CONFLUENŢE
Texts & Contexts Reloaded
T.C.R.

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Legitimacy

BOOK REVIEWS
COMPTES RENDUS DE LIVRES
BUCHBESPRECHUNGEN

Section Code: C025

Intro:

Liliana Truță[1]

In the Beginning There Was the Word and Then – Whoops! – The Crisis Came Along!

If it were up to us, we would gladly fall asleep in the middle of any crisis and wake up only once it had passed. We enjoy it that much: like a stressful exam, a dreaded dental appointment, a disagreeable event we wish were already over - preferably without us. *Without us* would be the key phrase in our experience of crisis.

Yet a crisis cannot unfold in our absence, just as it did not arise without us or beyond us. Whenever we hear the word crisis, something inside us recoils. We dislike its sound; we reject its presence. Again? - we ask ourselves repeatedly. The crisis may be in love with us, but we certainly are not in love with it, even though we carry it constantly, like a tree that grows its own rings or a flower that holds the fruit within its bud.

A crisis is, in fact, a kind of growth ring - emerging each time a system's previously harmonized elements fall into conflict. Then the madness begins: they collide and clash, disturbing dormant elements around them, stirring everything into motion like an anthill suddenly alarmed. Yes, crisis is the alarm bell of a closed system that once functioned perfectly - until it didn't. Commotion erupts, the order collapses, and chaos takes the stage. Entropy speaks.

Conflicts, clashes, disorder, upheaval - as if everything must be torn down and recreated from the rubble. And crises are difficult to endure. Everything feels overturned. Reality's carnival no longer elicits a healthy laugh from us, because we have identified far too deeply with our societal roles, forgetting how to laugh at ourselves, how to pause, how to let the world rest with us long enough to be rebuilt through the Word.

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Why? It's simply because we crave the comfort of predictability. Yet a crisis is precisely the opposite: the discomfort of the unpredictable, a suspended moment pulled out of linear time and thrust back into primordial chaos, from which a new order must be shaped. Although we know, deep down, that every crisis ends - either with a new cosmogony or with a mere change of scenery - we meet it with reluctance. Ultimately, history appears to be nothing more than a sequence of repeated crises: a long chronicle of upheavals that often changed only the scenery, not the substance.

Substantive change at the macro level becomes possible only after transformation at the individual level. We shed old burdens, redefine others, and eventually find ourselves stuck: our shoes too tight because our feet have grown. We want to run in a new direction but cannot find it. That is how progression truly works. Crisis, being the seed of any evolutionary process, marks the threshold state - the passage into a new paradigm.

But the crisis of modernity shook us to our core, and we have yet to recover. It required us to redefine the individual and their place in the world. A new world opened before us, one into which we have not yet settled. The anthropological crisis took shape in suspicious ideologies, in world wars that brought us to the brink of apocalypse. And it is still not over, for we have not yet redefined ourselves. Meanwhile, technology has overtaken us, carrying us into a new world for which we were unprepared.

The humanism of the ancients has dissolved into nihilism, post-humanism, trans-humanism - all the hyper-, super-, para- models we invent. The truth is: we do not really understand what is happening to us. We see only that nothing works anymore, that everything collapses, and that the values we tried to preserve are rotting before our eyes like tomatoes left in the sun. We look around like frightened children who have broken all their toys and have none left to play with - yet they are not grown enough to stop playing.

After the anxious crisis of modernity - with all its ideological "solutions" - today's turbulence may be the most spectacular yet, forcing us to abandon easy fixes, for they will detonate in our hands. What we face now is the crisis of crises, the mega-crisis of our remembered times - an accumulation of unresolved fractures surging into a tsunami.

And if we eagerly grab new toys, as we have so far - if we assume artificial intelligence will think for us - we risk evolving into a strange species: smaller heads, longer fingers, a spider-like humanity whose mind has atrophied through neglect.

But dystopias are unnecessary. Orwell's *1984* no longer applies: control no longer requires force; enthusiastic consent suffices. Ideologies are relics of a barbaric age. What good are they when we no longer believe in ideas? Now we want only short motivational commands.

Should we seek the meaning of life, as countless generations did? We have misplaced that meaning. How then should we enjoy ourselves? Consumerism worked for a while - we kept buying sweets to lick with childish enthusiasm - but beyond obesity and the drug of desire, it offered little lasting satisfaction. Before we could even renounce that beloved addiction, we were instructed to avoid waste and become minimalists. We enjoyed our packaged conveniences while they lasted; now we are told to sort our own trash - because disciplined children must do so.

And so we sort it enthusiastically. We have embraced climate neurosis, recycling hysteria, and the anxieties of post-consumerism - even though many of us were never true consumers to begin with. Like disciplined children, we rummage through our waste to "save, save, save"...

But once you take away a child's toys one by one - explaining that it is for their own good - what remains to play with afterward?
Thus, in this dramatic crisis, where the system and the individual collapse together, we wonder whether joy is still possible. Does the carnival of crisis still have cathartic power? After exhausting all its roles, can we still laugh? Do we still know how to live, not through simulacra, compulsions, or roles, but simply - to live? To ride the flow? We are too unhappy for that. From crisis to crisis, we have forgotten our own humanity. We became superhuman, trans-human, post-human - but not yet human. We have not explored our humanity. Too few ever have.

So let it be said: the carnival of crisis continues - but this time without us, for we no longer know who we are in this vast kindergarten of a world, slowly emptied of toys. We have wandered for ages with a faint nostalgia for a world in which our thoughts, words, and being were

united with the Great Creation. We longed for the lost paradise, and thus our crises held not only tragic sorrow but also utopian hope. Have we lost that higher nostalgia? Do we still carry the model that allows for utopian thought?

Without it, crisis becomes nothing more than a pile of recyclable debris – just like our world.
If we lose the memory of that higher vision, we will again cling to facile solutions and remain trapped in carnival.

Do we still suffer? I do not know. Somewhere along the way we lost our tears and the taste for authentic suffering - the kind that shakes us and lifts us anew. We learned to evade real suffering through relentless action, until exhaustion and self-forgetfulness buried us. We no longer dare to pause amid the rush to save the planet, to recycle, to perform, to consume simulacra (TikTok, AI, Facebook). This self-annihilating vortex has lulled us into sleep, so deep that we no longer ask the fundamental question: *Who am I*?

In doing so, we risk losing our greatest treasure: the gift of thought. No one cares for it anymore. Thought - our Cinderella - sits unseen in a corner of a room full of broken toys. It is thought that made us human, that gives discernment, that awakens consciousness, that creates meaning. Without questions, there are no answers. Without answers, meaning dies. Without your own answers, others will provide theirs - and then your life will no longer be yours. Without thought, there is no freedom.

How do we escape endless crises? Only by reclaiming our individual truth through thought. And with it, by choosing our toys - or by choosing to grow up.

What we are living through now is fundamentally a crisis of thought. The world's deep crisis will never be solved from the outside by those who think for others. It will be solved only when individuals reclaim their humanity, beyond ideologies, barbarism, and nonsense.
Until then, crises will remain nothing but collective hysteria - reborn each time the general anaesthesia wears off.

Literary Paradigms

Autofictions and Mutations:
Crises of the Self, Crises of the World

Paradigmes littéraires

Autofictions et mutations:
crises du moi, crises du monde

Literarische Paradigmen

Krisen des Selbst, Krisen der Welt

The Role and Effect of Autofiction in the Novel *Teino Kor* by Genovel-Florentin Frățilă

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Abstract: The purpose of this paper is to look at the effects and consequences of using autofiction in the novel Teino Kor by Genovel-Florentin Frățilă, published in 2024. Readers are eager to enter the story when they realize that its author is a character in it. The story becomes all the more fascinating and believable as they follow the footsteps of the author in rediscovering the past. The mystery is a philosophical one, yet the adventure is very exciting. The external journeys and searches for meaning accompany the inner world of characters from all historical ages. The novel creates a fantasy world which relies on real world elements, making it both fantastic and real at the same time. The fantasy world cannot, therefore, be dismissed as simply a figment of the imagination. We can consider the fantasy aspect as part of the hypotheses we usually make about the past and philosophical speculations. The methodological framework of analysis is reader response criticism. Readers are involved emotionally in the story and they are also prompted to interpret and analyse the story based on their background knowledge as they go through it and as they make sense of it.

Key words: fantasy, reality, philosophy, Postmodernism.

Introduction

We are by now familiar with the fact that a story told in a novel does not need to adhere to a fixed structure or pattern. A novel can tell the story in any way the author chooses: the plot does not need to be chronological, the story does not need to be about external incidents, about adventures, and it does not need to have beginning, middle and end. We, readers have seen this new structure of the plot with Modernism, with authors such as Virginia Woolf who wished to create a new type of novel, which would rely on poetic prose. The boundaries between genres have become blurred, with lyricism entering the stage

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in the novel, which is usually associated with prose.

The distinctions between genres and the way in which they should look like still exist, nowadays, for readers. It is enough for us to look at the novels and stories that are currently being written in online writers' communities, on the social media accounts of authors, as well as in online book readers' communities, where users post their book reviews. These observations hold true at the level of international communities, from abroad as well as from Romania. We can notice right away that readers appreciate a well-told story, full of suspense, well-developed characters, good visualization of the characters and action, together with a fast pace of the story, which should not be crowded by descriptions and psychological analysis. These latter two elements lead to the story advancing at a slow pace, and to readers getting lost in the abstract reflections of the author and of the characters as well. What is more, a very clear style is nowadays appreciated and used, with clear and not too long sentences. The style is simple, colloquial, and not overcharged with figures of speech. A pruned writing style is highly appreciated, as readers manage to get through the story in the novel at a very fast pace, not making too much effort and leaving them time to read and engage with more stories after the one they have just finished. Readers nowadays in online communities prefer to engage with the story, which makes it an advantage to send readers into completely different worlds than their own. An exceptional situation is also highly appreciated, such as a historical episode, with a mystery attached to it and an alternative exploration of it. Additionally, the exploration of the world of minorities is also a good way to gain interest. Fantasy stories are also highly appreciated due to their potential to transport readers into an alternate version of reality. In the meantime, the characters need to be easy to identify and resonate with for readers. They should be likeable and familiar to readers, so that they can see in them people they usually interact with, or themselves, based on the way they think, feel and act.

Nowadays, anyone has the freedom to publish a story. He or she does not need to The author of the present paper has witnessed the popularity starting from online social media of authors who are not famous except for in their niche, and in small circles. Among such authors we can find the following: Razvan Teodor Coloja, who has written, among other novels, *Soldati ai terebentinei* (2015)/ *Soldiers of the turpentine*, which focused on a group of characters from the rockers' subculture, and Cynthia Orszag, whose recent novel, from 2024, *Soare de iarna (Winder Sun)*, features a story from 1983 Russian Socialist Republic, which is a historical thriller, as well as a love story.

Cynthia Orszag has also written the novel *Art Nouveau* (2021), which is a story taking place in the 1960s, in the famous casino in Constanta, Romania, by the seaside, where a young Frenchman is looking for a painting with magical and strange powers. Her novel *Scrum in vant* features Darius, a young man from the Rroma minority, who faces a hard life.

Genovel-Florentin Frăţilă is an author who has become well-known in the online haiku communities. He is a member of the Romanian Kukai group led by Corneliu Traian Atanasiu, and his haiku poems are well appreciated there. He is one of the personalities of the group and of other national and international online haiku communities. His novel, *Teino Kor*, published in 2024, includes a character whom readers identify as himself, or, at least, partly himself. This character is called Giani and has written the haiku poems Genovel-Florentin Frăţilă did. Some of these poems are recognized by the members of the Romanian Kukai group and other haiku authors and readers preoccupied by haiku poems as his very own. A blog address which belongs to him can be accessed by readers and it belongs to Frăţilă. The title of one of his haiku volumes which is read by other characters is also one that exists in reality and which readers can go through themselves. This is his debut novel, *Picuri de rouă* (*Dewdrops*). In addition, there are real-life, historical places in Romania which are presented, together with members of the Romanian royal family. What is surprising is that the author of the novel manages to introduce himself in the fictional world, making readers wonder which parts of the story are true about himself and which are pure fiction. In addition to this, readers are introduced into a mystery regarding the way in which characters from various ages start exploring the mystery of the Golden Tablets from Sinaia, whose origin lies, according to the story, in the ritual Zamolxis from Dacia goes through. Zamolxis is presented in the novel as a human being, and not as a god. This is the belief of poet and philosopher Radu Muresan, who sets out to decipher the tablets, after completing his studies at the University in Vienna. There are nine tablets, grouped three by three as follows: Knowledge, Love, and Wisdom. Later on, a count living in France hopes to find the way to decipher the tablets by using the cipher inspired by the fixed format of the traditional haiku poem: 5-7-5 syllables and three lines. Knowledge of philosophy, ancient Greek, philosophical reflections, history, mythology, religion, as well as the pure experience of love are all explored and met naturally in the lives of the characters working out to understand the messages on the ancient tablets.

This is the world where the character of the author of this novel,

Giani, manages to explore, together with the readers. Giani makes the author of the novel explore together with the readers the mysterious world of the Eleusinian mysteries and rituals Zamolxis goes through at the Greek temples with goddesses Demeter and Kore, the history of the royal family, the character of Queen Maria of Romania, and her interest in the message of the tablets, as well as in philosophical reflections that are part of Radu Muresan's poems, the search for the meaning of the tables Muresan goes through and his genuine interest in their message.

The present paper will focus on the introduction and presence of Genovel-Florentin Frățilă in his own fictional world as the character Giani and the significance and effects of his presence.

Materials and Methods

The presence of a character which is the author of the story in a novel or work of fiction in general, such as a short story means more than metafiction. Metafiction shows a character reflecting on the very act of writing, and who is aware that he or she is writing a story. While this character may express opinions belonging to the author, this character needs not to be the author or suggest him or her as a character in his or her own story. The character Giani, whom we identify as the author of the novel *Teino Kor*, reflects in the beginning of the story on the process of writing as in the Prologue he explains the context in which, a part of this novel has been written and published: *A Zen Pseudo-Diary* (*my translation*). The Poet of Mauve is another character from reality entering the fictional world. Giani also reflects on the way in which he sees some of his haiku poems and makes some short comments about them.

The character Giani claims that he has written a haiku poem which he translated into English, inspired by the context of his own isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic, when he was impressed by the situation of the many cases in Italy. The poem sounds as follows: "coronavirus –/ the our morning prayer/ is for Italy" (Frățilă 2024: 7). There is a mistake in the English language which is noticed by his son. Another poem is written by Giani for the Romanian Kukai context, which exists in real life and where he has participated for the March contest with the word *mill* as a prompt. One version of the poem is the following: "decayed mill –/ time slowly grinds/ the old walls" (Frățilă 2024: 8, my translation). Giani analyzes this version as follows: it "captures the essence of Zen philosophy regarding the passage of time — which is ephemerality" (Frățilă 2024: 8, my translation). The comment continues: "Each person is consumed throughout life by desires and ambitions. Yet, for the mill of destiny, these are merely

illusory shadows of the mind. In the end, we all come to be worn down by the impassive mill of time" (Frățilă 2024: 8, *my translation*). The second version, "decayed mill –/ ground through its cracks/ the moonbeams" (Frățilă 2024: 9, my translation) is considered by Giani to move "into the realm of the fantastic" (Frățilă 2024: 9, my translation). In addition, Giani offers us an insight into the specific features of the haiku poem, which anticipates the philosophy of the enlightenment and the total harmony and interconnection referred to by the Golden Tablets:

> Apparently and bizarrely, in this haiku, the celestial seems defeated by the earthly. Although not explicitly mentioned, time is the test that proves the opposite. The earthly is subject to time, which is born of light. The illusory self is fleeting, while the gentle light of the spirit remains immortal. This light breaks through, dispelling the shadows of the ego, to resonate with the celestial harmony of the music of the spheres. (Frățilă 2024: 9, my translation).

When readers return to the prologue and to the above quotation from it, they recognize the way in which this comment foreshadows and resonates with the philosophical reflections belonging to Radu Muresan about the contents of the tablets. What is more, Giani presents and reflects on the form of the haiku poem in general:

> Beyond dogmas, cultures, and traditions, these small poems of Japanese origin are inspired mostly by nature. In its generosity, with boundless and unexpected imagination, nature often offers sublime images, which the author captures in seventeen syllables. Thus, an authentic haiku can convey unique emotions to that reader with a refined spirit. (Frățilă 2024: 8, my translation).

The apparently metafictional level serves as a starting point to introduce the author of the novel into his own fictional universe. The Prologue serves for offering the basic and most relevant information about the novel's author, whom the readers will identify later on when he writes down his *Zen Pseudo-Diary*. While having the author present the way in which he has written the novel in the Prologue can be a usual aspect found in a novel, what strikes our attention as readers is the way in which the author is gradually introduced as a character in his own work of fiction. He is one of the characters reflecting philosophically on his own life, and on the message of the tablets. His own work interrelates with his personal beliefs and life, in the same way as in the case of Radu Muresan. The message of the golden tablets and their

search for their meaning is interconnected and overlaps with their own search for the meaning of life, of themselves, and with the reflections about their relationships with the others, as well as to their surrounding environment, which includes the ideas circulating at the time in their society. While Radu Muresan is a version of a character inspired by a real-life poet, namely Lucian Blaga, Giani is the real Genovel-Florentin Frăţilă. However, the author of the novel is placed in a world which moves in-between the real and the fantastic.

How can we explain this state of affairs related to the way in which Giani is the actual author of the novel? We can rely on the concept of autofiction, which was coined as early 1s 1977 by Serge Doubrovsky and which has been defined as follows: "Autofiction is a narrative whose characteristics correspond to those of autobiography, but which claims its identity as a novel by acknowledging that it blends facts drawn from reality with fictional elements" (Doubrovsky 1977, qtd in Lecarme 1993: 227). This definition relies on the idea that reality and fiction can be united through the present of the author in the story as a character. It is the author of the novel in the case of *Teino Kor* the one who makes the connection between real world and fictional world, introducing familiar elements and realistic elements into an adventure belonging to the realm of fantasy.

Another definition of autofiction is the following: "Autofiction is first of all a very simple device: it is a narrative whose author, narrator and protagonist share the same nominal identity and whose generic title indicates that it is a novel" (Lecarme 1993). In the case of the novel *Teino Kor*, the protagonist Giani and the narrator Giani are identified by readers as Genovel, since they assume it is a short form of his name. The name Giani makes readers feel that they can address the author as a close friend, as likely only friends call him this way.

Schmitt (2022: 83-89) underlines that, in order to claim that a literary work is autofiction, at least one basic criterior needs to be met, such as onomastic correspondence or similarities in the author's and character's biography. Both criteria are met in the case of Giani in *Teino Kor*. On his blog, Frăţilă (2008-2015) has posts starting in 2008 and ending in 2015, where his winning or commented haiku poems, diplomas, and haiku volumes are posted. The address of the blog in the novel is a real one, working to be consulted by the readers. This element adds to the biographical similarity of Giani as a haiku author. For Schmitt (2022: 83-89), further elements, called enhancers, such as the metafictional comment may make the effect of autofiction stronger. However, these are not essential, in the opinion of Schmitt (2022: 83-89). In the case of the novel *Teino Kor*, the metafictional comments are

related to what a haiku poem is, some examples, and about how they have been written. In the Zen journal held by Giani, readers notice how the haiku poems have been written during the journey with the count, searching for the haiku poem to illuminate him in the understanding of the golden tablets. The golden tablets, once deciphered, consisted of poems reminding of haiku poems through their number of lines and syllables. Even if they were not genuine haiku poems, they were the key to wisdom and insight. Once arranged to fit in the code and guided by the flower of life, the letters on the tablets, based on their numbers of syllables, started making sense for the characters. The texts on the tablets were philosophical, abstract poems under the form of haiku poems.

For Worthington (2019), "Autofiction is a highly metafictional genre." We can identify here in autofiction the presence of self-reflexivity, as well as parody used in Postmodernism. Self-reflexivity refers to the way in which a work of literature or art can reflect on its own status, creation, as well as structure. With the information in the prologue, and the presence of the Zen journal held by Giani, readers enter a world which they are prepared to see a fiction. In the meantime, even if readers know that this is a work of fiction, as they know that Giani is writing a novel, this does not make the adventure in the novel, throughout the ages, any less thrilling. The adventure remains a genuine one, and readers do not distance themselves from the idea of fiction and adventure. They live all the incidents and historical episodes, as well as the philosophical reflections and relationships which are romantic or of friendship of the characters. The author of the novel becomes a character searching himself for the meaning of the main aspects of life and which are represented in the classification of the tablets. Philosophical reflections accompany us throughout the course of our lives, to the extent that we can claim that philosophy is a part of the life we are living. The question related to the meaning of life is an age-old one, and one present on the golden tablets, as well as in the emotional and reflective life of the characters. The author, Giani, is portrayed of starting off on an adventure of discovery of the meaning of life, through a literal journey through Romania with the count. The journey also has a psychological or philosophical, symbolic side, as Giani starts reflecting on the meaning of life. Radu Muresan has also reflected on its meaning, which was, for him, love, while for Giani, as suggested by the count, it may simply lie in the fact of actually living one's life. The golden tablets invite to philosophical reflection. The haiku poems written by the character Giani and by the real-life author, Genovel-Florentin Frățilă, show us how the haiku poems become a

means of philosophical reflection about what is currently going on around us, e.g. during the pandemic or during travelling with the count, as well as in everyday life. Giani simply stops at times to reflect on life, which does not undermine the reality of the fictional world, as we would expect from the feature of self-reflexivity of a text. The fact that we are led into a world of fiction does not make readers discard it, since it still holds on to philosophical truths. The philosophical reflections, which can hold valid at any time, save the fictional world from being considered purely fictional. The romantic relationships also transcend fiction, just as they transcend time. Romantic relationships and the wish for philosophical reflections about the meaning of life remain universal across time, which ensures an element of reality to the world of fiction. In this sense, even if it is fiction to some extent, the story in *Teino Kor* remains valid across the ages. The golden tablets offer us universal values and principles.

Schmitt (2017) believes that "Reading autofiction ... requires additional cognitive effort ... a refusal to lose track of the reality beyond the text." The philosophical reflections and the hypotheses related to Zamolxis being a god, or to the meanings of the tablets, together with the ideas about Giani becoming a Populist political leader, as a maire, meaning a leader belonging himself to the people, not to the elite, and caring about the actual well-being of the people, as well as with the interpretation of the haiku poems help preserve the realistic aspect of the story. Reality is highly present in the fictional world. Thus, the boundaries between reality and fantasy are clearly blurred in the case of the novel *Teino Kor*.

The haiku poetry volume *Dewdrops* by Frățilă (2020) starts off from the following haiku poem: "dewdrops -/ the sun scattered/ in thousands of pieces" (Frățilă 2024: 118, my translation). The dewdrops are considered to refer to a new beginning. The count hears Sophie telling him that she has received other haiku poetry from Romanian as well, while these volumes were translated from Romanian into English. It is during this moment that the count starts thinking of deciphering the tablets using syllables. At home, the count draws the Dacian flower, then starts placing the syllables two by two next to the opposed petals of the flower.

Another occasion when Frățilă (2024: 283, my translation) writes a haiku poem while travelling with the count is the following:

> As they were leaving Sinaia, the Caraiman Peak appeared before them in stony majesty. On its crest, at the crossroads between sky and earth, stood the renowned iron cross erected in 1928 at the request of Queen Maria, also known as the Queen of Hearts. Today, it is recorded in the

Guinness Book as the tallest cross placed at such an altitude. Its tip pierced a translucent cloud, and the light thus poured out formed a mystical halo around it. Giani was counting, using his fingers, the syllables of a haiku in which he tried to capture the grandeur of that moment:

silver halos –
the Cross on Caraiman
pierces through the clouds

In this haiku poem, readers can understand the context in which it was written by Giani, as well as his feelings. While the haiku poem is understood as being objective, its indirect language does make readers feel what the author has felt at the moment. Giani was clearly impressed by the Cross on Mount Caraiman. This is just one example when Giani writes in his Zen journal. The haiku poem, as it is accompanied by text, could be considered in such a case and in others similar to it a haibun poem. The haibun poem relies on text and haiku poem, which complete one another.

The analysis of the novel *Teino Kor* and autofiction has relies on the readers' reactions, which is why reader response approach (Mart 2019) was considered relevant throughout interpreting this novel. Readers react emotionally to any novel or text in general which they read. They also interpret and analyse in an attempt to understand any text by relying on their background knowledge. In the case of this novel, they rely on their own life experience and search for meaning of life, and also in some cases on knowledge about the haiku poem.

Results

The novel *Teino Kor* relies on autofiction at the time when the story switches to the contemporary period, and when Giani's adventures are followed. The entire adventure starts in ancient times, in times of legends, when Zamolxis, the human being, goes through a rite of initiation, then continues with the rediscovery of the past and with the philosophical reflections on life mainly belonging to poet and philosopher Radu Muresan. The story ends with similar philosophical reflections of the count and of Giani, the haiku author. The golden tables, therefore, invite to reflection. Autofiction makes the story all the more believable and thrilling, once Giani is identified as the author of the novel and of the haiku poetry volume *Dewdrops*. His involvement convinces readers of his passion about the topic.

Conclusions

Autofiction in the novel *Teino Kor* invites readers to accompany Giani in his search for meaning in life while he tries to solve the mystery of the golden tablets. The golden tablets have been part of philosophical questions about life of people living in several ages throughout history. One common feature of people living in several ages is that of asking themselves philosophical questions about life.

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Fragmented Selves and Rewritten Myths: Autofictional Structures in Marissa Meyer's *Cinder*

Borbála Bökös[1]

Abstract

This paper will make use of autofiction theory, especially as discussed by by Effe and Lawlor, as well as critical views on posthuman identity from Donna Haraway and Rosi Braidotti, and insights from YA cultural analysis, to attempt to put Marissa Meyer's novel, Cinder (2012) at the crossroads of YA science fiction, fairy-tale retelling, and a growing interest in autofictional narrative. The goal is to look at the ways in which Cinder dramatizes fragmented selfhood in a posthuman setting by closely analyzing scenes that feature Cinder's cyborg body, her self-assembly, as well as different fairy-tale echoes. These scenes, I argue, explore themes of self-authorship, memory gaps, and digital embodiment.

Keywords

posthumanism, autofictional identity, Young Adult fiction, science fiction, genre hybridity

Theoretical Framework: A Note on Posthumanism and Cyborgs

That of posthuman cyborg identity has been a major theoretical paradigm in recent years (see works by Rosi Braidotti, N. Katherine Hayles, and many scholars cited in Donna R. White and Anita Tarr's collection of essays, Posthumanism in Young Adult Science Fiction). This framework challenges familiar ideas of the human and draws our attention to the ambiguity of the relations between organic and inorganic, human and nonhuman, and what this implies for subjectivity, agency and ethics in a technologically mediated world. Based on this basic understanding of posthuman cyborg identity, it is important to consider how the broader field of posthumanism envisages the critical project. Posthumanism is not uniform but

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coalesces and subverts human exceptionalism on constant basis, particularly where it coincides with critiques of anthropocentrism.

The posthumanist is considered to be the product of the intersection between posthumanism (which criticizes the universalist depiction of 'Man' and human exceptionalism) and post-anthropocentrism (which challenges species hierarchy and human exceptionalism) (Braidotti 2). It does not only criticize the conventional notions of 'Man,' but it also opens to new interdisciplinary fields (Braidotti 1).

This re-conceptualization of the human inevitably results in a re-valuation of subjectivity. A major figure in this field, N. Katherine Hayles, questions liberal humanism and the ways in which posthumanism undermines its very fundamental concepts. Hayles claims that the liberal humanist subject, constructed historically as a white European male assumes a universality that has silenced other voices. Its "possessive quality" conceives the person as the "proprietor of his own person or capacities, owing nothing to society for them," (3-4), with freedom being a derivative of possession. The posthuman, in contrast, resolves this paradox by doing away with the 'natural' self, presenting the subject as an "amalgam, a collection of heterogeneous components, a material-informational entity whose boundaries undergo continuous construction and reconstruction" (Hayles 3).

Whereas Hayles finds the movement from autonomous, self-contained subject to distributed, emergent posthuman all but complete, Braidotti extends this critique to a planetary level. She investigates the way in which posthumanist thought undoes the meta-categories of the "human" and "human nature", the anthropocentric predilections informing modern epistemologies. The critical posthumanities, according to Braidotti, respond to the demise of the hegemony of "universalist 'Man'" and "supremacist Anthropos" (12). This is replaced, she claims, with a "naturecultures' continuum" that removes the "absolute distinction between bios and zoe." (3) This shift questions who "we" are and whose anxieties are taken up in the debates about posthumanism and post-anthropocentrism (Braidotti 4).

This larger philosophical reorientation is reflected in literary scholarship in the field of young adult literature, which considers the cultural implications of such reconceptualization. Of particular interest, by way of example as are Tarr and White, the threads reveal that these theoretical turns unsettle hierarchies and binary distinctions central to humanist ideologies of the past.

As some of the scholars that Tarr and White refers to, including Tarr and White themselves, emphasize, traditional humanism figures

the human by contrasting it to "Others," that is, animals, machines, the disabled, and clones, while it also ranks them according to their values and powers (Tarr and White 15). Posthumanism, conversely, rejects this separation, insisting that humans are "embodied and embedded" within an environment and co-evolve with other entities, organic and inorganic, in mutually sustaining relationships (Tarr and White 15).

Posthuman cyborg identification is entirely reliant on ideas of hybridity, assemblage, and networked existence. These critiques also highlight the positive content of posthumanism. Instead of just disassembling old paradigms there are those, such as Braidotti, who offer affirmative refigurations of posthuman subjectivity that rely on interconnectedness, embodiment, and ethical engagement.

Braidotti frames material, mediated posthuman subjects as constituting a "materially embodied and embedded community, a 'people,' bonded by affirmative ethics" (2). These subjects operate within a "zoe-centred framework," emphasizing complex assemblages of human and non-human, planetary and cosmic forces (12). She also introduces the concept of "nomadic becoming," where the posthuman is less a fixed entity and more a "figuration" or "conceptual persona" that tracks ongoing processes of subject-formation in a fast-changing world (3).

To add to Braidotti's vision of nomadic becoming and embedded materiality, Hayles has a more technologically inflected view. Her perspective locates the body within a trajectory of prosthetic augmentation and the transmission of information, stressing the continuity between body and machine. Hayles emphasizes that the posthuman perspective portrays the body as the "original prosthesis" that we learn to manage, so that when we extend or augment the body with other prosthesis, this merely extends a process already at work (3). She argues that the posthuman seamlessly articulates with intelligent machines, blurring essential differences between bodily existence and computer simulation, cybernetic mechanism and biological organism. The very idea of distributed cognition, where the self is a "posthuman collectivity" or an "I" transformed into a "we" of autonomous agents, challenges traditional individual agency (3, 6, 290).

When we think about our bodies and how they interact with technology, it opens up interesting discussions about identity. The concept of the body being a prosthetic continuum is closely tied to the study of identity as assemblage. Some critics argue that our identities aren't fixed; instead, they're like a blend of different influences that connect us with many forms of life around us. This idea suggests that the posthuman self is diverse and adaptable, which makes it tough to

draw clear lines between what we consider hybrids—like the mix of human and machine.

For example, critics like Tarr and White explain that our identities are shaped by our relationships with countless species on Earth, thus reinforcing the idea of the posthumanist self seen as assemblage, a "congeries, whose origins are multi-species and whose very survival is founded on symbiotic relations with numerous forms of life on earth" (White 149). This view sees identity as constantly changing rather than something stable and singular. The technologically enhanced "hybrid" is undoubtedly situated within transhumanism – a subsidiary of posthumanism, one that maintains the notion of engineered evolution toward "post-humans" – those whose powers surpass those of the present humans (Merrylees 76). A significant distinction in this discussion is between what we can call "informed posthumans," (Hayles's view, acknowledging close tie between technology and our bodies) and an "uninformed, reinscribed (and intentionally hyphenated) post-human" who treat technology as separate (Jaques 22). The integration of the body into a "cybernetic circuit" means our bodies are deeply embedded in a larger technological and social framework that shapes our experiences and identities, making us part of a complex web of interactions (Hayles 117-18).

These ontological changes in the understanding of the self have important ethical implications as well. As the distinction between such categories as human, machine and animal becomes blurred, thinkers like Donna Haraway ponder the ways in which such a blurring offers both opportunities — and dangers — in the reimaging of identity, power, and political engagement.

Posthuman cyborg is by definition the transgression and re-evaluation of borders at many levels which, as result, carries high ethical concerns. Haraway, through the lens of the cyborg, points to "three crucial boundary breakdowns": between human and animal, between animal-human (organism) and machine, and between physical and non-physical (151). These transgressions lead to "potent fusions and dangerous possibilities" (154) that progressive people can explore for political work.

