, seemed to express the attitude of her spirit, the desperate recklessness of her mood, by its wild and picturesque peculiarity" (idem: 94). Hawthorne (idem: 98) also notes that her overall look while holding Pearl at her bosom made her resemble "the image of Divine Maternity" in the eyes of "a Papist". This analogy obviously further hints at Hester's rejection of the laws and morals of the Puritans, who, after all, had left England for the New World because of their staunch opposition to the revival of Catholicism during the reign of Charles I in their home country (Daniels 2012: 41-42). The layout of the scene, with Hester standing under the gaze of the crowd surrounding her, may easily give the impression that Hester was the public enemy. Hester herself did not seem to care to have her situation interpreted differently, appearing rather at ease with the enmity between herself and the community:

> The unhappy culprit sustained herself as best a woman might, under the heavy weight of a thousand unrelenting eyes, all fastened upon her, and concentrated at her bosom. It was almost intolerable to be borne. Of an impulsive and passionate nature, she had fortified herself to encounter the stings and venomous stabs of public contumely, wreaking itself in every variety of insult; but there was a quality so much more terrible in the solemn mood of the popular mind, that she longed rather to behold all those rigid countenances contorted with scornful merriment, and herself the object. (Hawthorne 1892: 100)

However, similar to how he views Hutchinson, Hawthorne's attitude toward Hester as an individualist is not unambiguous admiration. Rather it is marked by disapproval. He describes Hester's state as the manifestation of her "impulsive and passionate nature" (ibid.). Such a nature, tho Hawthorne, needed to be softened and quelled. It was first done by Hester's reminiscence of the past. Most notably, it brought up Hester's memories of

her "happy infancy", "her paternal home" in Old England and her mother's "look of heedful and anxious love" (idem: 102). The latter, in particular, "laid the impediment of a gentle remonstrance in her daughter's pathway" (ibid.). Through reminiscing, Hester looks less like an individual existing in a vacuum, but someone with a history that was also participated by others. The happy nature of such memories supposedly also inspired Hester to consider giving Pearl, her daughter, similar experiences.

Therefore, memories, which connect the individual with the community, including the home and family, the place where the individual's first experiences of community take place, could serve as a restraining mechanism for individualism. Alexis de Tocqueville (2000: 482) notes that individualism has a segregating effect, which "disposes each citizen to isolate himself from the mass of those like him". It also serves to "make each man forget his ancestors" and "hides his descendants from him" (idem: 484). Memory, on the other hand, restores the broken links between different individuals and between the individual and the community.

Not surprisingly, the existence of Pearl, as Hester's descendant, also helped curb Hester's individualism. Though still an infant at this point, she nonetheless embodied Hawthorne's criticism of Hester's individualistic character. Faced with the judgmental gaze of the onlookers, Hester is said to have shown "a stony crust of insensibility", which was propelled by her "faculties of animal life" (Hawthorne 1892: 122). Pearl, as if displeased by her mother's unfeeling state, "pierced the air with its wailings and screams" (ibid.). Later in the novel, Hawthorne reveals that it was only because of Pearl's existence that Hester did not become "the foundress of a religious sect" (idem: 294). The fact that Hester's "enthusiasm of thought had something to wreak itself upon" (ibid.) due to the heavy duty of raising Pearl could well be seen as a good thing in the eyes of Hawthorne, which views individualistic traits such as passion and insensitivity as something to be restrained.

Hester the Constitutionalist

After what seems to be a futile display of defiance, Hester went through a crisis of meaning. Recognizing her own sin and seeing no end to her suffering, Hester, as she confided to Roger Chillingworth, had "thought of death" and even "wished" and "prayed for it" (idem: 128). In a system ruled by a singular moral code, Hester, having violated it, had yet to find the meaning of her own existence. Only the existence of Pearl kept her alive.

As she stayed alive and tried to make a living, life's meaning began to find its way back to Hester. She first agreed not to disclose Chillingworth's identity as he pledged to find out who Hester's illicit lover was. Keeping the secret, as Hester herself saw it, was for the sake of preserving the "fame", "position", and "life" of Dimmesdale (idem: 135). Such a decision was consistent with the altruism Hester had previously shown toward Dimmesdale, when, at her own public interrogation, she vowed to never disclose Dimmesdale's identity as her secret lover, even if the punishment for that was for her to "endure his agony, as well as mine!" (idem: 120). Thus, as individualistic as she was, Hester was also altruistic, which means her reckless defiance against her community could not last long. Altruism, which came rather naturally to Hester, was another antidote to her individualism.

Hester's life since being released from the prison seems to be characterized by an overcorrection of her past individualism. She chose to internalize the Puritan moral code, hoping that, since New England "had been the scene of her guilt", it should also "be the scene of her earthly punishment" and that "the torture of her daily shame would at length purge her soul, and work out another purity than that which she had lost, more saint-like, because the result of martyrdom" (idem: 140-141). The "saint" here supposedly refers to the visible saint, someone who receives "God's free grace" as "one of God's elect . . . destined for salvation" (Morgan 1965: 67). The visible saint may well be regarded as the paragon of the theological and moral ideals of the Calvinist Puritans. Therefore, longing to become like a saint, Hester felt compelled to embrace the Puritan morals whole-heartedly, perhaps with a stronger zeal than others.

So she did. This was first reflected in her new dressing style: Once exhibiting a highly personal style to show her individuality, Hester now wore a dress "of the coarsest materials and the most somber hue" (Hawthorne 1892: 146). Despite her mastery of needlework and success in earning herself a place in the Puritan community through it, Hester fully subscribed to the Puritan ethic, going so far as to dismiss the pleasure she took from the craft "as sin" (idem: 147). Hawthorne (ibid.) attributes such a view to the "morbid meddling of conscience", which was now chiefly informed by the Puritan ethic.

Thus, through her hard effort to redeem herself from her past sin and restore her place in the Puritan community, Hester had converted from an individualist to a constitutionalist, who, according to Beau Breslin (2004: xii), would believe that "the community's wishes, however powerfully expressed, must remain subordinate to the text itself". Although constitutionalism is often associated with the need to "delimit the power of

leaders to behave with unbridled capriciousness" (idem: x), I use it in this writing to mean the rule of the community by a fixed set of principles, written or unwritten, regardless of the current, prevailing attitudes and needs of the community members. Hester's needlework, which wove various threads into one fabric and covered the demand of various demographics of the community, may well be understood as a metaphor for her identity as a constitutionalist.

In a community that aspired to build a "utopia of human virtue and happiness" (Hawthorne 1892: 79), things like feelings and sentiments seem to be an impediment to the fulfillment of such a collective aspiration. Therefore, the most obvious constitutionalists in *The Scarlet Letter* - Governor Bellingham and Reverend John Wilson, who were the civil and religious leaders of the community respectively, were emphatically free of such things. The former is said to be "the head and representative of a community" whose sustenance and success relied on "the stern and tempered energies of manhood, and the somber sagacity of age" (idem: 113). The latter "looked like the darkly engraved portraits which we see prefixed to old volumes of sermons" (idem: 114). As figures of authority, they were embodiments of authority itself, rather than flesh-and-blood humans. As Puritan constitutionalists, they were naturally believers of "the inherent corruptibility and imperfectability of human nature" (Breslin 2004: 115) - a belief that is usually said by constitutionalists to be true of political leaders, but should be equally applicable to the average members of the community.

However, through Hester's zealous demonstrations of her adherence to the community's constitution, which were defined by self-denial and punitiveness, it is not hard to find that constitutionalism has a dehumanizing side. For example, despite being the target of constant verbal attacks even by those benefiting from her charitableness, Hester "never responded to these attacks" (Hawthorne 1892: 149). Punishment was an indispensable element of the way she raised Pearl. Standing out from other children with her "trait of passion" (idem: 157), Pearl was believed by her mother to have inherited the latter's own "impassioned state" (idem: 158). To suppress such a trait in her daughter, Hester applied rigorous discipline, including the "frown, the harsh rebuke, the frequent application of the rod, enjoined by Scriptural authority" (idem: 159). This all served to make Pearl a good fit for society and prevent her from treading the path of Hester herself.

The fact that Pearl possessed in her nature some "unquieted elements" that proved to be impossible to subdue deeply confounded and concerned Hester, making her unable to reject the suggestion made by her townspeople that Pearl "was a demon offspring" (idem: 173). Here Hawthorne makes an intriguing analogy between Pearl and Martin Luther,

who, "according to the scandal of his monkish enemies, was a brat of that hellish breed" (idem: 174). As a religious reformer with a radical agenda, Luther could certainly not have been well-received by the constitutionalists of his time. Likewise, Pearl's personality would not bode well for herself and for the community in the eyes of her mother, who tried to redeem herself from her sinful conduct in the past by becoming, in thought and in deed, a constitutionalist mother. Using Pearl as an embodiment of untamed human nature, Hawthorne clearly indicates that ardent constitutionalism as implemented by Hester went against human nature. Given Luther's seminal role in reforming Christianity, those 'unquieted elements' in Pearl and Hester should not be dismissed as something utterly meaningless or harmful to the relationship between the individual and the community.

Hester the Communitarian

Although Hester earned his place in the community by supplying her needlework, her past sinful act was still what defined her identity to her community members. That is why, despite the fact that her needlework was widely used, it was excluded from "the white veil which was to cover the pure blushes of a bride", suggesting "the ever relentless vigor with which society frowned upon her sin" (idem: 145). Meanwhile, through the inexplicable power of her scarlet letter, Hester noticed that she was far from alone in the violation of the Puritan ethic. In fact, she constantly encountered people who she conjectured had sinned in the same way as she herself did, including "a venerable minister or magistrate", "some matron", or "a young maiden" (idem: 152-153). She concluded that "the outward guise of purity was but a lie" (idem: 152). The constitution of the community was obviously obsolete when so many in the population were violating it but could not face up to such a fact.

The discovery of the community's collective violation of the constitution did not turn Hester into a cynic or revive her individualistic self. Instead, it would produce in her "a sympathetic throb" (ibid.) and inspired her to feel "a mystic sisterhood" (idem: 153) with her fellow sinners. In my view, it was this finding that prompted Hester's transformation from a constitutionalist to a communitarian. In promoting the newly drafted US Constitution, James Madison (2009: 281) insists that government should be "the greatest of all reflections on human nature". Here in the Puritan community, human nature was revealed by Hester to be universally corruptible, but nonetheless worthy of sympathy. To perpetuate the facade of a utopia of virtue and happiness was not only unrealistic, but

also repressive, making community members hypocritical and fearful of showing their true selves.

As a communitarian, Hester's mission was to address the blind spot of constitutionalism. In contrast to the constitutionalist's fixation with the constitution - both written and unwritten, Breslin (2004: xii) notes that, in communitarianism, "it is the community's welfare that ought to prevail". With so many of its members living under a disguise and fearing to show their authentic selves, the Puritan community obviously suffered a lack of communitarian spirit.

Who could better illustrate this lack of communitarianism than Arthur Dimmesdale? He exemplifies an inconsistent, even bipolar state of existence of the Puritan. On the one hand, Dimmesdale was a "godly pastor" and "a miracle of holiness" (Hawthorne 1892: 253). On the other hand, while gravely regretting his illicit love affair with Hester, he was unable to receive due punishment like her as he wished to. This inability was perpetuated by the malevolent Chillingworth, whose influence on Dimmesdale was that the latter's "conscience had been kept in an irritated state, the tendency of which was, not cure by wholesome pain, but to disorganize and corrupt his spiritual being" (idem: 345). Since the rest of the Puritan community had been revealed to be not so different from Dimmesdale in their concealment of the sin and thereby their "alienation from the Good and True" (ibid.), Chillingworth was essentially the enemy of the welfare of the community. He embodied an ill-willed continuation of constitutionalism so as to prevent the more humane communitarianism from taking root in the Puritan community.

However, despite the obstruction by Chillingworth, Hester carried out her communitarian project anyway. The central part of the project was to rescue Dimmesdale from the grip of Chillingworth by revealing the latter's true identity and ill intent. Upon being told such, Dimmesdale concluded that Chillingworth had "violated, in cold blood, the sanctity of the human heart", whereas he and Hester "never did so!" (idem: 348). Echoing Dimmesdale's view, Hester asserted that "What we did had a consecration of its own" (ibid.). The consecration of the human heart, therefore, constituted the central message of Hester's (and Hawthorne's) communitarian philosophy. It is evident that the heart, considered the center of passions, feelings, and sentiments, were denigrated in the Puritan constitution, whose devotees, including Governor Bellingham, Reverend Wilson and Roger Chillingworth, were all marked by their learnedness and, thus, the head.

The consecration of the heart should not mean an indiscriminate acceptance of its contents. We remember how Hester, driven by her impulse and passion, used to be an individualist. The consensus reached

between Dimmesdale and herself somewhat revived her individualism. Therefore, she proposed that they go back to "the Old World", which could provide them with an "eligible shelter and concealment" (idem: 383). If such a plan had been executed, it would mark another case of the Puritan community's split, not so different from Hutchinson's exile. This was not communitarianism. For communitarianism to take root and be embraced by all community members, including Hester, it would take an educational and transformative event. This was the role of the Election Sermon. It was only because of this event that Hester and Dimmesdale's plan to leave New England did not materialize.

Communitarianism requires the individual's dedication to the community. Fortunately, neither Dimmesdale nor Hester lacked such dedication. Dimmesdale pledged that he would "leave no public duty unperformed, nor ill performed" (idem: 385). The ceremony for the gubernatorial election, which took place on a "public holiday" (idem: 403), was essential to providing civic education to the public and forming people "into a community or nation through civil religious symbolism" (Arthur 2000: 100). Communitarian theorists believe that the symbolism could be reflected in "patriotic holiday observations and political rhetoric" (ibid.). Both elements, of course, were present at the event in the story. The rhetoric to be delivered by Dimmesdale was in the Election Sermon. Although Hawthorne stops short at detailing its content. There is no doubt that it had a focus on the importance of the human community, and specifically the New England community: Its subject was "the relation between the Deity and the communities of mankind, with a special reference to the New England which they were here planting in the wilderness" (Hawthorne 1892: 443), and central message was the "high and glorious destiny for the newly gathered people of the Lord" (idem: 444).

While Dimmesdale played a ceremonial role in ushering in a new vision of the community, Hester was there to lead the concrete changes in accordance with it. This is why Dimmesdale brought Hester to the center stage of the Puritan community again by inviting her to "the well-remembered and weather-darkened scaffold" (idem: 448). Once standing on it as an individualist and public enemy, Hester was now inaugurated as an unofficial leader of the community, who would work with her fellow community members in bringing the new vision prophesied by Dimmesdale into reality.

The new vision was certainly a communitarian one. The last moral message that Dimmesdale imparted to his community before his death was about benevolence and reciprocity, which demanded "our reverence each for the other's soul" (idem: 457). Benevolence and reciprocity, both stemming from the human heart instead of a constitutional text, are

conceivably the two foundational values of a good communal life. Hester's interactions with her community hereafter were highly illustrative of these values. After a trip to the Old World, Hester returned to New England and recommitted herself to her community, serving as a mentor to those who "brought all their sorrows and perplexities, and besought her counsel" (idem: 467). The community returned the favor by looking upon her scarlet letter "with awe, yet with reverence too" (idem: 466). Under the old constitution of the Puritan community, the scarlet letter had been an imposed symbol of punishment; now that the community was teeming with a communitarian spirit, it turned into a token of the inalienable bond between Hester and the community as well as the benevolent, reciprocal relationship between Hester and her fellow community members. This change in the interpretation of the scarlet letter, the central symbol of the novel, marked the triumph of the communitarian vision over a constitutionalist status quo in New England.

Conclusions

In promoting his communitarian vision, Hawthorne rejects both individualism and constitutionalism as the foundational philosophy about the relationship between the individual and the community, dismissing both as unconducive to a good life. Meanwhile, through observing Hester's transformation from an individualist, first to a constitutionalist, and eventually to a communitarian, one may find that Hawthorne's communitarianism also incorporates the chief merits of both individualism and constitutionalism, namely the former's prioritization of the free will and the integrity of the community prized by the latter. At the end of the novel, Hawthorne notes how Hester returned to her New England community and continued wearing the scarlet letter out "of her own free will" (idem: 466). He obviously believes that the free will of the individual and the common good of the community could be reconciled. His communitarianism, therefore, derives from his optimism about man's ability in making such a reconciliation.

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GUANTÁNAMO NARRATIVE AS A GENRE

Olga KAJTÁR-PINJUNG
University of Szeged

Abstract: *Mansoor Adayfi and Mohamedou Ould Slahi, among the nearly 800 detainees, have spent more than fourteen years of their lives at the Guantánamo Bay detention center without ever being charged with a crime. They endured a variety of mental and physical torture practices during the interrogations approved by the United Stated government in the name of the War on Terror following the 9/11 terrorist attacks. The present paper focuses on their memoirs, Don't Forget Us Here by Adayfi and Guantánamo Diary written by Ould Slahi, with the purpose of situating them in the immensely wide scope of life writing. At this point, I think it is worth noting that although there are five memoirs that were published by former detainees, I have chosen to use the works of Adayfi and Ould Slahi because they spent the longest period in detention, over fourteen years each. However, their experience at Guantánamo is not unique.*

Keywords: *narrative, Guantanamo, memoirs, life.*

The purpose of my paper is to provide arguments and substantial foundation for creating a separate genre of Guantánamo narratives within the frameworks of life writing by comparing, highlighting, and analyzing features that distinguish the memoirs of the former detainees from other types of life narratives. The term life writing encompasses a considerable number of genres including but not limited to diary, autobiography, slave narrative, and trauma narrative. Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson distinguish sixty genres of life narrative in their exhaustive and comprehensive book titled *Reading Autobiography*. While both *Guantánamo Diary* and *Don't Forget Us Here* bear resemblance to different genres including slave, trauma, and prison narrative, they cannot be confined to a single category. Therefore, I propose the addition of a distinct and separate genre of Guantánamo narrative to the diverse field of autobiography by accumulating their unique characteristics and providing a tentative definition.

Biographies and autobiographies are different due to their varying focal points, authorship, and objective/subjective renderings of a person's

life. John Paul Eakin highlights the difference in perspective of autobiographies, where the author writes his or her own story therefore the readers may assume a more subjective viewpoint and a perhaps more sincere insight into his or her own innermost feelings and intimate thoughts. According to Eakin, this extent of accessibility to the otherwise unknown aspects of a person's journey through life is what engages the attention of the reader (Eakin 2020, 42-46).

The research of autobiographies — life narratives where the narrator, the author, and the protagonist are one and the same — raises several questions, such as the intention of the author by writing his or her life narrative, the audience whom the author intends to target, the veracity of the events discussed and detailed as well as the recollection of memories. One may rightfully pose the question of whether the readers should be expected to believe everything that is mentioned in a book based on the fact that it was labelled an autobiography. Philippe Lejenue attempts to resolve the issue at hand by defining the term "autobiographical pact," which is an implicit or explicit contract that is suggested by the author to the reader (Lejeune 1989, 29). On the one hand, the readers understand and accept that the author is providing them with detailed events of his or her own life; on the other hand, the author expects and believes that his "past deeds, thoughts or feelings will be judged, forgiven, punished, or just listened to and remembered by any virtual community he/she thinks they belong to" (Z. Varga 2018, 63). Hence, autobiographies require the reader to place his faith in the fact that the author believes to tell the truth about his life the way he experienced it. This "subjective truth" is the story of the narrator, whose purpose is to describe history from his own perspective while explaining his perception of it, justifying his own viewpoint (Smith and Watson 2001, 10). When it comes to reading an autobiography, Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson emphasize the fact that the reader is the one who decides who has the "cultural authority" to tell a certain story (Smith and Watson 2001, 30). It means that from the readers' standpoint, the story of the narrator has credibility only if the author himself directly participated in the events of which he wishes to give an account.

Moreover, Smith and Watson list and detail the constitutive processes of "autobiographical subjectivity," which are memory, agency, identity, embodiment, and experience (Smith and Watson 2001, 15-16). First and foremost, the author needs to access his/her memory to take a retrospective look at the events of his/her life and by doing so he/she is able to reinterpret the events of the past in the present (Smith and Watson 2001, 16). Life narrative is a "site of embodied knowledge because autobiographical narrators are embodied subjects" whose memories can only be recollected

by the material body (Smith and Watson 2001, 37). The body gains and accumulates experience which is influenced by memory and mediated by language. The experience of a subject places the individual in a "culturally and historically specific present" (Smith and Watson 2001, 24). The next constitutive item is identity; the author is required to identify himself/herself to the reader by situating himself/herself in his/her cultural, historical, and social environment by acts of identification (Smith and Watson 2001, 32). Smith and Watson explain the issue of agency as the most complicated process because it entails the way the author asserts, practices, and narrates agency. They maintain that the theorization of the above-mentioned factors enables the reader to understand the complex nature of autobiographical subjectivity (Smith and Watson 2001, 48).

Having established the theoretical background of life writing, it is worth returning to the question of whether the memoirs of former Guantánamo Bay detainees belong to any existing genre or should they create their own category among autobiographical works of literature. *Guantánamo Diary* was first published in 2015 and the fully restored text was released in 2017 while Mansoor Adayfi's *Don't Forget Us Here* was published in August 2021, consequently, Ould Slahi's memoir has been researched more extensively than that of Adayfi.

There are two readers who published their views and research on the genre of *Guantánamo Diary,* and both compare it to the slave narrative, with good reason, I might add. Ould Slahi himself compares his situation to slavery,

> I often compare myself with a slave. Slaves were taken forcibly from Africa, and so was I. Slaves were sold a couple of times on their way to their final destination, and so was I. Slaves suddenly were assigned to somebody they didn't choose, and so was I. And when I looked at the history of slaves, I noticed that slaves sometimes ended up an integral part of the master's household (Ould Slahi 2015, 309).

Yogita Goyal did comprehensive research examining *Guantánamo Diary* from a postcolonial perspective and she likens Ould Slahi's narrative to that of a slave by highlighting how the book connects the "shameful past to an abusive present" (Goyal 2017, 69), the former referring to slavery while the latter indicating detention. As further parallels, she stresses Ould Slahi's hope to one day return to his family, and his devotion to remain humane in an abusive environment (Goyal 2017, 78).

Moreover, in his article "*Guantánamo Diary* and the American Slave Narrative" Scott Korb presents concise comparison between slavery and detention while relying on the work of Henry Louise Gates Jr. One

noteworthy parallel he remarks is that when slaves wrote their stories they not only were talking about their individual situation and experience, but, at the same time, they represented every slave who remained or was forced to remain silent (Korb 2015). In the preface of *Don't Forget Us Here* Adayfi states that the main motivation for writing his book for sharing his story with the world, which is not only his own but "it was always supposed to be all our stories," referring to his fellow detainees (Adayfi 2021, xiii).

Following the release of his article, Korb gave an interview at the Bloomington Community Radio, where he further elaborates his justification of reading *Guantánamo Diary* as a slave narrative. He brings up the example of Harriet Jacobs and highlights the importance of slaves relying on an authoritative figure, a person respected by society, who verifies and defends the authenticity of the story told by the author (Korb interview 2015). In *Guantánamo Diary*, it is emphasized that the experiences shared in the book are verified by the editor, Larry Siems (409 – 410). At the same time, both Adayfi and Ould Slahi mention the significant relationship they had with their respective lawyers while they were detained, further suggesting their own credibility.

While attending the Slave Narrative seminar in the same semester when I read *Don't Forget Us Here* and I discovered a number of similarities between Adayfi's story and the *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*. There are one hundred and seventy-six years between the publication of the two books, therefore one might wonder how it is possible that they have so much in common. In his article "Frederick Douglass's Self-Fashioning and the Making of a Representative American Man," John Stauffer lists the traditions of the slave narrative as follows, it condemns slavery, details the life of a former slave, ends with the freedom of the protagonist, exposes the cruelties of the institution, highlights the love of freedom of human beings, and the importance of literacy to achieve that freedom (Stauffer 204). Peculiarly, all the characteristics stated by Stauffer can be applied to *Don't Forget Us Here* if slavery is exchanged with detention, it condemns unlawful detention, narrates the life of a former detainee, ends with the release of the prisoner, exposes the cruelties of the guards, emphasizes the need and love of freedom, and finally, stresses the importance of learning English to be able to communicate and advocate for themselves and their innocence. Even though the situation of Ould Slahi is somewhat different as he wrote his book in detention, therefore some of the slave narrative traditions are not pertinent to *Guantánamo Diary*. Nevertheless, it speaks up against detention, highlights the crimes committed against him as well as the essential need for freedom, and the urgency of learning the language of the oppressor in order to be able to defend himself. As can be seen, the

memoirs of former Guantánamo detainees and slave narratives should be compared to understand the similarities. However, it is still questionable if it is enough to categorize *Guantánamo Diary* and *Don't Forget Us Here* as slave narratives.

I would argue that the differences outweigh the resemblance and must be taken into consideration. Firstly, slave narratives were the prominent genre of the late eighteenth, early nineteenth century, while Guantánamo memoirs were published in the 2010s, thus the historical progress and change must be noted. Furthermore, detainees were not forced to work; the primary purpose of their capture, imprisonment, and torture was to extract information to prevent a potential threat to the national security of the United States. Finally, prisoners of Guantánamo were seen as the enemy, they were presented to the public as "the worst of the worst" in political discourse. On the other hand, slaves were an integral part of the economy for Southern slaveowners; although they were seen as inferior, they were not considered to be the enemy.