Building on Haraway's considered vision of transgression of boundaries Braidotti emphasizes the need for ethical constructs in order to deal with these new realities. Instead of portraying the posthuman as dystopian or disquieting, she sees it as a theoretical instrument for creating new solidarities and ways of understanding. Braidotti stresses that the "posthuman" is "normatively neutral" and

should not be regarded as apocalyptic or inherently subversive, but rather as a figuration enabling "subtler and more complex analyses of powers and discourses" (4-5). Her theoretical concept advocates for an "affirmative ethics" and the construction of new subjects of knowledge through "immanent assemblages or transversal alliances between multiple actors" (4-5, 2). This zoe-centred framework is strenghtened by analyzing power relations and social exclusions, linking to concepts like "bio-piracy" and "necro-politics" (12).

Hayles too encourages a cautious navigation of these new terrains. She pushes for embodiment and information to be thought together and cautions against disembodied visions of the posthuman—instead seeking a grounded, relational ethics of technology and subjectivity. Hayles makes use of literary examples to illustrate the anxiety that occurs when the perceived boundaries of the body are breached (23, 115). She argues against disembodiment, asserting that "information, like humanity, cannot exist apart from the embodiment that brings it into being as a material entity in the world" (48). For Hayles, taking responsibility for the social relations of science and technology means embracing the "skillful task of reconstructing the boundaries of daily life, in partial connection with others" (291).

These theoretical interventions lend themselves to detailed application in young adult fiction, where posthumanism meets concerns over adolescent identities, biopolitics and cultural anxiety. Tarr and White show how YA fiction becomes a testing ground for the limits—and the ethical stakes—of these newly configured relations.

Moreover, Tarr and White consider how these border dissolutions are depicted in young adult fiction, and, in doing so, not only trace cultural anxieties, but also demonstrate the potential to reimagine identity (11, 15). They mention the bioethical debate, which distinguishes between "compensation (or correction) and enhancement (or augmentation)," raising concerns about radical inequality if enhancements are only accessible to the elite (Tarr and White 13, Insenga 58). They also touch upon the call for civil rights for cyborgs and artificial intelligences, challenging the species barrier between humans and animals (Tarr and White 13).

Taken together, these readings construct a more nuanced understanding of posthuman cyborg identity as a critique and a cultural metaphor. It is by no means a uniform or entirely celebratory framework, but rather one that provokes us to reconsider the category of the human in light of hybridity, fluidity, and engagement in an ever-changing technological world.

In short, posthuman cyborg identity, which is conceptualized by

Braidotti, Hayles, and others quoted by Tarr and White, is a complex and dynamic entity that implies a significant reconsideration of what it is to be human in the time of connectivity and mediation by means of technology. It requires embracing hybridity, acknowledging distributed subjectivity, and committing to ethically engaging the dissolved boundary between the living and the technological.

Cinder at the Crossroads of Genre: YA Sci-Fi and Fairy-Tale Retelling

Marissa Meyer's Cinder offers a fascinating case study in genre hybridization, adapting the world famous Cinderella fairy tale into a cyberpunk science-fiction narrative. As Javid Aliyev and Rasheed Ghassan Abed note, "[t]he traditional fairy tale usually regenerates social and cultural constructions, mainly those norms on gendering the female body" (198). However, Meyer's retelling is largely subversive, injecting posthuman critical theory into her adaptation. Aliyev and Abed argue that "contemporary posthuman critical theory has been fundamental in contributing to current debates and negotiating the traditional gendering issue, particularly in regard to the female and female cyborg body" (198).

The impact of fairy tales on developing personality and society's expectations has been studied extensively in contemporary times in cultural, feminist, and gender studies. Traditionally, fairy tales "were employed to acculturate young girls" to "accept codes of conventional femininity" (Palmer qtd in Aliyev and Abed 208). This acculturation often features girls being assimilated into patriarchal norms, where they are expected to be passive and conform to an "exaggerated feminized way" (Aliyev and Abed 208). Pauline Palmer's observations on the traditional role of fairy tales in "acculturat[ing] young girls" underscore the societal function these stories have historically served (Palmer qtd in Aliyev and Abed 208).

Meyer's novel directly challenges this centuries-old tradition. She "re-imagined the traditional Cinderella fairy tale into a posthuman cyborg, Cinder, as her protagonist" (Aliyev and Abed 199). The core objective of Meyer's series is to "criticize traditional fairy tales" by blending them with "contemporary theory of the posthuman" (Aliyev and Abed 207). This involves a significant "reworking of the female body of Cinderella, the protagonist," transforming her into a "cyborg female" within a "cyberpunk novel series" (Aliyev and Abed 208). The conversion extends beyond character, as Meyer also "converts the fairy tale elements into sci-fi (magic, fantastic elements and a universal

lesson) in her work" (Aliyev and Abed 208).

The setting of Cinder exemplifies this fusion. It takes place in a "cyberpunk world of 'high-tech low life'," where Earth is "plagued by a deadly virus" (Aliyev and Abed 209). Unlike the traditional Cinderella who is "assisted by a fantastic magic agency" and "waits desperately for someone to rescue her from her dismay," Meyer's Cinder is "empowered with knowledge and the power of advance technology" (Aliyev and Abed 209). Her journey is one of "active and independent persona" as she quests "to uncover her lost identity," (Aliyev and Abed 209) eventually leading her to rebellion. This foundational shift changes the story from waiting for a savior to being the explorer of one's own willing. Leah Phillips notes that Cinder, "as a Cinderella figure, should be the hero's prize, but owing to her status as a cyborg, her body is unfit to be the hero's prize" (Phillips 21). Instead, she "breaks the mirror to offer a 'girl full of wires'" (Meyer qtd in Phillips 22), disrupting the stereotypical image of the heroine. Angela S. Insenga further details this, stating that "virtually all iterations of the Cinderella mythos center on material embodiment, a trope that pervades any etymological study of the persecuted heroine core story" (55). Meyer leverages this, but "in a posthuman context, so that the concept is not relegated solely to materiality" (Insenga 55).

Meyer's Cinder not only retells a familiar story but actively "subverts the dominant myth of sexuality, love and happiness of the Cinderella story (as a cultural stereotype)" (Aliyev and Abed 208). She replaces the "traditional Cinderella as a stereotypical character" with a new "posthuman form and body" (Aliyev and Abed 208). This new Cinder is a "cyborg teenager" with "a remarkable artificial leg and arm," whose "body was ruined by doctors due to a cyborg operation, and 36% percent of her body is not human," which "ruins her femininity" (Aliyev and Abed 208).

This conscious act of rewriting is central to this study's purpose, as it investigates how Meyer "reworks the female body of Cinderella" and how this "reworked female body became a cyborg female" (Aliyev and Abed 208). Modern authors, as the sources emphasize, frequently "reinvent its familiar stories after their own fashion since, as Angela Carter well knew, fairy tales 'can be remade again and again by every person who tells them'" (qtd in Aliyev and Abed 208). Meyer's approach aligns with Emma Donoghue's revisionary writing, defined by Adrienne Rich as an "act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction" (qtd in Aliyev and Abed 208). Through this refashioning, Meyer modernizes the story and interrogates—critically—the underlying dominant patriarchal tropes,

offering a "utopian dream" where "every scriptwriter and director takes up a passive Cinderella and turns her into a champion freedom fighter" (qtd in Aliyev and Abed 208).

Others, too, have considered the extent to which Cinder problematizes gendered embodiment in teen girlhood and dystopian YA more generally. For example, Jessica D. and Mel R. contend that the novel dramatizes the way "docile bodies" are produced by means of technological intervention as well as in relationship with femininity and discipline. They interpret Cinder's cyborg body as standing in for a new form of oppression that may not squash out all agency in the same way as older forms of domination but retranscribes it within techno-patriarchal frameworks ("Docile Bodies").

But instead of simply rendering Cinder as an oppressed body, the novel presents Cinder's efficient recirculation and redeployment of affect. Hannah Hultman notes this transition, suggesting that the protagonist of Meyer does not achieve agency through magical metamorphosis, but through mechanic mastery and self-will. "Cinder refuses to wait around any longer for a prince who may never come to her rescue." Hultman writes, "She's ceased to rely on others, separating herself from Perrault's Cinderella. (…) Her metal parts, her heritage no longer defines her; Cinder has broken free of the prejudice, survived the plague, and decided she didn't need the prince" ("The Mechanics of Agency"). This focus on independence and technological prowess highlights the genre's shift away from fairy-tale passivity to self-contained, science-fictional autonomy.

Race, posthumanism, and generic hybridity are similarly intersected issues complicating this novel. As Mirlande D. and Karen P. observe, the racialization of Cinder's cyborg body mirrors conditions of marginalization and oppression within the real world. Making use of Foucault's concepts of "principle of enclosure" they argue that "the discrimination of Cinder's cyborg body constructing outcomes in a number of ways where her identity is considered expendable" ("Racialization of the Cyborg Body"). In a similar fashion, the blog post "The Cyborg Race" positions Cinder within broader discussions around eugenics, purity, and biopolitics as its narrative demonstrates how posthuman identity acts as a weapon to maintain power structures. It is this intersection of multiple levels of identity (gendered, racialized, technological) that turns Cinder into a particularly fruitful site of generic hybridity. As Diana B. and Alessia M. note in their analysis, Meyer resists the princess arc through withholding the transformation and instead is centered on an unstable, developing self that does not need to be perfected as a condition for agency. Moreover, they claim

that Cinder "refuses to participate in heteronormative romance narrative" ("Subverting the Princess Narrative"). This inversion is particularly potent in relation to the book's sci-fi simulacra, through which dystopian elements, electronic surveillance and corporeal augmentations delineate the constructedness of fairy tale fantasies.

Ultimately, Cinder, as Gonzales Jasmin observes in her undergraduate thesis, is an important work to think through the mechanics of genre adaptation within both the YA canon and fairy-tale tradition. Gonzales asserts that Cinder's cybernetic enhancements do not merely update Cinderella—they completely reframe what it means to be human, female, and heroic in a digital age (Gonzales 10, 13).

Looking at it this way, Meyer's work can be viewed as a fresh take on familiar fairy tales, combining speculative innovation with well-known components and classical motifs. This paradigm shift speaks to and enacts contemporary fears of embodiment, agency, and visibility by dispelling the formula of fairy-tale romance and magical rescue in the service of self-authored identity. As a result, Cinder occupies a sort of liminal space—between genres, between genders, between human and posthuman, between narratively progressive form and culturally regressive desire—where fairy tales are not just retold but also rewritten to make a statement about a world where identity categories are contested, fluid, and technologically intertwined.

The Posthuman Cyborg as Fragmented Self

The novel's main theme is the protagonist's reimagining as a posthuman cyborg, an embodiment that defies conventional notions of selfhood and is intrinsically fragmented. Cinder's inhuman characteristics are what most clearly define her: "36% percent of her body is not human", including an "artificial leg and arm" (qtd in Aliyev and Abed 208). This radical turning away from a "whole" body is not simply a cutaneous displacement, but indeed an ontological one, as noted by Aliyev and Abed who state, "her cyborg body is one of the main changes in the retelling or rewriting the new ideal woman that Meyer wants to create is the posthuman woman, desexualized with superior strength and knowledge" (qtd in Aliyev and Abed 209).

This representation unmistakably coincides with Donna Haraway's seminal concept of the cyborg. Haraway posits that "by the late twentieth century, our time, a mythic time, we are all chimeras, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism; in short, we are cyborgs" (Haraway 150). She views the cyborg as "a condensed image of both imagination and material reality, the two joined centres

structuring any possibility of historical transformation" (150). Cinder's physical reality, a blend of organic and synthetic, embodies this very hybridity. Haraway's "utopic vision of body transcendence" presents the cyborg as a "hybrid of machine and organism, a creature from social reality as well as a creature of fiction" (qtd in Aliyev and Abed 203). Through the cyborg, Haraway seeks to "change the history and structure of society" (Aliyev and Abed 203). And this, in fact, is what Meyer's Cinder embarks upon in the story—a revolution that hopes to invert the existing order of things.

The cyborg, in Haraway's view, "is a creature in a post-gender world" and "has no truck with bisexuality, pre-oedipal symbiosis, unalienated labour, or other seductions to organic wholeness through a final appropriation of all the powers of the parts into a higher unity" (Haraway 150). This aligns with Meyer's portrayal of Cinder as she "desexualizes Cinder's body such that the 'passionate' character of Cinderella becomes transformed in Cinder" (Aliyev and Abed 209). Cinder is described as "incapable of crying or blushing, due to her missing tear ducts" and "brain monitors that prevent her system from overheating" (Aliyev and Abed 209). This desexualization challenges the "exaggerated feminized way" in which the female body is often depicted, as well as the "faulty image of woman for the generations to come" (Aliyev and Abed 198).

Meyer's "posthuman female image" for Cinder is "superior compared to the delicate female image of the traditional Cinderella" (Aliyev and Abed 209). From a patriarchal perspective, this makes Cinder a "monster woman" due to her "active, unfeminine and aggressive female" traits (Aliyev and Abed 210). However, Meyer presents "a balanced image of the female body model" for her adolescent audience, associating Cinder with "technology and being expert in it," an image that defies the "sci-fi female trend of the patriarchy that almost always depicts woman characters as incompatible with technology" (Aliyev and Abed 210). This portrayal of Cinder as an "outcast cyborg and monster" is deliberate, as "monsters are always defying the boundaries in the Western culture" (Aliyev and Abed 210).

The concept of the posthuman body as an "amalgam, a collection of heterogeneous components, a material-informational entity" (Hayles 3) is vividly brought to life in Cinder. N. Katherine Hayles' work underscores how information no longer has a body, resulting in identity becoming disembodied from matter, and how the "historically specific construction called the human is giving way to a different construction called the posthuman" (Hayles 2). Cinder is situated right at the centre

of this posthuman evolutionary trend. Ferne Merrylees notes that "the posthuman in these novels is an expansion of the socially constructed human form into the next evolution of a hybrid being, not only becoming but belonging to something more" (76).

This form of hybridity, nevertheless, does not exist in social vacuum in the text. Cinder faces significant prejudice and "technophobia". The baker, Chang Sacha, "reproves her children for playing next to a cyborg's stall, [meeting] Cinder's gaze before [knotting] her lips and dragging her son away while Cinder mutters, 'It's not like wires are contagious'" (Meyer qtd in Insenga 57). Her adoptive stepmother, Adri, also "degrade[s] Cinder and her kind, becoming bellwethers of the empire's hostile attitudes toward posthumans in their midst" (Insenga 59). Cinder's physical modifications are seen as "less valuable than their fully organic fleshy counterparts" (Insenga 57), reinforcing a "discriminatory ethic of care that forces cyborgs to submit to medical trials" (Insenga 60). This social prejudice reflects the genuine fears people hold about biotechnological developments and the potential for a "new social hierarchy resulting in prolonged, global strife" (Fukuyama qtd in Insenga 58).

Even though she is an outcast/"Other"/"freak", Cinder's body image issues and conflicting identity are portrayed as universal adolescent concerns. Ferne Merrylees notes, "[f]or young adults negotiating the transition from childhood to adulthood, identity is constantly being reevaluated in terms of how they are perceived, how they perceive themselves, and how they wish to be perceived by others" (75). Cinder's struggle with and eventual acceptance of, her dual body, as Merrylees notes, is key for furthering representation and re-imagining of body image and embodiment within YA literature. This undermines the conventional idea of a stable, unified self as something "emergent rather than given, distributed rather than located solely in consciousness, emerging from and integrated into a chaotic world rather than occupying a position of mastery and control removed from it" (Hayles 291).

A Short Note on Autofictional Identity

Theoretical use of autofictional identity delves deeply into the symbiotic relationship between memory, the origin of self, and the actual process of self-creation, frequently rendering the distinction between what is "real" and what is "invented" (Effe and Lawlor 1). All

these levels of complexity erode the idea of a single, stable self and redefine identity as a dynamic, non-unitary and fragmented construction (Allamand 52).

The way autofiction handles memory is one of the main ways it undermines a stable identity. Autofiction uses memory as a creative, even unreliable, narrative tool that is essential to defining the malleable boundaries of the self, rather than as a neutral repository of past experience.

Autofiction consistently highlights the fallibility and constructed nature of memory, positioning it not as a passive record of the past, but as an active process of imaginative re-creation (Effe and Lawlor 25-26, 35). This viewpoint reveals that "even the order in which facts are presented creates somewhat fictional relations" (Effe and Lawlor 26), thereby undermining the autobiographical claim to absolute truth.

Traditional theories of autobiography are both resonant and complicated by this emphasis on memory as an imaginative act. A framework for comprehending the autobiographical project is provided by Philippe Lejeune's seminal work, but autofiction purposefully goes beyond his model by embracing the fictional elements present in personal narrative.

Philippe Lejeune's idea of autobiography, rooted in a "retrospective prose narrative of someone's own existence" (qtd in Effe and Lawlor 92), is complicated by autofiction's engagement with memory. While Lejeune noted that the "Autobiographical Pact" emphasizes how identity can be "conveyed to, and conceived by, readers" rather than implying a "hypothetical subjective unity", autofiction takes this a step further by deliberately showcasing memory's plasticity (qtd in Allamand 52). For instance, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's autobiography, Dichtung und Wahrheit (Poetry and Truth), foregrounds this blurring, with "Dichtung" (poetry/fiction) being understood as the "driving force of truth" (Effe and Lawlor 26, 24). Goethe even "invented love affairs for his younger years that did not actually take place" and changed the chronological order of events to create a "more rounded narrative," arguing that "poetry and fiction [are] more adequate producers of autobiographical truth than mere facts could be" (Effe and Lawlor 25). The autofictional mode is characterized by this creative manipulation of memory for the purpose of a more profound "truth."

This fictionality has ramifications that go beyond memory to the self's fundamental makeup. Autofiction delves deeply into the idea of origins, questioning and fragmenting it rather than confirming a

fundamental truth. Thus, the genre is in line with more general philosophical issues regarding identity discontinuity, multiplicity, and hybridity.

Autofiction inherently grapples with the question of origins and the self as a constructed, often hybrid, entity, challenging the notion of a fixed, unitary identity (Effe and Lawlor 1). There is a significant parallel between autofiction's fragmentation of the self and posthuman theory, especially in N. Katherine Hayles's writings. Her explanation of networked subjectivity and distributed cognition offers a convincing framework for comprehending how identity frequently arises from collective, technological, and external forces in autofiction and contemporary literature more generally.

Particularly pertinent in this context is N. Katherine Hayles's work on the posthuman topic, which contends that the posthuman challenges the conventional liberal humanist self, which is viewed as a "sole proprietor over one's own person." The posthuman posits a "distributed cognition located in disparate parts that may be in only tenuous communication with one another" (qtd. in Hervey 29-30). This networked subjectivity is extensively explored in young adult literature. For instance, in The Unwritten, the protagonist Tom Taylor discovers that his very "biology is literally composed of words" and that he is "made up of the collective unconsciousness of his father's fandom" (Hervey 42, 40). This portrays identity not as an internal essence but as a "cultural composite," largely "informed by the pervasive technologies that inscribe the self" (Hervey 29). The novel dramatically illustrates the "anxiety that there are no firm foundations" for reality or self, with a monster character stating, "It is frightening to think of the world as having no firm foundations. Frightening to meet one's maker"(Hervey 42). This suggests that "we are our own makers," yet this is undermined by the power of the "collective unconscious" (Hervey 42).

Autofiction questions the process of identity formation through narrative itself, even as these theoretical models explain how identity is formed. This type of writing is performative rather than merely representational; it becomes a proactive tool for creating and changing the self, particularly in opposition to ideas such as the "death of the author." Autofiction goes beyond simple representation to actively participate in self-authorship as a self-creation process, in which writing itself becomes a tool for self-transformation (Effe and Lawlor 71). The conventional "death of the author" theory contrasts with this, as autofiction "rebuttal[s] the death of the author" by overtly re-inscribing the authorial presence, albeit a fragmented or hybridized

one (Effe and Lawlor 102, 183).

Despite being fundamental, Lejeune's idea of the autobiographical pact becomes more flexible in the context of autofiction. Autofiction both upholds and undermines the agreement, blurring the lines between reality and fiction to make room for creative exploration and continuous self-building. The "autobiographical pact," where "author, narrator, and character share the same name" (Effe and Lawlor 42-43), is central to Lejeune's definition, but autofiction paradoxically "subscrib[es] at the same time and contradictorily to the autobiographical pact and the novelistic pact, perhaps in order to abolish their limits or limitations" (qtd. in Effe and Lawlor 32). This "oscillation between fictionality and factuality" (Effe and Lawlor 32) is key to its operation. For authors, this "act of autofictionalization" allows for "creative, explorative thinking in the pursuit of self-understanding, self-performance and self-creation" (Effe and Lawlor 66).

Autofictional Parallels in Cinder: Memory, Origins, and Self-Authorship

While Cinder is ostensibly a science fiction novel, its narrative structure and character development subtly align with key tenets of autofiction, particularly in its exploration of fragmented memory, ambiguous origins, and the protagonist's journey toward self-authorship.

A significant parallel lies in the autofictional emphasis on the "fragmentation of the self" and the "incompleteness that is characteristic of autofictional projects" (Effe and Lawlor 9). Serge Doubrovsky, who coined the term "autofiction," posited that it "doesn't perceive someone's life to be a whole. It is only concerned with separate fragments, with broken up chunks of existence, and a divided subject who doesn't coincide with him or herself" (qtd. in Effe and Lawlor 102). This strikes a deep chord with Cinder's situation. As a direct result of her cybernetic operation, she had no recollection of her early years before the age of eleven. Later on, she learns that her entire "childhood" and "parents" were part of "a made-up history. A made-up girl" (Meyer, 118). The autofictional investigation of self-narration as a construct is reflected directly in this "made-up history," where even "if the events and facts recounted are 'strictly real,' the 'adventure' of language produces a fiction" (Doubrovsky, qtd. in Effe and Lawlor 41). The idea that Cinder's past is a fabrication, a narrative imposed upon her, forces her, and the reader, to confront the constructed nature of identity and memory. Ferne Merrylees notes that Cinder "has no memories from

before she was eleven due to her cybernetic operation" and, like Pressia in Pure, "dislikes the idea of someone getting inside her head and making changes over which she herself has no control" (84-85).

The revelation of Cinder's true identity as Princess Selene, a Lunar "shell" who is immune to the deadly virus and possesses dormant glamour abilities (Merrylees 84, Insenga 63, 67), further complicates her sense of self. This moment is not merely a plot twist but a dramatization of how "autobiographical truth is not a fixed but an evolving content in an intricate process of self-discovery and self-creation" (Eakin qtd. in Effe and Lawlor 215). Cinder's multiple identities – cyborg, mechanic, fugitive, Lunar, Princess Selene – embody the "non-linear conception of the self" that characterizes autofictional writing (Menn and Schuh qtd in Effe and Lawlor 102). She grapples with these "heterogeneous selves while gazing into a portscreen at her reflection" (Insenga 63), an act forbidden to Lunars, highlighting her internal struggle with her fragmented identity. The phrase "Lunar. And cyborg. And a fugitive" (Meyer, 127) encapsulates this multiplicity, underscoring the layered and evolving nature of her identity. This "multifaceted identity" is claimed publicly by Cinder, challenging the notion of a singular, fixed self (Insenga 66).

Earlier in the text, a more subtle yet equally revelatory moment of autofictional resonance appears during Cinder's initial encounter with Prince Kai at the market. Cinder is scrambling to keep her identity as a cyborg secret even before Kai suddenly shows up in her stall:

> She covered her steel hand first, and though her right palm began to sweat immediately inside the thick material, she felt more comfortable with the gloves on, hiding the plating of her left hand. (Meyer 10).

This form of performative concealment provides a case in point of the sort of narrative self-fashioning typical of autofiction in which the subject simultaneously reveals and masks itself, for reasons of self-protection and narrative control. As Effe and Lawlor point out, autofictional subjects present the audience with a new self-narrative, and, thus, "[t]ruthfulness in the self-portrait becomes negotiable due to the multiple, differing, and at times contradictory portrayals of the self" (162).

Cinder's decision to hide her prosthesis isn't simply embarrassment, it's an act of self-narration, a form of authority over what her identity shows to others. Her hybrid form, both human and machine, has not yet become an empowering one so much as a negotiated one, the product of social outcast and internalized stigma. This duality reflects, again, Hayles's notion that "the body is the

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original prosthesis we all learn to manipulate" (3); in this case, the manipulation is both physical and narrative. In covering up her technological componentry, Cinder tries to project an identity that is legible within, for lack of a better term, humanist hegemony, however fleeting or unstable that may prove to be. This performative act thus concretely underscores autofiction's thematic priority of identity as no more lived than actively authored in real time.

Cinder knows exactly that everyone around her despises her for being different.

> She never broadcast the reason for her talent. The fewer people who knew she was cyborg, the better. She was sure she'd go mad if all the market shopkeepers looked at her with the same disdain as Chang Sacha did." (Meyer 14)

Cinder is ashamed of her difference; she fears that if everyone found out, no one would treat her as a human being. She hides it even from Prince Kai—she doesn't believe he could love her for who she truly is. Several people in the novel's world don't consider Cinder human and look at her with hatred and contempt, especially her guardian, Adri, who embodies the archetypal wicked stepmother from fairy tales. In Adri's eyes, Cinder is nothing but a useless burden—a slave she keeps in her home out of reluctant mercy, whose only value lies in her ability to earn money for the family through her mechanic work, so that Adri and her daughters don't have to work.

The contempt she feels toward Cinder becomes apparent on several occasions, especially in the scene where she refuses to let Cinder attend the ball. She mocks her and even suggests selling her off for parts along with Iko, the household android ("Perhaps I will have to sell both of you off as spare parts" (Meyer 182)), then tells her: "It will be a miracle if you can find something suitable to wear that will hide your"— her gaze dropped to Cinder's boots—"eccentricities. But, yes. If you fix the hover, I suppose you can go to the ball" (22). Later, she cruelly confronts her: "You are not part of this family. You aren't even human anymore" (Meyer 182).

Adri's mockery, and the constant need to hide her difference from unwanted gazes, severely undermines Cinder's self-confidence. She does not believe she is worthy or that Kai could ever love her for who she truly is. She does not see her own body as a beautiful female body, but rather as a repulsive mechanism—something that could evoke disgust in others, and she assumes in Kai as well. The cybernetic nature of her body robs her of her belief in her own femininity.

> If Cinder's body had ever been predisposed to femininity, it had been ruined by whatever the surgeons had done to her, leaving her with a stick-straight figure. Too angular. Too boyish. Too awkward with her heavy artificial leg. (Meyer 28)

Later, when it becomes clear that she and Kai have strong feelings for each other, Cinder is constantly terrified that Prince Kai will find out she's a cyborg—and hate her because of it. This is how she thinks about herself: "A girl. A machine. A freak." (Meyer 86)

While she thinks of her own body with disgust and considers it monstrous, she imagines what it would be like to be a real human.

> Then the prince reached for her hand—her cyborg hand.
> Cinder tensed, terrified that he would feel the hard metal, even through her gloves, and yet even more afraid to pull away lest he find it suspicious. She mentally urged the robotic limb to go soft, to be pliant, to be human, as she watched Kai lift the hand and kiss the back of it. She held her breath, overwhelmed and embarrassed. (Meyer 109)

Cinder's moments of reflection and self-awareness are particularly illustrative of autofiction's concern for narrative instability and self-formation. The revulsion she feels toward her own monstrosity—her mechanical body—is only intensified by the discovery in Dr. Erland's lab that she is, in fact, a Lunar, someone capable of manipulating innocent people. Lunars are seen as ancient enemies by people on Earth, and Queen Levana, the Empress of the Moon also wants to kill her. Cinder's first reaction is to deny that she could be Lunar. She, again, oscillates between alienation and fragmentation.

"I'm not Lunar." She wrenched her glove off and waved her hand at him. "I'm cyborg. You don't think that's bad enough?" (Meyer 117)

Later, when she reflects on this, she becomes even more desperate:

> To be cyborg and Lunar. One was enough to make her a mutant, an outcast, but to be both? She shuddered. Lunars were a cruel, savage people. They murdered their shell children. They lied and scammed and brainwashed each other because they could. They didn't care who they hurt, so long as it benefitted themselves. She was not one of them. (Meyer 118)

What this passage divulges is that, for Cinder, the concept of humanity—or what it means to be human—is not primarily about being a cyborg, but about the kind of person one is: how one behaves, and what kind of life one chooses to lead. For her, the true source of

monstrosity lies in the cruelty of the Lunars, which she sees as the real threat to human existence. And yet, if she wants to save the world, she must accept her new identity—that she is the lost Princess Selene—and embrace the abilities that come with being Lunar. Her first reaction, however, is denial: "No. I can't. I can't be a queen or a princess or—I'm nobody. I'm a cyborg!" (Meyer 248)

And it's this billowing of identity here—princess, Lunar, cyborg, mechanic—that emphasizes the discorroboration of story that's mapped onto her and the truth of her own self within. This fragmented catalog of identities mirrors the process by which autofiction figures the self as a patchwork of incompatible selves, refusing long-term re-habitation. As Effe and Lawlor write, autofiction "doesn't perceive someone's life to be a whole. It is only concerned with separate fragments" (102). Cinder's disbelief—"I'm nobody. I'm a cyborg!"—indicates not only her refusal of external identification but also an understanding of truth as both constructed and conditional. Her subjective identity has no fixed point of origin or final determination; rather, it is compelled to be perpetually re-narrated and negotiated. For if in this area she is to deny—"She can't be a princess"—that denial is not simply that of fact but, affirmatively, the ideological freight that attends such a role.

Cinder's emerging narrative builds truth through selective emphasis, imaginative synthesis, and emotional resonance, not through empirical precision, just like Goethe's Dichtung und Wahrheit (Effe and Lawlor 24–26). The elevator scene, where she falls in love with Kai, becomes a turning point in the story where the main character's identity is caught between what she is told and what she can confidently say is hers. This is similar to the autofictional project of unstable but self-authored truth.

After Cinder is publicly humiliated at the royal ball, there is another important moment that shows how autofictional narrative self-invention works. Cinder is put in the palace dungeon after fighting back against Queen Levana's control and being physically hurt and exposed. In this rare moment of peace and quiet, she starts to think about her own power:

> A tingle passed down her spine. A strange new electricity was thrumming beneath her skin, telling her she wasn't just a cyborg anymore. She was Lunar now. She could make people see things that weren't there. Feel things they shouldn't feel. Do things they didn't mean to do.
> She could be anyone. Become anyone.
> The thought both sickened and frightened her, but the resolve made

her calm again. (Meyer 250)

This internal monologue shows a change from reactive to authorial subjectivity. Cinder is no longer the subject of other people's stories; she is now in charge of her own story. This change recalls Meretoja's idea that autofictional stories help people foster "metanarrative awareness," where characters consciously rewrite inherited templates (qtd. in Effe and Lawlor 10). The fairytale scaffold, "Cinderella at the Ball," isn't thrown away; instead, it's changed into a story of resistance and political defiance. This act of self-authorship is important because it comes after public exposure and physical fragmentation. Cinder is literally "in pieces" (her metal foot is missing and her leg is hurt), but it is in this broken state that she takes back control of the story.

As Hayles argues, posthuman identity "emerges from and is integrated into a chaotic world," not from mastery or control (291). Likewise, autofiction honors the ability to write through fragmentation rather than coherence. Cinder's declaration—"She could be anyone. Become anyone"—is a metafictional rejection of deterministic genre roles as much as it is a protest against political oppression. Because of her technological hybridity, rather than in spite of it, her story turns into an autofictional act in which agency is reclaimed through the storytelling process itself.

Thus, Cinder's journey is one of profound self-authorship and agency. Unlike the traditional Cinderella, who is passive and waits for rescue, Cinder displays an "active and independent persona [that] prompts her quest to uncover her lost identity" (Aliyev and Abed 209). Her decision to rebel after learning the truth from Dr. Erland, and her proactive efforts to attend the ball and expose Queen Levana, signify a conscious act of shaping her own destiny (Aliyev and Abed 209). This self-driven transformation from a "passive Cinderella" to a "champion freedom fighter" (Aliyev and Abed 208) is a core element of Meyer's revisionary project.

This aligns with the affordances of autofiction as a literary strategy. As Hanna Meretoja explains, "metanarrative autofiction" offers "new perspectives on, and has the potential to heighten, the collective narrative agency of readers and writers" (qtd in Effe and Lawlor 10). Such texts critically engage with "cultural narrative templates and their role in how we make sense of our lives"(qtd in Effe 10). Cinder's narrative can be seen as her actively challenging the "master-narratives" of female passivity and pre-ordained destiny, both from the fairy tale and the oppressive Lunar regime. Autofiction, as a creative space, allows authors to "situate her life-long struggles within

a fictionalized context that moves away from a strict autobiographical frame" (Effe and Lawlor 215). Similarly, Cinder's fictional journey allows Meyer to explore universal struggles of identity and agency within a technologically mediated world. This process makes visible the interplay of fact and fiction, prompting a "heightened awareness of the stakes of both fiction and truth-telling" (Effe and Lawlor 56).