If, by the logic above, slave narrative is excluded as a potential genre for Guantánamo narratives, there remains one option offered by researchers that might be applicable, the prison narrative. In the interpretation of Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, books written by detainees, although they do not explicitly mention Guantánamo, should belong to the category of prison narratives; books that include the story of prisoners, detainees, some form of incarceration, physical torture (Smith and Watson 2001, 204 – 5). Should Guantánamo memoirs be regarded as prison narratives? I would argue no, or not completely because inmates in state or federal U.S. penitentiaries are allowed to practice their basic human rights, their rights to proper legal representation, and due process of law, which, by no means proves they are guilty of the crime they are accused of, but they are provided with the opportunity to be considered innocent until proven guilty.

One might rightfully pose the question of what makes these books stand out and different from other life stories written by prisoners. Guantánamo narratives are written by former detainees who were taken to the Guantánamo Bay detention center during the War on Terror; they were accused of aiding and abetting or being a member of or working with terrorist organizations; they were held against their will, indefinitely; they were interrogated and subjected to various methods of mental and physical torture techniques; they were never charged with a crime. For years, they did not have the right to an attorney, their basic human rights and religious freedom were disrespected. Finally, the perpetrator was the United States government, one that is famous for its human rights and takes pride in their

open-mindedness that is centered around equality, racial, gender, and religious tolerance. These factors are what make the genre of Guantánamo narratives unique and different from other genres of life writing.

In conclusion, the determination of the genre of Guantánamo memoirs is a complex task. Although memoirs written by former Guantánamo detainees bear resemblance to various genres within the framework of life writing, for instance, slave and prison narratives, their distinct features, and the circumstances in which they were written necessitate a separate genre for them. They are part of the broader collection of cultural products that might be coined "the Guantánamo experience".

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CULTURAL, GENDER
AND LANGUAGE STUDIES

RULE AND COMMUNITY OF THE TEMPLAR KNIGHTS

Andrada MARINĂU
University of Oradea

Abstract: *The oldest of Military Orders, the Knights Templar, has served as a model for all the other military orders. The Templars or The Order of the Knights of the Temple was founded in 1119 at Jerusalem by 8 French knights, led by Hugues de Payens. Their duty was to protect the pilgrims. A very poor order at first, they soon became the richest of all military orders. After barely a century of existence, they were suppressed by Clement V and Fillip IV of France, who confiscated all their assets. In order to become a Templar Knight, one had to take certain vows and to obey certain rules. This article intends to describe the way in which an individual could become a member of the Templar community.*

Keywords: *Individual, novice, rule, community, Templar Knights.*

A group's ideals and the real meaning of their identities can be learned a lot from their daily lives. By examining some of the myths and rumours we have heard about the Templars we may learn more about their daily lives. Do these tales accurately reflect their way of life, or are they possibly romanticized representations of the truth about an unexpectedly common medieval monastic order? This article tries to reveal the struggle of an individual to become part of a community: the struggle of a mere novice to become a Templar Knight. But to start with, we will shortly delve into the history of the order which will help us understand what would have taken an individual to become part of the Order of the Templar Knights.

All subsequent Military Orders have taken their cues from the earliest one, the Knights Templar. Eight French knights under the leadership of Hugues de Payens established the Templars, also known as the Order of the Knights of the Temple, in Jerusalem in 1119. *"…on Christmas Day, 1119, Hugh of Payns and eight other knights, among them Godfrey of Saint-Omer, Archambaud of Saint-Aignan, Payen of Montdidier, Geoffrey Bissot, and a knight called Rossal or possibly Roland, took vows of poverty, chastity and obedience before the Patriarch in the Church of the Holy*

Sepulchre. They called themselves 'The Poor FellowSoldiers of Jesus Christ', and at first, they wore no distinctive habit but kept the clothes of their secular profession." (Read, 1999: 117). Their task was to keep the pilgrims safe. They went from being the poorest military command to the richest one pretty quickly. They were abolished by French rulers Clement V and Fillip IV, who seized all of their belongings, after hardly a century of existence. One had to take specific vows and follow certain guidelines in order to become a Templar Knight. The goal of this article is to dissect the process by which someone could join the Templar order.

The need for persons committed to the Christian service of humanity as well as the defence and security of the Holy Land gave rise to the Military Orders. Their leadership was structured in a rigorous and centralized hierarchy to ensure maximum efficiency. At the top was a person known as "the Grand Master" or "Supreme Master," whose authority was second only to that of the pope in Rome.

As Upton –Ward specifies in his *The French Text of the Rule of the Order of the Knights Templar* "The Rule of the Templars" described a comprehensive set of rules regulating every facet of everyday life, such as social limitations (ample), sleeping arrangements (austere), meals (mainly silent), and attire (spartan). A sizable portion is devoted to penance, which was crucial for upholding the order's crucial discipline. The initial draft, written in 1129, contained 68 regulations intended to keep Templar knights under strict control and to uphold their vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience above all else. The disciplinary code of the order got more intricate and encompassed several hundred laws as it grew larger, wealthier, more military. As per the code, retribution might take various forms, such as physical punishment, disgrace from the brotherhood, or even losing one's habit (the knight's robes). Sometimes, for smaller transgressions, the penitent had to eat his meals on the floor.

There were rules concerning mealtime, sleeping, clothes, steering clear of women (including mothers), obeying their master, behaviour, travel, their squires, pastime, charity, infractions and penance.

Templars practiced monastic obedience. They observed their Grand Master's orders as if it were God's command. Humility was so important that if any knight boasted or became somehow arrogant, he would immediately be disciplined. If a knight refused to make amends he would be removed from the order.

As I have already mentioned in the beginning of this paper, the Templars were the most enterprising of religious institutions profiting from a wide spectrum of services that involved early forms of banking and transporting goods as well as people at a time when travelling, particularly

from the West to the East was fraught with many dangers. The Order's growing reputation as astute financiers was part and parcel of a lucrative business in facilitating and enabling trade for sovereigns, foreign merchants and pilgrims that lasted until the Order was dissolved around 1312.

To become a member of the Knights Templar during their historical existence, an individual had to go through a rigorous process. The validation of identity and individuality within the Templars was a crucial aspect of their organization. To become a member of the Knights Templar, individuals had to go through a rigorous process of recruitment and initiation. This process involved taking vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, which were intended to strip away personal possessions, worldly desires, and individual ambitions. Once initiated, Templars were expected to conform to a strict code of conduct and adhere to the rules and regulations set forth by the order. This emphasis on uniformity and discipline aimed to create a cohesive and unified group of knights. Individuality within the Templars was subordinated to the collective identity of the order. However, it is important to note that while Templars were expected to conform to the ideals and principles of the order, they were still recognized as individuals with unique skills and abilities. Templars held various roles within the organization, such as knights, sergeants, and chaplains, each contributing their expertise to the overall mission of the order.

In summary, while the Templars emphasized collective identity and conformity to their code of conduct, individuality was recognized within the order through the unique skills and roles of its members.

The distinctive signs and symbols of the Knights Templar hold historical and symbolic significance. The most prominent symbol associated with the Templars is the red cross pattée. This cross, with its equal-length arms and narrow ends, was a common Christian symbol during the medieval period. The red colour represented martyrdom and sacrifice, while the cross itself signified the Templars' commitment to defending the faith.

The seal of the Knights Templar is another important emblem. It depicted two knights riding on a single horse, known as the "Two Knights on a Horse." This symbolized the Templars' vow of poverty and their communal way of life. It represented their dedication to living modestly and sharing resources within the order.

The lamb was also a significant symbol for the Templars. It represented their devotion to Christ, who is often referred to as the "Lamb of God" in Christian theology. The lamb symbolized purity, innocence, and sacrifice, reflecting the Templars' spiritual ideals.

Lastly, the *beauseant*, a black and white banner, held symbolic meaning for the Templars. It represented their dual nature as both warriors and monks. The black and white colours were believed to represent the contrast between good and evil, light and darkness, and the Templars' role in defending the Church against its enemies.

These distinctive signs and symbols of the Knights Templar not only served as visual identifiers but also carried deeper meanings related to their religious beliefs, values, and organizational structure.

Throughout its active years, the Order had a hand in a variety of business ventures and profited from the commercial services it could provide. It also took advantage of its unique position as a religious order made up of monks who were also exceptionally skilled military knights. Initially, the Templars experienced wealth due to the pilgrimage rush, and later on, they were able to profit from a network of trade with both Christians and Muslims. This included the rental of their ships and their role as exchange brokers.

The Templars were able to extend their economic and commercial activities in order to support their military obligations in the East. They did this by owning mills and ships, exporting wine and horses, and receiving royal approval to hold marketplaces and fairs. The Templars were considered the ideal choice to protect travellers and their belongings because they were a powerful military organization coupled with a religious order. Ships had to transport coins in order to send money to the East, which was a significant aspect of the Order's economic activities. Produce could be transported thanks to this necessity, which also gave pilgrims a safe place to store their belongings and money, which they could "bank" with the Templars for "safe storage" to reduce the possibility of theft and probable disaster. The Order wrote their transactions in code.

Even though it was anticipated, the fall of Acre shocked Latin Christendom and made Pope Nicholas IV's plans for a new crusade seem urgent. This was not seen at that time as the end of the Latin presence in the Holy Land. Having extensive holdings in Cyprus, the Temple took refuge there, establishing its convent at Limassol in 1292. (Read, 1999: 303)

The initial tenets of the Knights Templar to aid in endeavours in the Holy Land were disrupted when Muslim armies retook Jerusalem. With loss after loss, the Templars continued to lose land and support of monarchies. King Philip IV of France, who owed the Knights Templar a great deal, exploited the circumstance. He had followers imprisoned in 1307, coerced into making up heretical confessions via torture, and executed at the stake. Pope Clement V dissolved the order at the Council of Vienne in 1312, five years after it was established, in response to

pressure from King Philip. The latter held onto a majority of the lands in France until 1818. In England, the lands were divided up amongst the crown and nobility until 1338. In other parts of Europe, the land was never transferred to the Knights Hospitaller, but instead taken over by nobility and monarchs.

Research into the activities of the Templars in the Levant is hampered by the disappearance of their central archive. We know much less than we would like about their estates and the location of their houses in the East, the make-up of the central convent, the names of commanders and castellans in the Levant, and the powers of the grand masters. After the suppression of the Templars and the transferral of their properties to the Hospitallers in the early fourteenth century, the archive, or at least part of it, must have come into Hospitaller hands in the West, because one cannot otherwise explain the odd survivals or the fact that quite a large number of papal letters relevant only to the Templars in the East were copied in France in the fifteenth century. At the time of its destruction, the order was an important institution in both Europe and the Holy Land and already an object of myth and legend.

The Templar Knights in novels often serve as symbols of identity construction and legitimation through their strong sense of camaraderie and shared values. Their bond as fellow knights reflects a search for the familiar and a connection with like-minded individuals. In many stories, the Templar Knights' loyalty to each other and their shared mission exemplify the importance of finding a sense of belonging and purpose in one's life. Their code of honour and dedication to their cause can inspire readers to seek out similar qualities in their own relationships and endeavours.

Dan Brown's portrayal of the Templar Knights in "The Da Vinci Code" emphasizes their historical significance and their alleged involvement in various conspiracies. The novel suggests that the Templars were targeted and persecuted by powerful entities due to their possession of hidden knowledge. The protagonist, Robert Langdon, unravels clues and symbols associated with the Templars, leading to a deeper understanding of their role in history.

Cotton Malone, the protagonist of the novel "The Templar Legacy" by Steve Berry uncovers secrets and conspiracies surrounding the Templar Knights. The knights are depicted as a historical order with a rich and complex legacy. The novel explores their historical significance and the enduring mysteries surrounding their activities. In Berry's portrayal, the Templar Knights are shown as a highly skilled and secretive group, known for their military prowess and dedication to their cause. The novel delves into their connection to various historical artefacts and their role in

safeguarding hidden knowledge and it presents the Templar Knights as an organization that has left behind a trail of clues and secrets. The novel also explores their influence on history and their potential involvement in modern-day conspiracies.

"The Last Templar" by Raymond Khoury combines historical elements with modern-day suspense, as a group of Templar Knights resurfaces in New York City. Khoury's portrayal of the Templar Knights emphasizes their dedication to their cause and their commitment to preserving their secrets. The novel delves into their rituals, codes and the training they underwent to become skilled warriors. The Templars are shown as a formidable force, skilled in combat and possessing deep knowledge of ancient relics. |In the sequel to this novel

In "Brethren" a trilogy by Robyn Young, the Templars are characterized as valiant and devoted warriors who are deeply committed to their cause. Young portrays them as skilled fighters who adhere to a strict code of honour and loyalty. The Templars in "Brethren" are depicted as complex individuals with their own personal struggles and conflicts, adding depth to their portrayal in the novel. Young's characterization of the Templars in "Brethren" showcases their bravery, dedication, and the challenges they face in their quest for righteousness. Devoted Baybars Bundukdari, the ruler of Egypt, who was determined to cleanse the area of Western influence, and young, idealistic Sir William Campbell represent Christendom's desperate attempts to hold a foothold in the Holy Land against a fierce Muslim jihad. Young moves between the opposing camps; there's a lot of activity on the battlefield, and William develops feelings for Elwen, the stunning young niece of his mentor who died. William must also investigate the riddle of the missing Book of the Grail, which revealed the explosive (and heretical) goals of a clandestine Brethren organization inside the Knights Templar.

Initiation into the Order was a profound commitment and involved a secret ceremony. Few details of the rituals were known at the time, fuelling the suspicions of medieval inquisitors. But initiates, at least in the early days of the Order, had to be of noble birth, of legitimate heritage, and had to be willing to sign over all of their wealth and goods to the Order. Further, joining the Order required vows of poverty, chastity, piety, and obedience. For the warriors of the Order, there was a cardinal rule of never surrendering. The vow of celibacy was meant to ensure that Templars remained focused on their spiritual and military duties without the distractions or obligations of family life. The motto of the Knights Templar, "Non Nobis Domine, Non Nobis, Sed Nomini Tuo Da Gloriam," translates to "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to your name give glory." This

humble invocation reflects their dedication to divine service and the Christian ideals they strove to embody, despite their martial prowess and considerable wealth. Their military skills made them formidable opponents in battle, often tipping the scales in the Crusades. Additionally, their extensive wealth and the secretive nature of their order's rites and ceremonies bred suspicion and envy among secular and religious leaders. This combination of power, wealth, and mystery made the Templars a target for fear and persecution.

The influence of the Templars on medieval civilization was significant. They were among the Crusades' most disciplined military units, pioneers in banking, and built a network of strongholds and commanderies throughout Europe and the Holy Land. Their architectural heritage is still studied and appreciated today, and it includes Templar churches and castles.

To conclude, for almost two hundred years, prayers, rituals, sacred texts, dietary laws, and other regulations have played a central role in defining the Templar's community and distinguishing it from the people among whom they have lived. It was a difficult path to come from a simple novice to a mounted knight which could grant one a place in the Templar's community, a wealthy, powerful and mysterious order that has fascinated historians and the public for centuries. Stories about the Knights Templar, their military skills, their financial and banking acumen, and their efforts to defend Christianity during the Crusades are still told in contemporary culture.

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LOOKING FOR RESONANCE:
CHALLENGES OF IDENTITIES

Delia-Maria RADU
University of Oradea

Abstract: *One of the way human beings define their identity is in relationship with others and with the community. How difficult is it for newcomers, fellow citizens or migrants, to find a place in a community, to be accepted by it and "resonate" with it? Our paper focuses on fictional characters and their stories in order to find examples of resonance and alienation, as proposed by Hartmut Rosa, looking at Mario Puzo's novel The Fortunate Pilgrim, Cătălin Dorian Florescu's The Man who Brings Happiness, and M.E. Ravage's An American in the Making: The Life Story of an Immigrant.*

Keywords: *resonance, relationships, alienation, identity*

Introduction

For Hartmut Rosa, resonance is an anthropological ability that connects human beings with others, with the world and its objects. As a responsive mode of being in the world, it captures the cognitive, bodily, and affective dimensions of subjectivity. With respect to a theory of human relationships to the world, resonance describes a mode of being-in-the-world, i.e. a specific way in which subject and world come into relation with each other. The difference between successful and unsuccessful relationships to the world is given by the degree to which one is connected with and open to other people (and things) (Rosa 2019:48).

As the 'Other of alienation' resonance captures a form of connectedness between the self, the other and their worlds. (Fuchs 2020:357) Intensive moments of subjective happiness can be understood as forms of resonant experience, while feelings of unhappiness arise particularly when and where we find the world indifferent or even repulsive. Alienation is a disturbed relationship to the world in which the subjects are incapable of successfully appropriating some segment of the world and thus become caught in a "relation of relationlessness" to it. One

of the places that reveals the characters' struggle to find their place, to adapt and be accepted by others, in other words the search for resonance, is the fiction about migrant characters.

Immigrant literature has often reflected the struggles of assimilation, the loss of identity in that process and the pain of being split between two cultures. The heroes and heroines of European American literature are often filled with self-doubt and search blindly for their identity (Cistelecan 2021:86)

According to King, Connell and White, migrant literature often focuses on the social context in the migrants' country of origin which prompt them to leave, on the experience of migration itself, on the mixed reception which they may receive in the country of arrival, on experiences of racism and hostility, and on the sense of rootlessness and the search for identity which can result from displacement and cultural diversity. Some of the most telling accounts of the immigration experience are the works of authors who are not immigrants at all, but who are, in some way, the product of past migrations. (2003:XI)

The need for resonance

In 1965, when he published his novel *The Fortunate Pilgrim* (entitled *Mamma Lucia* in the Italian version)*,* Puzo was not the well-known author of *The Godfather*, as he is known today. Yet, Lucia Santa, the matriarch of the family in *The Fortunate Pilgrim*, is a reflection of Puzo's own mother, of her difficult life, strength and resilience.

The waves of migrants arriving in the U.S. followed a certain pattern, new arrivals seeking the help and initial support of fellow countrymen. Neighbourhoods were vital. As Judith E. Smith notes, the structure of migration contributed to the development of immigrant settlements, as family members and fellow villagers tended to follow earlier migrants and depend on them for initial housing (Smith 1985:11)

In Puzo's novel, in the community of Italians, people try to regain the feeling of home by recreating patterns, habits and the "village voice", the groups of (elderly) women knowing and judging everything that goes on in the "community".

> "Each tenement was a village square; each had its group of women, all in black, sitting on stools and boxes and doing more than gossip. They recalled ancient history, argued morals and social law, always taking their precedents from the mountain village in southern Italy they had escaped, fled from many years ago. [...] Ah, Italia, Italia; how the world changed and for the worse. What madness was it that made them leave

such a land? Where fathers commanded and mothers were treated with respect by their children." (Puzo 2004:12)

Their role is to keep the ties with the old way of life, to maintain that sense of community people used to have back home. They live in what J. W. Berry calls separation, i.e. a parallel existence of the two distinct cultures, although the new culture does affect the old one, as the second generation is too soon tempted to forget the old rules and be more independent, stirring the criticism of the women who keep comparing the new realities with the way of life back in the "old country".

Lucia Santa, the matriarch in *The Fortunate Pilgrim*, left her homeland because of the poverty of her family, which couldn't afford to provide her with a dowry and, thus, subjected her to public shame and awful prospects. Desperate, she decided to marry a man she had played with during childhood, and to emigrate to America, to start her life with a complete stranger, in a strange land. She had two children with her husband and was pregnant with their third child when he got killed in a stupid work accident.

There was no lovers' resonance between Lucia Santa and her first husband, "a hard-working, ignorant, pleasure-loving man". She didn't really like him, but couldn't tell that to Octavia, the only child who remembered their father. She, who had no choice but leave her country, was determined to make a life in the new one and resented his lack of ambition, his lack of commitment to do something in order to leave the slum tenements and get a better life for himself and his family, preferring to give her only the money for food and spending the rest on wine and gambling with his friends. And he expected her to be grateful for his "*act of generosity in bringing her to the new country and his bed, beggar that she was without linen, that he had no need to be generous again. One deed served a lifetime*" (Puzo 2004:36).

At the moment of her husband's death, the community of the tenement, supposed to act as a saving net, showed its true face:

> "Fate did not make her bitter; that was left to friends and neighbours […] after the tragedy, after the initial pity and condolences [...] Greetings were cold, doors were shut, prospective godmothers disappeared. Who wished to be friendly with a young, full-blooded widow? Husbands were weak, there would be calls for assistance. In the tenements life was close; a young woman without a man was dangerous. She could draw off money and goods as the leech draws blood." (Puzo 2004:18)

And even if it was this same community that found her next husband, Santa Lucia becomes alienated from it, determined to "never let the world

deceive her again", attending but not taking part in the discussions of the women, "In all this Lucia Santa was silent. She waited for her friend and ally, Zia Louche."

Hartmut Rosa discusses the concept of friendship through his perspective on resonance, defining it as a relationship of elective affinity and spiritual kinship, and stating that "two people are friends when a resonant wire of sympathy and trust vibrates between them" (Rosa 2019:305). Zia Louche, an old, childless widow, is the only one standing by Santa Lucia in her moments of desperation and need, her only life-long friend, the only one she resonates with and listens to. There is also a relationship of mutual respect between the two:

> "It amused Octavia to see her mother defer to Zia Louche and the old crone valiantly do battle for her mother, each of them treating the other like a duchess. Her mother turning to Zia Louche and asking respectfully, "*E vero, Comare*?" And Zia Louche always answering imperiously, "*Sì, Signora,*" showing no callow familiarity before the others. Octavia knew the relationship behind this, her mother's gratitude for that valuable alliance in the hour of her most terrible misfortune." (Puzo 2004:6)

Not only was she the only one to help in need after the death of her first husband, but Zia Louche was also the only one who raised even more her suspicions that something was not in order with Vincent, her newborn's being taken care of by a relative to allow her to recover after the birth, which leads to her fetching him home:

> "In later years Lucia Santa always insisted that if Zia Louche had reassured her she would not have gone that day, and that for the honest answer she would always remain in the old woman's debt. For Zia Louche, nodding her old crone's head like a repentant witch, said, "I gave you bad advice, Signora. People are saying things I don't like." Lucia Santa begged her to speak out, but Zia Louche would not, because it was all gossip, nothing to be repeated to an anxious mother." (Puzo 2004:44)

She is the one bringing the news of Lorenzo's marriage to a very poor girl told in such a way as to avoid Santa Lucia's anger, and we see her helping in the kitchen at Octavia's return from the hospital as one of the family: "replenishing boiling water, stirring tomato sauce, […] throwing the ravioli into the pot of boiling water […] serving dinner. And her death would be mourned by Santa Lucia like the death and loss of a mother.

Lack of resonance can be noticed as well in Santa Lucia's relationship with the only man she fell in love with, Frank Corbo, who "now, after twelve years of life together, the husband was as secretive with her as he had always been with other people." Lucia Santa's second husband, was thirty-five when they got married.

> "slender, wiry, and with blue eyes; considered odd for being unwedded at that age, odd also in his reticence, his silent nature and lonely pride— that pride so ludicrous in those who are helpless before society and fate. The neighbors, searching for a widow's mate and feeder of four hungry mouths, thought him capable of any foolishness and a fine candidate. He worked steadily on the early morning shifts of the railroad gangs, and his afternoons were free for courting." (Puzo 2004:38)

Lucia's true love, he was a mentally unstable man, maddened by life's toughness and the responsibility of having a family. The son of drunken peasants, poor tenant farmers in Italy, who relied on him to work the farm and provide for them, he had often been hungry and cold, and his parents made him wear cast-off shoes which were too small, so his feet had become horribly deformed.

Frank Corbo had a history of mental problems, having gone through a breakdown following his parents' rejection of the girl he had been in love with and whom he had wanted to marry. At the time he had run away and lived in the woods for a week. Found in shock, "little more than an animal", he was committed to a mental institution and then he emigrated to America. The key to his balance was loneliness, but getting married and being surrounded by so many family members proves to be too much for him. He feels disconnected from his wife and own son, let alone his stepchildren.

> "Frank Corbo watched his son run crazily in some sort of tagging game incomprehensible to the father, as was the chils's American speech, as were the books and the newspapers, the colors of the night sky, the beauty of the summer night and *all the joys of the world he felt cut off from*, all colored with pain." (Puzo 2004:24)

He abandons his family, leaving the city, heading for a farm where he could work to exhaustion and thus get rid of his bad dreams, hoping to "gain peace from love, restore his strength […] tilling the earth, as he had done so long ago, a boy in Italy". When, at the end of the summer, he returns to his family, he tries to explain to his wife the reason for leaving: "I was sick. I didn't want to fight before I left, so I couldn't tell you. The noise in the city, in the house. My head hurt all the time. Out there it was

quiet. I worked hard all day and at night I slept without dreams. What man could want more?" (Puzo 2004:99)

For Hartmut Rosa, alienation denotes a state in which one does in fact have relationships – e.g. a family, a job, membership in a political party, a religious affiliation, hobbies, etc. – yet deems them meaningless, having become indifferent to or even repulsed by them, a situation in which the subject experiences his or her own body or feelings, material and natural environment, or social interactions as external, unconnected, non-responsive, in a word: *mute*. (Rosa 2019:255-256) Frank Corbo is unresponsive to his femily's needs of a provider, to his wife's need of a reliable partner or his children's needs of a father. He is too vulnerable to the aggressions of the responsibilities of the outside world, and he slowly loses his mind.

When he returns home from his escapade, he seems changed, for a while, by the effect of a Protestant couple who try to get him on the right path of their faith, teach him to read and write using The Bible and find him work at a chocolate factory. In a strange way and unseen by Santa Lucia before, Frank seems to resonate with them:

> "And she could see her husband reacting to their love. He was never demonstrative, but she could tell by his tone, by his respectful voice, in which for the first time since their marriage she heard that note which means that the speaker will bow to the wishes and opinions of his listeners. He was nervous, anxious to please. For the first time, he seemed to want people to think well of him. He poured the coffee himself." (Puzo 2004:102)

Octavia remembers her father, to whom she had been very fond of, so she finds it hard to accept Corbo as her stepfather. She sees him as an illiterate peasant, a contemptible immigrant who gave himself airs: "She hated him as someone cruel, villainous, evil. She had seen him give blows to her mother, act the tyrant to his stepchildren. […] she could not bear speaking to that man, looking into his cold blue eyes and harsh angular face. She knew her stepfather hated her as she hated him and that each feared the other. […] She feared him because he was strange". (Puzo 2004:22)

When Frank Corbo becomes insane, doctor Barbato comes to see him, and while he is consulting his patient, he is reflecting that "It was always the men who crumbled under the glories of the new land, never the women. There were many cases of Italian men who became insane and had to be committed, as if in leaving their homeland they had torn a vital root

from their minds." (Puzo 2004:77) There was a trauma associated with migration, explains Susan Matt, a trauma they did not shy away from expressing. Americans took homesickness seriously – as did their doctors, many of whom maintained that the only cure was to return sufferers to their homes before the condition turned fatal. (Matt 2011:3) Homesick without realizing it, missing a way of life closer to nature, impossible in the city and unable to find a way to resonate with others, family, acquaintances, community, Frank Corbo loses his vital force, then loses his mind, becomes aggressive with his family, is hospitalized and dies in a mental institution.

Another migrant author who writes his works in a different language than his mother tongue, like Puzo, is Cătălin Dorian Florescu. His novel *Der Mann, der das Glück Bringt (The Man Who Brings Happiness)* published in 2016, was translated into Romanian two years later as *Bărbatul care aduce fericirea[1]*. A writer who is defined by both Swiss and Romanian influences, Florescu also deals in his novels with issues such as solitude, identity, or longing for happiness. His confessed cultural in-betweenness (he writes in German, but his soul has remained Romanian) is a feature associated by Pultz Moslund (2010:4) with the contemporary migration novel, dealing with fluid, complex, multiple identities, and in which cultural facts and values are mutable and shaped in and through storytelling.

The identity of the narrator's grandfather, nicknamed Match for his short temper, is a fluid one, his survival is based on resonance – resonating with whomever might help him make it through another day. Not knowing who he really is, deprived of a family to provide him with an identity and having heard various stories about his fate before being taken to an orphanage, and speaking the languages of the ghetto – a little Italian, a little Yiddish and a little English – "Grandpa" assumes whatever identity serves his goals at the time.

He could have been anybody, Gustav, the coachman tells him: "If I look at you more closely, you really could be anything. Nothing tells me that your father was not Jew, your mother Irish and anyone of them Italian. Or the other way round." (Florescu 2018:24)

He vaguely remembers someone telling him he had been born in Europe. He images having been born in Italy, in Galicia, or in Ireland, according to what story he is listening to. Unable, or rather unwilling to choose a variant, as "there were too many good stories to stop at only one of them" (Florescu, 2018:16), Match was going to find time to contrive a

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[1] As I have used the Romanian version of Cătălin Dorian Florescu's novel and interviews, the quotes in English needed for the purpose of my analysis have been translated by me.

good story, one of his own. In the meantime, he assumes the identity of Berl, his best friend, who had told him stories about a family he had never had, about Galicia and the Carpathians, when he is looked after by Herschel, the Jew.

When he is in the presence of the pregnant women in Herschel's building, Match's identity changes again according to the woman he is talking to: "When Betsy drew him towards her and asked him which was his real name, he replied "Paddy" without hesitation, and when an Italian wanted to know the same thing, he was "Pasquale" for her, and "Berl", for a Jew." Some years later, when he tries to become a vaudeville singer and needs papers, he becomes Paddy Fowley, a name under which he meets his future partner, Giuseppina, and under which he is buried in the end.

His grandson, Ray, the narrating voice of the American space, becomes an impersonator of celebrities. Assuming their identities, he makes up for a life devoid of any attractions or joy: "I like to put myself in another's place, to impersonate a new character. And when I really succeed in doing so, the effect is like that of a drug: it is like having two, three, many lives. And if that other one is a a star, my many lives are full of miracles and greatness." (Florescu 2018:222)

The motto chosen by the author, a quote from the novel *Death and the Dervish* by the Bosnian writer Meša Selimović, draws right from the beginning of the book the attentive reader's attention to the issue of solitude [„I have been lonely, too./There was no way towards my inner Me"].

The newspaper boy's life is a continuous struggle for survival day after day. "Nobody asked him [i.e. what he wanted]. There was nobody. He was alone" (Florescu 2018:8). On New Year's Eve, on a small side street, in exchange for a newspaper he receives sweetened tea with gin and warms up. Sheltered from the cold and snow outside, together with the shop-assistant, he watches the world on the street making haste to and fro: "the gas lamp scattered more shadow than light over the two men who clearly were in no such rush as all the others. No one was waiting for them" (Florescu 2018:19). The same idea is conveyed some pages later, when Match thinks he could disappear and no one would miss him, or even remember him.

Solitude is also felt by Iulian, the fisherman who has no companions for a drink in the tavern or for fishing in the Delta. His wife's inability to give birth to live babies, a possibly contagious state in folk superstition, makes the other women in the village of Uzlina avoid her, and likewise, her husband, Iulian, is also shunned by the others, thus forced to drink by himself in the pub. Happiness, for him, would mean being accepted by the others, getting drunk as a regular man, together with the others, i.e. being

in resonance with his community of fellow villagers. When his wife is in labour pains again, for the fourth time, hearing her struggle, when her pains become unbearable, he runs in vain to the neighbours to ask for help, and is forced to wait alone, his head full of troubling thoughts, in front of a bottle of brandy, only to head for the pub after the birth of the child who turned out to be a girl, much to his dismay. When, drunk, he falls into the Danube and drowns, his death saddens no one (like Frank Corbo's): "He left behind no void, no memories, no regrets" (Florescu 2018:63).

After the birth and survival of her little baby girl, Leni, shunned by the other women when she was barren, retaliates by refusing their presence and gifts: "Grandma acted like she started hating the world now that she could reconcile with it" comments the narrative voice (Florescu 2018:65). She, like Frank Corbo, has become indifferent, repulsed by the presence of others, disconnected, out of resonance.

A similar feeling of loneliness as the one experienced by Iulian makes Marcus Revici (the hero of *An American in the Making: the Life Story of an Immigrant)*, the young Jew who left his home in Bârlad, where conditions had worsened for Jews after 1878, bound for America, with his head full of dreams after the stories of a departed relative who had paid them a visit, to seek the food, companionship and interpersonal connections that remind him of home. Arriving in New York and witnessing the degradation of his fellow citizens and of the spirit of community in a country where everyone is for himself, Marcus misses home and feels he does not belong there. After trying, in vain, to get a job in various places in the city, he begins peddling and when his efforts start bearing fruit he finds a place where he feels good, where he feels seen and heard, a restaurant serving Romanian food, frequented by other compatriots:

> "I returned to the restaurant every night. It was a great comfort [...] to [...] have a warm meal, and hear my native Rumanian spoken. [...] I began to make acquaintances; and after the meal we would sit around the tables, discussing America with her queer people and her queer language [...] to gosip about the latest arrivals and the recent news from home" (Ravage 2009:72).

When he starts work in a sweat-shop as a sleever, Marcus discovers a new world in which he feels happy. Although the work is hard and poorly paid, the sweat-shop is a community in itself, everybody knows everybody else, they have their lunch together and discuss socialist ideas or literature, there is an effervescence of reading, attending public lectures or theatre plays that whets his appetite for learning more. But entering into resonance

with his young fellow workers he loses touch and moves further and further away from his compatriots in Little Rumania. "They were very outspoken, were my kinsfolk, in their disapproval of me. They found fault with my impiety, my socialism (or anarchism – they did not know just which it was), my indifference to dress and the social proprieties, my ragamuffin argumentative associates" (Ravage 2009:110).

He attends night school for immigrants and the Clinton High School, before becoming a student of the University of Missouri. And this second, internal migration – from the temporary safety of Little Rumania and the Jewish ghetto in New York City to Columbia, where he attends college is central to his transformation. (see Stanciu 2015:3) Leaving his ethnic ghetto means that the whole process of adjustment starts all over again, including being rejected for being different, a "queer, unlikable animal": "During the remainder of that first week in Missouri I found out what it was to be a stranger in a foreign land; and as the year wore on, I found out more and more". (Ravage 2009:139) Looking for integration, for resonance with the others requires, yet again, a lot of struggles.

One of the challenges of an immigrant is learning and mastering the language of his new country. There is a difference between abstract language learned from the books and the language spoken by the natives. After a year of rejection and gradual acceptance, Ravage returns to New York, only to discover how much he has changed. He has reached the point of seeing his acquaintances in Little Rumania with the critical eye of Americans: "I had not dreamed that my mere going to Missouri had opened up a gulf between me and the world I had come from, and that every step I was taking towards my ultimate goal was a stride away from everything that had once been mine, that had once been myself. […] here in the persons of those dear to me I was seeing myself as those others had seen me". (Ravage 2009:169)

This stage of in-betweenness, when immigrants feel they don't fully belong to the old world they are coming from, but they are also not completely adjusted to the new one, gives him the feeling of loneliness, of not resonating with anyone anymore: "the East Side had somehow ceased to be my world. I had thought a few days ago that I was going home. […] But I had merely come to another strange land. In the fall I would return to that other exile. I was, indeed, a man without a country". (Ravage 2009:172) The price of assimilation to Missouri was alienation from New York, comments Steven Kellman in his Introduction to the book. (Ravage 2009:XXIII)

Returning to college the next fall, it only takes the hearty greetings and welcome of his colleagues for Ravage to feel a connection, to feel in

resonance again, but this time it is with the members of the previously labelled "new world": "I had not been aware how, throughout the previous year, the barriers between us had been gradually and steadily breaking down. […] I had become one of them. I was not a man without a country. I was an American". (Ravage 2009:174) Thus, he goes through what is generally called acculturation, i.e. assimilation of the acculturating group into the dominant culture, as its members change their behavior, attitudes and values toward those of the host culture. Cultural changes range from superficial changes to relatively deeper ones. Relatively superficial changes include modes of dress, schooling, transportation, housing and food. Deeper changes involve language shifts, religious conversions, fundamental alterations to value systems, and shifts in forms of social organization and social relations. (Swaidan 2006:2-3)

The definitive break from his old identity, the impossibility of feeling integrated and in resonance with those from his native place is obvious during his visit "home", to Bârlad, twenty years later: "In some strange illogical way this encounter with the people I had so long yearned to be with set my heart beating for America more powerfully than it had ever done in all those twenty years. I felt my Americanism mounting at a dizzying rate. […] What in the world was I doing here anyway? I belonged somewhere else. I was an American. I had always been one". (Ravage 2009:209)

Conclusions

Starting from Hartmut Rosa's definition of resonance as the ability to connect people with others and with the world, our article focused on examples from three works whose authors are, incidentally, migrants, writing in a language other than their native one, proof of the idea that the literature of migrants reflects the difficulties they face: issues of assimilation, of identity, their in-betweenness of two cultures. However, the characters discussed don't necessarily fall all into this category of migrants.

The Italian women migrants in Puzo's novel keep the sense of old-world community faced with the new realities in which the young people no longer fully resonate with the elderly, no longer care as much whether their lifestyle and life choices are being approved of. Marriages arranged out of necessity with partners from overseas who are little or not known at all to the bridegrooms lead to relationships in which the two spouses may not be suitable for each other at all, as in Santa Lucia's case. The difference in mentality and the disharmony between them makes it easier for her to overcome the loss of her first husband, but her status as a young widow

makes the other women avoid her as a potential danger, as they think of protecting their own families rather than resonate with her and understand how she feels.

Their behaviour has consequences and alienates Lucia from her community from which she will keep her distance, whom she will refuse to be in harmony with, to resonate henceforth. The only harmonious relationship she keeps is her friendship with Zia Louche, the only person she consults and listens to. Lucia's second husband is initially more attuned to her, but his problem is his inability to adapt to this new world, to the family that gathers around him and suffocates him, so that his lack of connectivity, of resonance with his wife and only son, with the rest of the family and with others makes him lose his mind and end up in a mental institution.

In search of resonance, Match, one of Florescu's characters, easily adopts multiple identities and is ready to do anything to arouse the pity of others and survive on the streets. Similarly, his grandson becomes an impersonator of celebrities, thus assuming various identities. Their loneliness is presented alongside that of the characters from overseas, from Romania: that of the fisherman Iulian, shunned by the other men and excluded from the community of pub drinkers because of superstitions, and that of his wife, Leni who, after giving birth to a daughter, refuses, in her turn, to relate to, to resonate with the community that has rejected her for so long.

Arrived in the community of Little Rumania, Marcus Revici faces difficulties in adapting and goes through all the stages of initiation migrants were supposed to. His exit from the ghetto of his compatriots, the various communities in which he subsequently manages to integrate and which make him want to achieve more and more, his adaptation and resonance with them turn him from a confused migrant into a true American, truly providing him with a new identity and life.

These stories illustrate Rosa's idea of resonance according to which the difference between successful and unsuccessful relationships to the world is given by the degree to which one is connected (resonating) with and open to other people (and things).

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GLOBAL FANTASIES OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN CLIMATE FICTION

Mona ASHOUR
University of Florida

Abstract: *In the face of climate change, communities across the globe are experiencing profound shifts in their ideological and physical environments, that amplify existing gender vulnerabilities. This study proposes a symbiosis adaptation paradigm to climate-induced violence against women, that is based on and stems from different gender-responsive adaptation epistemologies and theories. The analysis focuses on the intricate ways in which climate-related adaptation strategies intersect with gender dynamics and environmental injustice. It aims at enriching the discussion about violence against women (VAW), from a UNA/Human Rights approach perspective, in the context of climate change by drawing from diverse theoretical frameworks and analytical lenses like post-humanism, intersectional feminism and African futurism. Through the lens of two selected literary narratives, Octavia Butler's "Parable of the Sower," and Nnedi Okorafor's "Who Fears Death, " this study engages with exploring how these fictional and non-fictional written and visual narratives depict the intersections of gender, violence, and climate change in different regions of the Global South. Butler's "Parable of the Sower" is a dystopian fantasy adventure that paints a picture of ecological terror and racial tension in a postapocalyptic world. Butler shapes her story around the rejection of patriarchy, using language and metaphor to further develop her idea of a planet in desperate need of the feminine. Viewed through an ecofeminist lens, the world of Parable of the Sower becomes even more visceral as we assess the horror of what a white capitalist patriarchy has done to humankind and the Earth. Thus, Parable of the Sower becomes a story of a world rebuilt, reimagined, and ultimately healed by an ecofeminist hand. Meanwhile, in "Who Fears Death," Okorafor, the founder of Africanfuturism, presents a dystopian future Africa where violence against women is compounded by environmental degradation, showcasing the resilience of women as both victims and agents of change in navigating these socio-environmental challenges. This interdisciplinary thesis research underscores the potential of two samples from the Global South and the Global North narratives to galvanize environmental awareness and advocacy. It examines how it reflects, challenges, and perpetuates gender norms shedding light on its role in fostering eco-feminist discourse and activism. By exploring the unique ways in which these narratives amplify the voices of women affected by climate change, this study tackles dynamic*

perspectives on the 'imaginactivist' role of the gender-responsive narratives in addressing urgent socio-environmental issues and proposes 'symbiotic' adaptation strategy that can hinder gender-based violence (GBV), specifically violence against women (VAW), during global climatic changes.

Violence Against Women is a global pandemic that knows no boundaries, transcending cultural, geographic, and socioeconomic divisions. It encompasses physical, sexual, psychological, and economic violence, and it thrives in the ideological sphere of systemic inequalities. As the world grapples with the escalating impacts of climate change, we must recognize that gender violence is not isolated from these ecological challenges. Instead, it is intertwined with the complex web of climate-induced vulnerabilities. Climate change intensifies the vulnerabilities faced by women, making them more susceptible to different forms of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). Studies of John Barnett and W. Neil Adger show that the adverse impacts of climate change will be more visible among communities and nations where people are poor and highly dependent on environment-based livelihoods, such as agriculture (2013:642). That's why, according to J. Busby, K. Cook, E. Vizy, T. G. Smith and M. Bekalo, many African countries like Chad, Niger, Somalia, Sudan, and South Sudan, with potential expansion in the Sahel region by mid-century are considered as hot spots for climate change (2014:203). It is mainly on account of the above factors that women are more vulnerable to climate change than men. N. Z. Tanny and M. W. Rahman indicate that climate change affects more African women because a large percentage of them are poor farmers who rely much on rain-fed agriculture. There are indications that the gender gap will further widen because of adverse impacts of climate change, which is more on women. The breakdown of community support systems and the erosion of economic opportunities further compound these vulnerabilities (2016:114).

The stories of cli-fi, I argue, urge us to reckon with injustices in our world and dismantle power systems that perpetuate gender-based violence and environmental degradation. Within the context of cli-fi, authors have a unique platform to address the issue of violence against women. Through speculative anthropocentric narratives, they can illuminate the harsh realities faced by women in a changing climate, forcing readers to examine not only the immediate consequences of violence but also the underlying

systems and power dynamics that perpetuate it. Cli-fi challenges us to dismantle these systems, promoting societal change and gender equity in the face of an evolving planet. N. Sokoloff and I. Dupont argue that cli-fi explores connections and shed light on the intersectionality of climate-induced gendered violence by using an intersectional analysis and structural framework, more precisely, by placing female characters at the center of narratives, by representing their status from intersectional perspective, authors can highlight the violence women face in the context of climate change. It invites readers to empathize with these characters and, in turn, empathize with real-world women facing similar circumstances (2005:64).

Furthermore, cli-fi, based in future-based spatial-temporality, encourages readers to consider the long-term implications of climate-induced violence. It challenges societies to address the root causes of gender-based violence, such as patriarchal norms and unequal power dynamics. By doing so, it offers a pathway toward more equitable and resilient communities that can better withstand the impacts of climate change. Understanding the issue of VAW within the climate change context requires a profound appreciation of the intricacies of both challenges. Climate change is not solely an environmental crisis; it is a multi-faceted phenomenon with cascading social, economic, and political implications. Chase Hobbs-Morgan suggests that conceptualizing climate change as violence, rather than exclusively an environmental or technological problem, brings it closer to everyday life by exposing it as a concrete social and political issue (2017:77). Likewise, violence against women is not confined to physical acts but extends into psychological, economic, and structural forms of discrimination and harm. Cli-fi plays an effective role in framing the interconnected issues of climate change, gender-based violence, and their intersectionality, particularly within the processes of cultural production and popular literary imagination.

Comparative analysis of American and African literature within the climate fiction genre serves multiple purposes. It highlights the global nature of climate change and the universality of the issues at hand. It also underscores the importance of diverse voices and perspectives in shaping our understanding of these challenges. Readers can gain a more comprehensive view of the global, multidimensional climate change landscape. This comparison demonstrates that while the origins and manifestations of climate change may differ, the underlying issues of environmental degradation and social inequality are shared by all. Furthermore, a comparative analysis encourages cross-cultural dialogue and collaboration in addressing climate change and gender violence. It invites readers to learn

from the experiences and solutions presented in different cultural contexts. By recognizing common themes and shared struggles, readers may be better equipped to advocate for inclusive and effective policies and initiatives that address the global dimensions of these challenges.

Okorafor's *Who Fears Death* transcends conventional boundaries, fusing speculative fiction with elements drawn from African cultures and traditions. Her narratives navigate the intersection of the supernatural, technological, and environmental. In this context, Mbembe's concept of necropolitics becomes a lens through which we can analyze the ways in which climate apocalypse is depicted in Okorafor's works (2019:93). Okorafor's narratives echo this contrast by portraying the violence of the elements as more capricious and unpredictable than the intentional brutality of human institutions. Okorafor's *Who Fears Death* is an articulation of new ways of being and becoming human in the context of Mbembe's concept of "wild necropolitics" of climatic apocalypse. In *Who Fears Death*, Okorafor skillfully employs environmental metaphors to embody "wild necropolitics." This merging of cosmic and environmental forces underlines the idea that in Okorafor's universe, the distinction between human violence and the violence of nature becomes blurred. Animals and ecosystems are employed as metaphors to convey the impact of necropolitics on various levels. The disruption of natural ecosystems serves as a symbolic representation of disrupted societal structures, and the fate of animals becomes intertwined with the fate of human communities, reinforcing the interconnectedness of life and death.

In the novel, certain animals serve as metaphors for characters and societies. The shape-shifting abilities of certain characters, such as Onye, are reminiscent of animals that can transform or adapt to their environments. This symbolizes resilience and the ability to navigate a hostile world, echoing the resilience of certain marginalized groups in the face of necropolitical forces. Animals have hierarchies and power dynamics within their own ecosystems, and this is mirrored in the human societies depicted in the story. The predatory behavior of certain characters and groups reflects the destructive impact of necropolitics on marginalized communities. Ecosystems in the novel can be seen as metaphors for the interconnectedness of communities and the delicate balance that exists within societies. Disruption to these ecosystems, whether natural or caused by external forces, mirrors the disruption caused by necropolitics. The impact of violence and discrimination is portrayed as a disturbance that ripples through the fabric of society, affecting individuals and communities. The degradation of ecosystems symbolizes the environmental and social consequences of unchecked power. Just as the

health of an ecosystem depends on the well-being of its individual components, the well-being of a society depends on the fair and just treatment of its members.

Okorafor's wild necropolitics is further elaborated in *The Book of Phoenix*, where the wider context of colonial violence is made more visible; what Mbembe refers to as that "original wound … [the] encounter between Africa and the West that is lived as a rape." (2016:199) Okorafor's *The Book of Phoenix* is a revenge fantasy where the central character, Phoenix, decides to "kill everything. Everything should die. Let it all start from the beginning." Okorafor's wild necropolitics revolves around the question of who must live and who must die, the questions of violence (199). This is the heart of what Mbembe, drawing on the work of Michel Foucault (2008), refers to as biopolitics: "power over the living—or again, the capacity to voluntarily alter the human species—the absolute form of power." (2019:144) In this light, both Okorafor and Mbembe agree that the struggle for climate justice and the decolonization of carboniferous capitalism can hardly forgo the use of violence. The lesson Burnett draws from Okorafor's narratives is that "for Africa to become genuinely postcolonial, we must realize, some sort of apocalypse is necessary, destroying the institutional power structures that presently make neocolonialism so persistent and difficult to undermine." (2015:139)

Applying posthumanism to Butler's cli-fi, particularly in the context of analyzing violence against women, offers a nuanced perspective that goes beyond traditional human-centered approaches. Posthumanism challenges anthropocentric views, urging us to reconsider boundaries between humans and the environment, including non-human entities. Posthumanism allows us to reevaluate agency not only in human characters but also in non-human elements. Analyzing violence against women means considering not just human perpetrators but also environmental factors as potential agents. In Butler's works, particularly those in which characters exhibit hybrid qualities, violence against women might be influenced by their multispecies identity. This demands an analysis that incorporates the complex interplay between different forms of life.

Analyzing violence against women in cli-fi requires an examination of how social, ecological, and technological systems intersect. The impact of climate change on societal structures and power dynamics becomes integral to understanding the root causes of violence against women. Posthumanist analysis also considers how narrative itself shapes our perceptions of violence. Butler's storytelling techniques, which involve non-linear timelines and perspectives beyond the human, contribute to a posthumanist understanding of violence. It invites readers to question their

assumptions and preconceptions about the dynamics at play. Applying posthumanism to Butler's cli-fi prompts a shift from anthropocentrism to a more inclusive, interconnected perspective that considers the agency of non-human elements, the complexities of identity, and an ethics of care for all beings. This approach broadens the scope of analysis, revealing the intricate web of relationships that contribute to the narrative of violence in a changing climate.

Parable of the Sower is a fantastic critique of existing power structures, particularly as they pertain to the oppression of women. Butler exposes how patriarchal systems persist even in the wake of environmental catastrophe, revealing the enduring nature of gender-based violence. Through this critique, readers are prompted to question societal structures that perpetuate harm against women and consider alternative frameworks that prioritize equity and justice. The novel delves into the emotional landscape of environmental grief and trauma, exploring how the impending collapse of the natural world affects individuals, especially women. Olamina's experiences reflect the psychological toll of living in a world on the brink of ecological disaster. The emotional resonance of these narratives deepens the exploration of violence against women, emphasizing that the impacts extend beyond the physical realm to encompass mental and emotional well-being. The novel intricately examines the intersections of race and gender within the context of violence. Characters' experiences are shaped by both their gender and racial identities, highlighting the compounded challenges faced by women of color. Butler's approach to power in *Parable of the Sower*, Lauren J. Lacey observes, demystifies damaging discourses, resurrects subjugated knowledges, revises dominant discourses, and creates alternative communities (2008:381). Butler's narrative becomes a lens through which readers can analyze how systemic inequalities intersect and contribute to the violence against women. Butler's exploration of sexual violence is not sensationalized but presented as a grim reality. Olamina's survival becomes a testament to her resilience and defiance in the face of gendered violence. The novel continuously critiques power dynamics and toxic masculinity that persist even in a collapsed society.