Moreover, the novel's serial nature within The Lunar Chronicles series reinforces this autofictional sensibility of an "unstable subjectivity" and "discontinuous, non-linear, contingent, and multi-faceted sense of self" (Effe and Lawlor 9, 102). Ricarda Menn and Melissa Schuh argue that serial literary works pay "more attention to the incompleteness that is characteristic of autofictional projects" and invite us to "consider an author's entire oeuvre or a series of works as a dynamic site of self-expression and as an autofictional act" (qtd in Effe and Lawlor 9). Cinder's journey in the following books (Scarlet, Cress, Winter) represents a process of self-fashioning and growing, and is symptomatic of a self that is "unfinished, contingent, and subject to revision" (Effe and Lawlor 104). While physically represented as a cyborg, and with an identity in constant transformation from mechanic to princess, she represents a "shifting screw" which adds up to identity-in-the-making, reflecting the autofictional "oscillation between fictionality and factuality" and the never-ending self-fashioning of the self (Effe and Lawlor 7).

Taken together, these scenes chart Cinder's development from a passive recipient of others' stories to an active—but also fragmented—author of her own story. Her hiding of her own mechanic hand in the marketplace, wrestling with multiple, conflicting labels in the palace laboratory, or lashing out and taking control in the aftermath of public exposure work according to the logic of autofictional self-fashioning. Through her cyborg body she is both metaphor and medium: an isthmus on which technological augmentation and social expectation and narrative authorship meet. Instead of fitting into a static role—princess, mechanic, test subject, girl—Cinder rewrites and remixes these narrative identities as she goes.

Much like autofictional protagonists, she shifts between performance and authenticity, fragmentation and coherence, memory and invention. In the process, Cinder not only destabilizes the fixity of identity, but also highlights the inherently narrative, always rewritten nature of selfhood in a mediated culture.

Digital Embodiment and Contemporary Anxieties

The cyberpunk setting of Cinder and its depiction of a protagonist linked to technology functions as a metaphorical response to current worries about digital embodiment, agency, and authorship in an age when everything and everyone seem to be hyper-connected. Shannon Hervey notes the "pervasiveness of the internet and social network culture" has complicated adolescence, raising "anxieties and concerns that add to and sometimes exacerbate the age-old difficulties of growing up," often "pivot[ing] around self-representation and social projection of self" (Hervey 27). Indeed, Cinder isn't explicitly about social media, but its central concerns — with information and control, with machine dominance and human vulnerability — directly address these digital anxieties.

The novel depicts a society where cyborgs are "commodities rather than people" (Merrylees 77), subjected to forced medical trials (Insenga 60). This commodification of the body, reminiscent of concerns about self-commodification in digital spaces, underscores the precariousness of agency in a technologically advanced society (Hervey 31, 34). As Diane P. Michelfelder points out, "social networking and participating in online communities depends on a process of self-commodification" (qtd in Hervey 31). In Cinder, the state (New Beijing) and people like Adri (Cinder's stepmother) treat Cinder's cyborg body as property, something to be exploited or controlled, rather than an autonomous entity (Insenga 59-60).

However, unlike many dystopian narratives that present technology as solely "disempowering" (Hervey 30) or "an insidious obstacle to self-actualization" (Hervey 28), Cinder offers a more nuanced view. Though it recognizes the dangers of technocracy, and the discrimination faced by hybrid bodies, it depicts technology as something which can provide agency and strength, something which is key to Cinder's resilience. Cinder's cybernetic parts provide her with enhanced abilities, such as detecting lies and downloading information (Merrylees 85, 77). As Ferne Merrylees states, "Cinder's body gives her the tools to help her navigate her class-divided society, protects her from Queen Levana's mind control, and monitors her systems when she is placed in stressful situations" (86).

A striking moment that illustrates the tension between Cinder's digital embodiment and her social visibility occurs early in the novel, when she does her best to remove her mechanical foot so that she can work on it. The narration reads: "She hated the pincer tool, hated the wires and tubes, hated that her foot had been slipping lately. Hated that

she knew how to fix it. Hated that it was a part of her" (Meyer 8). This passage exemplifies the deeply conflicted body: Cinder is mechanically inclined, but her comfort with her prosthetics causes her self-hatred, not empowerment. Her resistance to the devices that enable her to get around is motivated by social embarrassment, not physical discomfort. The last clause — "hated that it was a part of her" — takes it in a different direction; she's not disgusted by her cyborg malfunctioning, she's disgusted by internalized stigma around tech difference. This corresponds to Hayles's claim that embodiment is never neutral: it is culturally coded, and frequently causes anxiety when the body does not satisfy humanist requirements of oneness and naturalness (Hayles 48).

Here, Cinder's cyborgness becomes the source of an alienation not merely from others, but from herself—a separation mirroring (if not surpassing) current real-world anxieties about bodily mediation, digital enhancement, and the decay of a "natural" self.

Later, we see this taking place when doctors in the medical trials were running tests on cyborgs to test the antidote to Letumosis and the holoscreen made Cinder's internal systems visible to those in the medical facility:

> Her retina display informed her that she was now connected to RATIO DETECTOR 2.3. SCANNING…2%…7%…16%… The machine hummed on the table behind her. Cinder imagined a subtle current of electricity slipping along her wires. She felt it most where the skin joined with metal, a tingle where the blood had been cut off.
> 63%… (Meyer 56)

That she is hunted — reduced to data for her physical and mental states, deprived of selfhood — also suggests anxieties about what in digital culture is called the "quantified selfhood". As Hervey comments, teen subjectivity is currently characterized by this conflict between an authentic self and the pressure to perform a highly curated, digital self (Hervey 27). The way Cinder's fear turns into a "spike" revealing her "life stats" on the netscreen rather than a sensation is another nice example of the flattening of interiority in techno-surveillance systems. And yet this hyper-digital readability doesn't make her feel shallow — it only makes her feel shrewd. She becomes a prototype of a character who simultaneously exists within data and in resistance to it. This moment is a literalization of the breakdown of boundaries between interior and embodied experience and the external technological apprehension of phenomena, reflecting how, as Hayles argues, "information cannot exist apart from the embodiment that gives rise to it" (Hayles 48). Cinder's fear, in code, reterritorializes feeling as a

dimension of digital embodiment, not its banishment.

Shortly after this scene, Cinder is truly shocked when she sees the holographic projection of her own body on the screen.

> It was as if someone had chopped her down the middle, dividing her front half from her back half, and then put her cartoonish image into a medical textbook. Her heart, her brain, her intestines, her muscles, her blue veins. Her control panel, her synthetic hand and leg, wires that trailed from the base of her skull all the way down her spine and out to her prosthetic limbs. The scar tissue where flesh met metal. A small dark square in her wrist—her ID chip. (...)
> She had not known about the metal vertebrae along her spine, or the four metal ribs, or the synthetic tissue around her heart, or the metal splints along the bones in her right leg. (Meyer 57)

The holographic image of her own body intensifies her horror at her cyborg form and further confuses her about who she really is. The fragmented body—assembled from various parts—also functions as a kind of narrative foreshadowing: it anticipates everything Cinder is about to discover about herself, her past, and her ability to reconstruct her identity. Although the holographic image of her cybernetic body is initially shocking, Dr. Erland refers to it as a masterpiece—a sign of love from someone who protected her and saved her life (by transforming her into a cyborg) while keeping her true identity hidden. The horror evoked by the fusion of human and machine gradually gives way to self-confidence: Cinder slowly begins to accept her body just as she begins to accept her past—who she truly is and what her future role might be. This positive portrayal of technological enhancement aligns with a perspective that "the full expression of human capability can be seen precisely to depend on the splice rather than being imperiled by it" (Hayles 290).

The novel's exploration of the "disappearing divide between the virtual and the material" (Hervey 33) is evident in Cinder's very being. Her biological and mechanical components are so deeply intertwined that they form a single, functioning entity. This resonates with Hayles' assertion that "human identity is essentially an informational pattern rather than an embodied enaction" (Hayles xi). The distinction between Cinder's "human" and "cyborg" eyes when she sees electricity sizzling across her metal hand (Insenga 66) illustrates this blurred boundary, hinting that "we have always been posthuman" (Hayles 291). Cinder's existence challenges the traditional "human/nonhuman binary" (White 138), making her an "assemblage, co-evolving with other forms of life, enmeshed with the environment and technology"

(Nayar qtd in Chen 182).

Cinder's story, of moving from being despised as "a thing" (Insenga 59) to taking pride in her identity, begins the process of self-authorship in a technologically saturated world. Her story provides a rhetorical lens through which we're able to see how identity is forged and remade in digital settings that are marked by fluid and contested self-representation. She constantly narrates herself into power, anchoring her difference as a hybrid in front of her, rather than a thing to be hidden or—it should go without saying—ashamed. This aligns with Haraway's concept of "cyborg writing" as being "about the power to survive... by seizing the tools to mark the world that marked them as other" (Haraway qtd in Merrylees 92). Cinder, by embracing her Otherness, transforms it into strength, offering a hopeful model for adolescent readers contending with their own evolving selfhoods in a complex, digital age. (Merrylees 92-93) The novel, therefore, becomes a space for readers to "explore not only body image and identity creation, but how humans fit within the various and complex systems that make up our posthuman world" (Merrylees 93).

Conclusion

Marissa Meyer's book, Cinder, combines elements of young adult sci-fi and fairy tales to explore deep questions about identity. The main character, Cinder, is a unique blend of human and cyborg, a fractured posthuman, whose complex (human and inhuman) nature reflects the challenges we face in understanding ourselves in a world heavily influenced by technology. Her hybrid body, mysterious beginnings and journey of self-invention echo the instability and ongoing construction that is part of autobiographical narratives.

Also, Meyer cleverly uses Cinder's story to highlight the shift of gender roles we find in traditional fairy tales, while also connecting to modern ideas about what it means to be human in today's world. Making use of theorizations of posthuman identity in the vein of Donna Haraway, we can safely assert that Cinder's physical differences challenge the idea of a perfect female figure, demonstrating how her cyborg features can actually empower her. Her cyborg augmentatios recall Haraway's vision of the cyborg as an empowering chimera capable of overcoming social constraints and biased politics, while Cinder's physical dismemberment and desexualization actively subvert socially constructed notions of the ideal female form. Because of her cyborg aspects, Cinder's "Otherness" reflects a broader adolescent quest for identity and belonging and compels young readers to

understand and relate to a number of theoretical abstractions.

Additionally, Cinder activates autofictional elements with Cinder's "made-up history" (Meyer 118) and the eventual discovery of her real lineage. This instability of the narrative reflects the uncertainty, the fluidity of the autobiographical truth as well as the ceaseless act of self-invention, rather than the discovery of a coherent and consistent self, that is, a fixed identity. The way Cinder actively pursues her own agency and the fact that she is engaged in a "self-writing" process in the face of external manipulation is proof of the kind of self-invention autofiction foregrounds. This process transforms her from being a passive female fairytale archetype to a proactive actor in her own right, able to implement change in her own destiny and defy systems of oppression.

In the end, Cinder positions itself as a complex interplay of genre hybridity and identity production: posthuman embodiment, autofictional taxonomies, digital subjectivities all come together, serving as the meeting point of these convergences. Utilizing Hayles's concept of the posthuman as a "material-information entity" (3), I claim that the novel visualizes Cinder's body in such a way as it becomes both a locus of oppression and a potential space for hope -an interface where the self is recovered. The same goes for Braidotti's nomadic subjectivity, echoing in Cinder 's refusal to be one definitive identity only, and her movements through the roles of mechanic, princess, cyborg, Lunar — heightens the narrative process of autofictive self-building. Instead of returning to a stable self or resolving the tensions of her hybrid status, Cinder becomes a figure whose identity is socially contested and emotionally inscribed. The novel thus prefigures today's concerns about technological mediation while also providing an affirmative redefinition of what it is to be human in a networked world.

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Evidence of Autofiction in Mario Puzo's *The Fortunate Pilgrim*

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Abstract: This paper focuses its attention on particular instances of autofiction, a somewhat obscure literary concept, that were identified within the novel written by Mario Puzo, The Fortunate Pilgrim. The author's real-life stories and experiences that were morphed into fictionalized versions within his novel are pointed out in clear comparisons and also supported with significant testimonies or quotations. The Italian-American author employs autofiction within his literary works in order to alleviate the profound wounds caused by worldwide historical crises or phenomena, such as the American Dream. Not only global catastrophes, but also personal ones are to be dismantled later on through concise analysis and comparison with the authentic life of the author and passages from the text.

Key words: Autofiction, immigrant experience, identity, Italian-American experience, American Dream, memories.

In the following pages, I am to make a significant effort in what regards the applicability of autofiction, a somewhat ambiguous literary concept, that is yet to grasp solid foregrounds, in correlation with an extraordinary novel, *The Fortunate Pilgrim*, written by one of the greatest Italian-American novelists, Mario Puzo. Therefore, the central focus of the paper is placed upon the literal applicability of autofiction within Puzo's less commercially embedded artistic creation, *The Fortunate Pilgrim*. My attempt to deliver such a daring affirmation is favored by the undeniable commercial success of *The Godfather*, an apparent worldwide sensation, which occurred simply to accommodate the author's financial necessities.

> In 1967, Mario Puzo had written only part of his novel *The Godfather* when Paramount gave him a $12,000 advance with the

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promise of an additional $75,000 if a film were made. Published in 1969, the novel was an immense success, remaining on the *New York Times* best-seller list for 67 weeks, and prompting the studio to get a film made quickly. (Kerbel)

While Puzo's most appraised literary and artistic chef d'oeuvre *The Godfather* is well-known in the academic realm, his other works tend to be overlooked, or even overshadowed if I may, in order to preserve his notoriety for his one-hit wonder novel. However, even with the inevitable passage of time, *The Godfather*, the saga of the Corleone family remains a classic and holds a special place in people's hearts, even in modern times according to recent data.

> THE GODFATHER is firmly enshrined in the world cinema pantheon. In the British Film Institute's most recent (2022) decennial Greatest Films of All Time poll, which amassed votes from about 1,600 critics, academics, and archivists, the film ranked #12; on the 2022 BFI poll of 480 directors, it ranked #3, after 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY and CITIZEN KANE. (Kerbel)

The Fortunate Pilgrim was published in 1965, way before Puzo's massive international breakthrough. This novel also delves into the journey through life, of an Italian-American family, filled with plenty of cultural and historical aspects, that shape the identity of the Italian immigrant. At this point scholars might wonder whether it is worth immersing themselves deeper into Puzo's artistic and literary finesse, which happens to be one other aim of this particular paper, an open invitation to in-depth knowledge. To prepare for a similar pondering situation of the scholarly public, the inquiry for in-depth knowledge shall never cease at the popular works of the artist, producer or writer. From my humble perspective, the typical reader is unable to become a connoisseur, regardless of the area, if they are familiarized exclusively with the mainstream novels or pieces of art of the creator. Regardless of the brutally candid nature of my opinion, I cannot call myself a connoisseur of French literature, for instance, if my corpus is composed entirely by one-hit wonders. In this respect, the interested public should thrive for extensive insight and discover other approaches, which are perhaps less investigated and focused on. In what concerns the aforementioned concept of autofiction, literary critics did not reach a definite consensus, that might dispose of its ambiguous nature. The ambiguous term was coined by the French writer Serge Doubrovsky in 1977 within one of his works, *Fils*.

The impossibility of reaching a satisfactory consensus on the definition of autofiction prompts arguments that it is best to dispose of the term altogether, to replace it with "life writing," perhaps with the addition of a modifier such as "experimental" or "hybrid." It quickly becomes apparent, however, that such labels do little to delineate the specific kinds of hybridity and experimentalism we find in autofictional texts, and would hence lose the conceptual focus that "autofiction" provides. The term is clearly problematic, possibly flawed, which may have to do with Serge Doubrovsky's coining it in passing to describe one particular book, *Fils* (1977). Doubrovsky himself clearly felt that it needed further development, having proposed various descriptions of autofiction in the course of his career. (Effe and Lawlor 1)

The scant description of Doubrovsky's book endorses a large-scale investigation of the concept from the curious readers. "Autofiction" emerged as a result of the assembling process of "auto", which stands for "automatic", at least from my point of view, together with "fiction", which stands for a specific literary genre. From my initial understanding and that of any novice reader, in an effort to further explore the concept, the final products integrate the self, together with the author's reality, or only some snippets of it graciously morphed into fiction. Moreover, the distinction between autobiography (a piece of writing on one's life produced by the person itself) and biography (a piece of writing about one's life produced by somebody else) slightly dispels the concept's vagueness. The following facet of autofiction that needs to be unraveled pertains to the authors' motivation to use the concept within their writings. I am invariably convinced that literature not only blesses writers with coping mechanisms, but also heals and eventually empowers. In a way, literature acts as a remedy and even as a tool for mending the aching soul and mind. Plenty of authors approach autofiction in their novels as a coping mechanism for the global crises, that ruthlessly destroyed the peace and stability of a human society. Puzo's novel published in 1965, recounts events over a span of time, in North America's neighborhood Hell's Kitchen, from the beginning of the 1920's up to the emergence of the Second World War. It most evidently explores an extremely challenged historical period through fictional characters, which are actually inspired by the immediate reality of the author. In effect readers are granted the written testimony of the author, that uses autobiographical information in a fictional text, which sometimes acts as a barrier between them and the constant attacks of the never-ending societal disasters.

Noteworthy similarities between Puzo's life and his characters' journey

It is necessary to take into consideration that writers, who use autofiction in their creations, usually place themselves or their personas as the main representatives. Not only their personal life experience, but also their immediate surroundings materialize into the story. Be it their economic situation, family structure, their loved ones' real names, their jobs, physical appearances, locations and so on. In Puzo's case, *The Fortunate Pilgrim* surprisingly does not concentrate on the author's fictionalized form of himself, but on the matriarch, Lucia Santa. She turns out to have been modelled deliberately in almost perfect concordance with the author's mother.

> Mario Puzo greatly admired his mother, Maria Le Conti Puzo, for her strong and determined character and used her as a model for many of his popular fictional characters, including the matriarch Mamma Lucia in *The Fortunate Pilgrim* and Don Vito Corleone in *The Godfather*. (Sharp 1143)

It is safe to disclose that Puzo tends to break the patterns of autofiction by downplaying the relevance of his fictionalized self in detriment of his mother's respectable characteristics within the novel. So meaningful was the impact of his mother figure in Puzo's life that he completely transformed the novel's route. Initially, the novel was meant to portray the condition of the artist, according to the writer. It should have been about an artist's journey at the dawn of the promising *Roaring Twenties*, when the idea of the *American Dream* took over every Tom, Dick and Harry, including our illustrious author.

> When I came to my "autobiographical novel," the one every writer does about himself, I planned to make myself the sensitive, misunderstood hero, much put upon by his mother and family. To my astonishment my mother took over the book and instead my revenge I got another comeuppance. But it is, I think, my best book. (Wheeler 47)

It seems as the perfect occasion to include even more information from Puzo's life, which needs further comparison with the actual events and overall action from *The Fortunate Pilgrim*.

The author was born on 15th of October, 1920 in a neighborhood called Hell's Kitchen in New York City, from illiterate parents, Antonio and Maria Le Conti Puzo. They came from Avellino, a town outside

Naples and together they had three children. Maria had four children from a previous marriage, but she unfortunately became a widow after losing her then-husband in an accident at the docks. All in all, there were two girls and five boys.

The novel's fictional characters accurately resemble the journey through life of an Italian-American family, during a challenging historical period, in an immigrant slum, evidently inspired from the author's real-life experience. The protagonist family is represented by the Angeluzzi-Corbo's, especially the storyline of the matriarch, Lucia Santa, an illiterate Italian immigrant. She went through two unfortunate marriages, that ultimately culminated with the deaths of both husbands. Consequently, Lucia Santa needed to raise her six children all alone and to make ends meet to the best of her abilities.

Puzo's dream was to become an artist, a writer, to be able to share his artistry with the whole world. He soon realized the improbability of his dream and eventually found work at the railroad company, that had their father, Antonio Puzo working as a trackman.

> My mother, however, wanted me to be a railroad clerk. And that was her *highest* ambition; she would have settled for less. At the age of sixteen when I let everybody know that I was going to be a great writer, my friends and family took the news quite calmly, my mother included. She did not become angry. She quite simply assumed that I had gone off my nut. (Wheeler 36)

The male inhabitants of both the original Italian family, the Puzo and the fictional version of it, the Angeluzzi-Corbo eventually found work at the railroad company, including our beloved author. In what regards the fictional characters, all of them were involved with the railroad at some point; the father, Larry, Vinnie and even Gino. However, Lucia Santa's oldest son from her first marriage, Larry is the only one that spends the most time working at the company throughout the entirety of the novel.

> My father supported his wife and seven children by working as a track man laborer for the New York Central Railroad. My oldest brother worked for the railroad as a brakeman, another brother was a railroad shipping clerk in the freight office. Eventually I spent some of the worst months of my life as the railroad's worst messenger boy. (Wheeler 38)

Another important aspect from Puzo's childhood that is accurately portrayed in the novel concerns schizophrenia, the mental disorder

that led to Antonio Puzo's institutionalization in a specialized asylum. Life took a new turn for the Puzo's family members after Antonio's confinement into the asylum; they went on welfare and moved to a housing project in the Bronx. Based on this particular unfortunate event is the deterioration of the mental and physical health, of the head of the fictional family, Angeluzzi-Corbo, which unfortunately led to him committing suicide.

Puzo's artistic path interfered with his definite refusal to a pursue a lifetime career at the railroad company. His extracurricular and physical activities shaped Puzo's interests and later on became main sources of inspiration for crayoning his fictional characters, Gino and Vinnie.

> Although Puzo's mother always assumed he would pursue a career with the railroad, his thoughts were elsewhere. Partly to escape the street crime rampant in his neighborhood, Puzo joined the Hudson Guild Settlement House, where he excelled at basketball, baseball and football and spent a considerable amount of time in the library reading everything he could get his hands on. Until he was 15, Puzo benefited from the Fresh Air Fund, a charity program giving underprivileged youth from New York the opportunity to spend two weeks during summer in the country. (Sharp 1138)

This particular aspect from the author's life experience motivates the characters' inclination towards basketball, baseball and football via Gino and Vinnie's constant need to perform these activities throughout the novel. Furthermore, the Angeluzzi-Corbo's decision to join a welfare program during times of need is clearly inspired from the aforementioned real-life event. Even the experience occurred in the countryside during summertime is evident in the novel, through Vinnie's two weeks departure from the city, thanks to his sister's decision to enroll him in the program. Gradually, narration reached the inevitable emergence of the Second World War, a large-scale catastrophe, which promised nothing but terror and death. But for Puzo, this horrendous war had different connotations.

> Following graduation, Puzo felt trapped in a life he did not want. In 1942 he enlisted in the army (his bad vision had gotten him a deferment) and was posted to the Fourth Armored Division, with which he was assigned to Europe. Puzo earned numerous decorations for his combat service. Although he never fired a shot during the war, the experience helped him realize that he was nonviolent by nature. (Sharp 1138-1139)

Puzo's voluntary enrollment into the army is indicative of his fictionalized character, Gino's attempt to escape the strict, Italian ruled familial cocoon. This particular transfer of ambitions, from Puzo to his character, Gino is clearly an indicator of autofiction's presence. By means of this literary concept, the author fictionalizes his real volitions within his artistic creation, with slight adaptations for the smoothest narrative transition. Another relevant aspect from Puzo's life that influenced the novel's course of events is represented by his romantic experiences and overall perspective on love matters.

> After the war Puzo, staying on in Europe, worked as a public relations officer for the U.S. Air Force in Germany, where he met his future wife, Erika Lina Broske. They were married in 1946 and eventually had five children, two girl (Dorothy and Virginia) and three boys (Anthony, Joey and Eugene). After Erika died in 1978 of breast cancer, Carol Gino, Erika's nurse, became Puzo's companion. The two spent much time together until Puzo's death in 1999. (Sharp 1139)

Puzo's lamentable romantic background most definitely makes its presence known within the novel. The fictional characters absolutely lack instances of true love in their journey. Idealizations about romance or true love never seem to take the spotlight in the characters' life or mind. Larry only got married because he impregnated a poor girl and could not ruin the family's reputation even more. Octavia eventually got married with a Jewish man, but was not truly happy with her new life. Lucia Santa has been cursed by fate with loss and solitude. What kept her going, most certainly, was her love and motivation to provide a better life to her children. A promising, happy-ending where love is invincible is far from the truth in this particular novel, shaped by the author's authentic experiences.

> Mario Puzo was 58 years old then, had already written the story of "The Godfather" – the most romantic Patriarchy ever – and had just lost his wife, his greatest passion. For him, her death had been a mythic battle and because of it he had suffered the most terrible defeat of his life. He swore he would never again fall into the innocence of True Love (Gino 15)

Unbreakable ties with himself and his community

With autofiction the author is able to express everything about himself but in a more subtle manner. Puzo managed to fictionalize some of his

dominant characteristics and to assign them to one of his male representatives from the novel, Gino. He is majorly shaped in perfect concordance with Puzo's authentic self. A first example is represented by the constant quarrels with Lucia Santa, which are caused by their surroundings.

> I did not understand that they simply could not afford to dream, I myself had a hundred dreams from which to choose. For I was already sure that I would make my escape, that I was one of the chosen. I would be rich, famous, happy. I would master my destiny. And so it was perhaps natural that as a child, with my father gone, my mother the family chief, I, like all the children in all the ghettos of America, became locked in a bitter struggle with the adults responsible for me. It was inevitable that my mother and I became enemies. (Wheeler 36)

The previous quotation seems to be useful in identifying Puzo's initial, childish approach concerning the incapacities of his immigrant fellows. This particular misunderstanding acts as the primary source of inspiration for Gino's constant bickering with Lucia Santa and almost all the other adults. Not only the constant quarrelling, but the overall enigmatic allure and internal secrecy of the fictional character, Gino are clearly imprinted from Puzo himself. Initially, Puzo wanted to become an artist, to achieve something greater than just basic survival. This aspect demonstrates that he discovered his *American Dream*, whereas other immigrants could not afford to pay the price for dreaming. Another issue directly inspired from Puzo's life and transferred on paper through his fictional representative refers to the total disinterest towards love and marriage. In the novel, our protagonist, Lucia Santa becomes visibly anxious and even bitter towards Gino's rejection of Caterina:

> What was Caterina, then, to this proud son of hers? Shit? The daughter of a wealthy man who could assure his future and his bread; comely, with strong legs and breasts, far above this wastrel this good-for-nothing, this fodder for the electric chair; and he didn't care? It was beneath his notice, if you please, that a jewel of an Italian girl didn't like him. Who did he think he was, the king of Italy? (Puzo 215)

The effectuation of the *American Dream*

In the beloved novel the entirety of the characters is placed under the radar of the *American Dream*, even if they are not aware of it. Every member of the Angeluzzi-Corbo family struggled, for they needed to

abandon their deepest aspirations, as to acquire a most basic, but comfortable human survival. Gino portrays his strong desires for freedom; Octavia gave up her dream of becoming a schoolteacher in detriment of becoming a co-parent, together with Lucia Santa, for her siblings. Octavia needed to work in the garment industry in order to provide for her family. Larry and Vinnie dedicated their life, unwillingly, to the railroad company that offered a reliable income. But when it comes to our novel's protagonist, Lucia Santa, the course of events takes a new turn. Readers might find themselves debating over her living the *American Dream* considering the immense emotional distress and human casualties that came along her way. Lucia Santa reminisces, at the end of the fictional journey, at the types of payment she was required to make in order to achieve the one and only, *American Dream*:

> Lucia Santa, Lucia Santa, you found your fortune in America," and Lucia Santa weeping on her backless kitchen chair raised her head to cry out against them, "I wanted all this without suffering. I wanted all this without weeping for two lost husbands and a beloved child. I wanted all this without the hatred of that son conceived in true love. I wanted all this without guilt, without sorrow, without fear of death and the terror of a judgement day. In innocence." (Puzo 274)

Lucia Santa became aware of all her torment throughout the years, asks for mercy and mans herself up in order to embark on another emotional rollercoaster, in her next fictional journey to Long Island.

In what regards Puzo's opinions on his personal experience with the *American Dream*, he strictly discloses that he fulfilled his ultimate ambitions, unconsciously in his youth, while constantly chasing other versions of it during his life.

> What has happened here has never happened in any other country in any other time. The poor who had been poor for centuries – hell, since the beginning of Christ – whose children had inherited their poverty, their illiteracy, their hopelessness, achieved some economic dignity and freedom. You didn't get it for nothing, you had to pay a price in tears, in suffering, but why not? And some even became artists." (Wheeler 46)

Gender roles, dismantling mental capacities and the Mafia

As I already mentioned throughout the paper, all the male members of the authentic Italian family, the Puzo and of the fictional one, the Angeluzzi-Corbo managed to earn a secure payment from the railroad

company. In the meantime, the feminine part of the family assumed the ancient roles of the woman, coined by the patriarchic Southern Italian society. Puzo actually discloses a significant testimony about his mother and sister's housebound occupations, which later on act as sources of inspiration for his beloved fictional characters.

> I never came home to an empty house; there was always the smell of supper cooking. My mother was always there to greet me, sometimes with a policeman's club in her hand. But – she was always there, or her authorized deputy, my older sister. (Coppa and Curran 127)

In immigrant families, the leader is usually represented by the man, the father who has the right and duty to discipline and keep his wife and children in line. Closely following Puzo's real life situation is Lucia Santa's responsibility to lead the family and to subordinate to her husbands, whenever they were around. When her husbands were alive and next to her, she was submissive and persuaded her children to respect the father's demands. Eventually, Lucia Santa became the head of the family and she tried her best to put up with fate, while keeping her sanity. Thus, the concept of *the mad woman in the attic* acquires a new nuance within this particular novel. It actually connects the male individuals to it, through their mental instability and lack of strength, required to protect and provide for their families. Puzo's father stands as the primary representative for the aforementioned concept that might be turned into *the mad man in the attic*, who could not fight and resist the struggles of the mad world, be it of physical or societal nature. Therefore, Lucia Santa's strength and sanity shall be appraised by the readers. As well as Puzo's mother's real-life resilience in catastrophic times, that managed to put other people down, most notably men.

It is only natural that the author intertwined aspects of his immediate reality, of society's perception on Italians, usually as criminals and mafiosi, with the fictional journey and experience of the characters with it. As the main characters have traces of Southern origins in their blood, it is inevitable that influences of Southern Mafia be found roaming around the streets of Hell's Kitchen, which eventually captures Lucia Santa's older son, Larry.

> No son of hers would be a gangster, a criminal sucked-out jellyfish to an older woman without shame. For one moment in the dark hallway, in those murky stairwells, Lucia Santa had a terrible vision of electric chairs, of her son bleeding, stabbed by the Sicilian or the jealous husband. (Puzo 65)

This quotation reveals the worst-case scenario imagined by a visibly fearful and worried, Italian mother, accustomed to the way in which such things unravel. In addition to her personal worries, the ongoing, higher Mafia acts actively within their life, the American system, who spares no one from difficulties. Even though Lucia Santa applied for a welfare social program, she was blackmailed by the Italian prosecutor, and she needed to pay him a certain amount of money to guarantee her services from the government. Ultimately, the readers are direct witnesses of two well-functioning engines of Mafia, that rule their victims accordingly.

All in all, the elements of autofiction are undoubtedly hard to miss in what concerns the novel, *The Fortunate Pilgrim*. Throughout this paper, the most relevant aspects from Puzo's personal life and his immediate surroundings were explicitly analyzed and portrayed by means of accurate quotations and comparisons. Puzo used autofiction in an effort to share his pure historical testimony, acting as a voice for the Italian community, that faced truly horrendous challenges including social stigma, world wars, economic and global crises.

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Cultural Paradigms

Autofictions and Mutations:
Crises of the Self, Crises of the World

Paradigmes culturels

Autofictions et mutations:
crises du moi, crises du monde

Kulturelle Paradigmen

Krisen des Selbst, Krisen der Welt

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The Crisis of the *American Dream* in Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood*

Lorena-Florina Turcuș[1]

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Abstract: This paper focuses on the *American Dream*, both as a philosophical concept and as a mindset that provided strength and hope to post-World War II American generations. While many aspired to achieve success through their own efforts, Truman Capote, in his first non-fiction novel *In Cold Blood*, deconstructs this myth by depicting the tragic story of the Clutter family, a symbol of the *American Dream*, whose fate ends in a dramatic and senseless manner. The article examines the ways in which the *American Dream* is reflected in American society, analyzing whether it is truly attainable or merely an illusion by correlating real-life observations with the events presented in *In Cold Blood*.

Key words: crisis, American Dream, postwar America, society

Introduction

20th-century America was a land of contrasts, marked by the fear of communism, discrimination, post-war trauma, and civic tensions, alongside a period of economic and demographic growth. In this context, people were guided by an ideal that kept their hope alive – the *American Dream*, the promise that anyone could achieve success through their own efforts, as long as they worked hard enough, and that the rewards of this labor would not be long in coming. Yet, this dream was never entirely real; rather, it was a sweet illusion for those who clung to hope above all else, in order to avoid existential crises, dilemmas about their role in life, or social inequality.