The plot in *Who Fears Death* is drawn by two forms of violence: the rape of Onye's mother, Najeeba, by her biological father, the warlord Daib, and the wider genocide of the Okeke by the Nuru. *Who Fears Death* serves as a feminist critique of political/patriarchal structures and societal norms. By magnifying the vulnerability of women in a dystopian setting, Okorafor invites readers to reflect on the parallels with our own world. The novel becomes a mirror that forces us to confront the injustices and imbalances that persist in our societies, questioning whether our current trajectory

might lead to a future where the vulnerability of women is exacerbated. The violence of patriarchy, L. Dowdall declares, also runs throughout the book, "as female characters are slighted, denied, scorned, beaten, cut, silenced, and raped because of their gender."(2013:180) In the novel, the violence of patriarchy is met with a violent response: the book opens with the death of Onye's adopted father; she attacks her father-teacher, Aro, and forcefully rejects his misogyny; Onye makes the town of Jwahir watch and experience her memory of her mother's rape; Binta murders her abusive father; and the central narrative is Onye's quest to kill her biological father, Daib. Patriarchy and patricide provide the context and the impetus to most of the violence in the story. The optimistic final note does not lessen the insistency with which Okorafor's novel repeatedly asks the question, who lives and who dies? The violence of birth and death, genocide, and the apocalypse, are never far from the surface of the story, and Onye is rarely slow to act. Onye is a product of this violence, but she also perpetrates it on others, seemingly fulfilling her society's prejudices about the Ewu. Her training in magic gives her power over life, flesh, and the elements, which she deploys both to rewrite ancient ethnic/racial hatreds and bring down a warlord, but also to wreak vengeance on bystanders and those who fail to intervene. She recognizes:

> I felt it inside me, too. Like a demon buried under my skin since my conception. A gift from my father, from his corrupted genetics. The potential and taste for amazing cruelty. It was in my bones, firm, stable, unmoving. Oh, I had to find and kill this man. (190)

The absence of pity is repeatedly stressed and is integral to what can be a representation of wild necropolitics. For Okorafor's wild necropolitics, Julia Hoydis states, "the power to make life and give death are tightly interconnected, and the genocidal conclusion of the story is one in which there is no reconciliation of differences and dialogue or forgiveness." (2017:193) Here, Okorafor also explores the legacy of violence, examining how cycles of harm are perpetuated through generations. The narrative prompts readers to contemplate the enduring impact of violence against women on communities and the potential for breaking these cycles. By confronting the intergenerational consequences of gender-based violence, Okorafor challenges societies to reckon with the long-term effects and work towards lasting change.

Both novels delve into the layered identities of women, showcasing that the impacts of violence are shaped by multifaceted factors. Butler intricately weaves intersectionality into the narrative, portraying the

experiences of women of different racial and socioeconomic backgrounds. The novel delves into how these intersecting identities shape the unique challenges faced by each woman. Okorafor's exploration of intersectionality is evident in how societal norms and gender intersect to create unique forms of oppression. *Parable of the Sower*, as an American cli-fi, introduces an intersectional lens through which to view violence against women including race, class, and disability, which compound the challenges the American culture faces. On the other hand, Okorafor's portrayal of the African version of violence and oppression is intersectional in a different way, considering factors of colonialism and ethnicity alongside gender. Butler and Okorafor challenge readers to recognize that violence against women is not a monolithic experience, that they must still be aware of the diversity of the issue when represented in two different cultures, geographies, and discourses. However, both narratives agree that the intersectionality of violence with other forms of oppression requires a nuanced and inclusive approach like intersectional feminism to address the multifaceted nature of gender-based violence. Here, also, the shadow of the continuum theory of violence comes clear as we move away from viewing violence against women as isolated incidents and instead recognize the interconnectedness of various forms of harm.

The oppression and violation of human rights is an almost constant backdrop from the start of the *Parable of the Sower* to the end, and through casual displays of violence against women and the Earth Butler makes clear that this is the way of patriarchy, a natural course for a world in which a poisonous, forceful, and stereotypical masculinity is prized above all. There is a distinct difference to be seen between Keith, hungry for material possession and self-actualization found through capitalist greed, and Lauren's father—who seemingly wants only to nurture and care for his children, to provide sustenance rather than abundance. Their battle for dominance through patriarchal power is a form of political/patriarchal violence that goes parallel with the ecofeminist philosophy of Vandana Shiva and Maria Mies. In *Ecofeminism*, they maintain that "life in nature (which includes human beings) is maintained by means of co-operation, and mutual care and love."26 Patriarchal powers have been conditioned by society to be incapable of recognizing that care and love will be what pushes the world forth (1993:5). Neither Keith, nor Lauren's father will win, but Onye who recognizes this very core reality of Earth will win. Butler's novel represents a world where violence is a currency and material wealth, and physical pleasure are also commodities.

Rape and other forms of violence against women fall in line with the mistreatment of the Earth in a constant and senseless cycle, so in the

background that it becomes common to see, through Olamina's eyes, a mistreated woman, and a ravenous dog in the same space. We see and hear of violence toward girls and women regardless of their age, from "a little girl, naked, maybe seven years old with blood running down her bare thighs" (9) to Lidia Cruz "only eight years old" and "raped, too" (144) to Zahra who cannot vocalize what has happened to her, rather calling it, because Olamina does, in fact, know without needing to be told (146). As Petra Kelly explains, "in *Parable of the Sower* women's suffering seems so normal and is so pervasive that it is scarcely noticed."(1997:114) If the women in Butler's landscape feel more than the men, if they are to be seen as a beacon of care in the way that the Earth was once able to care for her citizens, then the ecofeminist philosophies can be easily traced along the narrative.

Rape has become a facet of society as casual and easy as taking a breath, and it is at the hands of men; men aware of how easy it is to dominate and brutalize women, especially women of minimal means, women of color who lack the social and physical power necessary to stop them. These men are insatiable, and their violence is seemingly limitless, a direct reflection in the human domain of the harm they impose on nature more generally. This recalls Shiva and Mies's ecofeminist perspective, "the greater becomes his hunger for the original whole, wild, free, woman and nature: the more he destroys the greater his hunger. Because they are the source of the violence rather than its recipients, they cannot comprehend the horror of their own acts (318). While Olamina is afflicted with hyperempathy, men and society as a whole struggle with hyperaggression. Hyperaggression is only part of what Olamina battles against with her creation of 'Earthseed,' a religion rooted in the intention to spread "Earth life to new earths." (66) It is with the birth of Earthseed that she first wields the weapon of her ability to create. She readies herself to cut the umbilical cord by which she is connected to man's failings and moves onward. One ecofeminist perspective evident in Okorafor's is the notion of the Earth as a female body. The desolation and suffering inflicted upon the land mirror the violence experienced by the female characters. The violation of women's bodies, particularly through the practice of female genital mutilation (FGM) portrayed in the novel, becomes emblematic of the broader exploitation of the Earth. Okorafor invites readers to see the Earth not just as a resource to be exploited but as a living entity deserving of respect and protection, aligning with ecofeminist principles:

> So us girls knew that a piece of flesh was cut from between our legs and
> that circumcision didn't literally change who we were or make us better

people. But we didn't know what that piece of flesh did. And because it was an old practice, no one really remembered why it was done. So, the tradition was accepted, anticipated, and performed. (46-47)

FGM is a tool of control wielded by those in power, particularly by the ruling ethnic group. Similarly, the exploitation of the Earth is driven by those in positions of power who seek to maintain dominance and control over resources. The violation of women's bodies and the exploitation of the Earth are both manifestations of hierarchical power structures. The novel suggests a deep connection between the well-being of women and the health of the Earth. By drawing parallels between the violation of women's bodies and the exploitation of the environment, Okorafor underscores the interconnectedness of these two issues. Both are integral components of a larger system, and the degradation of one has profound effects on the other.

Onye's journey involves resisting the societal norms that perpetuate the violation of women's bodies. This resistance can be interpreted as a call for broader societal and environmental activism. By challenging accepted norms related to women and the Earth, the narrative encourages a collective resistance against exploitation and oppression. Onye's resistance against the practice of female genital mutilation can be interpreted as a feminist and environmental act. By challenging the oppressive norms and power structures, she not only fights for the autonomy and well-being of women but also stands against the exploitation of the environment. This aligns with ecofeminist principles that advocate for resistance against systems that oppress both women and nature. Ecofeminism emphasizes the need for holistic and interconnected approaches to healing both social and environmental issues. As Onye works towards her own healing and empowerment, the novel suggests a parallel process for the healing of the Earth. The interconnectedness of these healing processes reinforces the ecofeminist perspective that views the well-being of women and the environment as intertwined.

Indigenous Knowledge, Wisdom, and Cultural Preservation

This extended analysis further explores how indigenous knowledge and cultural preservation contribute to a nuanced political discourse surrounding violence against women in the context of climate change. Clare Tweedy discusses how Butler introduces cultural elements through Earthseed, presenting it not just as a survival strategy but as a new, inclusive belief system that challenges traditional gender roles and norms,

offering an alternative to social, cultural, and spiritual nihilism. (2014:4) The political discourse embedded in the cultural context suggests that redefining societal norms is crucial for addressing gender-based violence. Olamina embodies liberal feminist ideals as she strives for personal autonomy and equality within her community. She rejects the traditional gender roles imposed by the remnants of society, instead advocating for self-determination and equal opportunities for women. One of the central tenets of liberal feminism is the fight for legal and political equality. In *Parable of the Sower*, Olamina seeks to establish a new belief system, Earthseed, which emphasizes inclusivity and equality. Through Earthseed, Butler explores the idea that genuine societal change, including gender equality, requires a re-evaluation and reconstruction of prevailing ideologies. Olamina's efforts to propagate Earthseed reflect a liberal feminist commitment to dismantling discriminatory structures and fostering a more egalitarian society.

Who Fears Death is set in a post-apocalyptic Africa and similarly engages with liberal feminist themes. Onye challenges societal norms that restrict women, particularly through her rejection of oppressive practices like FGM. Onye's determination to break free from cultural constraints aligns with liberal feminism's emphasis on individual freedom and the dismantling of discriminatory traditions. Both novels address reproductive rights, a key concern for liberal feminists. In *Parable of the Sower*, the scarcity of resources and the hostile environment prompt Olamina to reconsider traditional family structures. Her decision to prioritize personal growth over traditional familial expectations reflects a liberal feminist stance on reproductive autonomy. In *Who Fears Death*, Onye's resistance against forced pregnancy and her determination to control her reproductive choices align with liberal feminist values. Both novels depict strong female protagonists who challenge societal norms, advocating for individual agency, educational empowerment, and reproductive autonomy. Through their narratives, Butler and Okorafor contribute to the ongoing discourse on gender equality, emphasizing the importance of individual rights and societal reform.

Key differences between American and African narratives become clearer as Okorafor weaves cultural traditions into the narrative, where rituals can perpetuate violence but also serve as a means of resistance. In *Who Fears Death*, Okorafor explores the value of rituals of mourning and memory become integral components of the narrative. The characters engage in ceremonies to remember those lost to violence, emphasizing the importance of acknowledging and honoring the victims considering the role of collective memory in preventing the normalization of violence and

fostering a commitment to justice. Okorafor tackles gendered violence by intertwining it with cultural practices. Chielozona Eze declares that "Okorafor's *Who Fears Death* challenges the (mis)use of culture as a means of legitimizing pain in a narrative that challenges the body's disability." (2016:96) Onye's journey involves navigating both the positive and negative aspects of cultural practices exploring how cultural contexts can either reinforce or challenge violence against women.

Okorafor, Robert Sum notes, appropriates Gothic motifs of monstrosity, villainy, and morality in her novels to highlight Africa's complex reality and offer new ways to highlight African identities. (2022:23) It emphasizes the importance of preserving only indigenous African cultural identity while actively resisting harmful traditions introduced and sustained by colonialism. Joshua Yu Burnett states that, "Okorafor's *Who Fears Death* explores the idea of a post-apocalyptic Africa, free from neocolonial bonds, challenging our understanding of what "postcolonial" means." (2015:149) Here, the notion of cultural relativism is highlighted as some beliefs, customs, and ethics around magic, spirituality, and societal norms are relative to the culture from which they originate. There are no universal standards for judging cultures, instead, cultural relativism emphasizes understanding and interpreting a cultural practice within the context of its own cultural framework. The narrative encourages readers to appreciate the diversity of perspectives and acknowledge that what is considered "right" or "wrong" can vary across cultures and histories. Throughout the novel, characters undergo cultural adaptation and transformation. This reflects the dynamic nature of cultures and the idea that beliefs and practices are not static.

Cultural relativism is portrayed not only in the acceptance of existing cultural practices but also in the recognition that cultures can evolve and adapt over time. On the other hand, Butler suggests that cultural identity, even in a dystopian setting, can be a source of strength and resistance against violence. Butler incorporates elements of indigenous knowledge through Earthseed's philosophy. Lacey suggests that the novel by tapping into indigenous wisdom can be a source of resilience and guidance in the face of societal challenges. (2008:383) It encourages readers to consider the role of traditional knowledge in addressing modern violence against women. Butler's narrative includes themes of healing and restoration, both on a personal and societal level. The novel suggests that addressing violence against women requires not only resistance but also a collective effort towards healing and rebuilding communities. Earthseed's emphasis on community-building contributes to the political discourse by

highlighting the role of supportive communities in addressing gendered violence.

Symbolism and Imagery

Critical fabulation, as envisioned by Édouard Glissant, is a theoretical lens that invites writers and thinkers to engage in speculative storytelling, challenging dominant historical narratives and envisioning alternative realities. (2010:17) Applying this framework to *Parable of the Sower* and *Who Fears Death* illuminates how these works use speculative fiction to disrupt conventional histories and provide a space for marginalized voices. Butler's use of symbolism, particularly the seed metaphor in Earthseed, adds layers to the narrative. The imagery of planting seeds becomes a powerful political statement about the importance of cultivating new ideas. The political discourse emphasizes the importance of fostering agency amid chaos. Butler employs critical fabulation to create a dystopian narrative that challenges prevailing notions of power, religion, and community. Earthseed serves as a counter-historical element, offering an alternative vision of spirituality and human connection. Through this speculative lens, Butler critiques the oppressive structures that led to the collapse and offers a narrative space for imagining a different, more inclusive future. Okorafor similarly engages with critical fabulation by introducing magical elements and cultural hybridity into the narrative, by challenging traditional views of gender, ethnicity, and power.

The magical realism in Okorafor's allows for a complex exploration of cultural traditions, resistance, and the impact of violence on marginalized communities. Magical realism blurs the boundaries between the real and the fantastical, creating a narrative space where cultural traditions and magical occurrences are treated as equally valid aspects of the characters' lives. This blurring serves to challenge conventional distinctions and encourages readers to embrace a more expansive and inclusive understanding of reality. The novel's emphasis on indigenous beliefs, particularly through the figure of Ani, the Earth-goddess from Igbo belief, allows for a foregrounding of environmental concerns. Ani emerges as a key figure symbolizing environmental ethics, a supernatural being with the power to punish those who commit offenses against the earth. Ani's response to the Okeke's actions is interpreted as nonhuman agency and causality personified, representing nature's retribution: "the Nuru militants waited for the retreat, when the Okeke women walked into the desert and stayed for seven days to give respect to the goddess Ani. "Okeke" means

"the created ones." The Okeke people have skin the color of the night because they were created before the day." (26) The novel blurs the boundaries between human and nonhuman in its portrayal of Onye. Descriptions of her physical appearance and behavior, such as her skin resembling camel's milk or her ability to scratch like a cat, emphasize a connection to the natural world: "But sometimes women crowded around me." But her skin" they would say to each other, never directly to me. "It's so smooth and delicate. It looks almost like camel's milk." (18) Onye's shape-shifting experiences further erase the boundaries between human and animal, highlighting her transformative abilities and challenging conventional distinctions.

Instances of interspecies relationships challenge the idea of human exceptionalism, showcasing common attributes and emotional depth among different species like Njeri's ability to communicate with and race camels and the collective efforts of wild dogs, camels, gazelles, and hawks working together: "Well, my Njeri could speak to camels. Camel talking is a man's job, so she chose camel racing instead. And Njeri didn't just race. She won races." (20) Butler and Okorafor draw from African and African American cultural traditions, blending them with speculative elements to create rich, diverse worlds. This cultural hybridity challenges monolithic representations and aligns with transnational feminist perspective by allowing for a more nuanced understanding of identity and history. In the context of critical fabulation, the imaginative resistance exhibited in both works extends beyond the narratives themselves. These stories encourage readers to question the constructed nature of historical narratives and engage critically with the power dynamics inherent in societal structures. In *Parable of the Sower*, symbols like fire are a recurring one representing both destruction and purification. The pervasive violence against women is mirrored in the destructive force of fire, highlighting the dual nature of societal breakdown. Fire becomes a tool of oppression but also a means of cleansing and renewal:

> The wall before me is burning. Fire has sprung from nowhere, has eaten in through the wall, has begun to reach towards me, reach for me. The fire spreads. I drift into it. It blazes up around me. I thrash and scramble and try to swim back out of it, grabbing handfuls of air and fire, kicking, burning! Darkness. The wall before me is burning. Fire has sprung from nowhere, has eaten in through the wall, has begun to reach toward me, reach for me. The fire spreads. I drift into it. It blazes up around me. I thrash and scramble and try to swim back out of it, grabbing handfuls of air and fire, kicking, burning! Darkness.
> Perhaps I awake a little. I do sometimes when the fire swallows me. That's bad. When I wake up all the way, I can't get back to sleep. I try, but

I've never been able to.

This time I don't wake up all the way. I fade into the second part of the dream—the part that's ordinary and real, the part that did happen years ago.

when I was little, though at the time it didn't seem to matter.

Darkness.

Darkness brightening.

Stars.

Stars casting their cool, pale, glinting light.

"We couldn't see so many stars when I was little," my stepmother says to me. She speaks in Spanish, her own first language. She stands still and small, looking up at the broad sweep of the Milky Way. She and I have gone out after dark to take the washing down from the clothesline. The day has been hot, as usual, and we both like the cool darkness of early night. There's no moon, but we can see very well. The sky is full of stars.(11-12)

Butler's use of this symbol invites readers to contemplate the potential for transformation and rebirth, even in the face of seemingly insurmountable violence. The novel utilizes the symbolism of walls and boundaries to underscore the divisions that perpetuate violence. Physical walls become metaphors for societal barriers, reinforcing hierarchies that contribute to the oppression of women. *Who Fears Death* is rich of symbolism and imagery that weaves together the author's cultural roots, science fiction, and fantasy elements. The critical-historical concept of Afrofuturism comes clear in the practice of scarification as a powerful symbol of identity and resistance. Onye bears facial markings that symbolize her African heritage and the violence inflicted upon her mother. These scars, far from being marks of shame, become a source of strength and a visual proclamation of her defiance against societal norms: "I had to also place my hands on the scar that was left from that swift cut nine years ago." (108) The desert is as prominent and powerful symbol in *Who Fears Death* as fire and walls in Butler's. The desert is a place of both danger and transformation, reflecting the arduous path of self-discovery and growth. The symbolism of the desert and its transformation serves as a metaphor for the possibility of renewal and change in the face of adversity. The red sands of the desert hold profound symbolic significance. They represent the harshness of Onye's environment and the challenges she faces. The redness may also evoke blood, linking the landscape to the violence and conflict that permeate the narrative. It becomes a visual metaphor for the struggles of the characters and the transformation that occurs in the crucible of adversity.

The figure of the Desert Sorceress embodies both fear and fascination: "The camels weren't stupid. They were watching each of us closely. It was only a matter of time now before one of the camels spit at or bit Fanasi. I turned back to the head camel. "I am Onyesonwu Ubaid-Ogundimu, born in the desert and raised in Jwahir. I'm twenty years old and a sorceress apprenticed to the sorcerer Aro and mentored by the sorcerer Sola. Mwita, tell it who you are." (109) As a symbol of mystical power, she represents the untapped potential within Onye and other women in the narrative. The imagery associated with the Desert Sorceress underscores the connection between femininity and magical abilities, challenging traditional gender roles and expectations.

Okorafor creates a thematic and technical link between *Who Fears Death* and another novel, *The Book of Phoenix*. The latter serves as a prequel and shares thematic elements, creating a literary universe where the symbolism and imagery resonate across different narratives. This intertextual connection enhances the depth and complexity of the storytelling. Both novels serve as a platform for social and political commentary. Okorafor uses the speculative elements of her stories to comment on real-world issues, such as racism, oppression, and the abuse of power. In *Who Fears Death*, Lester Malgas concludes that "The Great Book" in the novel is interpreted as a critique of Enlightenment ideals, Cartesian dualism, and the pursuit of scientific knowledge that maintains an exploitative break between humanity and nature. (2022:211) "I looked out at the dry desert. Not a patch of grass. Aro told me that long ago, the land hadn't been like this. "Don't completely discount the Great Book," he said. "Something did happen to bring it all down. To change green to sand. These lands used to look a lot more like the wilderness." (134) *The Book of Phoenix* extends this commentary by exploring the exploitation of genetically modified individuals and the corporate control of knowledge and power.

Moreover, the longstanding conflict between the Okeke and Nuru tribes is legitimized by The Great Book, "it was well known that the Okeke were born to be slaves of the Nuru. Long ago, during the Old Africa Era, they had done something terrible, causing Ani to put this duty on their backs. It is written in the Great Book."(2010:17) The unquestioning acceptance of the curse by the Okeke reflects a commitment to their cultural values. Despite being vilified in the Great Book, the Okeke remain loyal to the narrative of their inferiority to the Nuru, highlighting the enduring impact of cultural beliefs on the mindset of the society. This acceptance is paradoxical, as it contradicts the negative characterization of the Okeke in the Great Book. It raises questions about the ideological power dynamics, the historical/political events that led to the curse, and the cultural resilience that

allows the Okeke to maintain a connection with their natural environment despite their perceived inferiority. Later, we see the Okeke women engaging in spiritual practices such as praying with their foreheads to the sand. This interplay of religion and politics of racism suggests a holistic worldview where spiritual rituals are misused to support real-world ethnic and racial tensions. Okorafor uses this conflict to explore the consequences of hatred, discrimination, and the cyclical nature of violence. The imagery of tribal warfare becomes a powerful commentary on the destructive impact of prejudice and the potential for healing and reconciliation.

Hope and the Possibility of Change

Change is at the heart of *Who Fears Death*, in which radical and revolutionary mythic tales are an insistence that radical change and recreation is needed at the levels of ideologies, discourses, and social relations, especially in terms of gender and race. Franz Fanon when argues for true decolonization, he states, "everything must be started again from scratch." (1967:142) Okorafor doesn't say how such change should take place, and the wave of necropolitical Afrofuturistic revolutionary change that comes at the end of *Who Fears Death*, though strong and shocking, is essentially mystical. However, still the central character, Onye, whose "very essence was change and defiance"48 represents the "new genres of the human" that Sylvia Wynter calls for, "a mode of being which foregrounds fleshy mutability, psychological transformation, and shifting gendered and racialized identities."(2003: 263) The first third of the book is entitled "Becoming", and on the first page Onye tells us that, at the ceremony for her father's death "I became a different creature that day, not so human."(11) If we read her character as a mixed-race child born of wartime rape, in a world torn between racialized conflict between the Okeke and Nuru, legitimized through a scriptural Great Book, she is on a journey of self-discovery as well as a wider political quest to end the genocide. Her rewriting of the Great Book at the climax leads to waves of change altering the past, present, and future:

> GHANGE TAKES TIME AND I'D RUN OUT OF IT
> The moment I finished with that book; something began to happen. As it happened, I got up to run and realized I was caught. What I can tell you is the book and all that it touched and then all that touched what it touched and so on, everything in that small sandstone hut began to shift.

Not to the wilderness, that wouldn't have scared me. Someplace else. I dare say a pocket in time, a slit in time and space. To a place where all was grey, white, and black. I would have loved to stand and watch. But by then they were dragging me by my hair past what remained of Luyu's body, onto one of the boats. They were too blind to see what had begun to happen. (462)

Onye's act of rewriting the Great Book at the climax of the novel becomes a catalyst for significant temporal and spatial changes. The passage suggests that the consequences of this act extend beyond the immediate environment, influencing the past, present, and future. The act of rewriting the Great Book serves as a powerful means of transformation. By altering the content of this influential text, Onye initiates a chain reaction that extends to everything the book touches. The written word, in this context, becomes a tool not only for recording history but for actively shaping and reshaping it. A profound and immediate effect has emerged as Onye finishes rewriting the Great Book. The surroundings in the sandstone hut begin to shift, not to a physical location like the wilderness, but to a more abstract and cosmic space—a "pocket in time" or a "slit in time and space." This suggests a disruption of the traditional linear progression of time and a movement to a realm beyond conventional understanding. The mention of the resulting space being "grey, white, and black" creates a visual contrast with the usual vivid and varied colors associated with the physical world. This monochromatic imagery may symbolize a state of neutrality or a blank canvas—a space detached from the complexities and conflicts of the past, present, and future. It represents a canvas on which a new narrative can be written. The mention of being dragged onto one of the boats adds another layer of symbolism. Boats are associated with journeys and transitions. In this context, the boat becomes a vessel for navigating the uncharted waters of the transformed reality initiated by the rewriting of the Great Book. The act of being physically transported on a boat underscores the idea of a journey into the unknown. In *Parable of the Sower*, Maryam Kouhestani notes, the distinct parallel in evolutionary changing perspectives between Olamina's stepmother, Cory, and Olamina herself, between a woman dependent on husband and son and a girl intent on making her own way. Kouhestani explains Olamina's perspective as a denial of "passivity"; Olamina's stepmother believes the old days are behind them, recalling her "past life" as "good days" and yet "Lauren thinks differently and sees society's losses as a positive aspect, discovering a potential for change in society."(2015:899) Olamina's plan is dependent upon creating plants that seed themselves and leave their "parent

plants."(66) The Olamina at the beginning of narrative, with her father and brothers serving as these "parent plants" and her protection, is not the Lauren who is her own protector. Lauren's rejection of traditional gender roles lends itself to a new world where hyperempathy— something innately female within the novel—is neither feminine nor masculine but universal.