Truman Capote's nonfiction novel *In Cold Blood* (1966) presents this crisis of the dream from the very title. What dreams can ordinary people still have in a community where its most respected members

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(the embodiment of the American Dream) were senselessly murdered? Attempting to confront this collective trauma, this article will examine in turn the factors that led people to believe in the American Dream, as well as its opposite – the elements that contradict it, what happens in the real world, and whether this dream can truly be *dreamed* by everyone.

Before starting a thorough analysis, both in theory and on how the concept of the *American Dream* is put into practice, it is essential to explain the relevance it has in the book, which will be analyzed in the following lines. In the novel *In Cold Blood*, Truman Capote uses the *American Dream* to juxtapose the Clutter family, an epitome of success achieved through hard and diligent work, with Perry Smith and Dick Hickock, who illustrate human decay and the effects of marginalization and social segregation. Clutters are a symbol of the fulfilled, realized, and idealized *American Dream*, while the killers symbolize the failure of the *American Dream*, the frustration and resentment of a ruined life caused by the profound impact of social and economic inequality. The author exposes the discrepancy between the materialized *American Dream* myth, which leads the way for others to continue to aspire to it, and the painful reality of systemic inequalities that limit equal access to its victims to achieving their goals. One can also approach the question this way: the Clutter family achieved the *American Dream*, but what good did it do them? At what cost? How did it help them in the face of death? Isn't their fate even more tragic from this perspective?

1.   What exactly is the *American Dream*?

The *American Dream* can be understood as a symbolic concept that has not only shaped but continues to define the national ideals of the United States, as well as the aspirations of American citizens who either continue to pursue or have abandoned this ideal. America has long been thought of as the land of endless possibilities, where anyone can improve their life. The only thing they need to do is to work hard, to be self-determined, and to trust the limitless opportunities this country offers since its colonial origins. This idea is deeply rooted in the American culture and preserves the aspirations of people who dream of a brighter future on this land, considered as being blessed. The *American Dream*, however, is not a reality that applies to everyone, even though it is something everybody wants to hear and believe.

How might the *American Dream* be defined? The term itself is almost philosophical, as it speaks, as the name suggests, of a dream –

an abstract, intangible concept that eludes direct measurement. Therefore, the challenge arises: How do we measure it? Or, more critically for this paper, how do we define it? In essence, the *American Dream* embodies the notion that success and prosperity are attainable by anyone, regardless of their social standing or financial background, through hard work, determination, and individual abilities. To consider that anyone, regardless of their origins, can achieve a better life, is an ideal that transcends social, ethnic, and economic barriers. In the explanation of this dream, freedom and equality are regarded as fundamental principles and values that facilitate access to opportunities for everyone. This term was coined by James Truslow Adams in 1931 in his groundbreaking book, *The Epic of America*. Here, he portrays the *American Dream* not as an individual goal, but as a collective contribution to human progress and people's well-being from America to the entire world. Even though there were numerous threats to subvert it, this ideal has become an intrinsic part of the American national consciousness:

> that American dream of a better, richer, and happier life for all our citizens of every rank which is the greatest contribution we have as yet made to the thought and welfare of the world. That dream or hope has been present from the start. Ever since we became an independent nation, each generation has seen an uprising of the ordinary Americans to save that dream from the forces which appeared to be overwhelming and dispelling it. Possibly the greatest of these struggles lies just ahead of us at this present time — not a struggle of revolutionists against established order, but of the ordinary man to hold fast to those rights to 'life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness' which were vouchsafed to us in the past in vision and on parchment. (Adams 8)

Although it was first defined by James Truslow Adams, Harmon Leon (7) also offers a charming explanation of the *American Dream* in a playful manner:

> When I was a child, my active imagination told me that the American Dream was to become a doctor who drove a garbage truck [...] Ask a room full of any other seven-year-olds, and if they'd each have a completely different take on the question. Just imagine if all those children's American Dreams had been fulfilled; we could have a world made up entirely of ballerinas, superheroes and rappers. (7)

This *American Dream* is embodied by the Clutter family, with Herbert Clutter, as the head of the household, serving as the breadwinner and

the one who has naturally attained this ideal. Capote meticulously crafts Herbert's character from the very first pages, establishing an immediate connection with the reader and evoking a sense of compassion, the same force that has inspired generations to believe in the American Dream and sympathize with those who have achieved it. "The master of River Valley Farm, Herbert William Clutter, was forty-eight years old, and as a result of a recent medical examination for an insurance policy, knew himself to be in first-rate condition." (Capote 5) By portraying the Clutters as ordinary, relatable people, Capote provides readers with the hope that they too might succeed, should those around them succeed: "He was, however, the community's most widely known citizen, prominent both there and in Garden City, the close-by county seat, where he had headed the building committee for the newly completed First Methodist Church." (5)

In his portrait, Capote goes beyond physical or superficial description (how others saw him or how he appeared in the eyes of the community), offering instead a moral portrait and an account of his life achievements – all of which reflect not only Mr. Clutter's confidence and success, but also how he had achieved the *American Dream*: "Always certain of what he wanted from the world, Mr. Clutter had in large measure obtained it." (6) Thus, we learn that he is a self-made man, respected by the community and very secure financially and socially. What more could one want? Here, Capote anticipates one of the themes he will explore in the book: whether the *American Dream* truly exists or is merely an illusion, what it means for different people, and whether everyone has an equal chance of fulfilling it.

In contrast to her husband, Bonnie Clutter is presented as a fragile woman with precarious health, suffering from depression. Capote, however, presents her with delicacy, in a way that does not judge but rather gives the 'Angel in the House' a sense of depth and humanity through the suffering she endures:

> In regard to his family, Mr. Clutter had just one serious cause for disquiet – his wife's health. She was 'nervous,' she suffered 'little spells' – such were the sheltering expressions used by those close to her. Not that the truth concerning 'poor Bonnie's afflictions' was in the least a secret; everyone knew she had been an on-and-off psychiatric patient the last half-dozen years. (6)

As a seemingly perfect family that embodies the fulfilled *American Dream* in every aspect (financial, social, and personal), the Clutters also have two children, a girl and a boy: Nancy and Kenyon are portrayed in the same affectionate manner. Nancy, in particular, stands

out as lively, hardworking, an excellent student, and adored by the community:

> Where she found the time, and still managed to 'practically run that big house' and be a straight-A student, the president of her class, a leader in the 4-H program and the Young Methodists League, a skilled rider, an excellent musician (piano, clarinet), an annual winner at the county fair (pastry, preserves, needlework, flower arrangement) – how a girl not yet seventeen could haul such a wagonload, and do so without 'brag' with, rather, merely a radiant jauntiness, was an enigma the community pondered, and solved by saying, 'She's got character. Gets it from her old man.' (17)

This method of detailed characterization serves a clear, intentional purpose. Capote successfully constructs a vivid portrait of the Clutter family so that, later, their murder is perceived not merely as a sad event, but as a personal loss. We are not simply told they were good and decent people – the writer brings us into their intimate family life, presenting their daily routines and relationships (for example, Nancy's relationship with Bobby Rupp, one of the school's basketball stars, seen by the community as classic high school sweethearts). Through this writing technique, Capote moves beyond a purely journalistic presentation of these real events and turns them into an emotional narrative for the reader. This quality of Capote's writing style in his novel is also discussed by Harold Bloom and Blake Hobby in their book *Death and Dying*: "Capote purports In Cold Blood to be a work of nonfiction; all the principals were real people and the events presented happened. But he also claims for the book the status of a novel, a literary form traditionally understood as fictional." (106)

2.   How did the American Dream emerge?

This desire to achieve the American Dream did not arise in ordinary people by chance. From Cal Jillson's book, *The American Dream: In History, Politics, and Fiction*, we learn that the *American Dream* was primarily instilled in them by the political class throughout history:

> Political leaders, and social and economic elites more generally, all and always praise the American Dream. Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, Andrew Carnegie, Theodore Roosevelt, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, John F. Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson, Ronald Reagan, Barack Obama, and many others have lauded the singular promise of American life. (9)

They used this tactic to energize their voters and restore hope to their lives:

> Political leaders, especially in great national campaigns, and while in office, make stirring speeches intended to pluck at our collective heartstrings. They recall our national triumphs, and they promise that America's best days lie ahead. (Jillson 10)

However, from the same book (9-10), we learn that the *American Dream* also became a dream for those who were not necessarily American, but had a dream:

> The American Dream, the right to rise unfettered, urger wave after wave of immigrants and each new generation of Americans to the effort, innovation, and entrepreneurship that cumulated over time to national wealth and power. Leaders know that citizens will applaud praise of the American Dream, so they regularly offer it in hope of basking in that applause themselves. (Jillson 9-10)

In this category of people (those who had to restore hope in their lives and/or who were not *pure-blood* Americans) fall the other main characters of the novel, without whom neither the plot nor the book itself would exist: the murderers Perry Smith (of mixed ancestry – Dutch and Shoshone, or alternatively Irish–Cherokee) and Dick Hickock. Even though racial issues are not the primary obstacle in this book, they still frequently appear as a recurring concern in the discourse surrounding the *American Dream* throughout history.

Capote proves himself a keen psychologist, presenting the future killers in relation to their immediate reality and society, thereby logically linking the toxic environment in which they lived to the people they became, raising again the question of whether the *American Dream* is truly attainable for everyone. In *In Cold Blood*, we see that they have no way of believing in this dream; as a result, they attempt to deceive both those around them and life itself: living day by day, stealing, and committing crimes.

3.   The *American Dream* through the eyes of Capote's murderers

While both killers are introduced with a cause-effect background (each having suffered physical accidents that may have influenced their paths), Perry is seen by the narrator as a man tormented by dreams, a

misunderstood artist who failed to become what he once aspired to due to the complicated life he led (he still carries his guitar with him):

> [...] took control completely when he played the guitar and sang. Singing, and the thought of doing so in front of an audience, was another mesmeric way of whittling hours. He always used the same mental scenery – a night club in Las Vegas, which happened to be his home town. It was an elegant room filled with celebrities excitedly focused on the sensational new star rendering his famous, backed-by violins version of 'I'll Be Seeing You' and encoring with his latest self-composed ballad. (Capote 15)

His disillusionment with the *American Dream* is seen: being a failure himself, Perry is no longer able to feel joy for those who succeed; he does not consider that maybe they were lucky or worked tirelessly to achieve their goals. Instead, he becomes bitter and accusatory, convinced that life is unfair and that others must have succeeded through dishonest means.

This sympathy for the murder suspect is viewed critically by Lars Ole Sauerberg in his book *Fact into Fiction: Documentary Realism in the Contemporary Novel*, where he raises the issue that Capote's book cannot present an absolute truth, since the author becomes personally involved in shaping and shading that truth according to his own preferences:

> It is fairly obvious that we have to do with different kinds of truth. As a document to be used in court, the book certainly has its shortcomings, since the general tone evinces a degree of sympathy for the murderer Perry, stemming from Capote's conviction that Perry was socially and psychologically 'predestined' for violent crime. (21)

In contrast to Perry, Dick is portrayed as the mastermind, more cerebral, cynical, and manipulative than his partner in crime:

> Of course, Dick was very literal-minded, very – he had no understanding of music, poetry – and yet when you got right down to it, Dick's literalness, his pragmatic approach to every subject, was the primary reason Perry had been attracted to him, for it made Dick seem, compared to himself, so authentically tough, invulnerable, 'totally masculine'. (Capote 16)

4.   The motive behind the crime

In the post-war era, particularly during the 1950s, the *American Dream* became closely linked to an idealized vision of suburban life, characterized by a private home with a garden, a traditional family structure, and stable employment. Richard Reeves discusses this notion in his book, *Dream Hoarders: How the American Upper Middle Class Is Leaving Everyone Else in the Dust, Why That Is a Problem, and What to Do About It:*

> The American dream is not about superwealth or celebrity. The American dream is of a decent home in a pleasant neighborhood, good schools for our kids, a steadily rising income, and enough money put aside for an enjoyable retirement. It is about sustaining a strong family and seeing your children off to a good college. (15)

These elements were perpetuated in popular culture through movies and advertisements, which transformed the *American Dream* into a standard to which millions of people aspired. These examples, considered attractive and possible to obtain for the vast majority of Americans, strengthened the optimistic conviction that success and personal achievements are rewards that will not be delayed after hard and diligent work. Thus, it promotes the idea that anyone, without exception, can imagine and realize their own version of the *American dream*, a concept also pointed out by Jim Cullen (5) in his book, *The American Dream*:

> Actually, American Dream has long since moved beyond the relatively musty domain of print culture into the incandescent glow of the mass media, where it is enshrined as our national motto. Jubilant athletes declaim it following championship games. Aspiring politicians invoke it as the basis of their candidacies. Otherwise sober businessmen cite achieving it as the ultimate goal of their enterprises. The term seems like the most lofty as well as the most immediate component of an American identity, a birthright far more meaningful and compelling than terms like 'democracy', 'Constitution', or even 'the United States. (5)

The Clutter family possessed all of this: they were wealthy and owned their farm, which is precisely why Dick and Perry chose them as their target. Although the reader discovers that their intention was not initially to kill them, but to steal their money (from a safe they could not find), they ultimately murdered them to avoid being caught.

Therefore, to be or not to be the *American Dream* a reality? If

one chooses to believe that it is, then it is accepted that it was born from every individual's desire to believe they can succeed if they are willing to work hard enough to fulfill their dreams. The *American Dream* embodies an optimistic perspective where the major challenges of life are seen as personal hurdles that can be surmounted through determination and diligent effort, with the ultimate aim being to become a self-made man. As Richard Weiss notes in his book *The American Myth of Success: From Horatio Alger to Norman Vincent Peale*, Benjamin Franklin was the first example for Americans to embody this ideal: "Though the phrase 'self-made man' did not become current in American folk culture till some decades after Franklin's death, he – the boy of modest circumstances who grew up to share the company of kings – became its first archetype." (29)

Nevertheless, this idyllic view does not take into account the inequalities existing for ages in American society, thus excluding the problematic face of this myth. A fundamental aspect of the *American Dream* is the fact that it implies a boundless social mobility, with the help of which all individuals have equal chances to achieve the long-awaited success, with no exceptions or obstacles to achieving it. But the reality is different, because American social mobility is far more limited than the *American Dream* can make us believe. Although many Americans still believe that their success depends solely on their abilities and efforts, economic mobility remains relatively low. Children who come from poorer families have much lower chances of reaching a higher financial level than those who were born into wealthy families. This indicates that economic and social barriers have a stronger impact than the myth allows to be understood, and this view is illustrated by Nobel Prize-winning economist Joseph E. Stiglitz, who deconstructs the fundamentals of the *American Dream* in his study, *The Price of Inequality: How Today's Divided Society Endangers Our Future*:

> the American dream – has always been a cherished American ideal. But data now show that this is a myth: America has become the advanced country not only with the highest level of inequality, but one of those with the least equality of opportunity. (4)

He addresses the tangible realities on the ground, focusing on the lives of young American dreamers and their actual opportunities to become everything they aspire to in real life:

> The life prospects of a young American are more dependent on the income and education of his parents than in other developed

countries. We have betrayed a fundamental value. And the result is that we are wasting a most valuable resource, our human resources: millions of those at the bottom are not able to live up to their potential. (Stiglitz 4)

This is exemplified in *In Cold Blood* through the Clutter family's killers, who had unequal opportunities compared to Herbert, Bonnie, Nancy, and Kenyon. Perry and Dick represent *the failure of the American Dream*. Perry is far from a simple or flat character; Capote portrays him as a tragic product of the traumas he endured throughout his life, such as family abuse, poverty, broken family ties, and the dubious influence of his prison acquaintance, Willie-Jay. He never had a real chance at success. He dreams of becoming educated, wealthy, and respected, yet his troubled past prevents him from achieving these goals. His story illustrates how social and economic barriers can render the American Dream unattainable for some, with his anger and resentment stemming from a profound sense of being cheated by life.

Dick Hickock, in contrast, grew up in a stable, middle-class home. However, a car accident and subsequent financial struggles pushed him toward crime. He attempts to *cheat* his way into success through deception and robbery, embodying a distorted version of the *American Dream*, one in which people take what they want rather than earn it. Together, Perry and Dick demonstrate how the *American Dream* can fail those who are disadvantaged or desperate, highlighting the gap between ideal and reality.

5.   The dark side of the *American Dream*

Is the *American Dream* an attainable goal for everyone or not? Despite its idealized narrative, the reality is far more complex. Let's face the truth – since we are not born into equal backgrounds, we cannot have equal chances of success. Economic and social inequalities in the USA frequently get in the way of the *American Dream* for those who are less fortunate, creating a large divide between those who succeed and those who fail. While the *American Dream* promises, in theory, opportunities for everyone, in practice, it often turns into a process of selection shaped by factors outside of anyone's control. This notion could be considered *the reverse of the American Dream*, as D. L. Mayfield describes in her aptly titled book, *The Myth of the American Dream*:

This myth is a double-edged sword. If the systems and structures that shape your world have worked for you, then you will believe this idea

[...] And if other people experience it differently – say, if they are unable to find a job that pays a living wage or get access to education or secure a loan to buy a house – then something must be wrong with them, not the system. (18)

In this framework, Capote examines the lives of the criminals, Perry Smith and Dick Hickock, placing them within the context of poverty, different kinds of traumas, childhood abuse, vices and a lack of education. This is not just a presentation of their motives, but also a reflection on how society can influence individual decisions and how people can influence others' lives for better or worse. A similar interpretation of the darker side of the *American Dream* is explored by Lawrence R. Samuel in *The American Dream: A Cultural History*:

> The American Dream has hardly been just an everything-is-coming-up-roses-and-daffodils fantasy there to cheer us on and up, however, having a dark side just as powerful as its positive side. For each and every American Dream, there is an American nightmare, this evil twin always lurking in the shadows when the country is going through interesting times, as the Chinese curse goes. (9)

Samuel further clarifies the origins of this idea, exploring when and why it emerged: "In fact, the potential of the nightmare was frequently conjured up since the very beginnings of the Dream, not too surprising given that the phrase was conceived in the darkest days of the Depression." (9)

This aspect of the nightmare is closely related to Capote's most haunting statement about his literary masterpiece. The author told his biographer, Gerald Clarke, that: "No one will ever know what In Cold Blood took out of me. [...] It scraped me right down to the marrow of my bones. It nearly killed me. I think, in a way, it did kill me." (398)In *In Cold Blood*, Capote also famously referred to the murders as four shots fired, which did not merely kill four innocent souls, but marked the end of six lives in total: "At the time not a soul in sleeping Holcomb heard them – four shotgun blasts that, all told, ended six human lives." (5) These gunshots can be interpreted on several levels. Literally, they refer to the four blasts that killed the embodiment of *the American Dream*: the four members of the Clutter family: Herb, Bonnie, Nancy, and Kenyon. Yet the number of lives lost, according to Capote, is six. Where do the other two come from?

This aspect can also be interpreted from multiple perspectives. On the one hand, the other two lives could belong to the killers

themselves – Perry Smith and Richard Hickock – who shaped their own fate as a result of the crimes they committed. Those who kill will be killed in turn. On the other hand, the six lives that ended metaphorically could also include those of Truman Capote and his close friend, Harper Lee. Although they are not characters in the book, they were intrinsically linked to it. As mentioned earlier in this paper, Capote, deeply shaken by the senseless violence that struck the peaceful town of Holcomb, was somehow magnetically drawn to document the crime in the smallest detail. He was accompanied by Harper Lee throughout the investigation, and they both produced their own writings based on it.

6.   The problematic facets of post-war American society

6.1.   Financial (in)equality

One of the most evident obstacles leading to the crisis of the *American Dream* is economic inequality. This financial inequality can be seen as a possible trigger point for the criminals in *In Cold Blood*, especially for Perry, who suffered extensively in childhood due to poverty. No one resorts to theft simply because they have too much money. Moreover, even if Perry and Dick were employed, these types of individuals are aware that they would not be able to accumulate wealth, but only manage to get by from day to day. As a result, feelings of anger, frustration, despair, and social prejudice emerge, which can easily slide into criminal behavior.

While the American economy has experienced substantial growth in recent decades, most labor income has not increased correspondingly for many workers. For instance, why have salaries for much of the middle class stagnated or even decreased, while the incomes of the wealthiest have risen and continue to rise significantly? This economic polarization has created a significant divide between those who can afford to live comfortably and those who live in poverty.

Additionally, the high costs of education and housing have greatly diminished the ability of many Americans to achieve the *American Dream*. Perry suffered because he was unable to complete his education. The readers even discover that, despite his disability and lack of formal education, Perry was, in a way, a kind of teacher himself. As he recalls:

> I was on crutches, I was pretty helpless. Just had to sit around. So to give me something to do, try to make myself useful, I started what became a sort of school. The pupils were Joe's kids,

along with some of their friends, and we held classes in the parlor. I was teaching harmonica and guitar. Drawing. And penmanship. Everybody always remarks what a beautiful handwriting I have. [...] Also, we used to read stories—the kids did, each one in turn, and I'd correct them as we went along. It was fun. I like kids. Little kids. And that was a nice time. But then the spring came. It hurt me to walk, but I could walk. (Capote 124)

Thus, can we really blame him (or people in general) for being formally uneducated? Are they at fault for their limited schooling, or is it the lack of financial resources that holds them back? This financial aspect is presented in detail by Robert D. Putnam (31) in his book, *Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis*: "The distribution of income and wealth among adults in today's America [...] has generated much partisan debate during the past several years." In the book, Putnam provides real examples of Americans who openly discuss their perceptions of the *American Dream*, highlighting its financial dimensions and the inherent differences taken for granted among different groups of people:

> 'Most parents around here are Midwest parents who work for their money. It's not like Beverly Hills and the Hamptons.' [...] 'You have to work if you want to get rich' [...] 'If my kids are going to be successful, I don't think they should have to pay other people who are sitting around doing nothing for their success.' (25)

The *American Dream* also promotes an extreme idea of self-reliance, suggesting that success is one hundred percent the result of individual effort, but this idea ignores reality. Many successful stories are influenced by social and economic factors such as education, networking, or family resources. For example, there are many successful people in America who have been fortunate enough to be born into rich families that have given them access to private schooling from the beginning, professional connections, or even financial support to launch their own businesses. Therefore, it is obvious why success is not just about hard work – it is often the result of other advantages which do not belong only to the person in question. This point is also explored by David Kamp in his study, *Rethinking the American Dream*:

> 'Opportunity for each' is promised, but within the bounds of each person's ability; the reality is, some people will realize the American Dream more stupendously and significantly than others.

(For example, while President Obama is correct in saying 'Only in America is my story possible', this does not make it true that anyone in America can be the next Obama.) (4)

However, the novel reflects the idea that wealth itself represents nothing more than a shattered dream, since the Clutter family had everything financially and could offer their children a valuable education, yet these assets did not protect them from death. Ironically, the Clutters were killed by someone *beneath* their social level, thus once again illustrating that the distinction between social classes means nothing more than a human-made construct without any tangible foundation or real benefit. Indeed, the Clutter family could have afforded to improve their security, but as Capote writes in his novel the people of Holcomb, Kansas, were such a peaceful community that they could leave their doors unlocked without worry:

> But afterward the townspeople, theretofore sufficiently unfearful of each other to seldom trouble to lock their doors, found fantasy recreating them over and again – those somber explosions that stimulated fires of mistrust in the glare of which many old neighbors viewed each other strangely, and as strangers. (5)

6.2. The quality of life

Another aspect that undermines the *American Dream* as a reality is the US health system. Access to healthcare is highly unequal, with many Americans struggling to afford the high costs of health insurance and medical treatments. In a country where health is considered an essential factor to have a successful career and live a comfortable life, lack of access to adequate medical care can seriously affect the financial stability, well-being, and life expectancy of a family. There are many Americans who die because they do not have health insurance, or who would rather die than plunge their families into debt. In this context, the *American Dream* becomes an illusion for those who cannot afford health insurance or adequate treatments, as highlighted by Kant Patel and Mark Rushefsky (1980) in the specialized book, *Health Care in America: Separate and Unequal:*

> The United States spends more money per capita on health care than any other country and has the best medical care, yet around 45 million people do not have health insurance. The United States remains the only industrialized country in the world without a national health insurance system.

Although the healthcare system itself is not the central plot of the novel, it is closely intertwined with it. Through the psychological cause-and-effect approach that Capote employs in depicting the events and characters of the story, it is important to note that Perry suffered a motorcycle accident that left his legs permanently impaired, causing him chronic pain and later leading to insecurities about his health and physical appearance, including his limp. Dick, in turn, was involved in a car accident, which did not affect his legs but did impact his head and face. While it is not explicitly stated whether he sustained lasting brain injuries, his facial features remained asymmetrical. This raises a theoretical and rhetorical question: did these health issues affect their quality of life and their image in society? The answer is certainly yes. Consequently, one may wonder: if these two men had had sufficient financial resources to receive proper medical care and recover fully from their accidents, would they still have carried the insecurities and complexes that plagued them throughout their lives? The truth is, we will never know.

This aspect serves as a transition to the next philosophical issue explored in the novel: accidents, beyond leaving physical sequelae, are also traumatic events. One cannot discuss the crime without considering the trauma it generates. Thus, *In Cold Blood* can be seen as a compendium of traumas, depending on the perspective from which it is examined. There is the personal trauma of the Clutter family, who were brutally murdered; Perry's trauma, stemming from his life experiences, childhood, misguided choices that led to unfulfilled dreams, and his accident; Dick's trauma, including his accident, divorces, and the consequences of his own life decisions; and Bobby Rupp's trauma, following the death of his high school sweetheart.

In addition to these individual experiences, there is also collective trauma: the relatives of the Clutter family, of the murderers' families (who could hardly believe that those they had known for so long, related by blood, their own kin, were capable of such an act. For example, Perry's sister and Dick's father, who was gravely ill when he learned of the crime and during the investigation and trial, experienced profound emotional shock), and the tight-knit community of Holcomb, who suffered an unimaginable shock and were forced to reconstruct an entirely different way of life after the events in their small town, burying their dead: "The four coffins, which quite filled the small, flower-crowded parlor, were to be sealed at the funeral services – very understandably, for despite the care taken with the appearance of the victims, the effect achieved was disquieting." (Capote 87)

Also, discrimination based on race, class, and gender continues to be a major barrier for many ethnical groups in reaching the *American Dream*, leading to various crises. The *American Dream* myth assumes that everyone has equal access to the same opportunities. But, in a country with a history of racial segregation and gender inequalities, this could not be further from the truth. Although the killers in the novel did not commit murder on the basis of race, the concept of race can still be acknowledged and identified through the most burdened character, Perry Smith. Being of mixed ancestry (Dutch, Indigenous, and/or Irish) this aspect became an additional weight for him, compounding the emotional baggage he carried throughout his daily life.

While there has been some progress in civil rights and gender equality compared to other historical times, inequality is still a harsh reality. People of color, especially African Americans and Hispanics, often face fewer opportunities to access quality education, secure high-paying jobs, and move up in their careers. Racial and gender discrimination continues to be a reality that hinders access to the economic opportunities promised by the *American Dream*, as discussed by Mark Robert Rank, Thomas A. Hirschl, and Kirk A. Foster in their study, *Chasing the American Dream: Understanding What Shapes Our Fortunes*:

> Millions of Americans have been excluded throughout our history from meaningful participation in the American Dream. In particular, race, class, and gender have loomed large in terms of who has had greater or lesser access to viable opportunities. This side of America is represented by ongoing poverty, racism, sexism, and economic retrenchment. (3)

In addition, it is noted that one of the main characters belonged to the LGBTQ+ community, and the reader is left to determine whether this fact affected his life. This character is none other than Perry himself, who is portrayed in a more sympathetic light at multiple points throughout the chapter. Readers learn numerous details about Perry's biography, from his troubled childhood to his brief stint in the military (which, once again, emerges as another source of trauma) as well as revelations about his sexual orientation. Perry is depicted as queer, like the author himself.

Interestingly, Capote mentions this aspect of Perry only subtly, suggesting that other characteristics are far more central in defining him as a person. This technique is noteworthy, as it is uncharacteristic

of Capote. As Jeff Solomon observes in *So Famous and So Gay: The Fabulous Potency of Truman Capote and Gertrude Stein*, Perry's portrayal differs from other characters created by the same gay author: "Yet *In Cold Blood* is atypical of Capote's work in having a homosexual subtext rather than overt gay concerns. What are commonly called Capote's 'early' writings [...] frequently include overly homosexual characters and homosexual themes." (144)

Conclusions

All in all, Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood* shatters the reverie of the *American Dream*, confronting it with harsh reality. Although ordinary people have popularized this term and mindset as something to cling to for hope in life, the reality is entirely different. Yes, the Clutter family embodied the *American Dream*, but how did it help them? It did not protect them from death. The community was not more privileged because their neighbors had achieved the *American Dream*; on the contrary, they suffered even more: shocked by the tangible evidence of this dream's collapse and confronted with the despair and trauma that naturally follow the shattering of such an ideal. Perry and Dick, for whom the *American Dream* was denied, also prevented others from experiencing it. In this way, Capote holds up a true mirror to society, one worn down by trauma, burdens, social inequalities, worries, and needs, yet still hoping (perhaps naively) that through their own efforts they can achieve absolute success.

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Narrativizing One's Professional Space

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Abstract. Our paper is meant to shed light on the process of converting biographical units into narrative instances in order to carry out a particular authorial intention, namely, that of demonstrating how the factual can turn into the fictional arena of characters acting as carriers of their creators, voicing their life knowledge, respectively, professional practice and experience. Working with texts belonging to Kathy Reichs (a forensic anthropologist) and Patricia Cornwell (a crime investigation reporter) can be a good exercise to explain how scientific endeavours and procedures prove to be a valuable inspiration for narrative spaces on the one hand, and, on the other hand, in these two writers'cases, how one's personal expertise may be successfully fictionalized.

Key words: forensics, sciences, professional profile, biofiction, the self

Writing the self can be seen as part of this endless flood of new practices engendered by our constantly changing society and the energies generated by the great interest in questioning the nature of one's identity and the boundaries between what is private and what is public, as well as the validity of the notions of truth and fiction, individuality and authenticity, experience and its narration. If considered an expanding genre, autofiction points to the openness of the literary text, its adaptability to transpose the traditional autobiographical novel to the present days requirements, to push its boundaries artistically so that it should engage in the new trends of experimentations as expected by the community of readers. Biofiction usually encapsulates elements of a writer's life as basis for the fictional rendering of the real, experiential facts and details, characters and events, allowing an authorial extension of the narrative registers in order to stimulate "the readers' humanity and curiosity" and to strenghten their capacities for

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"empathy and humanity" by activating their "imagination and emotions" (McGill 102). When considering that "the only legitimate role of a writer is to tell the stories that are truly his or hers"(Toews 245), then autofiction is a way of serving the story by creating a novelistic background for the lived experiences to be included, prioritizing both emotional truth and imagination while emphasising on the narrator's/protagonist's status as an literary alter ego.

Writing one's life

Any text mirrors the author's way of thinking, re/acting, operating with personal experiences, within the very process of communicating them to potential readers, in the hope that they can initiate, then validate, a certain interaction, so necessary in the decoding writerly intentions and achievements. When it is about autofiction, its perusers are encouraged to perceive the differences between reality and fiction, the specific boundaries creatively blurred by the narrativization of one's everyday life, making the necessary assumptions about these differences while trying to profile the cast of characters engaged in rendering the intricate plot. Both Kathy Reichs and Patricia Cornwell are well established representatives of forensic investigation type novels, as they both have a considerable expertise in their particular area of forensics, so that their works are but an epitome of their professional everydayness aimed at scientifically determining the factual truth to serve justice (see Belis 13-14), as acknowledged by Dr. Kay Scarpetta, Cornwell's designated practitioner: "Our job as mandated by code is to determine cause and manner of death" (Cornwell, *Trace*, 45).