If, as Chelsea Frazier argues, "an ethics that points to new and fundamentally different possibilities and not improvements of existing ones" then it is no leap to apply these ethics to gender as well. (2016:60) Yet regardless of the growth she herself has experienced; the world remains static. So, she must hide under the guise of masculinity by taking on the identity of a man to safely travel in a world that covets brute force over feeling. In adopting this physical change, cutting her hair short and dressing in traditionally male clothing, she is forced to play the male role with shows of her own sort of violence. Despite her masculine guise and power, she is still able to make the conscious choice to revolutionize the world through words and the act of creation rather than violence and destruction. Earthseed is not a means to be achieved through fighting or war. Butler's novel encourages us to embrace our greatest strength, the capacity for change, and offers a vision of a humanist future without the need for a conventional, all-powerful supreme deity. There is no militaristic/masculine urge within Lauren, not at her core, though she fights when she must. She is maternal/feminine in her desire to spread information without force, yet she is a creator, made more capable by virtue of her womanhood, which has allowed her to absorb the best of herself from a litany of norms and offer what Frazier calls "a conception of humanity unwed to white, male, patriarchal, neoliberal, neo imperial conceptions of humanity." (54)

If ecofeminism endorses a world beyond the masculine and the feminine, promoting a unification of the best of these gender roles, then it is Lauren who becomes her own sort of Mother, her own sort of nurturer and protector. When Lauren names her initiative Earthseed, she intends the seed to become self-sustained entity, no longer a terrain to be claimed by men as their own, no longer in need of a masculine force to offer it patriarchal value. As Shiva explains in *Reductionism and Regeneration,*" "the seed and women's bodies are, in the eyes of the capitalist patriarchy, among the last colonies" and "nature, women, and non-white people merely provide 'raw' material." (1993:23) Accordingly, by the power of Lauren's maternal femininity, Earthseed will not be conquered. She does not provide a physical womb, but rather a metaphorical one; she provides an idea from which a seed springs, this idea then belongs not only to her, but to who Shiva indicates, "nature, women, and non-white people, the oppressed that

have been denied instruments of value by their oppressors."(1993:25) When Lauren says, "I am Earthseed,"(219) she speaks not only of herself in her infinite Femaleness but of everyone.

The hyperempathy she feels reaches out to every corner of the world. Her perspective is typically ecofeminist in that she "legitimizes the way of knowing and being that create wealth by", what Shiva indicates, "enhancing life and diversity and simultaneously delegitimizes the knowledge and practice of a culture of death as the basis for capital accumulation."60 The world before Earthseed is one in which the rich have "the power to make others submit, the power to take what they want— property, sex, life."(1993:33) But Lauren's Earthseed cannot be bought; her body and the bodies of her people may have once been a sort of commodity by way of sex and labor, but in her own community their value lies in the talents they are willing to share with one another. Butler suggests a need for a reimagined world where marginalized bodies can breathe life back into their bodies and be whole and free.

The reflection of "All that you touch, You Change. All that you Change, changes you" works as a rule not only for women and men, but the Earth itself as a growing and changing being punished and violated by patriarchy. Since I argue that Earthseed is built on the grounds of ecofeminism, it is only fitting that the community's leadership does not fall into line with a previously established societal standard of white and wealthy patriarchal dominance. Woman helped to rebuild a world that she watched its destruction without the power once delegated to her by virtue of her position; thus, reclaiming that power becomes a critical component of Earthseed and of ecofeminism. It is for this reason that Lauren's God is not man, nor woman, nor even a tangible or intangible Higher Being, but merely action: it is Change. She says to a rapt male listener that,

> God is Power
> Infinite,
> Irresistible,
> Inexorable,
> Indifferent,
> And yet, God is Pliable
> Trickster,
> Teacher,
> Chaos,
> Clay.
> God exists to be shaped.
> God is change. (40)

Lauren's philosophy becomes a vehicle for resistance, emphasizing the interconnectedness of all living things and the imperative to protect the planet. This activism extends beyond ecological concerns to encompass the fight against societal structures that perpetuate violence, positioning women as pivotal agents in the struggle for both environmental and gender justice. *Parable of the Sower* offers lessons for real-world advocacy by exploring the importance of community, resilience, and reimagining societal structures. The novel presents environmental activism as a form of resistance against the violence inflicted upon both the Earth and its inhabitants, particularly women. It inspires readers to consider how elements of Earthseed can be applied to contemporary efforts to address violence against women. Okorafor's narrative provides insights into real-world advocacy by depicting diverse forms of resistance and the complexities of societal transformation. The novel encourages readers to draw parallels between fictional narratives and ongoing efforts to combat gendered violence in Africa.

A comparative analysis of American and African cli-fi reveals that, while contextual differences certainly shape both literatures, there are striking similarities in their depictions of responses by women to environmental challenges. The narratives affirm that women, when united in networks and communities, become powerful agents of change, challenging societal norms, and confronting climate-related adversities. The richness of these narratives lies in their ability to provide readers with a holistic understanding of the interconnectedness between women, climate change, and community building. Both cultural contexts offer unique perspectives on resilience, adaptation, and the transformative potential of collective action. As climate change continues to be a pressing global issue, these insights from literature can inform real-world discussions and actions. By amplifying the voices of women in the face of environmental challenges, these narratives contribute to a broader conversation about the intersectionality of climate justice, gender equity, and community resilience. Ultimately, the comparative analysis reinforces the idea that, irrespective of geographic location, women's narratives are central to the evolving story of humanity's response to the climate crisis.

The transformative power of cli-fi lies in its ability to activate agency within readers. As readers engage with stories of resilience and adaptation, they are inspired to move beyond passive consumption to active advocacy. Cli-fi becomes a catalyst for a collective sense of responsibility, prompting individuals to seek out ways to contribute to climate justice and gender equity. The impact of cli-fi on climate justice and gender equity is profound and multifaceted. By challenging preconceptions, fostering empathy through

complex characters, exploring the gendered impact of environmental challenges, empowering marginalized voices, incorporating diverse cultural perspectives, and activating agency, cli-fi becomes a force for positive change. As we continue to grapple with the realities of a changing climate, the narratives within this genre guide us toward a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness of environmental justice and gender equity, urging us to become agents of change in our communities and beyond.

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KULTURA KRISMATRA: EXCAVATING THE PROGENITOR KRISTANG CREOLE/INDIGENOUS WAY OF BEING IN SINGAPORE

Kevin Martens WONG
National University of Singapore

Abstract: *Kristang (iso 639-3: mcm) is the critically endangered language of the creole/indigenous Kristang people of Melaka and Singapore. The Kristang community, which includes the author, the Kabesa or leader of the community, are the descendants of coercive intermarriages between arriving Portuguese invaders and local Malay residents in Melaka starting from the former's conquest of the city in August 1511; almost extinct by 2015, Kristang has since seen a historic and unprecedented revival in Singapore thanks to the Kodrah Kristang grassroots revitalisation effort led by the author (Wong 2019).*

Keywords: *Kristang, indigenous, community, revival, Singapore.*

As part of that effort, longstanding marginalisation by both the colonial British authorities and then the independent Singaporean government (Wong 2023h) have led to not just a revitalisation of Kristang vocabulary, but deeper renegotiations and reclamations of what it means to be creole and Kristang in Singapore in the 21st century, a concept poorly understood by even most Kristang themselves due to the aforementioned marginalisation and Othering. This paper thus explores major elements of the Krismatra or Progenitor Kristang identity (Wong 2022e), a construct introduced in November 2022 that was originally tagged to explorations and excavations of ways of thinking and being Kristang that directly challenged more conservative or colonial legacies still embedded in the language and community today, as well as in Western academia with regards to how language and culture develop and evolve. This gradation of pre-existing Kristang and Krismatra ways of being Kristang has rendered such challenges not just harmless but even appreciable by the community in general, such that at time of writing, the distinction between the traditional Kristang and Krismatra identities has now also become blurred,

indexing the success of the latter in contributing to language and cultural revitalisation.

Introduction

Two separate and entirely distinct etymologies now exist for the word *Kristang*, which today refers to a mixed creole/indigenous ethnic group that is mainly resident in the city of Melaka in Malaysia, in Singapore, and in Perth, Australia, as well as the language that is spoken by this group. The first, the historical, real-time meaning of the word, is that it is derived from the Portuguese word *Cristão*, meaning *Christian* (Baxter 2005: 12). This is attestable through the Western academic practice of historical linguistic research, as well as through an understanding of the community's very visible connections to Christianity (e.g. Pereira 2015: 29), and is generally intelligible even to non-specialists, who can usually quite readily understand how the morphophonological changes in the word *Cristão* gave rise to the Kristang word *Kristang*.

However, since 28 November 2022, a second etymological option for interpreting the word *Kristang* now exists, whereby the lexeme *Kristang* is reinterpreted as a morphological calque of the Greek word *χρυσός* (*chrysos*), meaning 'gold', and the Dutch word *steen*, meaning 'stone' (Wong 2022b: 317). Beyond Portuguese and Malay, the two most often-acknowledged languages contributing to the grammar and lexicon of Kristang, which itself is a creole or mixed indigenous language, the Dutch contribution to both the Kristang language and our culture and identity has also been significant (e.g. Borschberg 2010, Hancock 1970) but is often not as overtly recognised in the public sphere. Meanwhile, the Greek element *χρυσός* indexes associations with a similarly often-overlooked acknowledgement of Singapore and the Malayan peninsula's larger place in Western or world history, with the latter being identified with the *Χρυσῆ Χερσόνησος* (*Chrysi Chersonessos*), Golden Chersonese or the Golden Peninsula in Ptolemy's *Geography* (2nd century CE) (Wheatley 1955) and as the सुवर्णभूमि (*Suvarnadvipa*), also meaning the Golden Peninsula, in the *Ramayana* (4th to 8th century BCE) (Braddell 1937).

This second meaning, however, is not at all 'historical' or even, from some perspectives, 'rational' in the Western chronological sense of the word; it is not excavatable from any tangible documents or material evidence in chronological Western time from any point before 28 November 2022, and, to my own knowledge, at least, is at present visible

to but not immediately widely known throughout the Kristang community, having been publicly and visibly excavated through the indigenous process of *sunyeskah* or dreamfishing (Wong 2022b: 451) by myself in my capacity as *Kabesa* of the community and Merlionsman of the Republic of Singapore (Wong 2023a). The impetus for such a secondary meaning, however, should be clear: the separation and delineation between what it means to be Kristang, which is an ethnicity, and Christian, which is a religion, is often unclear, to the extent that we can say that the latter sometimes overshadows, or even overpowers, a fuller and fairer understanding of the former. In the context of Kristang, although the two identity constructs are interrelated, and have even influenced each other quite significantly in Singapore (see, for example, Boss 2009 and Rerceretnam 2021, as well as Baxter 2012: 116 even characterising this as a 'symbiosis' between Christianity and the Kristang language), they are not identical or even synonymous. I, of course, speak from my own positionality as a Kristang person (and as the leader of the community) who also happens to be atheist and therefore non-Christian; however, I am not the only Kristang person who identifies as such, and who has struggled to negotiate a clearer separation from the church and ways of thinking about the world that were introduced primarily through imperialist Western colonialism of the Malay archipelago and the Nusantara starting from the 15th century CE.

This is derivable as overshadowing on the part of Christianity, because a similar struggle with a hypothetical Islamic overshadowing of who we are as an indigenous people does not exist in any way in the Kristang experience where one might expect it should, Portuguese and Malay in theory having contributed 'equally' to the genesis of Kristang in the 15th century. And this in turn is because the creole, Malay and indigenous elements of Kristang personhood have often been negated or ignored at best, or, at worst, covertly demeaned and dismissed as primitive or backward, in comparison to what European middle-class identity aspirations unconsciously (or consciously) offered many Kristang people, who tend to be darker-skinned, in the past (Pereira 2015: 29). Indeed, this happened to such a degree that

> the multiple identities of the Kristang began to assume a more essential nature, and the previous 'creole' identity aspect, with more explicitly Malay elements, was suppressed while they 'exaggeratedly' adopted a new Portuguese identity (Gaspar 2020: 77).

The abusive and horrifying legacies of colonialism, too, are often rewritten or omitted so thoroughly in contemporary explorations of the

history of our people that not only is it that many Kristang today are still informally seen as having no place on the Malayan peninsula, since we are descended from people who, per the dominant Western narrative, somehow consensually and agentically intermarried with soldiers and mercenaries who had just invaded their territory and razed their city to the ground – Kristang people ourselves will even often freely (and sometimes even willingly) fail to understand the full and universal sociocultural and emotional implications of any context of any form of large-scale violence and exploitation, even if such violence and exploitation is 'less bad' than those endured by other indigenous or creole communities, or even more insidious and psychological rather than overtly physical and brutal.

Such behaviour, from my perspective as a trauma-informed therapy practitioner working with both the Western paradigm of Solutions-focused Brief Therapy and our indigenous modality of therapeutic intervention, the Osura Krismatra, is undoubtedly an unconscious collective trauma response to being so unusual and Other just in terms of our own history and identity; however, it is not dealt with consciously by most Kristang people, and is simply incorporated into one's own being, with very undesirable results. For example, Pereira (2015), a Kristang author, manages to unironically argue in the span of just three pages, without any hint of awareness of the wider implications of what he has just articulated, that several Portuguese and Dutch Eurasians began to adjust their own practices to align with the British model, not usually out of shame but for convenience…however, the British still preferred Eurasians rather than Asians as employees in the lower rungs of the colonial administration. Therefore, although Eurasians could not pass themselves off as Europeans and share the top rung of the social hierarchy any longer, they were at least, during the time, still viewed by the power elite as being above the Asians (19-21).

Similarly and separately, Rappa (2013), another Kristang author, simply characterises his own mother tongue, the Kristang language, as a "long-stymied medieval dialect" and a mere "potpourri of vulgarisms and expletives" (144), demonstrating the intense and almost incomprehensibly deep level of self-loathing and shame that our community has endured and become conditioned to accepting as normal (and even, as Rappa seems to do, taking a sort of perverse pride in) over our five hundred years of existence. And what is perhaps even more difficult to accept is the fact that both Rappa (2013) and Pereira (2015) are considered full academic works and were published by reputable publishers in Singapore associated with major universities and institutes.

Hence, the reclamation of Kristang has thus far taken place outside of academia and institutional oversight that in the past has proven to either

be inadequate, as seen above, or in several other notable cases beyond the scope of this paper outright intentionally destructive and malevolent (Wong 2023h); it has also taken place with an eye toward providing not just alternate sites for meaning-making, decolonisation and the renegotiation of what it means to be Kristang, as can be seen with the example of the two different etymologies available for the word *Kristang* itself now, but with the honouring and privileging of a Kristang point-of-view that is reindigenising, reclaiming and rejuvenative. The next section, on dreamfishing and working with the collective unconscious, summarises these as the major processes that have been taken toward ensuring that this renegotiation and reclamation is possible in Kristang today.

Dreamfishing and working with the Krismatra, or Dreaming Ocean

This paper began with an exploration of the variant etymologies of the word *Kristang*, and it now proceeds to introduce a second critical word, *Krismatra*. *Krismatra* is also a morphological calque derived from the combination of the same earlier Greek root morpheme χρυσός (*chrysos*), meaning 'gold', and the Kristang word *matra*, meaning 'ocean' (Wong 2022b: 317). Like the second etymology provided for the word *Kristang*, the word *Krismatra* indexes several meanings associated with ancient prehistory and the Deep Time of both humanity and the planet, as well as our cosmology. Understanding these facilitates a smoother understanding of the *Kultura Krismatra*, or Progenitor Kristang culture, that is described in the rest of this paper following this section. It also provides a short overview of the process of *sunyeskah* or dreamfishing which supports the excavation of Progenitor Kristang elements (Wong 2022b).

    Krismatra first refers to what in English is called the Dreaming Ocean, or the Domain of Gaia, the sentient collective unconscious of all life on the entire planet (Wong 2022f: 192). In Kristang, Gaia is what we call an *eleidi*, or a personified collective of sentient life (Wong 2023d: 2079). All groups or collectives made up of sentient life, will thus have an unseen, intangible humaniform or personifiable form or *eleidi*, which in Kristang we use the fourth grammatical person, comprising of the pronouns *ela* and *eletu* (translated as He, She or They in English), to refer to; all gods, divinities, angels, demons and gestalts are also *eleidi*. The Dreaming Ocean appears to be analogous to the Dreaming or Dreamtime described in many of the cultures of Aboriginal Australia, as well as other equivalents described in speculative fiction such as the Domain in the *Halo: Combat Evolved* series, and possibly even Western new age approaches to the

unconscious, such as the concept of the Akashic Records. In Kristang, the Dreaming Ocean or Domain of Gaia is hence the collected or accumulated knowledge of Gaia over Their entire existence on the planet and within the universe acquired through all sentient life that forms Gaia, stretching back to knowledge acquired through the first lifeforms that emerged out of the primordial soup of the early Earth some 4.1 billion years ago. Much of this knowledge is not accessible to human beings, however, as we have been disconnected as a species from Gaia for the last 77,000 years since an event in 75,010 BCE called the *Konkizabida*, or the Conquest of Life, where our previously Gaietic ancestors (i.e. humans who were fully connected to Gaia) made the decision to create non-gaietic humans as slave labour. This sparked off a chain of cyclical events known as the *Roda Mundansa*, or the Wheel of World Movement, that saw the destruction of our Gaietic ancestors, the *Prumireru* or the Progenitors, the fossilisation of many forms of very deep intergenerational and even interepochal trauma, and the engendering of deep species amnesia about our true history (Wong 2023l). Much of the information contained within the Dreaming Ocean is thus not consciously accessible to us, and appears in occluded or distorted fashion, especially in both traditional myths and legends in all cultures, and modern speculative fiction, science fiction and fantasy, which use the context or backdrop of the future to safely negotiate trauma and elements of the distant past that species amnesia normally prevent us from working with more lucidly (Wong 2023i: 586-588).

The core of the Kristang revitalisation effort since August 2022, therefore, has been to encourage the recovery of material from the Dreaming Ocean to facilitate the negotiation of all intergenerational trauma and abuse applying directly to the Kristang culture, language and identity primarily, and then on a wider level, gradually the whole planet and all of human civilisation (Wong 2023p: 4823). This thus brings us to the second meaning of *Krismatra*, where it indexes this particular variant approach to Kristang identity that in English is called Progenitor Kristang, Dreaming Kristang, or Kristang of the Deep (Wong 2022b: 317). Taking on a progenitor Kristang identity involves accepting the existence of not just the intangible, but a structurable, rationalisable and analysable approach to the intangible that can be excavated, queried, revised and further organised in a fractal or evolving manner. It is an extremely creole approach to all of reality, and incorporates what is also called *Lembransa Krismatra*, or Kristang uncertainty thinking, where our approach to not just ourselves and our own identity, but our epistemological and ontological understanding of reality itself, is always under endless metacognitive examination, negotiation, problematisation and reconsolidation as a result of the

fundamental and irresolvable differences in the belief systems of Christianity and Islam that still nonetheless serve as the twin main origin points for the Kristang sense of self. *Lembransa Krismatra* is therefore what allows our approach to our own reality to be more mutable and fluid compared to many other cultures, including how we know what we know about what it means to be Kristang (Wong 2023n: 48). As Baxter (2016) put it, this is true even when it comes to the so-called 'barest' form of the language with native speakers, where there is manifest difficulty of introspection / grammatical evaluation by naïve informants. Perhaps eight or nine times out of ten, I have always found that speaker evaluation with Kristang is not very secure (personal communication, 1 April 2016).

I have noticed the same thing, both with my own understanding of Kristang and that of many of the community members I work with; however, I never truly believed and presently do not believe this is necessarily unexpected or even a malignant feature of how the Kristang language functions, since we are a creole community speaking a creole language, and have already often been misunderstood and in some cases mistreated by academic institutions and researchers.

And this in turn brings us to dreamfishing or *sunyeskah*, the particular form of creolisation that in Kristang allows any speaker to add new words to the lexicon of Kristang in the moment by drawing from the Dreaming Ocean or the collective unconscious. Dreamfishing appears to have emerged organically out of Kristang performing culture, and is again a natural by-product (at least from my own perspective) of Kristang's inherent status as a creole (Wong 2022b). And although dreamfishing seemingly allows Kristang speakers to make unrestricted use of any material from any culture or domain to rejuvenate Kristang, it is actually a fairly structured and rule-based process that does not permit just any word to be regarded as Kristang, with speakers, including myself, often rejecting proposed new words that do not fit particular previously unconscious principles, methods and morphophonological forms that do appear to be stringently adhered to, and which are now being excavated consciously for the benefit of the community (e.g. Wong 2023c). The assumptions that dreamfishing is founded on, of course, are that dreamfishing enables us to get at or reach the intangible structure within the Dreaming Ocean that in itself is also assumed to be defineable and describable as a common, universal entity with ontologically separate elements that exist universally for all speakers (and, more generally, all people); however, the 'evidence' that these elements leave behind emerges in terms of what informally Kristang speakers will call 'vibes' or energy. To me, this therefore reflects the same reality as that of emotions and feelings, which are similarly

intangible and generally cannot really be experienced through the five senses directly, but which we can all agree are legitimate, actual ontologically-distinct entities that all neurotypical humans can universally speak about and deal with.

Dreamfishing in the Dreaming Ocean since August 2022 has thus yielded a substantial number of new elements of Progenitor Kristang culture and identity that have since been incorporated directly into the original Kodrah Kristang initiative. As of the time of writing of this paper in March 2024, many of these elements are now for all intents and purposes indistinguishable from 'mainstream' or 'mainline' Kristang culture, and have been studied and described by non-Kristang researchers and researchers other than myself. The next section illustrates four of these novel elements of Progenitor Kristang that occasionally complexify and problematise not just traditional Western academic understandings of language, culture and identity, but notions of legitimacy, validity and natural language in linguistics as well.

Some key elements of Progenitor Kristang culture excavated through dreamfishing since August 2022
Quaternity of personhood

The *Lembransa Krismatra* and Progenitor Kristang understanding of the world is centered on an understanding of the individual person as made up of four critical components, all of which must be integrated in balanced and nuanced harmony for the person to both enjoy the best possible life they could possibly enjoy, as well as contribute back to the community, to society and to the planet and the universe in the most helpful and maximal way possible. These four components are collectively called the *Kuartukarni Pesua Kristang* or the Kristang quaternity or unity of personhood, and consist of the body (*korpu*), the mind (*mulera*), the heart (*korsang*) and the soul (*alma*). The quaternity of personhood is the fundamental structure at the hub and nexus of our epistemological and ontological understanding of reality, and is the primary lens through which someone who is working with Krismatra material will engage with Kristang approaches to research, empiricism, analysis and taxonomification of the various elements of that reality. Most elements of Krismatran culture thus follow or align with this most fundamental division of the person into four parts; for example, the Kristang approach to gender and sexuality also subdivides these into the four components of *jenis* (biological sex, aligning with *korpu*), *wenza* (sexuality, aligning with

mulera), *jenta* (gender, aligning with *korsang*) and *alma* (affinity or romantic orientation, aligning with *alma*), the only known language in the world to do so (TimeOut 2023; Wong 2022c).

Osura Krismatra: Osura Pesuasang, Osura Spektala, Osura Elisia and Osura Samaserang

The Osura Krismatra ('dreaming structure') is the Kristang theoretical structure of the human psyche and similarly organises the psyche into four component sub-systems or meta-layer that deal with various facets of intangible reality and our growth as agentic individuals within the larger community across the timeframe of our lives. Each of the four component sub-systems follows its own particular fractally repeating basal restricted sequence that evolves exponentially and infinitely once one full repeating set of that sequence has been integrated by the individual; the psyche in Kristang, in other words, is filled with infinite potential and can always strive to unlock that potential (Wong 2023g). The first and most visible sub-system or meta-layer of the psyche, the hexadecimal Osura Pesuasang ('structure of personhood', consisting of a basal sequence of 16 steps), deals with what is called human individuation in English, straightforwardly supporting the development of a person's quaternity of personhood (Wong 2022g); the second, which is described as 'beneath' that, is the duodecimal Osura Spektala ('structure of performance', consisting of a basal sequence of 12 steps), which deals with what is called human transfiguration in English: the ability of a person to autonomously process, work through and transmute trauma into something life-affirming and restorative (Wong 2023o). The third and fourth systems, which are similarly 'beneath' the Osura Spektala, are even more profound and deal with even more highly and intensely transformative aspects of one's own life: the octal Osura Elisia ('structure of bittersweet joy') deals with what is called human convivification in English, providing a means by which individuals may process and negotiate the death of those who have *irei* or unconditional love for them (Wong 2023j), while the final and deepest system, the quatenary Osura Samaserang ('structure of resurrection'), deals with what is called human resurrection in English, and supports individuals following traumatic encounters with *Sinyorang Morti*, the *eleidi* of Death Themselves, who thereafter seek to integrate such apocalyptic material and reintegrate a new *reiwe* or unity of self across spacetime (Wong 2023k). The potency and applicability of the Osura Krismatra is informally very well-known in Singapore, having been used to support remarkable

academic achievement in creative and academic writing in a mainstream Singapore school toward national examinations between 2019 to 2022 (Wong 2023g); more research is undoubtedly required to understand the true breadth and depth of opportunities it offers to improve and rejuvenate society on every conceivable level.