According to general laws, a forensic pathologist investigates sudden, unexpected, suspicious or violent deaths by determining the cause and manner of death through autopsies, reviewing medical history and analyzing evidence rigorously, being aware, as both Kathy Reichs and her alter ego, Dr. Temperance Brennan put it, that, "Today, science is a routine and crucial tool of the criminal justice system. A latent fingerprint places a defendant at a crime scene. DNA from sperm links an accused to a rape victim. Chemical analysis determines that a drug is illegal. An autopsy establishes that a death is homicide. The forensic science community includes a wide array of practitioners: anthropologists, biologists, chemists, entomologists, odontologists, pathologists" (Reichs, *Deja Dead*, 375). The fictional forensic anthropologist points out the relevance of a proper scientific education and training, shedding light on the author's personal background and

competences, offering the readers a well-argued explanation for the protagonist's development within the narrative economy:

> Anthropology is a broad discipline, comprised of linked subspecialties. Physical. Cultural. Archaelogical. Linguistic. Our department has the full quartet (...). Anthropology is the study of the human organism. Physical anthropology is the study of the biology, variability, and evolution of the human organism. Osteology is the study of the bones of the human organism. Forensic anthropology is the study of the bones of the human organism for legal purposes. Follow the diverging branches, and there I am. Though my training was in bioarchaeology, and I started my career excavating and analyzing ancient remains, I shifted into forensics years ago (...). Forensic anthropologists work with the recently dead. We're employed by law enforcement agencies, coroners, medical examiners, prosecutors, defense attorneys, the military, human rights groups and mass-disaster recovery teams. Drawing on our knowledge of biomechanics, genetics, and skeletal anatomy, we address questions of identification, cause of death, postmortem interval, and postmortem alteration of the corpse. We examine the burned, decomposed, mummified, mutilated, dismembered, and skeletal. Often, by the time we see remains, they're too compromised for an autopsy to yield data of value (Reichs *Devil Bones*, 2-4).

Employing cases and details, sometimes even tertiary characters (in our examples, toxicologists, anthropologists, and various other forensic scientists, whose expertise is essential in order to gain a full understanding of the case) within a well-conceived scenario to reflect real-life situations, Patricia Cornwell brings forth a medical examiner's routine work through the reliable plot that Kay Scarpetta is to follow in her search to identify victims, assailants, place and time of demise/murder; it is an example of the relatability of any autofictional writing which can put together experiences, emotions, thoughts in a connected narrative, meant to serve the aim of the practitioner's duties. When at a crimes scene, as any other forensic pathologist, she examines the body, its position, its surroundings so that later these findings should facilitate interpretation of injuries, establishing the cause of death generated by that particular environment:

> Scarpetta opened the crime scene case just inside the door and retrieved a digital camera and a notepad and pen, and gave each person a pair of gloves. She took her ususal survey without moving closer or speaking, noticing that except for the evidence markers, there was nothing out of place, and not the slightest indication that anything remotely violent had happened. The apartment was impecable, and

everywhere she looked, she saw traces of the rigid, obsessive woman who had lived and died here" (Cornwell, *Scarpetta*, 288-9).

As any text is the image of its author in his/her effort to establish an effective communication with prospective readers, self-writing fiction tends to expose a particular authorial voice and the assumption of a certain role in order to grant a meaningful interaction and a perception of its content and intentions while rethinking the tencsion between truth and fictionality.

The solitude of the scientist

In the pursuit of authenticiy, crime fiction writers like Kathy Reichs or Patricia Cornwell focus on covering the readers' need for information and knowledge filtered through the precision and accuracy of scientific and procedural details, blending fact with invention to create science-driven stories on the one hand, and on the other hand, to educate them on forensic science while telling an entertaining story. Their life histories opened them access to the subgenres of medical, respectively, forensic thrillers, featuring examiners of the field as their protagonists, singling them out as the characters who have the propensity for enhancing the attention and emotions of the readers and for allowing them to better understand the interconnectedness between parts and elements of the events related by each text (see Șerbănescu 35). Their core responsibilities - investigating deaths by conducting autopsies to establish and classify their cause, manner and circumstances (see Iftenie, Dermengiu 8-10) - are essentially carried out through their performance of duties and obligations, involving a high degree of commitment to completing their engagement accurately so that they eventually can achieve the required and unanimously expected outcomes. Their tasks are accomplished in a space designated to serve this purpose, namely in the autopsy room where, for instance, Dr. Brennan proceeds to her professional routine almost every day, recording all the details of her findings on the analyzed remains of a corpse:

> What was left of her head had been arranged to form a body. The six bloody pieces had been placed in correct anatomical order, but the angles were slightly off, turning her into a life-sized version of those plastic dolls designed to be twisted into distorted positions. The overall effect was macabre. Her head had been cut off high on the neck, and the truncated muscles looked bright poppy red. The pallid skin rolled back gently at the severed edges, as if recoiling from contact

with the fresh, raw meat. Her eyes were half open, and a delicate trail of dried blood meandered from her right nostril. Her hair was wet and lay plastered against her head. It had been long and blond. Her trunk was bisected at the waist. The upper torso lay with her arms bent at the elbows, the hands drawn in and resting on her stomach. Coffin position, except her fingers were not intertwined. Her right hand was partially detached, and the ends of the creamy white tendons jutted out like snapped electrical cords. Her attacker had been more successful with the left. The technician had placed it beside her head, where it lay alone, the fingers drawn in like the legs of a shriveled spider" (Reichs, *Deja Dead,* 45).

A forensic scientist's work place is a built environment with specific connotative meanings that significantly effects his/her identity, re/shaping it according to the degree of their attachment to this physical place (see Hauge 45), reflected in the practitioner's view of him/herself, as in Kay Scarpetta's case:

> I never feel like a doctor, not even a surgeon, as I get ready to conduct a postmortem examination, and I suspect only people who deal with the dead for a living can understand what I mean by that (...). I know what it is to incise warm bodies that have a blood pressure and something vital to lose, What I'm about to do couldn't be more different from that, and the first time I inserted a scalpel blade into cold, unfeeling flesh, made my first Y-incision on my first dead patient, I gave aup something I've never gotten back. I abandoned any notion that I might be godlike or heroic or gifted beyond other mortals. I rejected the fantasy that I could heal any creature, including myself (Cornwell, *Post Mortuary*, 276).

Both Dr. Brennan and Dr. Scarpetta are the beneficiaries of a transfer of professional status and professional expertise form real life experiences and relevant autobiographical instances so that their fictionalized context could exemplify the circulated idea that writing is life, that we write of us as we are, that literature is a parallel life (see Kepes 36), that characters, especially in biofiction, can easily reveal facts and truths of their authors' everyday existence, as shown by the former's regular procedure to deal with bodies out of the autopsy room:

> Opening my kit, I spread out supplies. Beside me, the ME unsheathed a thermometer for insertion into the anus. Or the egg mass. I couldn't be sure. For two hours we gathered and labeled evidence (...). First, I took close-ups, in case something matured into something else in transit to the entomologist [Larabee] (..). Using a dampened child's paintbrush, I then scraped up eggs. Half I preserved in diluted alcohol.

RIP. The rest I wanted alive for the enthomologist to raise to maturity for species identification. That lucky half I placed in vials with beef liver and damp tissue. Then, I went for maggots (…). After melting and packaging adult flies, I gathered representatives of every species present within a yard of the body (…). Bugs sealed and labeled, I collected soil samples, then made notes about the habitat: freshwater lake, hardwoods and pines, semiacid soil, elevation five hundred to six hundred feet, temperature ranging from midfifties to mideghties Fahrenheit, low humidity, full sunlight. Finally, I jotted comments concering the body. Naked. Prone, buttocks raised, arms straight at the sides. Decapitation, no blood or bodily fluids at the scene. Head missing. Incised wounds on chest and belly. Minimal decomp. No aquatic or animal scavanging. Egg masses at neck and anus, with internal temperatures of 97 amd 98 degrees Fahrenheit, respectively, unknown cause of death (Reichs, *Devil Bones*, 99-100).

Completing their systematic tasks, in or out of their assigned environment – the autopsy room where, as already referred to, detailed external and internal examinations of the body are fulfilled in order to establish a documented final verdict -, forensic scientists, such as Dr. Scarpetta, face the challenge of permanently discovering new secrets of their field of research and operation and to improve their competence in rendering the body chart of the victim:

Postmortem hypostasis, better known as lividity or livor mortis, is one of my pet tattletales, although it is often misinterpreted even by those who should know better. It can look like bruising due to trauma when in fact it is caused by the mundane physiological phenomenon of noncirculating blood pooling into small vessels due to gravity. Livididty is a dusky red or can be purplish with lighter areas of blanching where areas of the body rested against a firm surface, and no matter what I'm told about the circumstances of a death, the body itself doesn's lie (Cornwell, *Post Mortuary*, 154).

The authors and the books we focused on and the excerpts we relied on are meant to exemplify the way in which autofiction blends autobiographical segments and storytelling, confronting them in a creative development, in an attempt to highlight Hemingway's genuineness when having stated that all good books have one thing in common – they are truer than if they had really happened, suggesting a way of discovering valid truths about human experiences, those internal truths brought forth by their authors that transcend the plot.

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Miscellaneous

Varia

Sonstiges

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals and Reframing the Dreamer Narrative: U.S. Immigrant Metaphors and the Apparatus of Legitimacy

Marzia Dessi[1]

Abstract: This paper explores the binary narrative surrounding undocumented immigrants in the U.S., specifically focusing on the "Dreamer" archetype established by the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) policy and its relationship with other pervasive media metaphors. The paper investigates several key metaphors, including the immigrant as animal, commodity, alien, line-cutter, wave/flood, and virus, and demonstrates how they function as structural tools to legitimize the exclusion of immigrants. By utilizing these conceptual instruments, citizens control the terms of the debate, reinforcing the illusion of procedural fairness that ultimately undermines the immigrant cause. Critically, both anti-immigrant and pro-immigrant rhetoric (such as the need for immigrants as economic "commodity") often share the capacity to objectify and de-humanize. The Dreamer Narrative itself is a metaphor that, while granting a precarious legitimacy to some, perpetually reinforces the "good immigrant/bad immigrant" binary, compelling migrants to perpetually perform American ideals and obscuring the systemic violence and historical context of immigration restrictions.

Keywords: Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), Dreamer narrative, Immigration metaphors, Good immigrant/ bad immigrant binary, Legitimacy and procedural fairness

The aspiring American narrative came into fruition alongside of the idea of the Dream Act itself in 2001. The narrative construction of the dreamer for immigrant children in the U.S. protected under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) has undoubtably done much to help immigrant cause. In that it presents a new version of the immigrant, one who take part in the American Dream, and has also made it possible for the immigrant to share in something that is quintessentially perceived as part of the American experience. The Dreamer Narrative creates the expectation, that students need to

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"Complete a four-year degree in communities where the system historically has been set up for just a few to succeed" (Perez, 2015) It paints the Dreamer as Aspirational-y American a state of continuously becoming but not a state of being. Dreamers can consider themselves American in every way with the exception of papers, they entered the country at a young age, maintaining good grades or otherwise have a high achieving career and participate in capitalism and the illusive idea of the American meritocracy. Despite the necessity of the dreamer narrative and the benefits that it provides to selective migrants the construct of the dreamer is a double-edged sword. DACA pacify dreamers, as unlike other subgroups of immigrants they have the capacity and support to make claims against the state. However, the caricature of the dreamer itself is problematic, as it presupposes that only such migrants who meet age, economic, and social conditions have the right to protection. And that by extension all those who do not meet those criteria are by definition criminals. My paper aims to explore this binary narrative of the Dreamer.

One method of understanding the binary is through Narrative depiction of the undocumented immigrants in contemporary news media in the U.S. is through the metaphors that are used. As metaphors are meaning making competitions in which in many ways the metaphor necessitates a certain solution. Metaphors are tools that can be used to exclude, because of their perception as being part of objective discourse, and because they render the immigrant exclusion from this discourse as a given. Metaphors are such that we not only think about them, but also think on their terms. Their role seemingly minor, is structurally important as it not only serve as a means of legitimizing violence against immigrants, but rendering this violence a necessary conclusion.

The making of metaphors around the immigrant, only those who have the power and prestige of citizenship control the terms of the debate on procedure fairness surrounding immigration. Addressing these metaphors, and their perceived fairness, plays a crucial role in understanding the treatment of undocumented immigrants. In many cases, metaphors serve to create the appearance of legitimacy of discourse, not its actuality an act which arguably further denigrates the migrant cause because it prevents steps from being taken to clarify or rectify the process.

Both Otto Santa Ana in "Empirical analysis of anti-immigrant metaphor in political discourse" and Joel Sati in his research "Other: Borders the Illegal as Normative Metaphor" focuses on the element of procedural fairness, that the kind of regulatory impulse is of non-US

Citizens is inherently different. In that it is a matter of procedural fairness rather than a fairness in outcome. Metaphors play a central role in shaping the illusion of procedural fairness precisely this procedural fairness which undermines the immigrant cause. Sati claims that we think about legitimacy in terms of metaphors, and metaphors shape the ways in which we think about policy, I want to expand on this argument that metaphors serve an additional function as a performative utterance that they not only create the immigrant but also shape what it means to be performing American and how these metaphors undermine and commodify the immigrant. To explore immigrant metaphors as speech acts, I will be looking at popular metaphors used to describe US. immigrants include: *immigrants as animals, commodities, aliens, illegals, terrorist, the immigrant as a virus, and the nation as a body, immigration as a line, immigration as a wave/flood, immigrants as dreamers.*

In order to understand how metaphors of immigration shape our understanding of immigration narratives we must first understand how Metaphors help us shape our understanding. A metaphor, simply described, is a figure of speech that contains an inferred parallel. Words or phrases that are normally associated with one type of item or thought are applied to something that is not typically linked with. In communication, metaphors are used to demonstrate or explain something by comparing it to something else. Metaphors serve a variety of purposes, however the most interesting of these purposes for us, is to pair the intangible with the literal, that it to say they attempt to simplify concepts we find difficult to understand. Metaphors shape and define how we think about something. They allow us to express or emphasize more complex notions about something and emphasize particular things about a subject. But at a perhaps even greater level they provide a framework of understanding for things that are too complex. Metaphors in a political domain function in a similar fashion. In these functions' metaphors are conceptual instruments that embody otherwise amorphous or remote concepts in ways that the public can readily understand.

According to linguist Lakoff and philosopher Mark Johnson in *Metaphors We Live By* a metaphor is not just a rhetorical flourish; it is fundamental to how we think, reason, and understand the world. They argue that we comprehend abstract concepts (like time or argument) in terms of more concrete concepts (like money or war). The power of a metaphor, as they explain, is that it highlights certain features of the abstract idea while simultaneously hiding or ignoring others, thus structuring our understanding and actions. For instance, the metaphor

"ARGUMENT IS WAR" highlights winning and losing, but hides the potential for collaboration or compromise. (Lakoff and Johnson 10)

In order to understand how metaphors of immigration are performative utterances and their influence on Immigrant Narratives, we must first understand what performative utterance are. In Austin's book, *How to Do Things with Words*, he introduces the concept of the performative utterance and the broader framework of Speech Act Theory. Speech Act Theory is the smallest unit of expression or communication is not a sentence, but rather the performance of some form of an act. Among these being making a stamen, asking a question, or giving an order all of these can be done through writing. Austin recognized in his Philosophical Papers of 1961 that legal documents were a perfect example of this. For instance, in the creation of firstly the preamble which gives indication of the circumstances in which the procedures shall take place and the operative element of the document which preforms the act itself. In the case of a will the operative part might be "I give and bequeath my watch to my brother" However, Austin decided against the word operative in favor of another word, performative utterance, because the term operative had already gained to many implications. Examples of performative utterances that Austin gave included "I bet you sixpence", 'I pronounce you guilty', or 'I name this ship the Queen Elizabeth'. (Austin 6)

As Judith Butler explains in her seminal work *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*, "Within speech act theory, a performative is that discursive practice that enacts or produces that which its names," (Bodies 13). Butler uses the theory of performativity (originally from J.L. Austin) to argue that gender and sex are not natural givens, but are produced and materialized through repeated, constraining discursive practices, like being named and categorized. The quote helps explain how calling an immigrant "illegal" or "dreamer" actively constitutes their identity and social status. The illegality of the immigrant body, becomes illegal through its inherent complexity it becomes illegal through its name. In that the act of naming the illegal is a way of reimagining immigrant as a threatening entity. The same way as in the terms inspiring the immigrant reimagines the immigrant.

Two implied metaphors regarding the immigrant are the *immigrant as a financial commodity* and the *immigrant as animal*. This view of Immigrants as a commodity, as financial burden or gain, reimagines the immigrant as sub human existing strictly for the benefit of the nation. To exemplify, O'Brien (2003) focuses on the degrading use of organism, object, natural catastrophe/war, and animal

metaphors in the 1900s in the U.S. immigration restriction debate that both dehumanized migrants and portrayed them as a threat to social functioning. Likewise, Santa Ana's (1999, 2002) study into the dehumanizing use of metaphor in the Los Angeles Times in the 1990s discusses how political policies and electorate's responses are shaped by public discourse and the *Immigrants Are Animals* metaphor.

Frequent immigrants are presented as a commodity that is played out in the dichotomy of either the useful immigrant, or the useless immigrant. The metaphorically used verbs such as "process," "take," "redistribute," and "pack," or nouns such as "share," "burden," "net," and "masses" share the same semantic property of "objectification"; that is, their basic meaning involved the concept of inanimate thing or object that undergoes an action. Immigrants loose not only their humanity, but are treated as mercenary commodities. Simply inverting the description of migrants from negative to the positive does nothing to change the status of the immigrant as a commodity. Even though the far right and the liberal centrist have different messages about immigrant, that are reflected in their rhetoric, they share in their capacity to commodify the immigrant. Both "Immigrants are steeling our jobs" and "our economy needs immigrants" treats immigrants as a commodity whose value or worth is inherently monetary. Burdening, and supporting the economy are both attempting to determine the monetary worth of migrant.

One example of a metaphor that is in in the *immigrant as alien* metaphor. The term alien has been used interchangeably with its science fiction counterpart that of extraterrestrial non-human beings, a view which proliferates the notion of the migrant as inherently foreign and other. This conflation of terms, alien and the migrant also make it easier to think of immigrants as non-human. A view which further "others" them and presents them as outside of the polity. The alien is in this case viewed as being by definition different from the naturalized individual, in that they are not accustom to the structural norms of the country. Thereby the possibility of inclusion is unachievable through the metaphor. It is the structure of the metaphor that makes possible the exclusion. This kind of approach allows there two sense of the term "alien" a cultural one and a legal one. The term 'alien' has done a good job of being both. Popular constructions of aliens in fictional media are frequently call into question whether or not aliens can experience human emotion. The alien metaphor directly calls into question their humanity. A humanity which is called into question, and demands performativity. Being human is not enough; they must perform the "American" a particular set of structural and cognitive norms.

This is rather seen as a direct threat 'the alien among us' either as a form of terrorism

The impacts of the immigrant as alien metaphor are further worsened by the depiction of certain foreign countries being depicted as more primitive then is structurally true. Which causes the average viewer to embrace a predisposed often racialized metaphor. This is further supported by the depiction the notion of alien with something foreign that though not green skinned is ie (not white). In such a way the immigrant (alien) is viewed as being identifiably or faulty identifiable in a crowd, resulting in a type of racial profiling.

True emerging the cultural also becomes impossible as does returning home. The isolated contradictory position of being neither this/ nor that. The incapability of shedding the pre-existing identity is clear in not only physical features which prevent them from properly merging, but also based on a set ideology, beliefs, religious views or any sense of previous cultural heritage. They will always be presented as a less realized version American a hyphenated American African-American, Chinese-American, Mexican-American.

In the attempt to perform the American, they are in fact creating or caricaturing a perceived Americanness. An act which functions as form of dreaming the American into being.

Nation as Body metaphor further emphasizes this issue, if the nation is presented as a human body, then undocumented immigrants are presented as a threat to the health and wellbeing of this body. However, this metaphor presupposes that the nation is structurally healthy without the presence of the migrant and that the labor of the migrant is not necessary for the sustaining the nation.

This metaphor also allows lends itself to the interpretation of the narrative of the *immigrant as a virus* polluting this body. In order for the body to be fully healthy, the desire has to be rooted out at its source through the removal of the virus. A virus which arguably should not be removed because of its significant not only to the economic wellbeing of the nation, but also important to the cultural identity of the U.S. and its invasions. This invasion itself to be a land of opportunity, a land of equality but ultimately, but the realities of the nation fall short of the actuality. The metaphor of the *nation as body* also calls into question the body itself: whose body? If the nation was a body what would the body look like? Would it be tall or short? Would it be male or female, would it be young or old? What would its race be? The answer provides us with one vision of America. But does it provide us with a faulty homogenate view of American. The bodily identity of the U.S. national further calls into question the identity of the immigrant? When we talk

of the immigrant what sort of body do we see? This *imaginary migrant* and who are they? What is their race, what are their identifying features? Our answers to these questions draw attention to U.S. identity. It raises the question if the illusive group identity is worth more than an individual life? Is it worth more than 7,000 lives? What about the group's identity is highlighted by the metaphor that is intrinsically more important. The idea of the nation—a collective representation—symbolizes many bodies fused to create one body. However, there is a large difference between Hobbs construction of the body of the nation and our own. The body politic as a whole has come to be a symbol of nationalistic identity. The pathogen and virus notion of the nation as body is largely undermined by question the body's structural autonomy independent of the immigrant or whether immigrants make up a vital part of this body.

The *immigrant as pathogens*, is another popular version, that has as it center the idea of the body. It is difficult to ignore the literal impact of metaphor as Anti-immigrant rhetoric and policy have often been framed by an explicitly medical language. Americans have a propensity to falsely blame outsiders for the spread of dangerous pathogens. That is that critical points in American history immigrants have been stigmatized as the direct cause etiology of a wide variety of physical and societal ills one of which is disease. The Persistent Association of Immigrants and Disease in American Society, in that medically immigrants have been the source of disease. However, as Howard Markel and Alexandra Minna Stern in all case the social perception of the threat of the infected immigrant was typically far greater than the actual danger, furthermore, Americans tended to view any pre-existing disease as being a foreign import. More recently, this has manifested itself in violence against Asian Americans during the 2020 Covid-19 outbreak in the United States. It should also be noted that in the 21st century when diseases such as tuberculosis and HIV become more drug resistant, the desire to blame outside must be curbed.

Somewhat related to the Nation as body metaphor, is the *Nation as home* metaphor provides a complete structural metaphor, in which different areas can be mapped out as parts of a home, complete with doors, corridors, bedroom. The Nation as a home metaphor is only one of the examples of territoriality in metaphors. But shows the ways in which become possessive and territorial over something as abstract and ambiguous as a nation.

We grant privileges to "the home" as oppose to the abstract mass that lies outside of its confines. The home is personal, human, whereas

the world outside is not. And the immigrant is presented as this external threat to the home. In this interpretation any outsider is not only a trespasser but also a threat, and potential terrorist or "home invader". The metaphor also shows our general mistrust of those of lower economic station and the houseless. In that it illustrates an immense fear of theft and burglary because we feel a sense of ownership of our homes. Treating the nation as home blurs the line between the person and the inter-personal. Not only this, but the house metaphor grants agency to the Anglo-American citizen it is their home, they own it, this is in stark contrast to the description of the abstract invader the faceless immigrant. And also explains the reaction response that some Anglo-American citizen have to "guard their homes". This notion extends to those who have provisional citizenship i.e. borrowed citizenship in that they have been granted some form of a privilege and overstaying that privilege is not welcome. This idea of the Nation as home likewise provides unique problems in light of land ownership being a largely colonial construct and many Native Americans.

In the *immigration as a line* metaphor, one of the key issues is that citizens do not have to stand in that line. The line does not apply to citizens, rather the line is a way for citizens to create a hierarchy, in which they will never be standing in the metaphorical line. It further emphasizes the illusion of justice. Preforming the idea of justice not is actuality.

Furthermore, the immigration as a line metaphor implies that the line is inherently fair. The metaphor of the line ignores that some countries have greater access to the line than others. The metaphor of line also chooses to ignore that many have passed away standing in that metaphorical line. As well as that for many countries there is no line. With respects to most types of green cards this means that "a single country can account for no more than 7% of all green cards issued annually" which means that China, Mexico and India are subject to the same numerical cap as small countries. Immigrants who migrated and are able to be naturalized can claiming that they did things the right way. In this way maintaining the preexisting hierarchy. Undocumented immigrants themselves are unable to receive citizenship due to the accrued unlawful presence that will be held against them. The metaphor of the line also fails to consider what caused the displacement in the first place proposing that there is a "right way to about it", causing not only an erasure in history but also an erasure of violence done against large populations of the United States. The Johnson Reed Immigration Act in 1924, drastically limited especially

Jewish and Slavic immigration from southern and eastern Europe. The act also extended prohibition of all and also excluded those from other Non-European countries on the basis of racial undesirability. Immigration restrictions are described by Iyoko Day as " Jim crow in a transnational context" in which " Immigration policy not only determined entry into the nation but could legally bar an immigrant from naturalizing, voting, owning property, and working." Many of the laws and militias regulating and punishing black movement developed from anti-black practices interested only in restraining and hurting. Lovato for example views the federal ICE agreement of cooperation in communities to enhance safety and security (ACCESS) program, supposedly aimed at facilitates cooperation by offering various programs and tools to assist these agencies in identifying and removing high-risk criminal alien but really. is based on the Fugitive Slave Act. (Lovato) Likewise, Philip Kretsedemas argues that socioeconomic order of white rule established through state-level Jim crow laws was eventually duplicated in the emulation of law enforcement policy to the state level and systematically which disproportionally impacts black immigrants. (Walia 29) The immigration as a line metaphor deliberately misconstrues notions of justice by presenting a fair world a meritocracy that does not exist that prevents systematic changes to this system from taking place.

Migrants themselves have been equivocated to animals, but the process of migration has been explained through the use of water metaphors. Take for instance the metaphor of the *immigration as a wave*, here the individual migrant is completely lost instead the emphasis is placed on the physical threat of the wave. The metaphor of the wave, makes ideas such as the building of a wall seem like a rational strategy. It seems absurd to deal with a wave at the molecular level, and thus responding to it with a wall seems under the conditions created by this metaphor as a rational strategy. Often the metaphor of immigration as a wave draws on the presence is volume the sheer number of migrants. This often take on tones of racial discrimination, a "brown flood" that is seen as "threatening" the Anglo-American dominance. (Santa Ana 321). The idea of what these metaphorical waters are washing away is significant a perceived pure white America.

However, not all metaphors have strictly negative connotation, some have positive or more ambiguous connotations. Floods are a perfect metaphor to inspire fear and dread, the single immigrant and their dream is completely washed away instead what the metaphor levels is the foreboding sense of a physical threat. For example, the

metaphor immigration is a flood utilizes certain characteristics of "flood" (the source domain), while underutilizing others. Thus, the metaphor emphasizes the flood's destructive qualities, while ignoring the fact that floods often recede and leave fertile soil in their wake. The metaphor of *immigration as waters* had a positive narrative of the same course of events. Even though it might seem at first glance that right wingers are making the populist appeals that "foreigners are stealing our jobs, ruing our environment, and infecting our neighborhoods, and tainting our values." At the core level, underlying systems blame "foreigners" a convenient target incapable of adequately defending itself. Such discourse focuses on good immigrants and good refuges who are paying for their citizenship through buying power, assimilation, respectability, and nationhood (Santa Ana 328)

Instead the metaphor of an immigrant flood has introduced far more ludicrous solutions, to the deal with this metaphorical flood of immigrants. Perhaps amongst the most humorous of which is the millionaire Jason Buzi who proposed that the idea of "refuge nation" where aims to relocate the worlds displaced people to a single island. A gesture which he frames a humanitarian. Buzi ideas include building a new island on international waters or buying island states like Dominica. But one thing is clear for Buzi, there will be no government handouts. There are many other such terrifying ideas in the works. (Walia 15)

Another metaphor is the idea of the immigrant as *dreamer*. The idea of the *dreamer* has undoubtably done much to help migrant cause. In that it presents a new version of the migrant, one who take part in the American Dream, and has also made it possible for the immigrant to share in something that is quintessentially perceived as part of the American experience. It paints the Dreamer as Aspirational-y American a state of continuously becoming but not a state of being. Often times DACA and Dreamer are conflated within the U.S. political consciousness. So, what is DACA? DACA stands for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, abbreviated as DACA, is a United States immigration policy that allows certain individuals with unlawful presence in the United States after being brought to the country as children to receive a renewable two-year period of deferred action from deportation and become eligible for an employment authorization document (work permit) in the U.S. To be considered eligible for the program, recipients cannot have felonies or serious misdemeanors on their records. Unlike the proposed DREAM Act, DACA does not provide a path to citizenship for recipients. The policy, an executive branch memorandum, was announced by President Barack Obama on

June 15, 2012. This followed a campaign by immigrants, advocates and supporters which employed a range of tactics. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) began accepting applications for the program on August 15, 2012.

However, the concept of the dreamer can be both advantageous and challenging. DACA has served to pacify dreamers, as unlike other subgroups they have the capacity and support to make claims against the state. Individuals who are considered Dreamers may identify as American in every respect, except for their legal documentation. They are individuals who entered the country at a young age, often maintaining strong academic records or pursuing successful careers. They actively participate in the economy and embody the ideals associated with the concept of American meritocracy. In most cases they have unaccented speech or participate and have internalized other aspects of the American identity. Despite the necessity of the dreamer narrative and the benefits that it provides to selective migrants. The caricature of the dreamer itself is problematic, as it presupposes that only such migrants who meet age, economic, and social conditions have the right to protection. And that by extension all those who do not meet those criteria are by definition criminals. The dreamer is not only required to be a law-abiding citizen but also meet extensive often unrealistic goals, and failure to participate or falling short of the lofty model warrants deportation (38) The *dreamer narrative* while helpful to some does not have the same effect across the board, this is particularly noteworthy in case where age, race, or economic standing play a more crucial role. However, it can also simply be a case of failure to meet high expectations, as many dreamers have external and financial pressures that do not allow them to meet these high expectations. The idea leads to a binary definition of those who are deserving of being American and those who are not. The aspiring American narrative which came into fruition alongside of the idea of the dream act itself in 2001. Rather the idea of the dreamer perpetuates good immigrant/bad immigrant dichotomy. A dichotomy that does nothing other than continue to impose criminality on undocumented Americans and require immigrants to work harder than US born citizens to be worthy of their place in the country, through things such as academic accomplishments. Even the use of the term 'dream' becomes subject to the realization that not all American have access to the same American dream. The conflation of the migrant as a criminal is clearly interlinked with the idea.

There are outer limits that define the dreamer, and even this inclusion does not necessarily lend itself to security. As recent policies

have illustrated not only can not all people dream, but their status as dreamers is constantly called into question. Unlike citizenship which one is born with, the dreamers' citizenship is removable, not as a result of any particular wrongdoing on part of the individual but rather as a result of an ever-changing political landscape. That choses to view the dreamer less as individual and more as a political talking point. Dreamers are young and fresh faces, which leads the public to view them with more favor. DACA recipients are thus in a unique position of having a politically legitimate life. But this legitimacy is borrowed. Consequently, challenging authority becomes an act of rebellion. The implicit message is: "How dare you, a guest, be ungrateful of all that we have given you?" The underlying implication is that this is not your home, but ours, and speaking up is to revolt against the hand that feeds you.

Dreamers are a reframing of the illegality of the immigrant. It legitimizes the illegality in the same manner as it attempts to undermine it by claiming that there can be 'some good immigrants' reaffirms that there are others who do not deserve this status. It regurgitates the point that there is a right way of immigrating and anyone who does not meet the qualifications for DACA is somehow faulty. It also provides an elusive dream the illusion of security. Because DACA is not a path to citizenship, it is simply a security net that can be removed at any given moment. Policy has likewise proven this point, in that its legitimacy as a policy is constantly under question.

The idea of the dreamer is also framed as embracing the idea of the *American dream* a belief that anyone, regardless of where they were born or what class they were born into, can attain their own version of success in a society in which upward mobility is possible for everyone. However, likewise the idea of the American Dream implies a kind of meritocracy that has constantly been called into question. The American dream is believed to be achieved through sacrifice, risk-taking, and hard work, rather than by chance.

The term was first used by James Truslow Adams in his best-selling 1931 book *Epic of America* described it as "that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement." Adams further extrapolates on this idea explaining, "It is a difficult dream for the European upper classes to interpret adequately, and too many of us ourselves have grown weary and mistrustful of it. It is not a dream of motorcars and high wages merely, but a dream of social order in which each man and woman shall be able to attain to the fullest stature of which they are innately capable, and be recognized by others for

what they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth or position." (Adams, J.T., 2017) The idea of the American Dream has much earlier roots however, as is exemplified in the declaration of independence in which the idea is heralded "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness." Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s famous speech referenced the concept of the American dream pointing out some of these very same inconsistencies in this dream: "I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: 'We hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men are created equal.'" While contemporary understanding of the American dream pigeonholes it at largely a matter of individual success, the house, the car, the picket fence. Early constructions focused more of the idea of equally itself. In the 1990's the company used the American dream in order to promote the idea that buying a home was the cornerstone of the American dream and this verbiage was central in ads selling home loans. An idea which led to the housing boom and ultimate bubble that popped leading to the 2008-09 financial crisis.

It quite clear that the criticism of this dream is as old as the dream itself. In that reality falls short of the ideals. Slavery, limitations to vote being initially restrained and arguably continue to restrain certain individuals from having access to this dream, arguably most continue to this day.

The metaphor of the immigrant/migrant as *illegal* is has been popularized throughout the US. Many conversations about immigration, both formally and informal, often include someone referring to others as "illegal." When choosing between "illegal" and "undocumented," reporters are deciding whether to depict the person as a lawbreaker or as a more neutral and sympathetic personage. A person cannot be illegal. Even the US government refers to certain individuals as illegal aliens. Certain actions may be criminal, or illegal, however people themselves cannot be illegal. Despite that in the US, it is a federal crime to enter the country without inspection, it is not a crime to be present within the country without authorization. As stated by many linguists the term "illegal immigrant" is neither "'accurate nor neutral'" and other people who break laws are not referred to as "illegal."(Johnston)The language of referring to them as illegals, dehumanizes them and perpetuates the stereotype of them as criminals. The Merriam-Webster's Dictionary defines the adjective 'illegal' as, "not according to or authorized by law." Synonyms include

"unlawful," "illicit," "criminal," "felonious," "wrongful," and "lawless." Every time someone makes the choice to call an individual illegal, they participate in the dehumanization and demonization of said individual. Their entire existence is marked as illegitimate, inferior and criminal.

It wasn't until the creation of the U.S. Border Patrol in 1924 that the term "illegal
alien" had a legal basis in immigration discussions. The 1924 Immigration Act was the first in US history to delineate immigration quotas, along with a framework for deporting undocumented people. It was in this Immigration Act, that Mexican immigrants were identified as "iconic illegal aliens"

Despite this phrase "illegal immigrant" was not popularly used until World War II when it was used to describe Jewish refugees who fled to Palestine without authorization. Elie Wiesel, a Nobel Peace Prize winner and Holocaust survivor, once said, "know that no human being is illegal. That is a contradiction in terms. Human beings can be beautiful or more beautiful, they can be fat or skinny, they can be right or wrong, but illegal? How can a human being be illegal?" (Long Island Wins 2016) Denial of humanity is the first step to inhumane treatment. Wiesel told CNN journalist Maria Hinojosa that the media should never use the term "illegal immigrant." When she asked why not, he said:

> Because once you label a people 'illegal,' that is exactly what the Nazis did to Jews.' You do not label a people 'illegal.' They have committed an illegal act. They are immigrants who crossed illegally. They are immigrants who crossed without papers. They are immigrants who crossed without permission. They are living in this country without permission. But they are not an illegal people.

Nevertheless, the term "illegal immigrant" became a term used by the Court in Arizona v. United States. The phrase has been popularized in the US to describe both documented and undocumented immigrants as a result of the misconception that undocumented immigrants, by virtue of existing, violate criminal law. However not everyone of this same opinion, one anti-immigration activist group, the Federation for American Immigration Reform, on its website argues for instance that "[The term 'undocumented'] blurs the distinction between legally admitted immigrants and those who have sneaked into the country or chosen to violate the terms of a legal entry" That do not hold the same negative connotations including: "newest Americans, newcomers, undocumented citizens, unauthorized immigrants, families who have moved from one place to another, and people who weren't born in the United States."(Johnston)   Furthermore, the notion of "illegal"

immigration implies that the opposite legal is possible and obtainable and leads one to ignore glaring flaws in the system which prevent this from being the case.

In not separating criminals from the illegal, the rhetoric implies a conflation of the two. The idea of the immigrant as an alien is also self-dehumanizing process in that it become self-actualizing: the migrant told that they have no rights begins to believe in their lack of rights. Because rather than being simply a human, even if not a citizen, one has rights whereas being told one is a criminal, inherently rids them of their rights. "No matter how many times his attorney explained it, he kept saying "I'm illegal, I have no rights. I 'm nobody in this country. Just do whatever you want with me." what made this framing possible is that humans have rights, criminals do not have rights, immigrants being criminals do not have rights. (28) In this way the immigrant develops cognitive structures that serve this function. They internalize these cognitive structures about themselves and are less likely to act.

This discussion extends beyond referring to people as illegal aliens or describing how someone enters the United States as legal or unlawful. This discussion covers all of the terms used to describe migrants and immigration. There is no "proper method" to enter the United States; there is no "queue" to join; there is no "good immigrant" or "bad immigrant." Some people must wait decades to be reunited with their relatives due to immigration regulations in the United States. Asylum seekers fleeing violence and persecution are subjected to these regulations. These laws discriminate against certain immigrants.

In a narrative that overwhelmingly paints the immigrant as bad, it is unsurprising that immigrants and their supporters attempt to rewrite their own narratives and present a narrative to the contrary. However, the *good immigrant* narrative presents its own problem in so much as immigrants are "bad" by default until they prove themselves otherwise. Often times proving themselves otherwise often by winning an Olympic medal, treat you at your local hospital, or rescue a child from the side of a building. Small criminal activities or simply a failure to live up to the often-outrageous expectation of 'the good immigrant' becomes newsworthy, and worth of scorn. DACA and the Dream Act fall into a unique category of conditional status because they directly challenge the meaning of American identity. They differ from traditional hyphenated identities (such as African-American or Korean-American) and other forms of conditional citizenship by selectively choosing desirable traits for inclusion.

All the metaphors and narratives used to talk about immigrants

have significant consequences in the treatment of immigrants. Immigration attorneys, activists, and politicians in particular must be aware of the importance of using the appropriate language so as to not continue to dehumanize fellow Americans or continue to embolden racists and their hateful rhetoric- as this rhetoric not only hurts those who are undocumented but also those who appear to be undocumented further disenfranchising people on the margins. Although the core discourse surrounding immigrants, the use of similar derogatory terms and metaphors, has persisted over the last fifty years, social media has drastically increased the spread and political influence of this rhetoric. This amplification has led to an influx of hate speech and the legitimization of violence against migrants, often publicly witnessed and, implicitly, condoned.

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Historical Power Dynamics Reflecting on Today's Cultural Appropriation: The Arab Culture in Global Fashion

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Abstract: This paper explores how fashion brands use cultural heritage and history in their marketing strategies, often repackaging them for profit without acknowledging the communities they stem from. It explains Cultural Appropriation (CA) and focuses on the role of power dynamics in shaping consumer backlash to it. Using a qualitative approach, I examine case studies of brands criticised for appropriating indigenous cultures, analysing how they justify their actions versus how consumers respond, especially through online visuals and text. Findings show that consumer reactions vary, depending on the historical relationship between cultures, highlighting the need to define and call out appropriation in its different guises. The study argues that businesses must consider historical context when representing the cultures they draw on. Overall, this research adds to the ongoing discussions on power and responsibility in cultural representation in today's commercialised world.

Keywords: Cultural appropriation, Cultural identity, Historical factors, Fashion industry, Cultural heritage.

1. Introduction

Today, brands are defined by both their products and the cultural values promoted by their marketing strategies, shaping consumer behaviour. Some cultural organisations succeed by presenting historical artistic products as exotic in foreign markets, reinforcing cultural diversity as a global competitive advantage (Arango & María, 2016; Mohiuddin et al., 2009). Social media fuels this trend as companies exploit scandals for attention, risking reputational damage. Brands like Carolina Herrera and Gucci have faced Cultural Appropriation (CA) accusations, forcing brands to address such

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controversies with care and transparency (Gargoles & Ambas, 2023).

CA is a rising controversy in modern business. Scafidi (2005, in Bucar 2022, 9) defines it as "taking intellectual property, traditional knowledge, cultural expressions, or artefacts from someone else's culture without permission." In business, turning a profit from CA is central to its definition. Many borrowings can be labelled CA, but this does not mean they are morally objectionable or perceived equally (Bucar 2022). Any product, tangible or intangible, may be seen as CA, even outside the realm of business, depending on the power dynamics or historical ties between cultures. This makes CA a highly sensitive and complex notion (Yagiz, 2010; Lancefield et al., 1998).

This paper applies an interpretive approach to the exploration of various facets of CA and CA-related situations. It addresses the question: To what extent is Cultural Appropriation a universally applicable concept? This requires attempting some answers to investigative questions, such as how does consumer perception vary by case? To what extent do power dynamics and historical background affect consumer behaviour? In what follows, I shall be using the term "preponderant" for the appropriating culture due to its greater influence on society and the market, and "subaltern" for the appropriated culture.

2. CA: Scope, Definition, and Relevance

The concept of culture is rather complex, involving more than behaviour, items, and symbols. Culture manifests itself in diverse forms, including art, science, spiritual systems, and daily life practices. The term is often used to describe specific historical periods, societies, or areas of human activity (Makhmudova, 2022). It encompasses symbolic and expressive dimensions of social life, including language, ideas, values, identity, and meanings attributed to material objects (Williams, 2013). This view shows how beliefs, behaviour, and products construct society. UNESCO adds emotional and intellectual elements, defining culture as a web of art, literature, lifestyle, values, traditions, and beliefs (The 2009 UNESCO Framework for Cultural Statistics (FCS), 2009). Culture shapes identity and preserves human history, but is frail due to global interaction and technology, risking value loss (Birukou et al. 2013).

Appropriation involves borrowing a cultural item and claiming ownership, changing its meaning and use from the original (Schneider 2003). CA can be classified into four frameworks. The first is exploitation, involving commodification and financial gain, where

businesses turn cultural elements into profit without crediting the source, converting culture into exchangeable value stripped of meaning (Heath 1992). The second is transculturation, a mix of cultural elements from various sources, with appropriation at its core (Pratt 2008). The third is exchange, where CA occurs between equal powers and can be seen as reciprocal (Büyükokutan 2011). The last framework is dominance. Appropriation occurs when a dominant power imposes its power dynamic on an oppressed group or as a site of resistance of the latter to challenge this dynamic (Said, 1978). Legal scholars view CA through the lens of intellectual property, regarding it as cultural theft and focusing on unauthorised use and protection. Sociologists and anthropologists study borrowing across cultures, offering not only negative but also neutral definitions (Ashley & Plesch 2002; Rogers 2006). Exploring different frameworks reveals Cultural Appropriation's potential and its varying impact across business and ethnic cultures.

3. Literature review

Because current debates on CA are rooted in history, it is important to first provide historical context. Wachs and Weber (2023) trace the origins of CA to art theft during wars and colonialism, when rulers and collectors seized cultural objects from colonised regions as trophies of conquest. Similarly, Jenss and Hofmann (2019) document how German-speaking elites in the nineteenth century collected oriental jewellery, Arabic coins, textiles, maps, and costume books, revealing early forms of appropriation shaped by colonial fascination with the "exotic". These studies show that CA is deeply rooted in historical practices of cultural expropriation.

Historical and literary scholars have traced early academic discussions of CA to the 1920s. Ledbetter (2016, in Green and Kaiser, 2017), highlights how Harlem Renaissance intellectuals criticised popular depictions of African Americans, laying the groundwork for later critiques of cultural misrepresentation. Nearly a century later, in 2016, public debate on CA re-emerged when several celebrities issued public apologies for appropriation, marking a shift toward mainstream awareness.

From a postcolonial perspective, Cuthbert (1998) emphasises the legacy of colonialism, where colonisers acted as appropriators and indigenous peoples as dispossessed subjects. Yet he also recognises that appropriation may occur in reverse, as colonised groups sometimes adopt elements from dominant cultures as strategies of

survival or adaptation.

Focusing on economic and social processes, Watson (2006) identifies importation as an important dimension of CA, linking it to cultural imperialism and to the passive acceptance of global influences by less resistant societies. Similarly, Kjeldgaard and Askegaard (2006) describe acculturation as a process through which minority cultures assimilate into dominant ones, illustrating how cultural influence often mirrors global power hierarchies.

Analysing CA through the lens of power dynamics, Heath (1992) defines it as a situation in which a dominant culture appropriates from a subaltern (as the author puts it, "subordinate") one without acknowledgement or respect, resulting in the commodification and misrepresentation of the subaltern culture. Derderian (2017) supports this interpretation, noting that such acts reproduce Western superiority and marginalise the cultural contributions of others. Some scholars have explored the reverse dynamic of cultural appropriation, where less powerful cultures adopt elements of dominant ones as strategies of adaptation or negotiation. This process has been described as acculturation or assimilation within global consumer contexts (Kjeldgaard & Askegaard, 2006; Watson, 2006). Sobh et al. (2012) extend this to fashion, showing how individuals combine Western and traditional elements to express pride and continuity within modern contexts. Adding a further perspective, Thimm (2021) examines cases of appropriation where equally less powerful cultures borrow from each other, using cultural exchange to challenge stereotypes or for commercial purposes.

The question of authenticity and representation has also attracted critical attention. Said (1978), through his theory of Orientalism, demonstrates how Western discourse constructed the East as inferior and exotic in order to legitimise dominance. Heath (1992) and Carini and Salice (2023) show how such practices distort or erase authenticity, turning cultural symbols into marketable commodities. Howes (1996, 2002) situates this within global consumer culture, arguing that cross-cultural exchange simultaneously generates creativity and inequality. Sobh et al. (2012) further note that participation in global fashion can reinforce hierarchies and perceptions of superiority over "foreign" cultures.

From the standpoint of cultural innovation, Rogers (2006) and Lancefield et al. (1998) view appropriation as existing on a spectrum between appreciation and exploitation, depending on context and intent. Worsley (2011), cited in David (2020), provides a concrete example of this through Assyrian heritage organisations reclaiming

objects such as the keffiyeh or shemagh, an Arab headdress rooted in Sumerian history, illustrating local agency in redefining cultural ownership. Said (1978) reiterates that reclaiming interpretive and representational authority from Western dominance remains essential to preserving authenticity and resisting cultural dilution.

In terms of methodology, Alsultany and Shohat (201 3) and Sobh et al. (2012) observe, in general terms, that research on CA predominantly employs qualitative approaches, including ethnography, interviews, and case studies. Specifically, David (2020) and Heath (1992) conduct comparative analyses of Western and non-Western interactions, while Said (1978) and Young (2001) provide key theoretical foundations through postcolonial and cultural studies frameworks. Together, these studies emphasise that CA cannot be understood without considering historical and structural power relations. Nevertheless, gaps persist in the literature. Research continues to focus mainly on Western contexts, with relatively little attention to non-Western settings such as the Arab world. Moreover, the intersections of gender, long-term cultural impact, and reciprocal exchange remain underexplored. Carini and Salice (2023) insist that understanding CA requires a sustained analysis of the power dynamics underlying cultural interaction. Following this approach, recent scholarship increasingly distinguishes between creative freedom, often framed as appreciation, and exploitative practices that disregard reciprocity and context.

Collectively, these studies reveal that CA is neither a fixed nor a one-directional process : it must be understood as a dynamic system of cultural negotiation shaped by history, power, and evolving standards of representation.

4. Methodology

As far as the research design is concerned, I employed a qualitative approach, presenting visuals of Cultural Appropriation and examining real-life fashion industry cases. Data collection, discussed earlier, involved poring through scholarly articles, books, industry reports, and case studies on fashion intersections, as well as finding examples of CA. I also collected case studies, which I subsequently organised into three categories.

The first is the Cultural Appropriation of non-Western cultures by Western Fashion Brands. The second is Fashion Brands' Appropriation of Subaltern Culture. Third, Cultural Appropriation between two subaltern cultures. The data analysis method used is thematic analysis,

identifying common patterns. I used a systematic approach to categorise visual elements in the imagery, focusing on symbols, motifs, colours, and design elements related to specific cultures. I used a semiotic analysis in order to evaluate these symbols. Additionally, I conducted a comparative analysis to examine instances of Cultural Appropriation across brands, identifying similarities and differences in their use of cultural elements. I also evaluated the effectiveness and sensitivity of each brand's approach and analysed how the representation of cultural elements has evolved over time.

5. Findings

5.1 Case Studies

A. **Western Brands Appropriating from the Arab Culture**

Case A1: In 2018, Dior created 15 new pieces for their haute couture show in Dubai, incorporating local elements. This case represents how global brands attempt to connect with local markets by adopting local aesthetics, but sometimes they risk appropriating cultural elements without sufficient consideration. While the show claimed to honour local values, it could be perceived as an instance of CA, due to its ambiguous respect for cultural significance. Regardless of intent, it clashes with CA's definition. To align with the eclectic fashion style of the UAE, Dior chose a circus theme with vibrant colours, maintaining the global aspect of its identity. As a result, Dubai became a significant hub for modest fashion. Is it possible that such appropriation in high-profile fashion shows is acceptable because it boosts tourism in the city and actually promotes the local cultural identity? In this case, there is a fine line between Appreciation and appropriation. Clearly, there is a huge financial gain for Dior. However, can the benefit be mutual? Do we no longer consider this case as cultural appropriation (CA), or do we still call it CA but without assigning a negative connotation to it, since it fits the definition? Further cases should be collected and analysed in detail in the future.

Case A2: In 2014-2015, Karl Lagerfeld's Chanel Cruise collection incorporated cultural elements like Aladdin-style slippers, harem trousers, and tweed patterns resembling the Keffiyeh scarf to blend Middle Eastern symbols within a Western framework. Chanel aimed to connect with local consumers, assuming relatability, while appealing to both Western (preponderant) and Middle Eastern (subaltern) markets. However, as Chanel is a Western brand, it remains the appropriator in this case, using these elements to increase

profitability by focusing on modest fashion.

Case A3: The Swedish brand H&M released children's socks featuring a doodle design that closely resembled the word "Allah" (God). This word is unique in Arabic, as it is written differently due to its sacredness. The company used the calligraphy without understanding its meaning or the cultural and religious sensitivity. Though unintentional, the resemblance led to backlash, forcing H&M to withdraw the product. This case shows the need for Western companies to thoroughly research cultural symbols in order to avoid disrespect.

Case A4: Gigi Hadid faced backlash for her Vogue Arabia cover, with critics claiming she disrespected Palestinian culture. She defended the shoot, stating that, given her Palestinian roots, the cover was meant to honour her heritage. Her response could explain the sensitive distinction between cultural appropriation and cultural representation. The stand she embraces is that she has pure intentions in representing her familial cultural ties respectfully. This begs the question: Could intention be the crucial standard of CA evaluation? If so, how to measure intention effectively? Is it measurable in the first place?...

Case A5: The Italian brand Dolce & Gabbana used Arab cultural items in their collection of 2016, and because of that, faced a huge backlash. The presence of Arabic script and calligraphic elements in their designs was considered a misuse. The brand employed cultural symbols disconnected from the proper context. This was seen as stripped of its original significance and value. Arab inspiration appeared in Gucci's designs for dresses, scarves, and bags. Critics argue that turning cultural values into fashion trends exploits these elements for profit without compensation or proper acknowledgement. Whether or not the criticism is valid, the consequences are significant, as key stakeholders (consumers) may change their behaviour in response. Similarly, Dolce & Gabbana's use of Arab motifs simplifies and stereotypes the source culture, diluting its meaning in the pursuit of profit. This harms Arab designers, who gain little recognition or benefit, while global brands profit without giving back. The cover features Dolce & Gabbana's collection, including the Abaya, a traditional garment worn by Muslim Arab women, highlighting the thin line between appreciation and appropriation. The "Yay or nay" caption suggests a choice to approve or reject the image, as the Abaya carries deep cultural and religious meaning.

B. Arab designers appropriating from Western culture.
Case B1: Faissal El-Malak is a Palestinian designer who uses

traditional textiles from Yemen, Tunisia, and Egypt in his modern, Western-like clothing. He works within a Western context and collaborates with traditional Arab designers, translating cultural artefacts into modernised designs. This is seen as a respectful form of innovation rather than appropriation, possibly due to the lack of power and influence in the appropriator culture compared to the one being appropriated from. Designers like Utruj, Zareena, and Mashael Alrajhi also transform Arab traditions into Western-style designs. Utruj and Emirati designer Zareena have reinvented women's dress wear to suit Western tastes, likely because Western styles appeal more to UAE consumers. These Arab designers appropriate from Western culture while preserving traditional Arab elements to maintain modesty accepted by their society. This reflects the social and economic influence of Western culture. Meanwhile, Saudi designer Mashael Alrajhi appropriates Western techniques, not designs, to access a broader, cross-cultural market beyond the local one.

C. The less preponderant cultures appropriating from the Arab culture.

Case C1: Elie Saab is a Lebanese designer known for his haute couture creations that are influenced by many cultures. In his Fall/Winter 2015 collection, Elie Saab combined Indian embroidery techniques with his signature design and Arabian features. The detailed beadwork, mirror work, and thread embroidery from Indian traditional fashion used by Saab did not put him in a position to receive backlash, unlike in other cases. The collection was well received, and the appropriation may be viewed as a privilege, as these cultural elements were included in and elevated by Saab's success and fame.

Case C2: Zuhair Murad's Spring/Summer 2018 Collection
Zuhair Murad's Spring/Summer 2018 collection, "Indian Summer," was inspired by Native American culture, featuring feathers, traditional patterns, and teepee-like decorations. Critics called the use of "Indian" inaccurate and the designs disrespectful for commercialising sacred symbols like feathers, which represent freedom, wisdom, and honour. Murad defended the collection as a creative challenge and a tribute to Native American art. However, critics like Native scholar and activist Adrienne Keene argued that using sacred cultural symbols for profit risks misrepresentation, strips them of meaning, and can offend communities by reducing traditions to stereotypes.

Case C3: A different category
In September 2024, Morocco's Ministry of Youth, Culture, and Communication warned Adidas about CA, accusing it of using

Moroccan "Zellij" patterns on Algeria's football warm-up shirt. While Adidas claimed inspiration from Tlemcen's Moorish palace, Morocco argued the designs are historical and uniquely Moroccan and accused Adidas of misattribution and economic exploitation. The ministry demanded withdrawal, compensation for craftsmen, and raised broader concerns over the role of fashion in cultural appropriation and the need for legal protection of heritage. Moreover, Morocco filed a complaint against Algeria over the appropriation of the "Ntaa El Fassi" caftan, opposing its inclusion in Algeria's UNESCO dossier. Though not directly tied to profit, this case highlights the need to protect cultural heritage from misappropriation, especially amid geopolitical tensions. UNESCO plays a key role in mediating such disputes and preserving traditions across borders, even within shared ethnic groups.

D. Other less preponderant cultures appropriating from the Arab culture

Case D1: Manish Malhotra, an Indian designer, drew from many cultures in his 2018 Haute Couture collection "Zween," which featured Middle Eastern motifs and aesthetics. Critics pointed out his superficial use of these symbols without real cultural respect. While some admired his creativity, others felt that using important cultural elements without a deep understanding was disrespectful. With many DESI immigrants in the Gulf, the collection could also spark political and social controversy.

6. Analysis and Discussion

The foremost reason for criticising CA usually arises when a preponderant culture or, as described by Cranes (2018), a privileged and often white culture appropriates elements from, as described, marginalised culture and thereby profits from them. The Arabic world, however, has an interesting dynamic. In this part, I will employ some theoretical frameworks discussed in the literature review. Chanel's 2022 collection typifies the concept of importation by incorporating Middle Eastern modesty traditions, cultural symbols, and elements of regional textile heritage that were used to evoke a vague sense of "local authenticity in Western luxury fashion. As for Gigi Hadid's case, it could typify the challenges of importing cultural symbols into global fashion. These mixed reactions reflect the complexity of cultural affiliation, especially when a figure has a hybrid identity. Here, the historical façade is more layered; it is not just about appropriation, but also about claims to belonging and representation in a globalised

context. I use the term "historical façade" in reference to a surface-level engagement with history that enhances brand image without deeper cultural accountability. The trend of tailoring fashion collections to regional preferences (for example, DIOR and Dolce & Gabbana) is predicated on the premise on the fact that entering a market and gaining money is more important than preserving the cultural value of the fashion items. These cases illustrate the influence of Western brands on cultural representation and integration. These brands can shape the perception of Arab motifs in the fashion world and highlight the power dynamics within this industry, making Western culture more preponderant. Chanel's incorporation of traditional Bedouin headdresses and latticework patterns in its designs raises questions. Is it genuine engagement with Middle Eastern culture? A mere fashion statement, or a blatant attempt to make more money? Regardless of the intention, the risk of superficial representation and commodification persists. In the fashion industry, the interchange between cultural appropriation and authentic representation underscores a pivotal theme. The industry shows the profound impact that fashion can have on cultural records. I would advocate an approach that values authenticity over mere commodification. El-Malak and Malhotra successfully navigate the balance between honouring cultural heritage and Fashion innovation. It is a kind of alternative to the commodification frequently observed in shows like Chanel's Cruise Collection (2014-2015). On another note, the H&M controversy highlights the dangers of misinterpreting cultural significance, regardless of the intention, that mistakes (honest or dishonest) would lead to backlash and could lead to boycotts, as consumer backlash is closely tied to historical wounds. Dolce & Gabbana, known for prior racist scandals, faced accusations of insincere inclusion when launching abayas aimed at Muslim consumers. These reactions show how the power imbalance between global brands and local cultures shapes public perception: the more marginalised the culture, the more sensitive the reaction when its history is commodified. Certain Local Cultures could change due to the influence of the Western brand that did not receive an impactful backlash or was just embraced by the local culture. Not only gradually change the local adaptation of local elements, but it also changes the global perceptions of such elements. For example, Chanel's incorporation of Arab elements, such as keffiyeh scarves, impacted the popularity of these scarves and the market value of these symbols, which raises concern about fashion authenticity and commodification.

7. Conclusion

This paper explores the nuanced concept of cultural appropriation (CA) in the Arab world, as manifest in the fashion industry. Specifically, it examines stakeholder reactions, questioning whether CA is universally applicable. It focuses on power dynamics shaped by historical and political contexts, which influence how cultural elements are perceived and commercialised. CA in this context reflects both adaptability and complexity. Consumer understanding in the Arab world remains unclear, despite the rise of traditional elements in modern Western fashion. While this reflects cultural awareness and global engagement, it also poses risks of misrepresentation if not handled with respect. The study confirms CA as a global issue, but with distinct dynamics in the Arab world. Addressing it requires an inclusive approach that considers all stakeholders' perspectives.

8. Limitations and Implications

The first limitation is the reliance on secondary sources, which risks bias; direct consumer input would have added more depth to the study. Second, the paper did not focus on a specific stakeholder, limiting the range of perspectives. Third, CA is a complex, fluid concept with no clear definition or metrics, making it difficult to study objectively.

The first implication is an academic contribution to developing standards to assess CA, with the Arab world offering insights into power dynamics. The second implication is that business research on CA can guide branding strategies and help build contingency plans. Lastly, it calls for clearer policies in fashion, better-trained mediators, and CA education for designers and marketers.

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Truth Saying: Power and Manipulation in Frank Herbert's *Dune*

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Abstract: Frank Herbert's *Dune* masterfully explores the concept of collective memory through the Bene Gesserit's genetic recollections, the Fremen's oral traditions, and Paul Atreides' prescient burden. The novel illustrates how memory, whether controlled, inherited or mythologized serves as a powerful force in shaping societies, dictating political outcomes, and influencing individual fates. By examining these elements, *Dune* offers a profound meditation on the ways in which the past continuously informs and constrains the present and the future while serving as a powerful force in shaping societies, dictating political outcomes and influencing individual fates.

Key words: truth saying, collective memory, manipulation, power, history, narratives

Context and Methodology

Scholarship on *Dune* has long inspired a remarkably diverse critical corpus, encompassing and exploring its intersections with ecology, religion, politics, philosophical, and feminist interpretations, positioning Herbert's universe as a mirror of 20th-century anxieties regarding power and ideology. Early critics such as Timothy O'Reilly (1981) emphasized *Dune*'s ecological mysticism reading it as a parable of environmental interdependence, while more recent analyses by Gerry Canavan (2014) and Jeffrey Nicholas (2011) examined its philosophical and ethical dimensions, particularly the tension between destiny and agency. Subsequent scholars, including Willis E. McNelly

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(1992) and Donald Palumbo (2008), emphasized Herbert's mythopoeic construction and the novel's engagement with the archetypal hero's journey. Feminist and postcolonial perspectives, represented by Jessica Langer (2011), Kara Kennedy (2020), and Susan Stratton (2021), have drawn attention to the Bene Gesserit's ambiguous agency and to Herbert's ambivalent portrayal of gender and empire. Moreover, scholars such as Carl Freedman (2000) and Istvan Csicsery-Ronay Jr. (2008) have situated *Dune* within the broader history of science fiction's "cognitive estrangement," arguing that Herbert constructs a world where belief systems are simultaneously ideological mechanisms and instruments of resistance.

Against this backdrop, the present paper positions itself at the intersection of these debates, arguing that *Dune* should also be read as a political allegory of truth manipulation and collective memory, foregrounding Herbert's concern with the sociotechnical production of belief. While previous criticism has often approached Herbert's work through ecological or mythological lenses, this study foregrounds the discursive construction of truth as Herbert's central philosophical concern.

Accordingly, our method of analysis employs close textual reading within the theoretical framework informed by Foucauldian discourse theory, Halbwachs' concept of collective memory, and Jungian archetypes, emphasizing the novel's rhetorical and structural strategies that expose truth as a constructed and weaponized phenomenon.

Foucault's concept of "regimes of truth" (1980) provides the foundation for examining Herbert's depiction of institutional power embodied in the Bene Gesserit Sisterhood, the Great Houses, and the imperial bureaucracy as systems that produce truth through selective narration and control of knowledge. Maurice Halbwachs' *On Collective Memory* (1992) informs the analysis of the Fremen and their mythologized traditions, demonstrating how communal memory serves as both identity marker and site of manipulation. Herbert's desert world dramatizes Halbwachs' claim that memory is a social construct, perpetually shaped by power relations. Last but not least, Carl Jung's *Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious* (1959) further illuminates Herbert's use of mythic patterns, particularly in Paul Atreides' evolution as the Kwisatz Haderach, a figure at once savior, tyrant, and victim of historical determinism.

Our research argument contributes thus to *Dune* scholarship by reframing Herbert's fictional universe as a model of epistemic control, showing how truth operates as a social technology of domination. In

doing so, the paper connects Herbert's mid-20th-century vision to contemporary anxieties about propaganda, digital manipulation, and collective memory.

The Constructed Universe of *Dune*

Frank Herbert's *Dune*, first published in 1965, constitutes a landmark in speculative and epistemological fiction, offering a profound inquiry into the entanglements of truth, power, and perception. Set in a feudal interstellar empire where control over spice mélange governs the economy, religion, and cognition, *Dune* operates as a meditation on how power structures produce belief. As McNelly (1992) notes, Herbert's future history functions as an "anthropology of control," a sociological thought experiment about authority and adaptation. The fragmented narrative, annotated, archival, and quasi-historical, mimics the instability of historical truth itself. This structural multiplicity foregrounds Herbert's awareness of history as contested narrative. As proof, the epigraphs that preface each chapter, often attributed to Princess Irulan's future chronicles, create the illusion of historiographical distance while simultaneously exposing the process of myth-making. On one hand, they expose how history is shaped by those in power; on the other, they reveal how truth and narratives are manipulated to align with the dominant perspective. Such control over historical and ideological narratives inevitably shapes cultural portrayals as well. What is more, Herbert's use of Islamic motifs and Middle Eastern cultural frameworks, as argued by Langer (2011) and Kennedy (2020), reveals the novel's debt to Orientalist discourse even as it subverts Western mythic paradigms. The synthesis of mysticism and political realism situates *Dune* within the genre's broader critique of modernity: it is not a prophecy of the future but an allegory of how societies remember and believe.

In this regard, the novel resembles a legal document intended for future interpretation. Its fragmented narrative, structured through overlapping and contradictory perspectives, evokes the polyphony of witness statements rather than a single authoritative account. The recurrent use of flashbacks and flash-forwards disrupts linear temporality, foregrounding what Gérard Genette (1980) terms "narrative anachrony", the disjunction between story order and narrative order, and suggesting that meaning is always produced in retrospect and anticipation rather than in real time. Such a structure not only enhances the text's complexity but also dramatizes the instability of narrative authority. In aligning storytelling with juridical

interpretation, the novel exposes how discourses of power, whether legal, historical, or literary, depend on selective framing and the privileging of certain voices over others. Ultimately, it transforms the reader into an interpreter or adjudicator, compelled to navigate conflicting versions of truth within a system designed to obscure rather than reveal it.

Consequently, the main characters' construal focuses on underlining this destabilized narrative and provide plural narrative points that have been developed into prequel and sequel novels connecting a closeknit web of timelines within Hebert's universe, starting with *House Atreides* (1999) and ending with the most recent *The Heir of Caladan* (2022). To this end, the three primary sociopolitical entities, the Bene Gesserit Sisterhood, the Fremen, and the Great Houses, offer distinct yet intersecting frameworks through which Herbert explores the construction and manipulation of truth.