Diseides / Base-16 and Lusembra / Base-12 numbers

Kristang is now the only known natural language in the world with three separate counting systems: base-10 (the *nanamba*, the existing numbers in Kristang), base-12 (known as the *medensa lusembra* or *darklight numbers*) (Wong 2022d) and base-16 (known as the *medensa diseides* or *hexadecimal numbers*) (Wong 2022a). The latter two systems were excavated via dreamfishing to support the negotiation of one of the deepest and most intense stereotypes inflicted onto the Kristang people as a whole: that Kristang people in general are inherently primitive, backward and unintelligent, and are incapable of achieving or making use of the higher-order thinking and 'rationality' that underpins engineering, computing, mathematics and other STEM domains. Since November 2022, the two new systems are used to teach the Osura Krismatra in alignment with the hexadecimal Osura Pesuasang and the duodecimal Osura Spektala; they also have facilitated further excavation of new elements of Progenitor Kristang grammar, including an expanded pronominal system of referents going up to the sixteenth-person (Wong 2023m) and a similarly expanded system of our *hentakasa* and *baletoza* tense-mood-aspect (TMA) (Wong 2023f) and negative TMA particles (Wong 2023b). Again, both the pronominal system and TMA system are unique among the world's languages, and appear to have no parallel.

Quaternary Grammatical Polarity

Progenitor Kristang offers quaternary grammatical polarity, in that addition to *seng* ('yes') and *ngka* ('no'), speakers now also have two other options that have no straightforward equivalent in English: *irang* (analogous to 'both yes and no' in English), and *ugora* (meaning 'neither yes nor no' in English), reflecting and honouring the intense complexity that underpins not just the daily Kristang reality, but our complex opinions, feelings and thoughts that necessarily arise when perceiving and evaluating that reality. Progenitor Kristang therefore also offers speakers a chance to engage

overtly with quaternary logic: in addition to *dretu* or *retu* ('true') and *falsu* ('false'), speakers can now also work with *iguelu* ('both true and false') and *norsu* ('neither true nor false') when examining and responding to statements and claims about reality (Wong 2024). Once more, Kristang currently appears to be the only natural language in the world with quaternary grammatical polarity, which is not known to exist in any other language studied by Western academia.

Conclusion: Is there really a difference between Kristang and Krismatra?

These features and others were dreamfished deliberately and intentionally, of course, to support revitalisation and to increase the contemporary relevance, value and utility of Kristang to both its current speakers and to new ones in successive generations, who will not only need to appreciate the emotional resonance of who we are as a culture and people, but (especially in utility-oriented Singapore) find a way to integrate the language into the demands, complexities and confusions of 21st-century modern life if our culture is to survive. After all, we are an urban indigenous people – a paradox, if you ask some, and a blessing, if you ask others or ask us, because our relationship with the living planet has always existed within the cities, in the smallest spaces and in the tiniest, most tenacious places where life still fights on to survive and thrive in its best possible forms. Our language, culture, identity and way of being must reflect that.

And arguably, they do even more so now, because the intentional substantiation of Kristang through the Progenitor Kristang revitalisation matrix was done with what it means to be Kristang in our present, possible and future times, in addition to our past. Too often, many other efforts to negotiate Otherness and separateness are still submerged beneath neocolonial and dehumanising attitudes, prejudices and stereotypes that win out because the culture, identity or way of being they are eroding has not found a firm enough footing in the present time of where we are. If there is one thing we can share with all peoples, it is that we as a people have defied expectations time and again across our history because we know the value of adapting, improvising, transforming and evolving while still honouring that mutable, uncertain essence of what it means to be ourselves at our core.

Krismatra material began being formally integrated into and taught in the Kodrah Kristang revitalisation classroom curricula on 12 September 2023. Since then, a significant number of these Krismatran features, including *ela, eletu* and *eleidi*, the quaternity of personhood, the Osura

Krismatra and the base-16 numbers, have achieved widespread currency among learners and the speakers who are part of the effort with no pushback whatsoever; the practice of *sunyeskah* or dreamfishing, also formalised for classroom use at the same time, has also not just become commonplace, but an accepted part of what it means to be Kristang, and to speak Kristang, in the Republic of Singapore.

Our language, as a result, also has a new title, too. Once known as *Linggu Mai*, or the Mother Language, we also now also call it *Lingguaza Semulah*: The Resurrection Language of the Republic of Singapore and Southeast Asia, calling everyone home back to themselves and their own respect and cherishing of their own home and progenitor cultures, no matter what these may be, and how far away they are from reclaiming what always should have been their own linguistic and cultural birthright and inheritance, or *ardansa*, as we say in Kristang (Wong 2023e: 5013). The right to self-determination on every level of what it means to speak a language, and embody the culture and identity that it underpins, supports and strengthens with every single passing day that all of them, and all of us, live anew.

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FILM AND DRAMA

THE PARADOX OF ENCLOSED SPACIOUSNESS AND METAPHORS OF RESONANCE IN BONG JOON-HO'S *PARASITE* (2019)

Gábor PATKÓS
Károli Gáspár University

Abstract: *Bong Joon-Ho's highly acclaimed Parasite (2019) has been universally praised for the unique depiction of issues such as class conflict, hierarchy and social mobility. Critics have also celebrated the film's superb cinematography, especially with regard to its employment of space and motion. The South Korean film has resonated exceptionally well with an international and English-speaking audience, culminating in winning the Academy Award for Best Picture, becoming the first non-English-language film in history with this achievement. In spite of this, the connection between social class, identity, space and movement has not been fully explored. In this paper I would propose to explore the skillful depiction of class and identity through spatial and motional metaphors using a variety of concepts.*

Keywords: *class conflict, social mobility, identity, space, movement.*

The 2019 South Korean film, *Parasite*, written and directed by Bong Joon-Ho is one of the most successful one ever made. The film has been analyzed in terms of its well-crafted realism (Dong 2023), raising awareness of social inequality (Dewi et al. 2021, Ramos-Niaves 2021), techniques of identity construction (Octavia 2021), discourse analysis of its dialogue (Frez et al. 2022) and the role of food (Turner 2021). However, the meaning-making mechanisms of the film through its inventive employment of metaphors of embodiment has not been fully explored yet. I also aim to articulate why "Parasite," despite being a South Korean movie, holds significant interest from the viewpoint of English studies. Notably, "Parasite" garnered immense popularity from an international audience, particularly in the United States. This widespread acclaim is especially intriguing because the film is deeply embedded in the nuances of contemporary South Korean culture, showcasing elements and themes particularly resonant with South Korean audiences. Despite this cultural specificity, "Parasite" achieved remarkable international success, as evidenced by its winning of four

Oscars, including "Best Picture" This phenomenon underscores the film's universal appeal and the broader relevance of its themes, making it a subject of interest in the context of English studies as well. Consequently, this essay will focus on how metaphors of space, smell and embodiment act jointly in several of the film's key scenes to create possible conditions for resonance based on Hartmut Rosas's social theory.

The film centers on two families leading in a way parallel, but also starkly different lives in Seoul. Both families have four members, mother, father, daughter and son. The Kim family is grappling with poverty and daily struggles, while the Park family, on the other hand, epitomizes wealth and perfection, belonging to the top 1% of society. Despite residing in the same city, their living conditions are worlds apart. The interaction between these two families becomes the catalyst for the class conflict that is central to the movie's narrative. This dynamic not only fuels the plot but also serves as a critical exploration of societal divisions and tensions.

Paradox of Enclosed Spaciousness

I intend to explore three specific concepts in more detail that are important regarding the analysis of the film, starting with Kornélia Faragó's concept of the "paradox of enclosed spaciousness" (2005: 7). Faragó highlights two crucial concepts: "home" and "intimacy". She posits that "home" serves as a foundational reference for understanding the world, providing a unique viewpoint from which all other perspectives emerge (2005: 7). The meaning of "intimacy" within the home is defined in contrast to unfamiliar interior spaces or the external environment. This discussion helps us see how the living conditions of the Kim family embody this paradox, as do the Park family's, albeit in vastly different ways. Faragó ultimately argues that "intimacy" represents an "enclosed spaciousness", a closeness that does not exclude openness, suggesting that the absence of barriers doesn't necessarily equate to fulfillment (2005, 7). Both families' homes illustrate this concept but in completely different ways with different outcomes.

The scene I selected to illustrate this point is the film's opening shot, which shows the Kim family's semi-basement apartment, vividly captures their constrained perspective—viewing the world from below, through barred windows that align with the street level (Figure 1). This view often consists of passersby's feet, and the family regularly faces the indignity of people urinating outside their home. This situation starkly contrasts with the Park family's spacious, modern home, which opens onto wide, green landscapes, offering a view filled with light, air, and a sense of vast

openness, far removed from the cramped, dirty streets of Seoul (Figure 2). These contrasting living conditions underscore the concept of enclosed spaciousness from both families' perspectives, illustrating the complexity of intimacy and space within their respective lives. From a perspective of opportunities and socioeconomic outcomes, these metaphors of space clearly point towards a bright future for the Parks as opposed to the hopeless outlook of the Kims.

Figure 1 - View from the Kims' semi-basement apartment (Bong 2019, 00:00:57)

Figure 2- Open green space of The Parks' mansion (Bong 2019, 00:55:36)

The second point regarding the two family homes is the way these spaces are accessible from the street, or another words, entering the private, intimate space from the public space and how they are separated. The Kim's semi-basement apartment is accessible by descent – following a set of stairs that goes below the street level, into darkness (Figure 3). Light barely enters the damp, uncomfortable, cramped space. This follows the same metaphor that they are in fact below the general public space, they are seem lower, less and worse than other people. The Park's home on the other hand is accessible by a set of stairs leading up, above the street level, arriving in a lush, bright, spacious, quiet green area (Figure 4). The house features bright and wide windows, air and light freely goes through the almost opaque house. Privacy is not only guaranteed by the house, but by the remote surroundings. The garden itself is private, and separated from the general public. Again, these scenes underscore Faragó's argument about the paradox of enclosed spaciousness and reflect to the socioeconomic options and resource the two families possess.

Figure 3 - Descending into the Kims' apartment (Bong 2019, 00:12:07)

Figure 4 - Ascending to the Park mansion (Bong 2019, 00:13:03)

Gramsci's cultural hegemony

Antonio Gramsci, a well-known Marxist thinker of sociology and political theory, delineates the structure of societal power into two primary dimensions. He identifies 'civil society', which includes the array of entities often described as 'private', and 'political society' or the State. These dimensions fulfill separate roles; the former is the arena in which the ruling group extends its influence and control over the broader society, a process Gramsci refers to as 'hegemony'. The latter refers to the sphere of 'direct domination' or governance, enacted through the State and its legal mechanisms (Anderson 1976: 21-22). An illustration of Gramsci's notion of cultural hegemony seems evident when analyzing the motivation behind the Kims' scheme.

Throughout the film, the Kim family engages in deceptive practices that, by conventional standards, could definitely be seen as cheating or fraud. Yet, it is crucial to understand that their actions are not targeted towards the Park family or driven by malice. Despite their cunning, the Kims do not exploit the Parks' vulnerability to the fullest extent possible; they refrain from more grievous acts such as scamming for money, blackmail, or outright theft. The methods they employ, while dishonest, are relatively mild and appears to stem from a place of desperation rather than pure malevolence. We could even go as far as say that the true victims of

the Kims' scheming are the Parks' former employees, who now finds themselves jobless because of the Kims' actions.

Yet, through the lens of cultural hegemony, it's also possible to interpret their actions as a rejection of the ruling class's norms, which are deliberately crafted to maintain the status quo and hinder social mobility. Adhering to these prescribed rules and societal expectations, in hopes of bettering their lives, consistently leads to their downfall. Upon recognizing the system's inherent bias, they choose to bypass the bourgeoisie's dictates. Leveraging their abilities for personal gain, they opt to navigate outside the constraints imposed by societal norms, utilizing their skills in ways that serve their interests rather than conforming to societal expectations.

Based on the intentionally subtle clues about their history, we learn that the Kim family as individuals endowed with notable skills; the son possesses sufficient proficiency in English, the daughter excels in organization and has a keen visual sense. The father is dedicated to improve his families' fortunes and a skilled driver, while the mother is an efficient housekeeper, quick problem solver and has a background in professional sports. Their predicament is symbolized by their confinement in a *banjiha* apartment, a physical manifestation of Faragó's paradox of enclosed spaciousness. It underscores the harsh reality that, despite their abilities, the Kims are trapped in a system that limits their potential and confines them to a predetermined socio-economic tier.

The most interesting presentation of this concept is the narrative device of the madam's "belt of trust" idea, essentially employing people recruited from a network built on recommendations (Figure 5). Ingeniously, the Kim family leverages the ruling class's own expectations to their advantage. By infiltrating this recommendation system, they create a false sense of trust for the madam, who believes this network shields her from unwelcome applicants, not realizing it actually facilitates the Kim family's entry into their hegemony.

Figure 5 - A belt of trust (Bong 2019, 00:37:05)

Moreover, this dynamic shed light on the intricate relationship between layers of upper and lower classes, underscoring a mutual dependence to co-exist: the upper classes rely on the labor of the lower classes, while the lower classes depend on the financial resources of the upper classes. This interdependence is a crucial aspect of the "belt of trust" system, revealing the complex network of reliance that spans across social strata, where trust and exploitation often intertwine.

In the second half of the film, the revelation of a secret bunker in the Park's house, and the fact that the former housekeeper's husband has been secretly living there, dramatically escalates the tension. When the Kims discover this, there is a shocking absence of empathy from the Kim family, an unexpected response given their own precarious situation. This lack of compassion underscores a stark reality; despite their shared struggles, there is a fierce competition for survival, with both parties prioritizing their self-interest over solidarity. Rather than uniting their efforts to challenge the societal structures that oppress them, they engage in a ruthless battle to outmaneuver one another, highlighting a missed opportunity for collective action against the hegemon classes.

Similarly, when the topic of the dismissed servants arises while enjoying the house in the absence of the Parks, any fleeting guilt the Kims feel is quickly rationalized away with the justification that their own poverty necessitates their actions, not the needs of others. This lack of empathy and solidarity is a concept deeply rooted in Marxist theory,

defined as an important term in Critical Theory as alienation. The Kims, feeling disconnected, view those in similar situations as the "other", incapable of forming a meaningful connection. For this very reason, Hartmut Rosa introduces the concept of resonance as the "other" to the sense of this alienation (Rosa 2019: 83).

Hartmut Rosa's Resonance

The final component to fully understand the cultural significance of the film is German sociologist Hartmut Rosa's theory of resonance. Rosa introduces his theory of resonance as a critique of the widespread belief that the quality of human life hinges on the options and resources available to a person. Rosa contends that this perspective falls short. He proposes that a more accurate measure of life quality is an individual's relationship to the world. To this end, he formulates a sociology of relationships, adopting the term "resonance" to describe whether an individual's engagement with the world is successful or not (Rosa 2019: 20). As Rosa's concept of resonance is primarily a sociological concept, it heavily contributes to building my argument.

Firstly, given the film's main themes of social issues and class conflict, it naturally lends itself to the type of analysis I aim to conduct. Secondly, to grasp the film's international acclaim, we can apply the concept of resonance to interpret its widespread success and appeal. Lastly, the use of resonance as a theoretical framework remains relatively unexplored in the realms of literary and film studies, making it a novel and intriguing approach to examine "Parasite".

The metaphor of smell in "Parasite" emerges as a multifaceted device of conveying resonance, operating on the literal, social, and narrative levels. On a literal level, the shared family scent underscores their unity, highlighted by the mother's question whether to switch to an individual laundry detergent for everyone (Bong and Han 2019: 58).

Socially, smell serves as a subconscious marker of their lower social status and living conditions, distinguishing them from the affluent Park family. "Same smell. They smell exactly the same!" (Figure 6, Bong and Han 2019: 58). This distinction is poignantly recognized by the Parks' young son, whose sensitivity and observance underscore the importance of this olfactory difference. As the Kim daughter states: "It won't work. It is the basement smell. The smell won't go away unless we leave this place" (Bong and Han 2019: 58-59). It highlights the division line between the families, rooted in their

respective positions occupied within society. The Parks are owners, the Kims are servants.

Figure 6 - They have the same smell (Bong 2019, 00:51:48)

The head of the Park family also seems to notice the smell multiple times throughout the narrative, especially in connection with Ki-taek, the father of the Kim family. He says that he likes his driving, and Ki-taek "never actually crosses it [the line]. That's all great. But that smell. It definitely crosses the line (Bong and Han 2019: 102). However, Mr Park clearly indicates a discomfort around people who happens to share this smell: "There's this unique smell that subway commuters have—" (Bong and Han 2019: 102). What we see here is his subconscious recognition of the "other" and alienating himself from this group of people. It seems obvious that he identifies this smell with a specific type of lower-class people and he is evidently bothered by it.

The concept of resonance reaches its zenith in the film's climactic moment, with the Kim Ki-Woo, the son questioning his place within the Park's world: "Do I look like I belong here?" (Bong and Han 2019: 119). This query essentially asks, "Do I share the same smell?" It is poignant metaphor identity and the other, asking if he can ever truly bridge the gap between his world and that of the Parks, underscoring the film's exploration of class divide and the elusive nature of social mobility. His resolve to "go down" suggests that he cannot feel a resonance between him and the people in the garden. The script also describes him as "numb", in Rosa's term would be "mute", again, in a different way: alienated.

Conversely, the film portrays moments of resonance among the three social groups, demonstrating fleeting connections that suggest potential for real understanding and empathy. A notable instance is the romantic entanglement between the Park daughter, Da-hye and the Kim son, Ki-woo, as well as the moment when Chung-sook, the new housekeeper wants to give food to the former housekeeper and her husband, indicating acts of kindness and connection across class lines. However, each of these instances ultimately devolves, suggesting that socioeconomic circumstances render such resonance unsustainable in the long term. These moments of successful relationships, though initially promising, underscore the prevailing social barriers that impede genuine and lasting connections across class divides.

An important aspect of Rosa's theory is the acknowledgment that these relationships are not isolated from societal or social conditions; rather, they are deeply intertwined with and shaped by the social context in which they occur. According to him, a "successful" relationship is one that resonates with the individual, creating a dynamic and responsive connection, whereas an "unsuccessful" relationship is characterized as mute, lacking interaction and engagement (2019: 19). This approach emphasizes the significance of our interactions with the world around us, suggesting that fulfillment and meaning are derived not just from material conditions but from the quality of our engagement with our surroundings and society. This is what we see in these attempts of establishing good relationships, but also in terms of the resonance within the two respective families.

The perceived intimacy of the Park family is undermined by the design of their home, where the transparency of the walls symbolizes a lack of genuine connection or a sense of belonging. On the surface, they might seem like the ideal family, yet the film consistently fails to showcase moments of genuine quality or – in other words – resonant time spent together. Instead, family members often occupy separate spaces, rarely coming together in meaningful ways. The few attempts to unite as a family are notably unsuccessful. A planned camping trip is spoiled by torrential rain, and a second attempt to connect, during the Park's boy, Da-song's birthday party, ends in tragedy with the Kim's daughter, Ki-jung's untimely death. These events highlight the superficial nature of their interactions and the profound disconnection underlying their familial bonds.

In contrast, the Kim family exhibits a genuine care and a strong bond among its members, as demonstrated by their frequent sharing of the same space throughout the film. Their moments together, often centered around shared meals or feasts, signify deep familial connections—a vital

expression of closeness in Korean culture (Figure 7). This is underscored by the Korean word *sikgu*, which literally translates to "members who share meals and live together" (Lee 2018), reflecting the essence of family. These scenes not only highlight the warmth and solidarity within the Kim family, but also serve as a metaphor to showcase the existence of resonant relationships in their family.

Figure 7 - The Kims eating and drinking (resonating) together (Bong 2019, 00:58:01)

Ultimately, it is possible to suggest that Rosa's concept of resonance and Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony interplay in a complex manner, indicating that the socio-economic statuses of individuals hinder their ability to truly connect or resonate with one another. Moreover, sharing similar socio-economic conditions does not guarantee resonance; it can, in fact, give rise to even fiercer conflict within the same class. The narrative of the film thus leans towards a theme of alienation rather than resonance, embodying what can be described as "a relation of relationlessness". (Rosa 2019: 94). This theme of disconnectedness culminates in the film's climax and resolution, where Ki-taek finds himself isolated in the basement bunker, encapsulating the ultimate state of alienation.

It is also worth theorizing that resonance plays a critical role both internally within the film and externally among its audience. Internally, resonance is essential for a profound understanding of the film's plot and characters. Externally, it helps us grasp why audiences connect so deeply with the film's central themes. These two aspects of resonance are not isolated; rather, their interplay is vital to do justice to the film's impact. As

audience members, we find moments of resonance as we watch the film that allow us to empathize with the characters and, by extension, create meaningful relationship to the work of art itself. This phenomenon may be common with every compelling film, but it becomes particularly pronounced in narratives that tackle social issues of universal value, transforming our shared experiences of resonance even more profound. If we consider that to be the film and the audiences shared meaning-making experience, maybe it is not just the alienation after all.

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TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

ELECTRONIC VISUAL LEARNING AIDS FOR THE EFFECTIVE AND METACOGNITIVE LEARNING CLASS IN HE

Dileta JATAUTAITE,
Vilnius Business School, Lithuania
Vaiva ZUZEVIČIŪTĖ
Mykolas Romeris University, Lithuania

Abstract: *Contemporary employment arena requires employees to achieve high standards of English communication skills, knowledge and competences, universities also have a mission to foster critical thinking, reflection skills, creative thinking, that is foster metacognitive learning. Though the expected high level of competencies in English language may be facilitated by an abundance of teaching and learning tools, aids at the disposal of a contemporary teacher in higher education, the holistic educational value must still be at the focus. One of the tools in the tool kit of a teacher in higher education right after the pandemic is the wider spread usage of the electronic visual aids, which were incorporated into everyday teaching practices during COVID out of necessity; not surprisingly they have proved themselves being useful further on. Visual aids, as pedagogy (based on the research and theories by esteemed thinkers in the field (Gardner, 1983)) indicated, were always considered as useful for the quality of teaching and learning of students in the classroom. Once COVID struck, even the teachers who had been reluctant previously to use the el.tools, including el.visual aids previously, had been pushed to do exactly that. In a year after the challenge, it is time to reflect on lessons: generally experienced by a HE teacher and on lessons while teaching specific course units(s); this paper is one of the several dedicated to analyses of lessons learnt while teaching English for specific purposes. While many universities have managed to use the COVID-19 pandemic as an opportunity for modernization foreign language programs, curriculum, and to build a more effective class, these benefits are irrefutable, we, as professionals in education, are also concerned regarding the holistic educational value, which also includes fostering metacognitive learning. Based on to the analysis of the findings from the empiric study (qualitative approach, written reflections), the results of which are presented in the paper, using el.visual aids may have certain positive effect on certain aspects of learning, including fostering metacognitive learning, though not to the level that the theoretical findings lead to expect.*

Keywords: *e*lectronic visual aids, communicative competencies, foreign language for specific purpose, metacognitive learning.

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary globalized and technologized world is evolving fast, it takes requires energy and attention to stay attuned to the process. We are forced to adapt and keep with this pace otherwise we will be forced to become merely observers of the rich life in all walks of life: employment, education, even social services and leisure activities. Due to these circumstances, there is no denying the way the students study languages has changed, but in many ways the change was additionally prompted by the pandemic. Many universities, and that certainly stands true for the Lithuanian universities, have managed to use the COVID-19 pandemic as an opportunity for change and helped change the way of work and study. This shift in studying, including languages, languages has encouraged education to implement advance electronic tools usage practices in educational methodology. Interestingly, there had been colleagues before pandemic, who had been savvy in using the tools before 2020, however, also native and foreign language teachers were forced into a crash course on modern technology. As a result: more than ever students and teachers have the skills and knowledge to work more effectively and successfully with new technologies.

In a year after the challenge, it is time to reflect on lessons: generally experienced by a HE teacher (Zuzeviciute, 2021) and on lessons while teaching specific course units(s); this paper is one of the several dedicated to analyses of lessons learnt while teaching English for specific purposes.

Thus, the **aim** of the article is to analyze the implementation of electronic visual aids facilitating the foreign language teaching and learning with an emphasis on the potential role for fostering metacognitive learning. The **object** of the research – usage of electronic visual aids for teaching and learning for foreign language in a contemporary higher education (further on - HE) class for (potentially) metacognitive learning. The **objectives** of the research are based on RQ: What are the possible educational gains/added value (e.g., fostering metacognitive learning) of using electronic visual aids for teaching and learning a foreign language, based on the theoretical and empiric analysis? **Research methods:** critical analysis of scientific literature, empiric study, based on the qualitative research methodology in social sciences (written reflections). This paper is presenting data from the third phase of the study.

LEARNING FOREIGN LANGUAGE FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES AND EL. VISUAL AIDS

Due to the pandemic many students and teachers became so clued so soon up on modern technologies. During at least a year and a half and in some instances, longer, many language courses were provided entirely online by universities. It turned out to be popular among tech-savvy generation students. But it should also be noted that if after the pandemic modern universities return to using only traditional teaching strategies with the same set of teaching materials, they would definitely side track the contemporary students' expectations and general ambience. In other words, today language teaching and learning paradigm has shifted, probably, forever. During this unprecedented pandemic time, students and teachers have embraced new skills and developed new behaviors which have improved the way they operate and process in the classroom, which, we think, is the most significant issue in this context.

Due to professional, political, even security pressures there is a demand to learn the language as quickly as possible with a good language command level, otherwise: no job in any multinational business company, or work as a lawyer or an officer. The world has shrunk so much that it is no longer enough to speak one language. English has become a lingua franca in the global world, consequently, employers require from their employees' high standards of English communication skills, knowledge and competencies. In terms of career prospects speaking another language has become an undeniable plus, o rather a 'must' on the resume. Several studies show a direct correlation between the importance of the first salary and the ability to speak a foreign language.

Proliferation (even domination) of English language in professional, social and even private walks of life means that in an age of borderless communication and travel, it seems we are almost pushed to use the aforementioned lingua franca, which may have – and does! - have a detrimental effect of individual's right to communicate in their national language, foster their national identity. Though, besides the English there are many other languages that belong to a group of foreign languages for a specific purpose, for example, German, French, Spanish and many others that are not the native language of a learner. Notwithstanding our general concern for linguistic and cultural diversity, as teachers in higher education we have our professional duties. The duties include both to teach the foreign language and to do that in a professional way, attuned to students' expectations and general ambience, including using el.visual aids. Using new technologies such as el.visual aids for enriching the language learning

and teaching environment, in particular for Generation Z and Millennials is relatively easy, as they are technology savvy (Jatautaite and Kazimianec, 2019). Sometimes (actually, quite often) we, therefore, are in desperate need of an assistance from our colleagues in IT departments or the colleagues who have the IT competence due to other reasons; general interest in technologies for education may be one of the reasons.

TEACHING AND LEARNING FOREIGN LANGUAGE (ENGLISH) FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES: OPPORTUNITIES FOR METACOGNITIVE LEARNING

The importance of usage of visual aids was emphasized since the beginning of the professional pedagogy era (e.g., see: ideas of 'pictures' by J.A. Comenius in 17th century, here from Gedvilienė, Zuzevičiūtė, 2007). Recently, though, the most influential theory of recent times was suggested by Gardner (1983), where the idea of multiple intelligences was presented with the accompanying idea of the need to address learning by emphasis on verbal, audio, visual, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal and other aspects of human thinking, and thus learning. The el.visual aids (almost always incorporating also verbal, audio, other aspects) expand further the available assortment for teachers (and learners). There are many studies on the effect of using visual aids based on using electronic devices (Dalali and Mwila, 2022; Lopez, 2022; Martiniello et. al., 2022). Lopez explains visual aids as items "of illustrative matter, including, but not limited to a film, slide, graph, chart, or model, designed to supplement written or spoken information so that it can be understood more easily" (2022).

Murphy at el (2023) note that association is essential for learning words of foreign language; and a first step toward increase in retaining is forging mental imagery. Moreover, the skills of associating words to images may potentially lead to specific conscious metacognitive decisions further on for better learning. Evidently, using visual aids (including el.visual aids) may contribute for prompting students to associate concepts to certain images and thus increase retaining as a first benefit and encourage students to use this technique for further leaning and thus increase metacognitive learning as a second benefit. While active listening serves as prerequisites for further, meaningful interactions (Anaktototy, 2022), using el.visual aids may serve as a tool to foster active listening, especially in learning language for special purposes: e.g., a video clip on especially relevant criminal case, the deliberation and decision in a court of law may (and does) serve as a stepping stone for further interaction/discussion in

class for students/future officers. Moreover, student's may be encouraged to stay attuned to the events in their professional context in order to keep themselves informed and relevant (this choice also may lead to metacognitive learning in class and in a life long learning setting). Also, as Winarti et al (2022) note, it is important for fostering metacognitive learning to emphasise problem solving skills, which, while using the above mentioned el.visual aids (such as relevant criminal case, the deliberation and decision in a court of law) may lead to in-depth problem solving exercise, where students may provide their own arguments, reference legal acts for defending their own position in the specific event, decision or controversy (López, 2022).

However, using available, IT based tools poses certain additional tasks for teachers.

Firstly, authors of this paper will note the time and effort necessary to find the relevant clip, which is intrinsically related to the approved curriculum and yet may serve as a trigger for discussion, an illustration to a concept or serve other educational purpose. Secondly, as Bouhafa, Hochberg, (2022) note: "It is essential to provide the necessary guidelines for using online resources for interaction purposes to students prior to exposure. The level of teachers' comments and feedback in the online environment is of prime importance. It can either play a significant role in enhancing students' interactions, or it can hinder students' effective use of such contexts" (http://ejournal.iainpalopo.ac.id/index.php/ITJ/article/view/2567).

Generally, visual aids help to better focus attention on the content to be learned and remember the concepts they have just learned, providing associative learning by linking the concept to the visual representation (Stancampiano, 2013). Moreover, visuals aids benefit the learners better store verbal information in the brain than merely verbal communication (Antonova et. al., 2019). Besides, while using visual aids teachers have additional opportunities to engage learners and help to clarify difficult concepts (Nitu et. al., 2017). Quecan (2021) states that using visual aids may also enhance the motivation of language learners. Ahmed (2018) adds: visual aids increase students' involvement and interaction, students become more involved in language learning process and they are more attentive to process, which leads to increased understanding. Today visual tools comprise multimedia pedagogical tools, which range from simple static characters that provide information to complex and dynamic animated three-dimensional characters that narrate information while gesturing (Castro-Alonso et.al., 2021). What concerns the research of this article, it deals mainly with visual aids, which may be incorporated into teaching and learning either in a form of or: "electronic textbooks and materials,

smartphones, tablets and internet extensions, computers, smartboards, TVs and projectors" (Ünal, 2022). This explanation of visual aids best suits the research problem due to the advancements in technology since the number, assortment, inventory, format, also media of visual aids for education have increased and diversified.

Teaching language for specific purpose to business management students is mainly focused on developing writing skills, to the military is centered on speaking and listening skills or basically communicative approach, teaching language for future law enforcement officers encompasses both formal register (for academic, professional settings) and in-formal register (for communication with citizens and especially residents whose English may be either rudimentary or street-wise based). Also, in terms of teaching law enforcement students, it depends upon the purpose of the course whether they need written and verbal communication skills. That is, some of the students later in their professional life will work in court, prosecutor's office and may be will even participate in legislature (even internationally), or at least organize and implement operations internationally; they will use formal register, surely, written communication will comprise a huge part of their work. Some other students will directly work 'in the field' of law enforcement, which will inevitable include using the informal register, primarily, verbal communication. On the written side, law enforcement officers must be able to communicate the details, for example, describing findings in a crime scene or report clearly and thoroughly in participating in events, activities of international and local organizations. On the verbal side, they must communicate positively and with sensitivity to diversity (nationality and culture of people and populations they work with). Thus, the foreign language for specific purpose focuses mainly on the use of language (Farmati et. al., 2022). However, we, the authors of this paper will argue that also teaching grammar and language structures are very important if a possible career in legislature (especially, internationally) is kept in mind. Certain (advanced) level of command of professional foreign language is an absolute necessity in those cases. This is especially valid in a contemporary situation for an increased need for international cooperation against the direct threats to national and international security due to the war against the Ukraine.

Current state of methodological educational approaches in synergy with rapid developments in business, military, and law enforcement poses certain expectations (advanced!) for a second foreign language competencies (in our case: English for Specific Purpose).

In summary, language teaching for specific purpose is defined as an approach that aims to meet the academic and vocational/professional needs

of learners and is student-centered, multi-disciplinary and an effective combination of theory and practice (Anthony, 2018).

Traditional approaches focus on learning the language without too much specific focus. According to the communicative approach, the use of language as a means of communication is more important than its rules. Therefore, communicative competence is one of the main aims in communicative approach. The communicative competence of teaching and learning the foreign language for specific purpose is alignment to reality. Grammar is important but in communicative approach the learner should also use communication strategies and be aware of the features of discourse and sociolinguistic rules of interactions, rules of both language use and grammar have an important role in gaining communicative competence (Savignon, 2017). Communicative competence has four main components: linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, strategic competence. Thus, while teaching and learning the foreign language for specific purpose "there should be a close link between the tasks performed by learners in the language classroom and in the outside world", which is authentic learning (Van den Branden, 2006; 6). Therefore, while, in teaching foreign language for specific purpose teachers incorporate technological (electronic) equipment or any digital device in designing curriculum, instruction (Garofalo & Farenga, 2021), they both facilitate (at least potentially) learning and at the same time attune the classroom experiences to the everyday life practices and routines of contemporary young people, the students.

The critical analyses of sources highlight the importance of using visual aids (of any kind and format), because of the multifaceted nature of human learning (as it was suggested several decades ago by H. Gardner. The IT assisted teaching, including using el.visual aids, which stormed into classes in HE during the last few years of the pandemic may have a positive role in enriching teaching and learning experiences. Though the constructivist approach to education has firmly established itself for decades, its main premises are still valid: 'In constructivism, knowledge is not transmitted from the teacher or other sources to students, but rather students reconstruct knowledge by establishing connections between new and previous learning experiences" (Dökmecioğlu et el, 2020), thus, while learning foreign language for specific purposes, using el.visual aids may help establishing connection between what students know regarding curriculum, life beyond studies, and the professional realities (or at least the context of professional realities, which is especially important for future law enforcement officers). Because of these possibilities, teachers may construct diverse assortment of 'windows' into realities of professions: e.g., organize analysis of news broadcasts on the current situation in

markets or a particularly intriguing criminal case. These 'windows' allow teachers to start discussions on realities out there, to attune class and profession and thus to ensure relevance between the curriculum and the everyday routines of young people.

Thus, on the one hand, using el.visual aids may have certain positive effect for metacognitive learning because of its potential for association (and thus retaining), for fostering meaningful in-depth interactions and problem solving. On the other hand, using el.visual aids in class adds additional pressures on teachers regarding time, and effort necessary to find appropriate, relevant, up-to date materials and incorporate those materials appropriately and in timely manner for the best results, preferably including attention to metacognitive learning.

STUDENTS ON EL.VISUAL AIDS AND METACOGNITIVE LEARNING

Once it was established that el.visual aids seem to have support of researchers, esteemed scholars, two issues become evident.

Firstly, language teachers, notwithstanding the 'fight or perish' experiences during pandemic, still in many cases need support of IT department colleagues or other colleagues who have gained competencies in the field because of other reasons (for example, they had participated in projects in the field, or just had been interested in IT assisted teaching) (Zuzeviciute, 2021). The support teachers provided for each other was invaluable, however, the discussion along these lines exceeds the scope of this paper.

Secondly, while there seems to be a unanimous agreement among scholars regarding the effectiveness and important role of el.visual aids in educational settings, it was decided to analyze whether Lithuanian students share the same or similar enthusiasm regarding potential benefits.

Therefore, three phase empiric study was designed and implemented; the first two phases of the study aimed at examining students' perspective on foreign language learning for specific purpose using el. visual aids with a focus whether aids may facilitate learning the language for specific purpose and it what way. The results of the two phases of quantitative study were reported elsewhere (Jatautaite, Zuzeviciute, 2022, paper accepted, publishing pending[1] and Jatautaite, Zuzeviciute, Butrime, 2023, paper

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[1] Proceedings of ALTA'22. Advanced learning technologies and applications. Digital Competencies.

accepted, publishing pending[2]); here we are presenting the third phase, based on qualitative research method (semi-structured written anonymous reflection). The study was carried out during the first quarter of 2023; all of the respondents studied English as a foreign language for specific purposes: Business English and English for law enforcement. 22 respondents shared their opinions (N=22), 18 women ((W, 1-18) further on) and 4 men ((M, 1-4) further on).

Limitations of the study consist of the fact that the number of respondents in a study is not high, though the qualitative approach allows that, and the fact that the categorization while applying Content analysis always involves certain level of subjectivity.

Results. Students were asked: "What main differences in study process do you note, when comparing studies (teaching and learning at university) before, during and after Covid?"

Four main categories were identified, the categories are enlisted according to the number in each:

1. Impossible to tell, because the only experience in HE was under covid or after it ("I can not really tell any differences because I have started studying at university after Covid", W, 22) (n=7).

2. Competence in using various IT tools increased ("The main difference ...<. >Talking with teacher on "Zoom", "Teams" ..., W, 5 or: "Before covid in school was old system. During the Covid we learned how to study from zoom, teams and other platforms", W, 6) (n=5).

3. Nature of learning changed ("The main difference between studying before, during and after covid is the learning style. For instance, before covid we studied at school with the help of a teacher, and during the coronavirus we studied on our own, which was a little difficult for us", W, 7) (n=5).

4. Classes are again as they had been before covid ("Before covid it was all good, during covid there was some problems because it was a little bit complicated to work online, but we also learned to work on some platforms such as zoom, teamworks and other. After covid, everything went back to old ways", W, 3); this category is surprising; we, teachers should discuss whether this is an educational experience that we want to create for our students (n=3).

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[2] Proceedings of 17th International Conference on e-Learning and Digital Learning 2023 (ELDL 2023).

Several answers were formal (e.g., "for some students it was easier, for some more difficult ") and were too general in order to assign certain meaning, thus they were not categorized (n=2).

Evidently, students are not really reflective regarding this (using el.visual aids) educational dimension, not many (or any) new insights were gained; however, the most important finding in this aspects is the fact that several students noted return to previous style of teaching, which is of some concern. Surely, it can be argued, that text-book based classes before covid had been qualitative, however, it is also evident that technology-based assortment of teaching tools expanded significantly. Thus, not taking advantage for using the available array of tools may indicate certain issues, reasons and reasoning by teachers to be discussed with them, which was beyond the scope of this phase of study.

The contributions regarding other results, benefits for learning are presented in Table 1.

1 Table

Respondents on using el.visual aids in HE class: towards the metacognitive learning?

What is the **role** of el.visual teaching and learning aids (e.g., using clips of BBC broadcasts or similar items) in study process?		What **do you learn**, while using el.visual aids (provided, integrated in class of foreign language by your teachers)?	
Category, No.of contributions	Illustration, excerpt	Category, No.of contributions	Illustration, excerpt
Mandatory (to be used in contemporary HE class) n=7	*I believe that being able to use technology that surrounds us not only benefits quality of classes but it also helps students to feel more confident and comfortable. Therefore the role of el.visual nowadays is mandatory part of teaching process. (W, 22)*	Increases retaining/memory (**limited degree** of benefit for metacognitive learning) n=12	*I learned more words, it made it easier to remember information because it was much more interesting* (M, 3) *We learned new words, grammar, watched videos and films and it was more memorable and more interesting than just listening to teacher speaking.* (W, 3)
Productive n=5	*Actually new technologies changed learning*	Fosters understanding (**some degree** of	*By using al.visuals it is easier to **understand** the topic, take notes*

	system. It becomes more productive and new. (W, 6)	benefit for metacognitive learning) n=7	*and participate in the class* (W, 22) *Various clips and shows helps a lot to* **understand**. *Diversifies learning and students like it. (W, 9)* *Last, you learn to be* **creative** *then you have to prepare some subject, also it's good to make a point of some details in that subject*. (Man, 4)
Fun n=4	*Second, the main role of el.visual aids teaching is make lectures fun and not boring, also it's good to make a point about the subject.* (M, 4)	-	-
Students note (n=3) that slides dominate the visual aspect of learning without too many other modes, forms or media used in class. Several students shared formal, content-free answers, such as *I do not know* or *I don't have an answer* (n=3)		Several students shared formal, content-free answers, such as *I do not know* (n=3)

As it is evident from an illustration above that students are not very reflective regarding the issue of potential effect of using el.visual aids for metacognitive learning. While quite many agree that the very fact of using el.visual aids in class in mandatory in contemporary settings, probably productive and may be fun, however, just a few noted any impact on the depth of learning. Majority (12 out of 22) note very limited positive effect, which, on the other hand is in some harmony to the ideas discussed above. Several (7 out of 22) note some degree of positive effect associated to metacognitive learning: increase in understanding and creativity. None of the students mentioned positive effect of learning to establish association, stay attuned to outside world or the benefit to learn problem solving better.

CONCLUSIONS

Analysis of sources and theoretical considerations revealed that though using el.visual aids may have certain positive effect for metacognitive learning because of its potential for association (and thus retaining), for fostering meaningful in-depth interactions and problem solving, but also using el.visual aids in class adds additional pressures on teachers regarding time, and effort necessary to find appropriate, relevant, up-to date materials and incorporate those materials appropriately and in timely manner for the best results.

Empiric study revealed that contemporary students are not reflective regarding the issue of potential effect of using el.visual aids for metacognitive learning. While quite many agree that the very fact of using el.visual aids in class in mandatory in contemporary settings, probably productive and may be fun, however, just a few noted any impact on the depth of learning: namely, increase in understanding and creativity. None of the students mentioned positive effect of learning to establish association, stay attuned to outside world or the benefit to learn problem solving better.

It may be summarized that respondents note certain positive effect on certain aspects of learning, including fostering metacognitive learning, though not to the level that the theoretical findings lead to expect.

The most important finding, to our mind, is the fact that several students noted return to previous style of teaching, which is of some concern. Though it can be argued, that traditional text-book based classes before covid had been qualitative, however, it is also evident that technology-based assortment of teaching tools expanded significantly since. Thus, not taking advantage for using the available array of tools may indicate certain issues to be discussed with teachers, which was beyond the scope of this particular phase of study and will inform our further studies.

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AN AGE-OLD DILEMMA:
IDENTITY VERSUS NATIVE-LIKENESS IN
TEACHING ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION

Giulia SUCIU
University of Oradea

Abstract: *Should people hang on to their national accents as a source of pride and identity, or should they strive to achieve native-likeness in their pronunciation of English? The paper will try to find an answer to this age-old dilemma, bringing to light shifting goals in the teaching of English pronunciation in a globalized world.*

Keywords: *identity, teaching pronunciation, accents, globalization.*

English is an international language, spoken by far more non-native speakers and in a wide variety of accents. That is, it does not belong to speakers of old varieties of English such as British English or American English in the way that people used to perceive it did. The globalization of English in recent decades has brought about significant changes in the language. With non-native speakers making up more than three quarters of English users, we are actually looking at a language which is used all over the world by speakers of all sorts of backgrounds. It goes without saying that all these have had a particularly strong influence on the pronunciation of English, which is more varied today than ever before.

With English now operating as the dominant language of global communication, non-native speakers have increasingly found themselves using English as a shared language of communication, with other non-native speakers, frequently in the absence of native speakers. In fact, by the beginning of the 21st century, experts have estimated that 'almost 80% of communication in English no longer involved native speakers'. (Seidlhoffer 2011: 27) And let's face it, the average student is more likely to use English with a Brazilian, Russian, Italian etc. than with a Brit, American or Australian. This has given rise to what is often referred to as EIL (i.e. English as an international language). Like all living languages, English is constantly

evolving to suit the needs of its users. The growing number of non-native speakers is bringing about multiple changes in the English language – in its grammar, vocabulary, but most notably in its pronunciation. Consequently, the goals of pronunciation teaching have also shifted.

So far English has been mainly taught through the EFL/ESL approaches, (English as a Foreign Language/English as a Second Language) both following the language model of native British or American English. Much of the 20th century pronunciation teaching was governed by the nativeness principle. (Levis 2005: 369-377), the goal being the attainment of a native-speaker accent, either British Received Pronunciation or General American.

Some pedagogical assumptions and principles about teaching EFL have included the following: the focus is on conformity with a standard native speaker model; standard 'native speaker' pronunciation is seen as the only appropriate goal for the students, leading to the idea that having a foreign accent is something bad and automatically to the fact that non-native speakers will be very, very rarely used as language models.

To sum up, the EFL approach to teaching English puts those perceived as 'native speakers' as the only and default correct language and culture models. The native speaker teacher is put on a pedestal.[1] If you are a native speaker in the domain of ELT, you are sought after, you are seen as the best kind of expert in the field, people marvel at your effortless vowels etc. and pay you for being able to speak. In a nutshell, it perpetuates the idea that those perceived as 'native speakers' are superior, not only from a lingusitic point of view, but also from a pedagogical one.
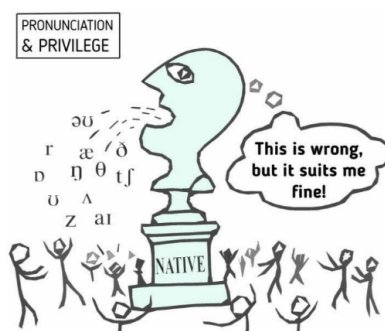
This assumption was challenged by the arrival of communicative approaches in the 1980s, focusing on communicative competence rather than native-speaker accents. It was felt that a more appropriate goal for learners would be 'comfortable intelligibility', which has given rise to the current view that pronunciation teaching should be focused on international intelligibility, that is the capacity to make one's speech understandable to people from a wide range of language backgrounds, both native and non-native.

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[1] Available at https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/pronunciation-privilege-mark-hancock/, retrieved 7.03.2023

The ELF/EIL (English as a Lingua Franca/English as an International Language) pedagogical assumptions encompass the following: the focus is shifted on intelligibility and the ability to communicate successfully in international contexts; emphasis is being laid on intercultural communicative skills; there is no single 'model' of correct pronunciation which represents a more attainable goal for the students.

Which brings us to issue of international intelligibility and some closely interrelated terms. *Intelligibility* refers to how easily a listener can identify the individual words or phrases that a speaker produces *('I can understand almost everything')*. *Comprehensibility* relates to the effort required by the listener to understand what the speaker is saying ('*I don't have to concentrate to understand*'). Thus, speakers can be intelligible but may be judged to be poorly comprehensible if understanding their speech requires concentrated effort on the listener's part. *Accentedness* is the extent to which listeners judge the speaker's accent to deviate from what they consider neutral or 'standard'—in other words, how much of an 'accent' the speaker has ('*The speaker's accent is different from mine*'). It is very important to point out that in the intelligibility approach to teaching pronunciation, accentedness does not have to be a barrier to intelligibility; in other words, a non-native accent does not affect intelligibility.

There is no such thing as neutral or no accent. Everyone speaks with an accent. Our accents can provide a window into our social backgrounds. Humans are very quick to judge a person based on accents, and are often unaware they do so. As soon as a word comes out of our mouth, people start making assumptions about our background, about our education etc. How well we speak the language therefore is a measuring stick for how competent we are at anything else. Derwing & Munro (2015: 2) have pointed that while accented speech may not be unintelligible, it may be negatively evaluated by listeners.

There's an old Punch magazine[2] cartoon, depicting a typical boardroom meeting. There are five men and a woman at that meeting and apparently the woman puts forward an excellent idea. The caption says: "*That's an excellent suggestion Miss. Triggs. Perhaps one of the men would like to make it.*' Though it seems obsolete, the cartoon is still regularly shared on social media in the context of the debate around unconscious, or automatic bias. We could apply/extent it to the topic at hand "*That's an excellent idea! Perhaps a native speaker would care to present it…*' A negative evaluation of your accent will affect the way that you are perceived (for example, as less believable/credible). It has been

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[2] Available at https://magazine.punch.co.uk/image/I0000BaPhg4sVCD4, retrieved 17.03.2023

proven that if one is biased against an accent, he will invest less effort in listening to that particular person. It can even give rise to discriminatory behaviour. Unfortunately, society has been socialised into believing that some accents are 'better' than others, especially standard accents. It is a mainstream idea that linguists have vehemently opposed. However, it has proven very resilient. While it is essential that these prejudices should be called out and recognised as part and parcel of unconscious bias, it is clear that this will have to be a marathon, not a sprint.

However, on some occasions, it can be important to show our native identity. As Derwing & Munro (2015: 132) have put it: 'It is through language that we express our own selves'.

"That's an excellent suggestion, Miss Triggs. Perhaps one of the men here would like to make it."

Speaking with an accent gives people the opportunity to signal their L1 identity through their second language accent. '*Do you know what a foreign accent is? It's a sign of bravery*.' (Amy Chua) An intelligibility-based approach to pronunciation teaching allows learners to retain L1 pronunciation features that do not compromise international intelligibility. It thus relieves the pressure learners – as well as teachers – may feel to sound like native-speakers, providing them with a more attainable goal which respects their right to show their identity through a L1-influenced accent. After all, teaching pronunciation should not be about adopting a different accent and losing your own identity, but about being intelligible.