The Bene Gesserit: Architects of Narrative Power

Among Herbert's many institutional constructs, the Bene Gesserit most compellingly exemplify Foucault's assertion that knowledge and power are mutually constitutive, operating as the clearest manifestation of systemic manipulation within *Dune*. As a clandestine matriarchal order, they utilize truthsaying, genetic memory, and psychological conditioning to influence dynastic politics. Trained in heightened perception, linguistic mastery, and physiological control, truthsayers are indispensable tools of political arbitration. The truthsayer's capacity to detect falsehoods gives the illusion of moral authority, yet the Sisterhood's own motives remain opaque. As the Reverend Mother Gaius Helen Mohiam tells Lady Jessica:

> You well know the pattern of our affairs, Jessica. The race knows its own mortality and fears stagnation of its heredity. It's in the bloodstream—the urge to mingle genetic strains without plan. The Imperium, the CHOAM Company, all the Great Houses, they are but bits of flotsam in the path of the flood. (Herbert 24),

revealing the malleability of perceived truths in the hands of trained manipulators. Yet, their role extends beyond passive detection of falsehood; they actively curate and disseminate select narratives to shape historical consciousness and ensure the Sisterhood's influence across generations. As Touponce (1988) observed, the Sisterhood's "religious pragmatism" reflects Herbert's fascination with the bureaucratization of belief.

The Sisterhood's power stands in the understanding that any narrative is opened to interpretation and that there is no such thing as a linear story. To this end, the Bene Gesserit's Missionaria Protectiva illustrates an early and deliberate form of narrative engineering, namely the strategic implantation of myths and religious motifs across cultures to secure long-term influence. These make-believe stories highlight how manipulations are institutionalized, masquerading as divine prophecy. Through this lens, the Sisterhood operates not merely as a secretive order but as a calculated architect of belief, shaping perceptions and behaviors over generations.

Central to the Bene Gesserit project is the creation of the Kwisatz Haderach, an individual designed to possess unparalleled insight and mastery over all knowledge. Yet Frank Herbert reveals the inherent paradox in this ambition: absolute awareness does not confer freedom but imposes constraint. Paul Atreides' prescient vision, encompassing countless potential futures, becomes a cage rather than a tool, as his awareness of infinite possibilities restricts decisive action. From a Foucauldian perspective, the Sisterhood's command over discourse collapses under the weight of totalizing logic, showing the limits of institutional control over human consciousness.

Hence, the Bene Gesserit's centuries-long eugenics program, culminating in Paul's birth, underscores their intention to shape both human destiny and historical trajectories, while at the same time marking the end of their supremacy. Reverend Mother Gaius Helen Mohiam's remark "The original Bene Gesserit school was directed by those who saw the need of a thread of continuity in human affairs. They saw there could be no such continuity without separating human stock from animal stock for breeding purposes" (Herbert 13) reveals the calculated nature of their designs. Nonetheless, Paul's emergence, as one who can access both male and female ancestral memories, exemplifies the paradox of prophetic power: possessing ultimate truth does not liberate but ensnares, leaving him bound to a fate dictated by foreknowledge and forcing him to end the Bene Gesserit's supremacy.

The Fremen: Mythologized Memory and Cultural Exploitation

The Fremen, the indigenous population of the desert planet Arrakis, embody the vulnerability of oral cultures to external manipulation. Rooted in a survivalist ethos and sustained by a rich mythic tradition, their belief in the prophecy of the Mahdi is not entirely organic but rather a product of deliberate cultural engineering. This prophecy,

subtly introduced by the Bene Gesserit's *Missionaria Protectiva*, functions as a preemptive mechanism for control, an ideological tool designed to facilitate future political manipulation. Jessica's realization upon arriving on Arrakis encapsulates this strategy: "So our Missionaria Protectiva even planted religious safety valves all through this hell hole. Ah, well…it'll help, and that's what it was meant to do." (Herbert 304) In this moment, Herbert exposes the calculated implantation of belief systems within oral cultures, revealing how myth can be both weapon and refuge.

As numerous scholars have observed, the Fremen's oral culture and prophetic traditions constitute one of Herbert's most intricate explorations of collective identity. For Langer (2011), the Fremen simultaneously embody the romanticized "noble savage" trope and serve as a vehicle for critiquing imperial domination. Their culture, steeped in oral transmission, preserves the illusion of authenticity while remaining susceptible to ideological infiltration. Through Halbwachs' lens of collective memory, the Fremen's shared past appears less as an organic accumulation of experiences and more as a sedimentation of externally manipulated myths. Herbert thus situates them within a paradox: they are both the keepers of ancestral wisdom and the unconscious bearers of imperial design.

Throughout *Dune*, Herbert dramatizes how the Fremen's collective memory becomes co-opted to serve broader political ambitions. Paul Atreides' calculated fulfillment of their messianic expectations not only secures their allegiance but also transforms them into instruments of his own imperial vision: "They've a legend here, a prophecy, that a leader will come to them, child of a Bene Gesserit, to lead them to true freedom. It follows the familiar messiah pattern." (Herbert 109) Freedman (2000) interprets Paul's adoption of the Mahdi role as a prescient warning against charismatic populism, i.e. the seductive yet destructive potential of leadership grounded in faith rather than reason. By contrast, Canavan (2014) reads this dynamic as Herbert's meditation on historical inevitability and the cyclical nature of fanaticism. In both interpretations, the Fremen's devotion becomes a mirror for humanity's recurrent susceptibility to myth as political mobilization.

Nonetheless, Herbert refuses to depict the Fremen as mere victims of manipulation. Rather, he portrays them as active participants in what might be called a cyclical economy of myth. They internalize externally imposed narratives and reconfigure them as instruments of their own resistance and eventual liberation. Still, this act of reclamation remains temporary: once institutionalized through

Paul's ascendancy, their emancipatory myth is reabsorbed into the very structures of power it sought to oppose. This tragic repetition underscores the fragility of collective memory when subjected to political appropriation and demonstrates Herbert's broader concern with the mutability of belief systems in contexts of domination and rebellion.

Ultimately, *Dune*'s sustained attention to oral narratives underscores the performative and persuasive power of language itself. Herbert's depiction of the Fremen foregrounds how discourse, whether religious, political, or mythic, can both empower and enslave. In this sense, the novel anticipates contemporary critical discourse on political rhetoric and media influence, revealing how stories shape collective consciousness and how, in turn, belief can become the most potent instrument of control.

The Great Houses: Hegemonic Truth and Imperial Control

The Great Houses, Atreides, Harkonnen, and Corrino, represent the aristocratic strata of *Dune*'s intricate political hierarchy. Their cultural identities and ideological trajectories are shaped not only by internal codes of honor or ambition but also through the selective manipulation of history orchestrated by the Bene Gesserit. In Herbert's universe, lineage and legitimacy are less inherited truths than carefully curated narratives, constructed to sustain political continuity and moral authority. Consequently, the Great Houses expose the stakes of narrative control: the power to define legitimacy, monopolize resources, and govern collective memory. In this respect, they function as the novel's overt political framework, offering a striking allegory of narrative dominance and its role in shaping systems of belief and governance.

Within this narrative economy, Herbert contrasts different models of power by positioning Duke Leto Atreides and Baron Harkonnen as ideological foils. As Csicsery-Ronay (2008) notes, Duke Leto's reputation for honor is less a moral reality than a political performance, a cultivated myth of virtue that enables the Atreides to operate within a fundamentally corrupt system. His image of a just ruler functions as symbolic capital, consolidating loyalty among subordinates while simultaneously provoking jealousy and suspicion among rivals. By contrast, Baron Harkonnen represents the cynical inversion of Leto's performative ethics. His brutal pragmatism and manipulation of perception expose the mechanisms through which institutional truth is fabricated and weaponized. Herbert thus stages a

dialectic between idealism and cynicism, suggesting that both rely on the same machinery of myth-making. The Great Houses, therefore, are not merely political entities but discursive constructions, each sustained by narrative, illusion, and belief. Herbert's depiction of the imperial economy of spice, as Touponce (1988) and Nicholas (2011) both observe, mirrors the epistemological economy of modernity: whoever controls the resource controls not only wealth but the very conditions of thought. The phrase "he who controls the spice controls the universe" thus becomes an axiom of cognitive power, an anticipation of the data regimes that shape our own century. The oft-repeated maxim thus operates on both economic and cognitive planes, transforming the spice into a metaphor for the infrastructures of information and perception. In this sense, Herbert anticipates the mechanisms of power that define contemporary data regimes, where control over information equates to control over consciousness. The spice, like data, functions as a substance of thought, an axis around which both empire and epistemology revolve.

Building on this metaphor, Herbert's political universe exemplifies what Michel Foucault theorizes as "regimes of truth," systems through which dominant institutions produce and disseminate knowledge to reinforce their authority (Foucault 1980). The contest among the Great Houses is therefore not only material but epistemological: the struggle for control of the spice becomes a struggle for control of reality itself. Truth, in Herbert's vision, is neither stable nor transcendent; it is manufactured, circulated, and enforced within networks of power. The novel thus translates Foucault's insights into narrative form, dramatizing how ideology operates through discourse and how myth becomes the architecture of domination.

This alignment between truth and perception finds concrete expression in the Houses' political maneuvering. Duke Leto's reputation for justice: "The Duke Leto was popular among the Great Houses of the Landsraad. A popular man arouses the jealousy of the powerful," Hawat had said." (Herbert 4) illustrates how moral narratives can be reinterpreted as political liabilities. His public image, initially a source of legitimacy, becomes a pretext for imperial betrayal, revealing how even truth can be appropriated and turned against its originator. Herbert's attention to these dynamics foregrounds the instability of narrative authority: every truth, once uttered, enters the arena of power, where it may be reframed, distorted, or weaponized.

Baron Harkonnen's manipulations further expose the malleability of truth within this economy of perception. His reflection: "The uncertain rabbits had to be exposed, made to run for their

burrows. Else how could you control them and breed them? He pictured his fighting men as bees routing the rabbits. And he thought: The day hums sweetly when you have enough bees working for you." (Herbert 188) encapsulates the logic of control as spectacle. For Harkonnen, visibility equates to dominance, i.e. to govern others, one must first script their reactions, anticipate their fears, and direct their gaze. His worldview thus literalizes Herbert's broader critique of narrative politics, an order in which perception itself becomes a battleground.

Taken together, the rivalries among the Great Houses transform *Dune* into a meditation on the politics of storytelling. Power operates through the control of narratives, whether familial, economic, or prophetic and those who command belief command history. By linking economic monopoly, ideological manipulation, and epistemic authority, Herbert exposes the deep interdependence between myth and governance. The Great Houses' struggle for dominance ultimately reflects a universal truth: empires rise and fall not only by force of arms, but by mastery over the stories that define what is real.

Collective Memory and the Fragility of Truth

At the center of *Dune* stands Paul Atreides, a figure whose transformation from noble heir to messianic ruler encapsulates the novel's philosophical tension between freedom and determinism. As Palumbo (2008) observes, Herbert reconfigures the traditional hero's journey by turning it inward, transforming mythic adventure into psychological crisis. Through Paul, Herbert stages a meditation on the costs of enlightenment and the burden of knowing, situating his protagonist at the crossroads between individual agency and historical inevitability.

Endowed with prescient vision and ancestral memory, Paul becomes the vessel through which Herbert explores the double-edged nature of truth. As the *Kwisatz Haderach*, he occupies a liminal position between human and superhuman, between subject and system. Yet his extraordinary insight proves not liberating but entrapping: the power to see the future does not grant the power to change it. Herbert underscores this tragic realization through Paul's own reflections: "the vision of fanatic legions following the green and black banner of the Atreides, pillaging and burning across the universe in the name of their prophet Muad'Dib. That must not happen, he told himself." (Herbert 329) His prescience becomes a deterministic cage, foreclosing genuine choice and rendering every act of resistance

complicit in the very fate he wishes to avoid.

This self-awareness intensifies Paul's internal conflict. Born of generations of Bene Gesserit genetic design, he embodies the culmination of engineered purpose while struggling under the illusion of free will. As Jung would suggest, Paul's confrontation with the archetype of the Self, his encounter with total consciousness, proves catastrophic precisely because it erases the boundary between personal identity and collective memory. In achieving the fullness of self-knowledge, Paul forfeits autonomy, becoming both subject and symbol of forces beyond his control. Herbert thus destabilizes the romantic ideal of the hero. Paul's self-recognition as a manufactured messiah undermines the notion of destiny as moral truth. Rather than embodying divine purpose, he assumes a role constructed through political necessity and religious manipulation. In revising Joseph Campbell's monomyth, Herbert transforms the hero's journey from a narrative of self-realization into a critique of myth itself. The hero's return no longer restores harmony but inaugurates tyranny as the messiah becomes the mechanism of domination, and truth dissolves into belief. Similarly, Jung's archetype of the savior is dismantled, revealing how cultural expectations and archetypal projections shape, and ultimately imprison, individual identity.

To understand the broader implications of this transformation, Maurice Halbwachs' theory of collective memory offers an illuminating framework. Halbwachs posits that memory exists only within social structures, constantly reshaped to reflect the needs of the present. The Fremen's oral traditions exemplify this process: their histories, continually retold, function less as records of the past than as instruments of survival and cohesion. Herbert illustrates this dynamic through his description of the Fremen's disciplined self-control: "The Fremen were supreme in that quality the ancients called 'spannungsbogen'—which is the self-imposed delay between desire for a thing and the act of reaching out to grasp that thing." (Herbert 309) Nevertheless, this seemingly authentic memory is yet another of the Bene Gesserit's *Missionaria Protectiva* fabrication. The Fremen's oral heritage, therefore, becomes a case study in the vulnerability of memory to ideological infiltration.

Herbert's portrayal of this process anticipates postmodern concerns about historiography. In *Dune*, memory is not a repository of immutable truths but a contested site where power, narrative, and identity intersect. When Paul consolidates Fremen belief into a unifying jihadist mythology, he enacts what Foucault (1980) would describe as the transformation of discourse into domination. The

production of meaning becomes inseparable from the production of power. By turning collective memory into a political instrument, Paul demonstrates how history can be weaponized: remembrance becomes not heritage, but battleground.

Through Paul's ascendancy, Herbert articulates a profound critique of the politics of belief. In *Dune*, truth is never neutral; it circulates as a form of currency within systems of control. As Paul himself comes to realize, prophecy is indistinguishable from propaganda, and vision from manipulation. Thus, Herbert's universe mirrors our own: history becomes an instrument of governance, and belief a medium of exchange. As Canavan (2014) observes, *Dune* "predicts the epistemological crises of modernity, when every truth becomes strategic and every belief transactional." In tracing Paul's transformation from savior to sovereign, Herbert invites readers to confront the peril inherent in all messianic systems: that enlightenment, once institutionalized, inevitably becomes tyranny.

Herbert's speculative vision resonates with contemporary political realities, particularly in the realm of media, propaganda, and historiography. The Bene Gesserit's manipulation of belief mirrors the role of modern institutions in shaping public consciousness through strategic narrative control, data algorithms, and political spin. Truth, in Herbert's vision, is not discovered but engineered. In the digital age, where social media and algorithmic curation dominate information flow, truth becomes increasingly contingent upon access and dissemination. Moreover, the metaphor of spice as the ultimate commodity parallels data and information in the contemporary world, intangible yet indispensable, and ruthlessly contested. The figure of the truthsayer, once a guardian of objectivity, becomes a symbol of selective authentication, echoing modern concerns over misinformation, disinformation, and epistemic trust.

Freedman (2000) and Kennedy (2020) both argue that *Dune*'s durability stems from its capacity to adapt to new ideological contexts: Cold War allegory, ecological parable, postcolonial critique, and digital prophecy. Its treatment of prophecy as political technology resonates with our era's struggles over misinformation, surveillance, and epistemic trust. By reframing Herbert's speculative universe through the lenses of collective memory and discourse theory, this paper underscores the novel's continuing capacity to interrogate the politics of knowledge and the ethics of belief.

Conclusion

Dune transcends the boundaries of science fiction to emerge as a profound meditation on the sociopolitical construction of truth. Through its intricate interplay of prophetic manipulation, genetic memory, and myth-making, Herbert dissects the mechanisms through which power is legitimized, perpetuated, and naturalized. The novel's universe operates as an allegory of epistemic control, revealing that truth is never a neutral category but a dynamic instrument, at once a resource, a weapon, and a form of governance.

By foregrounding these dynamics, Herbert constructs a prescient critique of modern systems of knowledge, belief, and authority. His vision resonates with Foucault's notion of "regimes of truth," Halbwachs' theory of collective memory, and Jung's conception of the archetypal psyche, illustrating how individual consciousness and collective ideology are mutually constitutive. Within this framework, *Dune* becomes a study of how history is not simply remembered but strategically written and rewritten, transforming memory into a site of ideological negotiation.

Ultimately, *Dune* demonstrates that truth, like spice, is both indispensable and perilous. It sustains civilizations even as it corrodes them, binding freedom to control and revelation to manipulation. Herbert's narrative thus anticipates the epistemological crises of the modern world, an era in which information has supplanted material power, and belief itself has become transactional. In exposing the fragility of truth and the volatility of memory, *Dune* reminds us that history does not merely record human actions, it claims everyone caught within its shifting tides.

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Intertextualität und Ironie in André Kaminskis *Nächstes Jahr in Jerusalem*[1]

Eunicia-Maria Pavel[2]
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Abstract: The study discusses the postmodern novel „Nächstes Jahr in Jerusalem" by André Kaminski based on the theories of the historical novel (Hugo Aust) and of historiographic metafiction (Linda Hutcheon). The aim of the study is to determine the function of irony and to analyze various intertextual references in this postmodern novel, as it brings the past into the present (according to Linda Hutcheon) and also generates a palimpsest (as described by Gérard Genette) through intertextuality.

Key Words: historical novel, historiographic metafiction, irony, intertextuality, palimpsest

I. Einleitung

Dieser Beitrag analysiert intertextuelle Bezüge und die ironische Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit in André Kaminskis Roman *Nächstes Jahr in Jerusalem*. Der theoretischen Auseinandersetzung mit diesen Themenschwerpunkten folgt die literarische Analyse einiger Auszüge aus dem Roman.

Zu Beginn wird die Gattungszuordnung des Werks angesprochen, weil der Begriff des *postmodernen historischen Romans* von Linda Hutcheon in *A Poetics of Postmodernism* (Hutcheon 2004) als unbefriedigend betrachtet wird und sie die *historiographische Metafiktion* (Hutcheon 2004) als alternative Gattungsbezeichnung vorschlägt. In derselben Studie hebt Hutcheon die Bedeutung der Intertextualität und der Ironie in der historiographischen Metafiktion hervor. Diese zwei Konzepte werden im dritten Kapitel der Untersuchung anhand der Theorien von Gérard

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Genette (Genette 1993) und Linda Hutcheon (Hutcheon 2004, Hutcheon 2005) erläutert. Im anschließenden Teil des vorliegenden Beitrags werden einige Beispiele für intertextuelle Referenzen aus Kaminskis Roman analysiert, wobei die Funktion der Ironie in den ausgewählten Textstellen in Betracht gezogen wird.

II. Voraussetzungen

Im Folgenden wird die Gattungszugehörigkeit des Romans *Nächstes Jahr in Jerusalem* angesprochen. Der untersuchte Quellentext wurde 1988 veröffentlicht und gibt die Schicksale der Familien Kaminski und Rosenbach vom Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts bis Anfang des 20. Jahrhunderts wieder. Es stellt sich die Frage, ob das Werk ein traditioneller historischer Roman ist, so wie er von Theoretikern wie Hugo Aust (Aust 1994) definiert wird. Laut Aust sei die Treue zu den Fakten ein wichtiges Merkmal des historischen Erzählens:

> Die faktisch exakte Vergangenheit, der aufgeklärte Hintergrund, die bloßgelegten Triebkräfte und das spannende Ereignis – das sind nicht nur Endzwecke, sondern zuweilen auch bloße Mittel für einen Spiegel, der in geschichtlicher Tönung die Gegenwart reflektiert. Der parabolische Zweck des historischen Erzählens liegt in diesen großräumig gezogenen Vergleichen zwischen Damals und Jetzt, Früher und Später. (Aust 1994: 18)

Neben der darstellenden Funktion des historischen Romans betont Aust auch die allegorische Dimension dieser Gattung. Durch die Aufarbeitung der Geschichte nehme sich der Roman vor, einen Aspekt der Gegenwart zu thematisieren oder sogar die Gegenwart wiederzugeben. Noch deutlicher macht Aust den Unterschied zwischen den zwei Arten des historischen Romans im folgenden Auszug:

> Unter dem Gesichtspunkt der Darstellungsintention gliedert sich der historische Roman in eine rekonstruktive und eine parabolische Variante. Die rekonstruktive zielt auf eine möglichst authentische Wiederherstellung einer früheren geschichtlichen Person, Epoche oder Welt; ihre prototypische Extremform begegnet im Professorenroman, der von der antiquarischen Neigung Scotts über die archäologischen Ambitionen eines Ebers bis zu Ecos semiotischer Gelehrsamkeit oder Kraussers musikgeschichtlichem Studium seine mehr oder minder faszinierende Spur zieht. Die parabolische Form sucht in der Geschichte den Spiegel für die Gegenwart; ihre historischen

Studien lassen sich mit „Putzmitteln" vergleichen, die dem Spiegel die klarste Reflexion abgewinnen wollen. (Aust 1994: 33)

Für beide Gattungskategorien sei die Genauigkeit der Wiedergabe von großer Bedeutung, weil die Authentizität im ersten Fall und die Wiedererkennbarkeit im zweiten das Hauptziel des historischen Romans sei.

Die Rekonstruktion der Vergangenheit, und zwar der Geschichte der eigenen Familie, ist in Kaminskis *Nächstes Jahr in Jerusalem* das zentrale Anliegen. Einerseits wirkt der historisch-politische Hintergrund durchaus realistisch, weil die geopolitische Realität der Jahrhundertwende offen genannt wird: Angesprochen werden der rasende Antisemitismus in Österreich-Ungarn, die sozialistische Bewegung und die Manifestationen im Tzarenreich, der Erste Weltkrieg usw.

Andererseits behauptet der Erzähler selbst, dass seine Quellen die Erzählungen seiner Verwandten seien (vgl. Kaminski 2022: 391). Die (auto)biographische Verankerung des Erzählers in den Lebensgeschichten seiner Vorfahren und die Hinterfragung deren Authentizität tragen zum hohen Subjektivitätsgrad dieses Textes bei, die die Unterscheidung zwischen Geschichte und Fiktion erschwert. Um die metareflexive Dimension des postmodernen historischen Romans hervorzuheben, schlägt Linda Hutcheon den alternativen Begriff der *historiographischen Metafiktion* vor:

> […] the novel genre, and one form in particular, a form that I want to call "historiographic metafiction." By this I mean those well-known and popular novels which are both intensely self-reflexive and yet paradoxically also lay claim to historical events and personages […]. (Hutcheon 2004: 5)

In der zitierten Aussage wird nicht nur eine Abweichung vom traditionellen historischen Roman betont, sondern auch eine neue Gattungsbezeichnung eingeführt. Die historiographische Metafiktion betone laut Hutcheon einerseits die Tendenz zur Reflexion und zur Skepsis gegenüber der Geschichte und betrachte andererseits die Geschichtsschreibung als Mittel der Interpretation, nicht der Rekonstruktion der Vergangenheit.

Wenn man Linda Hutcheons Theorie der historiographischen Metafiktion (Hutcheon 2004) in Betracht zieht, kann man feststellen, dass sie die Ähnlichkeit von Geschichtsschreibung und Fiktion in der Wiedergabe vergangener Ereignisse hervorhebt, wie im folgenden Zitat

gezeigt wird:

> Historiographic metafiction refutes the natural or common-
> sense methods of distinguishing between historical fact and
> fiction. It refuses the view that only history has a truth claim,
> both by questioning the ground of that claim in historiography
> and by asserting that both history and fiction are discourses,
> human constructs, signifying systems, and both derive their
> major claim to truth from that identity. (Hutcheon 2004: 93)

Laut Hutcheon könne die Wahrheit aus dem Bereich der Fiktion nicht
ausgeschlossen werden, weil die Unterscheidung zwischen der
historischen Realität und der fiktionalen Darstellung nicht relevant sei.
    In Bezug auf die obigen Gattungsbeschreibungen ist
festzustellen, dass André Kaminskis *Nächstes Jahr in Jerusalem* zwar
eine Familienchronik ist, aber nicht den Wahrheitsanspruch eines
historischen Romans hat, so wie er von Aust (Aust 1994) beschrieben
wird. Der Erzähler bezeichnet seine Aufzeichnungen sogar als „ein
Hirngespinst, ein verrücktes Lügengewebe" (Kaminski 2022: 392). Die
metafiktionale Reflexion, die hier durch die Delegitimierung der
eigenen Aussagen illustriert wird, ist ein Merkmal der
historiographischen Metafiktion. Demzufolge wird der untersuchte
Roman als historiographische Metafiktion betrachtet.

III. Intertextualität und Ironie
III.1. Intertextualität
Die im vorigen Teil der Arbeit begründete Gattungszuordnung dieses
Romans setzt einen hohen Grad der Intertextualität voraus, weil der
historische Stoff durch intertextuelle Bezüge aufgegriffen wird.
Intertextualität bezeichnet die Erscheinung eines Textes in einem
anderen Text und wird von Gérard Genette in *Palimpseste* (Genette
1993) thematisiert. Er unterscheidet zwischen drei
Erscheinungsformen der Intertextualität:

> In ihrer einfachsten und wörtlichsten Form ist dies die
> traditionelle Praxis des *Zitats* (unter Anführungszeichen, mit
> oder genaue Quellenangabe); in einer weniger expliziten und
> auch weniger kanonischen Form die des *Plagiats* (etwa bei
> Lautréamont), das eine nicht deklarierte, aber immer noch
> wörtliche Entlehnung darstellt; und in einer noch wenigen
> expliziten und weniger wörtlichen Form die der *Anspielung*, d.
> h. einer Aussage, deren volles Verständnis das Erkennen einer

Beziehung zwischen ihr und einer anderen voraussetzt, auf die sich diese oder jene Wendung des Textes bezieht, der ja sonst nicht ganz verständlich wäre. (Genette 1993: 10)

Das Zitat ist eine der häufigsten und am leichtesten erkennbare Form der Intertextualität. In Kaminskis Roman spielen die Bibel und jüdische Traditionen eine wichtige Rolle, weil die zwei Familien der jüdischen Gemeinschaft angehören und sich mit ihrer Identität auseinandersetzen. Ein weiteres wichtiges Thema, dass durch Anspielungen angesprochen wird, ist die marxistische Ideologie, von der zahlreiche Figuren überzeugt sind. Aussagekräftige Beispiele aus dem Text werden im nächsten Teil analysiert.

Gérard Genette führt in Bezug zur Intertextualität den Begriff des Palimpsests ein, den er folgenderweise definiert:

> Diese Doppelheit des Objekts läßt sich im Bereich der Textbeziehungen durch das alte Bild des *Palimpsests* abbilden, auf dem man auf dem gleichen Pergament einen Text über einem anderen stehen sieht, den er nicht gänzlich überdeckt, sondern durchscheinen läßt. (Genette 1993: 532)

Weil ein literarischer Text durch intertextuelle Bezüge doppelt vorhanden ist, spielt die Ironie eine wichtige Rolle in der Doppeldeutigkeit der Bedeutungen, die auch spezifisch für die postmoderne Poetik ist, wie Linda Hutcheon (vgl. Hutcheon 2004: 124) betont. Im Gegensatz zu Gérard Genette beschäftigt sich Linda Hutcheon nicht ausschließlich mit Intertextualität, sondern betrachtet diese als ein grundlegendes Merkmal der postmodernen Poetik im Kontext der historiographischen Metafiktion (vgl. Hutcheon 2004: 5f.). Sie bezeichnet postmoderne Intertextualität als ein Mittel, durch das der Autor eines Textes versucht, sich mit der Vergangenheit auseinanderzusetzen, ohne einer bestimmten literarischen Tradition zu folgen oder diese als selbstverständlich zu betrachten. Linda Hutcheon definiert die postmoderne Intertextualität folgenderweise:

> Postmodern intertextuality is a formal manifestation of both a desire to close the gap between past and present of the reader and a desire to rewrite the past in a new context. It is not a modernist desire to order the present through the past or to make the present look spare in contrast to the richness of the past [...]. It is not an attempt to void or avoid history. Instead it directly confronts the past of literature – and of historiography,

for it too derives from other texts (documents). It uses and abuses those intertextual echoes, inscribing their powerful allusions and then subverting that power through irony. (Hutcheon 2004: 118)

Das Neuschreiben der Geschichte durch eine intertextuell geprägte Aufarbeitung in postmodernen Texten sei also nicht eine Respektsbekundung gegenüber der Vergangenheit, sondern ein Ansatz dafür, sich mit der Vergangenheit kritisch auseinanderzusetzen und sie sogar zu ironisieren.

III.2. Ironie

Schon in der Definition der Intertextualität (siehe oben) betont Linda Hutcheon die Bedeutung der Ironie, die den historischen Stoff infrage stelle und ihm oft einen neuen Sinn verleihe. Laut Hutcheon bestehe die Funktion der Ironie in der Erzeugung einer Spannung zwischen dem Gesagten und dem Ungesagten, zwischen mehreren Bedeutungen eines Wortes, eines Satzes oder einer Situation; dieser Aspekt wird im folgenden Textauszug hervorgehoben:

> From a purely semantic point of view, the ironic "solution" of plural and separate meanings – the said together with unsaid – held in suspension (like oil and water) might challenge any notion of language as having a direct one-to-one referential relation to any single reality outside itself. To discuss the semantics of irony, however, is inevitably to address a set of complex issues not only centering around the concept of plural meaning, but also involving things like the conditioning role of context and the attitudes and expectations of both ironist and interpreter. (Hutcheon 2005: 55)

Ironie ist also ein Mittel, mithilfe dessen die Beziehung zwischen Realität und Sprache an Mehrdeutigkeit gewinnt. Die Grenze zwischen dem Gesagten und dem Gemeinten wird dabei verwischt, so dass eine mehrdeutige Kommunikation entsteht. Der Kontext und die Teilnehmer des Kommunikationsaktes haben dadurch einen großen Einfluss auf die Realisierung der Ironie.

Hutcheon betont ebenfalls die Tatsache, dass Ironie nicht nur ein sprachlich-stilistisches, sondern auch ein psychologisches Merkmal eines Kommunikationsprozesses sei. Die Zusammenführung von verschiedenen Bedeutungen erfülle nur dann ihre Absicht, wenn das Ungesagte von dem beabsichtigten Empfänger verstanden werde. In

diesem Sinne kann Ironie nur kontextbezogen und relational aufgefasst werden:

> Irony is a **relational** strategy in the sense that it operates not only between meanings (said, unsaid) but between people (ironists, interpreters, targets). Ironic meaning comes into being as the consequence of a relationship, a dynamic, performative bringing together of different meaning-makers, but also of different meanings, first, in order to create something new and, then, as Chapter 2 explored, to endow it with the critical edge of judgment. (Hutcheon 2005: 56)

Was Hutcheon „critical edge of judgement" (ebd.) nennt ist die kritische Dimension der ironischen Äußerung, die eine distanzierte, aber doch affektbezogene Position gegenüber dem Gesagten zeigt. Der Sender in der jeweiligen Kommunikationssituation will eine subjektiv geprägte Nachricht senden, die auch einschneidend wirken soll.

In *Irony's Edge. The theory and politics of irony* (Hutcheon 2005) fasst die Theoretikerin die verschiedenen Funktionen der Ironie systematisch zusammen und stellt dabei Folgendes fest:

> Each of these functions turns out to have both a positive and a negative articulation, for critics have presented each in both approving and disapproving terms. One critic's "emphatic" function is another critic's purely "decorative" one; one's "corrective" function is another's "destructive" one – and so on. Although I have modeled the functions as part of a tonal and emotive continuum, they are not intended to be hierarchically organized: despite the obvious difficulties of overcoming the connotations of semiotic representation, the move upwards on the diagram is intended simply to show a move from minimal to maximal affective charge. (Hutcheon 2005: 44)

Die Funktionen der Ironie beziehen sich hauptsächlich auf deren Wirkung, aber die Absicht des Senders innerhalb der Kommunikationssituation ist ebenfalls ein wichtiger Aspekt in der Interpretation von Ironie. Die affektive Dimension der Ironie erzeuge keine Hierarchie, sondern zeige eher die Nähe bzw. die Distanzierung der Kommunikationsteilnehmer zur ironischen Aussage.

IV. Intertextuelle Bezüge in *Nächstes Jahr in Jerusalem*

Die Auswahl der intertextuellen Bezüge in dieser Untersuchung

ermöglicht die Identifizierung verschiedener Arten von Ironie, wobei die folgenden Zitate auch für die im Roman aufgearbeiteten thematischen Schwerpunkte repräsentativ sind.