The Common European Framework of Reference for languages also sustains the idea of international intelligibility, acknowledging in its 2018 update that the former focus on native speaker accent was mistaken: „In language teaching, the phonological control of an idealised native speaker has traditionally been seen as the target, with accent being seen as a marker of poor phonological control. The focus on accent and on accuracy instead of on intelligibility has been detrimental to the development of the teaching of pronunciation." (Common European Framework Reference for Languages, Council of Europe, 2018). Even for high levels (C1 and C2), the 2018 CEFR descriptors for phonological control acknowledge that the speaker's intelligibility is not affected in any way by features of an accent

that may be retained from other languages. In other words, learners of English can achieve the very highest levels of competence while retaining a non-native-speaker accent.

As the goals of pronunciation teaching have shifted, so have the views on how 'good pronunciation' should be defined and what exactly learners need to be taught. English as a Foreign Language (EFL) approaches to teaching assumed that 'good pronunciation' should be synonymous with a near-native-speaker accent. And yet, there are native speakers of BE varieties that can be difficult to understand, despite being native speakers. As a matter of fact, it has been shown that 'native speakers' are often less intelligible in international settings. English as an International Language approaches on the other hand focus on intelligibility rather than native likeness. In an English for an international language paradigm no single accent of English represents good pronunciation.

Which brings us to three core questions when it comes to teaching English pronunciation for international intelligibility: *The who?* (Who should be teaching it?), *The why?* (Why should we teach international intelligibility?) and *The what?* (What exactly should we focus on when teaching English pronunciation for international intelligibility.)

The Who. Who is the better teacher: a certified teacher and non-native English speaker or an uncertified teacher but native English speaker? The view that someone with a more "native" command of a language must be more knowledgeable than one who doesn't – even if we are talking about a non-native who is considerably more expert – is deeply rooted and hard to challenge. However, we cannot underestimate the important qualities that a non-native teacher brings to the pronunciation classroom. Native speakers are often monolingual, which means that they have no linguistic or cultural understanding of the language they are teaching. Non-native teachers bring a wealth of experience to the classroom; they know the learners' first language and what problems might arise when trying to learn a new language, the interferences that might occur. What's more, they have been learners themselves and received teacher training too, whereas native speakers might have no background in language teaching. Just because you speak the language, does not mean you can teach it. As Jennifer Jenkins put it 'Non-native teachers are better placed as instructors, given that they will be guiding the learners on the same journey that they have taken themselves to attain international intelligibility.' (Jenkins 2007: 125)

The Why. We are operating in an extremely linguistically diverse Anglophone world, where pronunciation can account for up to two thirds of communication breakdowns between two non-native speakers (Walker

2010: 87), therefore pronunciation skills are crucial for successful communication in today's globalized world and international intelligibility is an essential component of intercultural communication competence. Research into intelligibility in spoken interactions between non-native speakers was pioneered by Jennifer Jenkins.

The What. Jennifer Jenkins analysed breakdowns in spoken interactions between non-native speakers that could be attributed to pronunciation and came up with a list of priorities in English pronunciation that appear central to intelligibility (the LFC – Lingua Franca Core). The pronunciation features included in Jenkins's Lingua Franca Core (LFC) are those that learners require for basic productive competence.

This core is an inventory of the features of pronunciation which are essential to ensure international mutual intelligibility and which should be focused on in the pronunciation classroom.

- Consonants are more important than vowels and we need accuracy for all (except the TH sound – where we can allow /f/, /v/, /t/, /d/ (Some linguists predict that by the year 2066 the TH sounds will completely disappear from the English language.)
- Rhotic accent is better, avoiding confusion
- Aspiration of /p/, /t/ /k/ at the beginning of vowels, otherwise words like COAT and GOAT would be easily confusable
- Consonant clusters – adding an extra sound is unlikely to affect intelligibility, but deleting a consonant will surely do e.g. STONE – sitone/tone/sone
- Vowel length
- Sentence stress: *I bought the book yesterday*. – the placement of stress affects the interpretation of the sentence
- Word stress – FOLlow/ foLLOW

It goes without saying that Jennifer Jenkins' work gave rise to a lot of debate around the LFC. For instance, there are a number of factors which make it a little complicated to decide on features that influence intelligibility and credibility. One such factor is 'context'. Suppose that two words are distinguished by just one sound. Not pronouncing that sound will cause intelligibility problems only if the two words can occur in the same context. For example, substituting the sound /f/ for /θ/ ('th') is more likely to cause communication to break down (*free or three beers*?) than /t/ does (*tree beers*).

Further, whether communication is impeded depends to some degree on the listener. If a listener has the same native language/the same non-native accent, you are more likely to understand each other.

Perhaps it is better to point out that the study of the relationship between pronunciation features and intelligibility/credibility is still in its infancy. This core should not be regarded as finished and definitive, and this is a very important point. I think that teachers could refer to the core for guidance, but they will also need to use their own judgement in its application. I personally would still teach some of the features that the core currently leaves out.

In today's world, English teaching is not comparable with the teaching of other languages. English is an international Lingua Franca, your passport to a global speech community. This calls into question the preferential treatment which has been given to native speakers in ELT. The native speaker privilege is a hangover from a time when English was taught as a national language, rather than an international one. It's time to move on and embrace the new reality. In this new reality, the very notion of 'native speaker' loses its sense: there are no native speakers of English as a Lingua Franca.

In the context of English as a Lingua Franca the objective is to enable the learners to communicate internationally, not necessarily with native English speakers and not necessarily in a country where English is spoken. This new objective has important implications for language teaching generally, and pronunciation teaching in particular, and it has generated a large amount of research and theorizing. In today's world of global communication, the goal of pronunciation learning in this context is mutual intelligibility rather than approximation to native speaker norms.

'*English is a global language and both native and non-native speakers need to develop the skills for effective mutual understanding.*' (Jane Setter 2021)

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"Undateable" - A Classroom Experiment to Validate Subtitling as a Pedagogical Tool in Foreign Language and Translation Teaching.

Madalina PANTEA
University of Oradea

Abstract: *The purpose of this paper is to validate subtitling as a means of acquiring and improving skills necessary in the formation of future linguists. The experiment was carried out with the participants in the optional course of Traductology - the Subtitling module. The students were exposed to a TV series in which language diversity and identity issues are combined. The translation tasks aimed at raising students' awareness of the complexity of the translation process and the translator's role as a cultural mediator.*

Keywords: *subtitling, language diversity, identity issues, foreign language teaching.*

This paper emphasizes the validity of subtitling as a teaching tool having a significant impact on the improvement of various skills, ranging from translation to the acquisition of socio-cultural knowledge and intercultural awareness.

Specifically, it describes a teaching proposal based on the integration of interlingual subtitling into the university TRADUCTOLOGY course (2ND YEAR STUDENTS). The didactic project was carried out with a class of students attending the optional translation course who were asked to engage in subtitling activities of a TV series (*UNDATEABLE*).

Undateable is a multilingual series (2014-2016) which involves specific translation problems, such as the rendering of language diversity and variation (i.e. ethnolects, dialects, sociolects, accents, language varieties, idiolects, etc.) and cultural references.

The translation tasks were meant to enhance students' awareness of the complexity of the translation process and of the role of the translator as a cultural mediator, not only fostering the development of strategies related to audiovisual comprehension and audiovisual translation, but also promoting students' intercultural awareness.

Introduction

Over the past few decades, numerous theorists have explored the potential of subtitling as a tool for language learning. Their research has examined how both intra- and interlingual subtitled content can benefit foreign language acquisition, particularly in areas such as listening and reading comprehension, spoken language production, vocabulary expansion, and grammar (Araújo 2008; Bravo 2010; Caimi 2006, 2008; Danan 2004; Ghia 2012; Sokoli 2006).

Some studies, including one by the European Commission (2011), emphasize that subtitled videos may enhance learner motivation and engagement (Williams and Thorne 2000). The use of audiovisual materials, such as films and TV series, has become increasingly popular in foreign language classrooms, providing students with an accessible "window" into the target language and culture, while also enabling teachers to develop a variety of language learning activities.

While the studies mentioned above primarily view subtitling as a pedagogical tool for foreign language learning, another research area within Audiovisual Translation Studies focuses on subtitling as a component of translation education. This body of work discusses how subtitling can be incorporated into university courses (Beseghi 2013; Blane 1996; Díaz Cintas 2001)

The didactic approach discussed in this contribution centers on subtitling activities within the Traductology class. It will be illustrated through a classroom experiment conducted during the first semester of the 2022-2023 academic year at the University of Oradea, Faculty of Letters, as part of the optional Traductology course for second-year students in English combination degrees. One of the two main topics covered in the course is Audiovisual Translation, where students learn about the primary AVT modalities and characteristics, including subtitling and its technical aspects.

"In the context of a general translation module, subtitling as an individual and collaborative task can provide a range of activities aimed at developing translation skills, at the same time promoting students' awareness of the translation process as well as their motivation and involvement in a translation." (Sokoli 2006, 66).

The subtitling activities outlined in this paper are designed to promote the development of a comprehensive skill set, encompassing both receptive and productive abilities, as well as linguistic and (inter)cultural competencies. These activities aim to encourage students to reflect on the translator's role and the translation process.

The Pre-testing phase

Before starting the Traductology Course, it was deemed important to gather some data on the students' habitual viewing behaviours, their awareness of AVT and their familiarity with new technological tools. The starting assumption was that university language students are familiar with audiovisual language, which they experience through frequent viewing of audiovisual products (e.g. films and TV series). In order to verify this hypothesis and investigate students' viewing habits and preferred AVT modalities, as well as their attitudes to subtitling, a preliminary test was carried out at the beginning of the module.

A six-question questionnaire was given to students to explore their preferences regarding AVT modalities (Questions 1 and 2), viewing habits (Questions 3 and 4), and preferred genres or types of programs (Questions 5 and 6). Twenty Romanian students enrolled in the optional Traductology Course completed the questionnaire anonymously. The respondents included 19 female students and 1 male student, with ages ranging from 20 to 24.

The first question aimed to identify students' preferred AVT modality when watching films and TV series. The results showed that none of the respondents (0%) prefer dubbing, while 17 students (85%) prefer viewing content in the original language with subtitles, and 3 students (15%) opt for the original language without subtitles.

This data highlights a clear preference for subtitling and the original language, supporting the common belief that younger generations, particularly those studying foreign languages, are increasingly inclined to watch audiovisual content in its original form.

The second question aimed to uncover the reasons behind students' AVT preferences. Those who favored subtitling provided two main explanations:

- 17 students use subtitling for learning purposes, as hearing and seeing the original language enhances their linguistic and cultural knowledge (including listening skills, pronunciation, vocabulary, wordplay, idioms, and cultural references).
- 3 students prefer subtitling because they find it more "natural" than dubbing, as it preserves the original voices of the actors.

Students who preferred watching the original version without subtitles explained that they believe they learn more effectively without any aids and find subtitles to be a "distraction." Meanwhile, those who preferred the original version with subtitles mentioned that they enjoy the combination of seeing and hearing the language to boost their language learning.

These all suggest that university language students are highly aware of the importance of audiovisual materials in their language learning process. They explicitly state that their foreign language skills improve when they watch films or TV series in the original language.

The 3rd question sought to determine students' preferred media for watching audiovisual content. The results showed that 75% of respondents primarily watch films and TV series online or on streaming platforms using their computers or iPads, 25% prefer television (including pay-per-view channels), and none (0%) chose DVDs or the cinema. These findings support the notion that Internet broadcasting and "TV on the move" are dominating the current "audiovisual revolution."

Question 4 aimed to assess how much time students dedicate to watching audiovisuals. According to the data, 60% of respondents watch audiovisual content daily, 20% three or four times a week, 15% twice a week, and 5% once a week. No one selected the option "less than once a week," clearly indicating that audiovisual content is a significant part of university students' daily routines.

Lastly, Questions 5 and 6 aimed to explore students' favorite films and TV series, thereby identifying their preferred genres. The answers to these questions revealed that students enjoy a diverse selection of American and British films and TV series, spanning genres such as comedy, drama, and fantasy.

The survey data reveal several important insights: in terms of AVT modalities, most students are accustomed to using subtitles regularly to watch films and TV series; a large majority of students recognize the potential of audiovisual materials to enhance their English language skills and actively use them for learning purposes; students are well-versed in audiovisual language, likely due to their frequent exposure to it; additionally, the findings show that students watch a diverse range of films and TV series. This diversity can be leveraged by teachers to design subtitling activities aligned with student preferences, making the learning process more enjoyable and engaging.

The Translation Course activities involve creating interlingual subtitles—translating from English into Romanian—for the TV series *Undateable*. The subtitling software chosen for this educational experiment is *Subtitle Workshop*, a user-friendly free program that helps students develop fundamental technical and software skills in subtitling. One advantage of Subtitle Workshop is that students can install it on their personal computers and work independently at home, allowing them to explore its features and practice with audiovisual material of their choice.[1]

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[1] https://subworkshop.sourceforge.net/ (accessed on 12th February 2023)

The subtitling process can be carried out within a single two-hour lesson or spread across two consecutive lessons of 60 minutes each. The key phases of each subtitling task are as follows: 1. Selecting the audiovisual material for translation; 2. Pre-translation discussion and script analysis; 3. Organizing the subtitling task; 4. Performing the subtitling; 5. Revising and discussing post-translation

Subtitling activities can utilize a range of materials, from films to TV series, spanning various genres such as drama, comedy, and fantasy. The subtitling task itself poses challenges for students, who must navigate technical constraints and translation issues. Additionally, the discussions before and after the subtitling task provide opportunities for students to reflect on translation strategies and the nature of translation.

From an educational perspective, multilingual films are particularly valuable for subtitling exercises. They help students understand translation as a complex intercultural process. The methodological approach here suggests that using clips from multilingual films can enhance translation pedagogy by offering a more comprehensive learning experience.

Feedback and results

At the conclusion of the Translation Module, students were asked to fill out a final feedback questionnaire regarding the subtitling activities included in the course. All 20 students who participated in the course completed the questionnaire. The results were as follows: 1. Did you enjoy creating subtitles in Romanian? (Scale of 1 to 5) No (0%); Not so much (0%); A little (5%); Quite a lot (15%); Very much (80%); 2. Have you increased your consumption of subtitled material after this experience? YES (70%), NO (30%); 3. Do you believe that interlingual subtitling helped improve your general translation skills? (Scale of 1 to 5) : No (0%), Not so much (0%), A little (10%), A lot (20%), Very much (70%); 4. Did you learn about other cultures through this experience? (Scale of 1 to 5): No (0%), Not so much (0%), A little (10%), A lot (40%), Very much (50%); 5. Do you think active subtitling has made you a more aware and responsible translator? (Scale of 1 to 5): No (0%), Not so much (0%), A little (5%), Quite a lot (30%), Very much (65%); 6. What was the most challenging aspect of subtitling?: Technical aspects (40%), The text reduction (10%), The poly-semiotic nature of the text (5%), Linguistic issues (30%), Cultural issues (15%); 7. In which skills or areas do you believe you have improved the most due to active subtitling? (Multiple choices allowed): Listening (60%), Reading (5%), Speaking (15%), Vocabulary (30%), Translation (80%),

(Inter)cultural awareness (35%); 8. Have you practiced subtitling on your own outside of class?: YES (75%), NO (25%); 9. Please provide any personal comments on your subtitling experience.

Responses to the first question reveal that a majority of students (80%) enjoyed the subtitling experience, with no one rating it negatively. Surprisingly, 70% of students reported changing their viewing habits, noting they have watched more subtitled programs since the class exercise (Question 2). In terms of skill development, 70% of students felt they had significantly improved their translation abilities (Question 3), and 90% believed they had gained cultural knowledge (Question 4). Additionally, almost all students reported feeling more responsible as translators after the subtitling experience (Question 5). Regarding challenges (Question 6), the majority (40%) found technical issues to be the most difficult aspects. In self-assessing their improvement (Question 7), all students reported enhancement in translation skills, and 35% felt more (inter)culturally aware, which is plausible given the multicultural nature of the series used. The process of translating messages between languages also helped many students expand their vocabulary (30%). These findings suggest that while students are learning subtitling, they also develop broader linguistic competencies, aiding preparation for other skills (Listening, Reading, Speaking, Use of English). Question 8 aimed to assess the motivational impact of the subtitling experience. A notable 75% of students practiced subtitling independently outside the classroom, indicating that the activity significantly boosted their motivation and autonomy. In the comment section, students appreciated the subtitling activities for several reasons: the chance to work with authentic AV material they frequently watch and to deal with the complexities of subtitling; the selected films prompted reflection on cultural issues and increased their interest in multiculturalism; they gained insights into translation complexity and they felt that the subtitling activities heightened their awareness of the translator's responsibility in general.

Conclusion

The availability of modern technology and free, accessible software makes it feasible to produce subtitles within the translation classroom. The qualitative data collected suggest that subtitling can serve as an effective educational tool, improving not only students' language and translation skills but also their intercultural awareness—a field that may have been underexplored previously. Additionally, subtitling has proven effective both as a classroom activity and as a task undertaken outside of class,

supporting the development of learner autonomy while also boosting motivation and engagement.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Jason Ānanda Josephson Storm, *Metamodernism. The Future of Theory* (The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 2021)

Amalia DRĂGULĂNESCU
Institute of Romanian Philology, Romanian Academy – Iaşi branch

The absolute value of metamodernism encompases not only the realistic traits of the postmodernism, but also the absolutist features of the modernism. The volume ***Metamodernism. The Future of Theory*** pleads for the relativity of the existence of the fictional characters and it traces a kind of demarcation between the events as time-slices and the living objects or the biological entities. The whole argumentation gravitates around a dominant interrogation about the social constructs and their specific ontology. The end of art lies between the end of history and that of religion, with the manifestation of avant-gardes. "Not only are new works of art constantly being produced, but artists are continually finding new ways to defy the very boundaries of art itself and to transgress the concept's limits. In this respect, one cannot exhaustively enumerate either works of art or the conditions under which the concept of art is appropriate" (78). Since art has no real essence and it is only a kind of evaluative court, then the whole of traditional aesthetics is misguided. From the postmodern perspective, there are several strategies that undermine reality: to collect competing definitions, to expose internal contradictions, disaggregate concepts, to collapse the implicit binarity of terms, to introduce nominalist skepticism. The author insists on other similar tendencies, such as the relativization of the cultural context, the excessive identification of the victims, the exaggerated historicization which can provoke opposite reactions. "Process thinkers tend instead to describe existence in terms of dynamics, change, transformation, impermanence, creation, destruction, entanglement, emergence, interdependence, and interrelation" (102).

The postmodern traits are represented by *anti-realism*, an exacerbation of ends*,* an extreme linguistic turn, a generalized skepticism, an ethical relativism reaching almost to absolute nihilism. J. Ānanda J. Storm shows that metamodernism is an anti-system, anticipating some of its characteristics: *metarealism*, *hylosemantics*, *zetheticism*. In another

vein, the author reminds us that ethical values have always been at the foundation of social organization against the postmodern trend that wants to establish an era devoid of morals. He seeks to restore the idea that social determinations lie within a certain geographical and temporal horizon, with change and variation representing basic norms of society and four types of social processes: dynamic-nominative, mimetic, ergonic and etiological.

Deconstructing and reconstructing social categories, distinguishes between the ways in which academic courts and ordinary people perceive various categories such as race or religion. According to metamodernism, which can be glimpsed even in our expectations, the writer pleads for the removal of constraining social categories, realities being in a state of heightened entropy. Inclusion and exclusion, aggregation and disaggregation, cohesion and dispersion, as well as discontinuity, rupture, variation and change thus become important operations by which social entities are judged. "So we must presume discontinuity and difference. The oddity is any similarity or stability at all. For metamodern process kind analysis to take place, the thing that needs to be explained is not discontinuity, rupture, or change, but why any properties should stabilize at all" (155). The social universe is in an ongoing transformation, and its lawfulness changes within space and time, while concepts such as art, science, religion changing, at a given moment, into transnational categories.

Hylosemiotics. The discourse of things refers to the complex set of signs and symbols used especially in social contexts. Jason Ānanda Josephson Storm criticizes poststructuralism and postmodernism which have given increased powers to language, to the detriment of a broader hermeneutic. On the other hand, the author warns that not only humans are sentient beings, but also some animals, and even plants (206). From the programming languages of computers, to the default labels people wear with functions, for example, from the weather signs deciphered by meteorologists to pointing at a painting with the finger, all these are part of an extended system of signs and current day symbols. Supporting the idea that this mind-body wholy participates in the sedimentation of images about the world, the following arguments are made: "Knowledge emerges from the exploratory manipulation of the physical world" (213); "Matter (and energy) are used to store information and to modulate cognitive complexity" (214); "Public semiosis facilitates the formation of collective representations" (215). In a similar way, the author distances himself from the arbitrary essence of postmodernism, advocating for a metamodernism where *semiotic beings* join in universal understanding.

Doubting the Doubt proposes a new positioning of the man in relation with the knowledge, called *zetheticism*, which asumes the

modesty at the expense of the knowledge, meaning an approfoundation of the criticism of good quality which necessitates to confectionate more precise instruments of cultural analysis and encouraging the consideration of the knowledge as being always only approximate and having a dominant function of storage of information. Finally, the zeteticism is a way of reformulating the way of mastering the world in terms of *impermanence*. The zetetic knowledge does not reject all the European philosophy, but it is a reasearch method based exclusively on the study of the cause and the nature of things, an approximation of the analytical method. "We do not simply look at the world outside through the window. We pick things up. We drop them. We taste them. We chew on them for a little bit. We assemble evidence from multiple senses via a process of interaction. We form hypotheses about the external world from our role as situated and embodied agents" (247). *From the postmodern scepticism at the emancipator zeteticism* is then a conclusion at these extremely modern considerations, and yet absorbed in essence from the ancient philosophers like Pyrrhon from Alexandria. The critic observed also the limits of his own approach, because the analytical philosophers could considerate the zetheticism a kind of pragmatic fallibilism, according to which absolute knowledge is impossible.

As a last resort, the author emphasizes the reconsideration and the re-evaluation of the values in metamodernism which amplifies the idea of being a means meant to make us better people. In this respect, the "eudaimonic ethics" becomes the imperative of the actual world, and the critic proposes also the notion of "revolutionary happiness". So, a certain balance among the actual human coordinates can be reached besides the *correct beliefs*, the appropriate *epistemic values* and the proper *scientific mind*. The entire volume defends the humanization of the society, in order to re-shape the relations between the human beings. In such a way, the metamodernism aims to restore some sort of **Golden Age**, soft but more authentic, by moderating the fast progress, and by recovering an amenity of *a way of life directed toward human flourishing* (270. Actually, the writer states that the happiness is not only an emotion, but an empiric state and an experiential mood. According to the author's considerations, to live a good life means to be mostly in contemplation, or devoted to the family, to be an environmentalist, or involved into any action which induces a state of fulfillment. In other words **compassion,** or the work for the others' benefit, is another supreme value which is supposed to be found in metamodernism. The exegete concludes that all men are problematic beings, in an etymological sense: they are submitted to the error, but they are also "self-fashioning entities".

At last, the **metamodernism** signifies an existential therapy, an ontological welfare, a mouvement integrative of the values, attitudes and human commandments. It tries to assimilate, in a creative manner, the imperfect knowledge of the past and the present, to enlighten the history and the thought of the mankind, without overestimating them, and to identify a moral imperative meant to work in favor of a much balanced society. „Metamodernism is a postapocalyptic philosophy of the human sciences and it was conceived in the long shadow of many a disciplinary eulogy. But if the humanities are dying, it has been a slow-progressing illness and long anticipated. Indeed, scholars have been lamenting a crisis in the humanities and forecasting their demise for over eighty years" (294). This analytical placement derives from some apparently postmodern approaches: the working on *anti-realism*; the self-critique belonging to certain (humanistic) subjects; the changing of the linguistic, communicative dominant; a prosperous climate for the skepticism and, not least, the ethical nihilism. According to this humanist, nowadays we witness a revival of the humanities by a descent of the new socio-cultural model, at the level of the common people. If the volume started with a *post-mortem* at postmodernism, it ends with a re-shaping of the general human values from the very first moment of metamodernism. „Our brains are *plastic*. Our bodies can be trained. Our minds expanded. Our virtues can be cultivated. We can become better people. We can learn to live more meaningful lives. We can build more just societies and more cohesive communities. We are always evolving, and thus our work is never done. We can make progress toward humble knowledge of ourselves and others. The human sciences can help us get there" (295).

AUTHORS:

ASHOUR Mona: mona.ashour@ufl.edu

CISTELECAN Ioana: ioana_cistelecan@yahoo.com

DRĂGULĂNESCU Amalia: amalita004@yahoo.com

DROBOT Irina-Ana: anadrobot@yahoo.com

DU Xiaorui: raydu18@gmail.com

JATAUTAITE Dileta: dileta.jatautaite@vm.vu.lt

KAJTÁR-PINJUNG Olga: pinjungolga@gmail.com

MARINĂU Andrada: adamarinau@yahoo.com

MARTENS WONG Kevin: zeekyang23@gmail.com

MUREȘAN Dorel-Aurel: muresanaurel@yahoo.com

PANTEA Mădălina: madalinapantea@yahoo.com

PATKÓS Gábor: patkos.gabor@kre.hu

RADU Delia Maria: dradu.uo@gmail.com

SIERRA Erick: erick.sierra@trnty.edu

SUCIU Giulia: giuliasuciu@gmail.com

ZUZEVICIUTE Vaiva: vaiva.zuzeviciute@mruni.eu