Ein intertextueller Bezug, der in Form eines Zitats auftritt, ist im Titel zu finden und wiederholt sich ein einziges Mal, am Ende des Romans, wenn der Erzähler sagt: „Damit schließe ich und wünsche Ihnen, wie es die Juden beim Abschied zu tun pflegen: Nächstes Jahr in Jerusalem!" (Kaminski 2022: 392). Die Ironie, die man hier identifizieren kann, ist inklusive Ironie („inclusionary irony", Hutcheon 2005: 52), weil der Erzähler nicht die Absicht hat, sich tatsächlich mit dem Leser in Jerusalem zu treffen; er schließt diesen durch den Gruß in die kulturelle Gemeinschaft ein, die durch den Text generiert wird. Obwohl eine lange Pilgertradition im Bezug auf Jerusalem vorliegt (vgl. *Encyclopaedia Judaica* 2007: 208f.), ersetzen die Romanfiguren die symbolische Pilgerreise nach Jerusalem mit einer anderen, deren Ziel ihnen näher liegt: „Seit Generationen pilgern wir alljährlich am heiligen Jom Kippur nach Tschernowitz und beten für die Seele des großen Vorfahren." (Kaminski 2022: 7)

Der zitierte Gruß setzt drei zeitliche Ebenen in Verbindung zueinander. Erstens ist er eine Anspielung auf die Vergangenheit der Stadt Jerusalem als grundlegender Teil der Geschichte der Juden, der eine wichtige Rolle in ihrer Identitätskonstruktion spielt. (vgl. *Encyclopaedia Judaica* 2007: 143f.) Zweitens kann man im obigen Gruß die sprachliche Gegenwart erkennen, die durch das Verb im Präsens „wünsche" suggeriert wird und den Erzähler und den Leser auf die gleiche zeitliche Ebene stellt. Drittens erkennt der Leser in diesem Abschiedsgruß die Projektion der Hoffnung, die durch das Syntagma „nächstes Jahr" ausgedrückt wird. Der Abschiedsgruß aus dem Titel ist gleichzeitig ein Wunsch und eine Hoffnung, denn ein Wiedersehen des Autors mit seinen Lesern in Jerusalem bleibt im Bereich des Unwahrscheinlichen.

Ein weiteres Zitat, das Teil des jüdischen Erbes des Erzählers, aber nur für seine Familie von Bedeutung ist, ist die Grabsteininschrift eines Vorfahren aus Tschernowitz, die sowohl am Anfang (vgl. Kaminski 2022: 7) als auch am Ende des Romans erwähnt wird. (vgl. Kaminski 2022: 391f.) Die Inschrift ist ein Aphorismus und soll als Lebensmotto der Nachfolger des Gelehrten Schloime Rosenbach aus Tschernowitz gelten:

> Jedenfalls stammte Onkel Henner vom berühmten Rabbi Schloime Rosenbach ab, der vor dreihundert Jahren in der Bukowina seine Traktate schrieb und auf dessen Grabstein der

folgende Sinnspruch steht: „Wahrheit ist das wertvollste aller Güter und soll gehandhabt werden mit Sparsamkeit und Zurückhaltung." Meine Familie war und ist bestrebt, dieser Devise nachzuleben. (Kaminski 2022: 7)

Die im obigen Zitat erwähnte Pilgerreise, die auch als eine Initiationsreise interpretiert werden kann, zeigt den großen Respekt der Nachfahren für die Tradition und für die Wahrheit, die als ein fundamentaler Wert angesehen wird. Diese formale Manifestation des Respekts und der Zuneigung gegenüber der Tradition kontrastiert im Roman mit der Wahrnehmung der Familienmitglieder, weil der Erzähler seinen Onkel Henner ausdrücklich als Lügner bezeichnet (vgl. Kaminski 2022: 7).

Am Ende des Romans wird die Grabsteininschrift wieder aufgegriffen, wobei der Erzähler bemerkt, dass die Realität seiner Gegenwart im Gegensatz zur Lehre von Schloime Rosenbach steht. Der Sinn der Inschrift wird in seiner Deutung ironisch verändert: Der Autor behauptet, dass die Lehre seines Vorfahren über die Bedeutung der Wahrheit grundsätzlich ignoriert wird, weil die Nachfolger des Gelehrten (zu denen er ebenfalls zählt) in der Nacherzählung ihrer Lebensgeschichten die Wahrheit möglichst vermeiden:

> „Wahrheit ist das wertvollste aller Güter und soll gehandhabt werden mit Sparsamkeit und Zurückhaltung." Wie ich andeutete, bemühen sich seine Nachfahren – ich bin einer von ihnen –, jenem Epigramm getreulich nachzuleben. Wir sprechen und schreiben die Wahrheit nur, wenn uns nichts anderes übrigbleibt. Traktieren Sie also meine Aufzeichnungen als ein Hirngespinst, ein verrücktes Lügengewebe, und wenn Sie trotzdem da oder dort ein Fünkchen Wahrheit entdecken, ist das reiner Zufall. (Kaminski 2022: 392)

Der Erzähler selbst nimmt an dieser Umdeutung der Familientradition teil, indem er sich offen als einen Lügner bezeichnet und die Leser auch dazu ermutigt, ihn und seine Familienchronik nicht ernst zu nehmen. Das Ziel des Erzählers ist weder die Infragestellung der Wahrheit als fundamentaler Wert des Lebens noch die Verachtung der Tradition. In seiner ironischen Interpretation des Epigramms hebt der Autor hervor, dass die Realität der Gegenwart den ethischen Vorstellungen und Erwartungen der Vorfahren nicht mehr entsprechen könne. Laut der Klassifizierung von Linda Hutcheon ist hier die entmythisierende Ironie („demystifying irony", Hutcheon 2005: 49) zu erkennen, weil

dadurch auch der Anspruch auf Wahrheit, den ein historischer Roman berücksichtigen müsste, durch das obige Zitat dekonstruiert wird.

Selbst die Bibel kann der Ironie des Autors nicht entrinnen, wie man im Roman an mehreren Stellen beobachten kann. Bei der Hochzeit von Leo und Jana Rosenbach zeigt der Oberrabbiner, wie man die Gebote so interpretieren kann, dass dadurch die weltlichen Beschäftigungen der Menschen begründet werden:

> Es heißt wohl in der Schrift, meine hochverehrte Hochzeitsgesellschaft, du sollst dir kein Bildnis machen. Darum gibt es Leute, welche die Fotografie für eine Sünde anschauen. Sie irren sich. Die Bedeutung des Gebots liegt nämlich tiefer. Du sollst dir kein falsches, ich unterstreiche, kein falsches Bildnis machen. Du sollst dem Herrgott nicht ins Handwerk pfuschen! Er weiß nämlich, was er tut, und tut es gut. Das Gebot betrifft die Malerei und besonders die schlechte Malerei, wie sie heute in Paris betrieben wird und in Wien. Der Allmächtige wollte uns warnen vor all den Klecksern und Kritzelbrüdern, die in ihrer Vermessenheit die Schöpfung zu verändern suchen. Von ihnen ist die Rede im heiligen Buch, nicht von der naturgetreuen Abbildung des göttlichen Werks. Ein Spiegel ist ohne Sünde, lehrte Maimonides, und der Frevel beginnt erst bei der Verzerrung der Wirklichkeit, denn es heißt, du sollst kein falsches Zeugnis ablegen. Du sollst nicht lügen! Der Spiegel lügt nicht. Er gibt nur wieder, was er sieht. Die Fotografie desgleichen. (Kaminski 2022: 17)

In seiner Rede setzt der Rabbiner zwei unterschiedliche Gebote zueinander in Verbindung, obwohl sie sich auf verschiedene moralische Aspekte beziehen. Das erste Gebot beruft sich auf die Verehrung Gottes und auf das Verbot, fremde Götter anzubeten oder sie bildlich darzustellen. Die Malerei wird hier als Sünde angesehen, weil dies eine künstliche Darstellung sei, bei der der Maler auch kreativ sein und die Ergebnisse seiner Vorstellungskraft zeigen könne. Im Gegensatz zu ihm bleibe der Fotograf der Natur treu. Die Kunst der Fotografie sei eigentlich ein Spiegel, der Gottes Werk genau wiedergebe und somit nicht lüge, sondern die Wirklichkeit der Welt zeige. Das zweite Gebot, das im Zitat angesprochen wird, bezieht sich nicht auf die Haltung des Menschen gegenüber der Gottheit, sondern drückt ein Prinzip des Miteinanderlebens aus. Die Absicht des Rabbiners ist es nicht, ironisch zu sein, aber die Zusammenstellung der zwei Gebote erzeugt eine Form der Ironie, die irreführend („misleading irony",

Hutcheon 2005: 45) ist.

Ein weiterer intertextueller Bezug ist in der Andeutung auf Karl Marx zu finden, der eine wichtige Gestalt für die elf Kaminski-Brüder ist.

Die elf Söhne eines jüdischen Geschäftsmannes nehmen an politischen Manifestationen an der Seite der Sozialisten zum zweiten Mal teil und werden dabei verhaftet (vgl. Kaminski 2022: 49f.). Nach einer gelungenen Flucht erreichen sie Amerika, wo ihr Onkel sie in kurzer Zeit in Profi-Sportler verwandeln möchte. (vgl. Kaminski 2022: 133f.). Das folgende Zitat ist Teil eines Gesprächs zwischen dem Onkel aus Amerika und dem Trainer, wobei der Onkel Vorschläge zur Motivierung der Jungs macht:

> Ich bin kein Athlet, Mister Taubenschlag, aber ich würde ihnen erklären, daß sie nicht Fußball spielen, sondern Klassenkampf. Ich würde beweisen, daß die Gegner einen, was weiß ich, imperialistischen Komplott drehen. Ich würde sagen, die anderen sind reaktionäre Schweine, und daß es nicht um den Pokal geht, sondern um die Weltrevolution. (Kaminski 2022: 138)

Die jungen Kaminskis sind zwar nicht sportlich begabt, aber sie glauben an den Marxismus und an die Weltrevolution, deswegen werden diese politischen Ziele zu ihrer Motivation herangezogen. Obwohl Marx oder andere sozialistische Denker nicht direkt genannt werden, ist die Andeutung leicht zu erkennen. Die Gegenüberstellung von Fußballspiel und Klassenkampf zeigt einerseits spielerische Ironie ("playful irony", Hutcheon 2005: 45), andererseits bringt sie eine neue Perspektive sowohl für die Figuren als auch für den Leser. Die elf Jungs sollen eine ideologische Interpretation des Spiels erhalten, damit sie hervorragende Leistung erbringen, während dem Leser im Gegenzug suggeriert wird, dass die Revolution eigentlich nur ein Spiel ist. Man bemerkt im obigen Zitat auch die Ironisierung der sozialistischen Rhetorik, die ihre Gegner "reaktionäre Schweine" (siehe oben) nennt, um ihre Legitimität zu vernichten.

V. Schlussfolgerungen

Der Roman *Nächstes Jahr in Jerusalem* von André Kaminski kann als ein literarisches Palimpsest interpretiert werden; obwohl er keine Neuschreibung eines anderen Werks ist, werden darin verschiedene Texte durch intertextuelle Bezüge aufgegriffen. Dadurch verbindet der Roman mehrere zeitliche Ebenen, zu denen die historisch-mythische

Zeit der jüdischen Geschichte, die Vergangenheit der zwei Familien und die politischen Begebenheiten des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts zählen.

Die Zitate und Anspielungen aus Kaminskis Roman zeigen einerseits die Vielschichtigkeit des Textes und die Vielfalt der Weltanschauungen, die in einem fiktionalen Raum gemeinsam existieren können. Andererseits wird durch die Ironie ein Riss zwischen der Vergangenheit und der Gegenwart der Handlung erzeugt, weil im Roman eine literarische Tradition aufgearbeitet wird, die nicht mehr die ethischen und ideologischen Vorstellungen der Figuren und der Leser prägt. Das Spiel mit der Sprache und mit den Ideen wirkt noch drastischer, wenn man die Rolle der Bibel und der marxistischen Ideologie in der Gesellschaft in Betracht zieht. Die Ironie wird nicht unmittelbar an diese Texte, sondern eher an die Figuren und an den Erzähler selbst gerichtet, die weder den geerbten Werten folgen noch ihre eigenen Prinzipien festlegen und im Grunde eine Geschichte des Scheiterns schreiben.

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Paradigms of Death as Absence

Andi Mihalache: *Grafemele absentei: indolieri, inscriptionari, anamneze,* Cluj-Napoca: Editura Argonaut/Mega, 2023/*Graphemes of Absence: Mourning, Insignia, Anamnesis,* Cluj-Napoca: Argonaut/Mega Publishing House, 2023

Anemona Alb[1]

This paper sets out to review Andi Mihalache's *Grafemele absentei: indolieri, inscriptionari, anamneze/ Graphemes of Absence: Mourning, Insignia, Anamnesis* published in 2023. Andi Mihalache is a culture historian with the Institute for History in Iasi, a branch of the Romanian Academy and has published research on cultural representation. It is with painstaking rigor that Mihalache (2023) lays out and analyses the socio-cultural and anthropological tenets of the imagery of death in literary and non-fictional texts. His is a comprehensive and astute look at all things thanatological; the slew of cultural anthropological theories he submits are aptly illustrated, indeed bountifully so, with salient examples from universal literature. Death can arguably be mis/construed in myriad ways, each in turn in fact failing to detect its quintessence. Death is idiosyncratic - and, subsequently, the representations thereof are idiosyncratic as well, - as circumstances of death hardly resemble one another. Mihalache (2023) identifies sites of semiotic significance whereby death is represented, and the following paradigmatic configurations: names, bodies, scars; and of remembrance: statues. Indeed, these constitute the structure of the chapters, under the arch-category of death as absence. The book also comprises a post-intro and a name index.

Much of fiction writing, Mihalache (2023) argues, is sarcophagus-writing, as it were. What he means by coining this syntagm is that, quoting Handke (2022), "Cand scriu, scriu in mod necesar despre trecut, despre ceva consumat – pe perioada scrisului, cel putin. Ma indeletnicesc cu scrisul, ca de obicei, exteriorizat si

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obiectivat intr-o masinarie de amintiri si formulari."[1] (Handke 2022 quoted in Mihalache 312). Hence the ideological encapsulation of writing into a sarcophagus-like structure. Deferring the act of submitting writing to readership, indeed the procrastination of reception is at times the *modus operandi* of authors, whose act of writing is cherished in and of itself, followed by an absence of sharing. As Annie Ernaux puts it, "(...) n-am nimic de asteptat de la scriitura, unde nu se intampla decat ce pui tu in ea. A continua sa scriu inseamna si sa aman angoasa de a le da celorlalti sa citeasca acest text."[2] (Ernaux 1992 quoted in Mihalache 313). New facets of the concept of absence indeed; to say nothing of what Mihalache (2023) terms '*literariness as self-inscription*' (Mihalache 313).

As such, literariness has more often than not taken the guise of the corporeal, as Mihalache (2023) argues:

> Literaritatea a avut, (...) si o componenta corporalizanta. Si nu e nevoie sa ne reamintim de tatuajele naziste, destul de relevanta fiind relatia dintre trup si limbaj in gandirea unui filosof al culturii de talia lui George Steiner: 'Fiecare cuvant, mai mult, fiecare sunet articulat si semnificatia lui potentiala isi are propriul sau context non-lingvistic. Limbajul corpului este o stenografie menita sa acopere multitudinea de componente ale posturii, gestului si miscarii fizice care insotesc, califica si adeseori slabesc sau contrazic o afirmatie'.[3] (Steiner 2015: 170 quoted in Mihalache 314)

Indeed, body language, used in the sense of inscriptions of ideology on the body (in the case of Nazi extermination camp tattoos) reveal the juxtaposed absence of empathy on the one hand and the heralding of impending death on the other hand.

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[1] "When I write, I necessarily write about the past, about something that has been consumed – throughout the writing process, at least. I exercise writing, as usual, in an outward manner and indeed my writing gets reified into a machinery of remembrance and wording." (translation by Anemona Alb)

[2] "I have no expectations from discourse, where nothing happens except for what you yourself throw into it. Keeping on writing equally means deferring the anguish of giving the others this text for them to read." (translation by Anemona Alb)

[3] "Literariness has had a corporeal component as well. And it's hardly necessary for us to recollect the Nazi tattoos, the correlation between the body and language being quite relevant in the thinking of a philosopher of culture such as George Steiner: each and every word, moreover, each and every sound that is articulated and its potential significance, they all have their own non-linguistic context. Body language is some sort of stenography meant to cover the multitude of components of posture, of gesture and of physical movement that accompany, qualify and contradict a statement'." (translation by Anemona Alb)

Absence is more often than not obscured by the remains of the act *per se* or, in Handke's example, by the presence of the corpse of the person he's grieving; as he poignantly writes,

> Cum pana la sosire n-am reusit sa descopar nici un indiciu, nici un semn prevestitor, trupul ei mort in camera inghetata m-a luat iar cu totul pe nepregatite (...). In dimineata zilei cand trebuia inmormantata, am ramas multa vreme singur cu moarta in camera. Sentimentele mele concordau dintr-o data cu obiceiul raspandit al priveghiului. Chiar si acest trup mort imi parea ingrozitor de parasit si de avid de iubire.[4] (Handke 2022: 313)

The ultimate abandonment is at work here, in the impossibility of companionship beyond death. Abandonment is used ambivalently here, both in the sense of the next-of-kin abandoning the dead body and of the deceased abandoning themselves into lifelessness.

In terms of the semiotics of inscription, Mihalache (2023) pinpoints the outstanding theories that philosophy and cultural anthropology have put forward to date. As such, frameworks like 'the reification of image' (Alain Besancon, *The Prohibited Image*), 'artistic creation as spectacle' (Horst Bredekamp, *The Image Act*) and 'the temporalized experience of gaze' (John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*) are eloquently discussed by Mihalache (2023). In order to illustrate the notion of memory and the insignia thereof, Mihalache (2023) quotes Marin Tarangul as saying:

> Ca sa-si dea seama de simtul de pietate al cuiva, grecii il intrebau daca are un mormant al familiei si daca isi cinsteste stramosii. Prins in fuga zilei, omul nu este prea atent la realitatea pe care o au in memoria noastra aceste lucruri. Omul nu este destul de atent la propria lui memorie. Iar cultul stramosilor este ecoul acestei dinastii sufletesti care este de fapt povestea propriei noastre memorii.[5] (Tarangul

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[4] "As I had failed to discover the shred of a clue by the time of my arrival, not the tiniest clue, nor any foreboding sign or omen, her dead body in the mortuary took me by surprise yet again (...). In the wee hours of the day when she needed to be buried, I was left by myself with the deceased in the room. My feelings suddenly got attuned to the widespread custom of the wake. Even the dead body seemed terribly forlorn and eager for love." (translation by Anemona Alb)

[5] In order to assess someone's devoutness, the Greeks would ask that person whether they had a family crypt and whether they honored their forefathers. Enmeshed in the daily rat race, people hardly pay attention to the reality that such things hold in our memory. Man does not heed his own memory quite as much. And cultivating your ancestors constitutes the echo of this dynasty of the soul that is in fact the story of our memory per se." (translation by Anemona Alb)

quoted in Mihalache 2023: 381).

The 'cultural semiotics', to coin a term that therefore emerges is that of the memory-laden insignia on objects such as the crypt, the sepulchral space thereof carrying history, the family history, but also the history of our relationships. The 'reification of image', as Besancon coins it is rife with the plethora of family traumas and subsequent emotional neglect of the vestiges. Therefore, death as the Great Leveler is perceived by Mihalache (2023) not merely in its ontological sense, but in the sense of erasing any recollection of one's past relationships as well, thus relinquishing all the hedonism associated with past bond.

The imagery of demise and of all things defunct is located by Mihalache (2023) in class-based hierarchies as well – see the semiotics of the royal effigies he refers to in the second chapter, entitled *Of Remembrance: Statues*. In that vein, he states "De-a lungul istoriei au existat mai multe forme de a suplini, in plan artistic, absenta unei persoane din planul fizic (...) efigia regala etc[6] (Mihalache 2014 quoted in Mihalache 2023: 386)

All in all, *Graphemes of Absence: Mourning, Insignia and Anamnesis* (2023) yields a myriad of possible interpretations of the paradigms of semiotic inscription of absence, of memory, of the recollection of absence and of the sheer absence of memory. At times, anamnesis is an impossibility, as Mihalache (2023) adroitly demonstrates. Arguably, he is a bellwether of innovation in cultural and semiotic interpretation.

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[6] "Throughout history, there have been several means of supplanting, artistically speaking, the absence of a person, physically speaking (...) the royal effigy etc)." (translation by Anemona Alb)

Poetry & Academics: On Kimberly Quiogue Andrews, *The Academic Avant-Garde: Poetry and the American University* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2023)

Ioana Cistelecan[1]

Kimberly Quiogue Andrews' *The Academic Avant-Garde: Poetry and the American University* constitutes a measured and well-researched intervention in contemporary debates concerning the institutional embeddedness of American experimental poetry. Kimberly Quiogue Andrews challenges the persistent though increasingly invalid assumption that avant-garde practices emerge in deliberate opposition to academic structures. Instead, she advances a nuanced thesis: far from being antithetical to innovation, the university - its professional routines, curricular frameworks, and intellectual networks - has played a central role in shaping the aesthetic and conceptual orientations of the U.S. poetic avant-garde. The monograph is grounded in a balanced combination of textual analysis, institutional history, and sociological inquiry, and it offers a contribution of considerable relevance to scholars of post-war American literature.

The book was reviewed by John Beer in *The Review of English Studies* (vol. 75, no. 318, February 2024). John Beer underscores the importance of such a study, drawing on Andrews's observation that what is often labelled "marginal" or "extra-institutional" within avant-garde poetry is, in fact, deeply interwoven with the structures of the university. Consequently, the familiar opposition between "the university" and "the avant-garde" warrants reconsideration.

The architecture of the book reflects a deliberate critical choice. Kimberly Quiogue Andrews organizes her study not by literary movements or individual authors but by forms of academic labour. Chapters devoted to teaching, theorizing, editorial practices, workshop culture, and institutional critique provide the backbone of the analysis. This organizational strategy underscores the author's contention that

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avant-garde poetics cannot be understood in isolation from the professional environments in which they are produced. By foregrounding the quotidian processes of academic life - reading groups, conferences, departmental obligations, peer review, and pedagogical design – the author emphasizes that these activities, often relegated to the periphery of literary scholarship, exert discernible influence on poetic form and practice. The approach is conceptually coherent and allows for a careful examination of the symbiotic relationship between creative and institutional work.

Methodologically, the study is noteworthy for its careful modulation between close reading and context-sensitive interpretation. Kimberly Quiogue Andrews consistently anchors her claims in specific textual examples, while simultaneously placing those examples within the broader institutional ecosystems in which poets operate. Her discussion of workshop dynamics, for instance, illuminates how the circulation of drafts, the conventions of critique, and the expectations of peer audiences contribute to recurrent aesthetic tendencies in contemporary experimental poetry. Similarly, her analysis of conference culture - its discursive norms, collaborative environments, and circuits of professional recognition - clarifies how academic networks shape the reception and legitimation of avant-garde writing. These sections are persuasively executed and demonstrate the value of an interdisciplinary methodology that draws from literary studies, sociology, and cultural theory.

A particularly significant implication of Kimberly Quiogue Andrews' argument is her reframing of the university not merely as a site of patronage or distribution but as a generative force in the formation of poetic movements. She shows that many influential figures in the American avant-garde have held sustained affiliations with higher education institutions. This is not, in her view, an incidental biographical detail but an essential component of understanding how experimental practices have evolved since the mid-twentieth century. By tracing the circulation of ideas, pedagogical models, and aesthetic theories through creative writing programs and academic conferences, the author reveals the extent to which institutional forms mediate literary production. Her conclusions complicate the often-invoked dichotomy between autonomous artistic creation and institutional constraint, suggesting instead a more integrated and historically informed understanding of the avant-garde's development.

Stylistically, the text is measured, precise, and accessible without sacrificing scholarly rigor. The researcher avoids excessive

theoretical abstraction, yet her argument remains firmly situated within contemporary critical discourse. The clarity of her exposition facilitates engagement with complex institutional dynamics, and the book maintains a consistent analytical tone throughout. The value of the monograph lies not in the novelty of any single claim but in the cumulative weight of its evidence and the coherence with which it rethinks established narrative patterns.

The study does, however, present certain limitations. Because it concentrates primarily on poets working within research universities and MFA programs, it devotes less attention to avant-garde practices that originate outside academic structures, such as: community-based, activist, and digital poetic movements, which often operate at a significant remove from university settings, these all appear only tangentially. Additionally, the author's focus on the American context leaves unanswered questions about how similar dynamics operate in other national traditions, where the relationship between universities and literary culture differs substantially. These points do not detract from the study's strengths, yet they do identify areas where subsequent scholarship might extend or refine the analysis.

Another aspect that is worthy of attention is given by the book's implicit commentary on the contemporary state of the humanities. Although Kimberly Quiogue Andrews refrains from overt institutional critique, the monograph gestures toward larger structural pressures that shape academic labour and, by extension, literary production. Her observations concerning precarious employment, funding shortages, and the professionalization of creative writing programs suggest that the interplay between avant-garde poetics and the university is shaped by economic and administrative conditions as much as by intellectual ones. Without adopting a polemical stance, she nevertheless indicates that understanding the institutional foundations of poetic innovation may be essential for assessing the future trajectory of literary studies in an era of diminished resources and shifting cultural priorities.

In all these respects, *The Academic Avant-Garde...* represents a substantial and carefully articulated contribution to scholarship on contemporary American poetry. The researcher succeeds in demonstrating that the avant-garde is not, as it is often assumed, a domain insulated from institutional influence. Instead, she reveals it to be deeply embedded within academic cultures that provide both practical support and discursive frameworks for experimentation. By grounding her analysis in specific textual examples and by tracing the institutional structures that shape poetic production, she offers a persuasive and methodologically robust account of how experimental

forms do actually evolve. The book's combination of clear exposition, judicious critical judgment, and attention to institutional detail makes it a valuable resource for scholars in literary studies, cultural sociology, and the history of higher education.

Rethinking the Representation of Animals in Twentieth-Century Canadian Fiction

Alice Higgs, *Animal Fiction in Late-Twentieth-Century Canada* (Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2023)

Monika Leferman[1]

Alice Higgs sets out to delve into the rich field of animal writing in the twenty-first-century Canadian context, offering a varied and complex exploration of an area of Canadian studies that has been widely overlooked in critical discourse. The book primarily concerns literary texts that incorporate animal imagery, demonstrating that animal stories are significant not only for their symbolic potential, but also for their role in shaping personal and national identities. In the author's words, the book aims "to explore the forms of social identity-based, critical commentary on animal writing that takes shape across" (4) the late twentieth-century. The author includes a variety of literary texts by different authors, including well-known names such as Marian Engel and Margaret Atwood. Higgs also explores extensively the figure of the coyote, a central element in Native American mythology, by examining Gail Anderson-Dargatz's novel *The Cure for Death by Lightning* (1996). This section of the study is particularly useful for gaining a better understanding of the postcolonial context of *The Cure for Death by Lightning* (1996) and the intricate relationship between Indigenous culture and the knowledge systems of settlers.

 Animal Fiction in Late-Twentieth-Century Canada draws on recent historical events, such as the case in 2020 when a grizzly bear was relocated rather than killed at the request of local First Nations people after it was spotted on Hanson Island looking for food. Higgs also analyses the various interpretations of Canadian animal stories, including Atwood's seminal contribution *Survival* (1972) and Janice Fiamengo's collection *Other Selves: Animals in the Canadian Literary Imagination* (2007), which Higgs considers to be the first major

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contribution to animal studies in Canadian literature. She also dedicates part of her book to what she refers to as 'nature fakers', namely the sentimental writings of Ernest Thompson Seton and Charles G. D. Roberts, considered among the first writers of animal stories in Canada.

Higgs traces the evolution of the animal story in Canadian literature in chronological order. The starting point is Farley Mowat's 1963 memoir *Never Cry Wolf*, which challenges the cultural perception of the wolf as merely a dangerous predator by presenting a more favourable portrayal through anthropomorphism. Furthermore, Higgs emphasises how literature can influence social policies, demonstrating how *Never Cry Wolf* marked a cultural movement that prioritised conservation in the 1960s and 1970s. However, this is only briefly mentioned at the end of the first chapter, rather than being discussed in more detail.

For avid readers of Margaret Atwood, chapter three offers insights into two of her celebrated novels: *Surfacing* (1972) and *Life Before Man* (1979). It argues that, although animals appear in these seminal texts, the narratives fail to construct a meaningful "pro-animal ethics" (71). Instead, Atwood uses animals as a symbolic tool to reflect on personal and national identity. The chapter includes cultural references and explores the social and political context of twentieth-century Canada, particularly in terms of feminist ideology, offering valuable insights into the novels and enriching the reading experience through the broad range of references. However, the chapter leans towards an interpretation of the novels that argues non-human animals are merely symbolic and that the dead animal body is just a form of "subjectively transformative experience" (144), rather than promoting the idea of empathy towards animals.

One of the highlights of the book is the chapter on Marian Engel's *Bear* (1976), in which Higgs combines commentaries from online platforms such as Reddit with cultural insights and an excellent literary analysis of the novel. This expands the theoretical horizons by including a wide range of critical voices that have explored the novel. This interpretative exercise demonstrates how Engel moves away from the traditional representation of animals as symbols and moves towards a more inclusive approach, proving "that it is possible to deliver nuanced animal representation that offers constructive ways of thinking about human-animal relationships outside of a symbolic framework" (77). Furthermore, Higgs emphasises Engel's contribution to the development of contemporary Canadian animal stories and explores the metafictional strategies employed in the novel to reflect on

the construction of animal writing and interrogate the boundaries between symbolic and material animals (78).

Another interesting chapter focuses on Timothy Findley's novels *The Wars* (1977) and *Not Wanted on the Voyage* (1984). Findley's ethics of care, queerness, kinship, and emphatic prose are central to the interpretative exercise, and Higgs contextualises the novels masterfully, both historically and culturally. Higgs argues that the novels "introduce a pro-animal element that opens up space for more developed understandings of material relationships between humans and animals" (117) so they are relevant for their subversive potential and pro-animal stance.

The next chapter discusses the 1996 novel *The Cure for Death by Lightning* by Gail Anderson-Dargatz, focusing on its portrayal of Indigenous ethics of care. By focusing on the mythical figure of the coyote, a recurring and pivotal element in Native American stories and mythologies, Higgs also addresses relations between North American Indigenous Nations and settlers, concluding that the novel highlights the need for settler writing to actively decolonise by meaningfully and respectfully engaging with Indigenous epistemologies and stories, rather than appropriating them (138).

Overall, the book makes a valuable contribution to the ever-growing field of animal studies, particularly as it sheds light on a specific cultural environment: Canada. The novels' chronological ordering helps readers better situate them and observe the evolution of animal writing. At the same time, the critical analysis extensively employs a social-identity-based critical lens, and the criteria appear to lean towards pro-animal ethics, which is necessary. However, a more multifaceted theoretical framework could have broadened the scope of the study's analysis. Nevertheless, the book is engaging, demonstrating critical mastery and emotional depth regarding non-human animals, and promoting an ethics of care and empathy towards animal subjects.

La crise identitaire dans *Souvenirs de ces époques nues*, de Shumona Sinha

Shumona Sinha, *Souvenirs de ces époques nues*, Paris, Gallimard, 2024.

Bianca Marinău[1]

Shumona Sinha est une écrivaine franco-indienne née en 1973 à Calcutta, en Inde. Son parcours littéraire s'avère assez intéressant, car elle a commencé à étudier la langue française à l'âge de 22 ans et c'est en 2001 qu'elle arrive en France et qu'elle va y rester jusqu'à présent, tout en écrivant sept romans en français.

Nous allons analyser en quelques lignes son dernier roman, *Souvenirs de ces époques nues*, paru en 2024 chez Gallimard.

Le titre du roman nous indique, avant de nous plonger dans la lecture, ce que nous allons y retrouver : l'histoire d'une période où toute la vie de la narratrice a été mise à nu.

Ce dernier livre n'est pas tout à fait comme les autres, car cette fois-ci nous n'avons plus affaire à une femme d'origine indienne qui va en France, mais à une jeune femme française qui va en Inde afin de se redécouvrir et de voir la vie différemment.

Le séjour que Sophia, la protagoniste du roman, veut entreprendre en Inde a comme but la redécouverte de soi. Elle pense qu'en faisant cela, à son retour en France elle pourrait apprécier ce que la vie peut lui offrir à chaque instant. Ce voyage pourrait être perçu comme la bouée de sauvetage qui l'empêcherait de se noyer dans un monde qui ne peut pas la comprendre et qu'elle-même ne comprend plus.

Jusqu'à cet instant, nous n'avons aucun indice de ce qui pourrait se passer ensuite, car la technique de Sinha est assez intéressante et elle réussit à faire immerger le lecteur dans ses livres. Nous découvrons avec stupéfaction, en même temps que la protagoniste, que l'Inde n'est pas seulement le pays où l'on protège les vaches, mais aussi le pays où

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l'hindouisme est à l'honneur.

Cela ne poserait aucun problème si les événements qui s'enchaînent ne nous montraient pas le visage caché de l'Ashram où l'héroïne est forcée de passer son temps libre. C'est un lieu où l'on fait l'apologie du détachement du monde extérieur par l'acceptation de sa propre personne ; de plus, les méthodes utilisées par les gourous ne sont pas du tout les plus efficaces, car elles proposent un « dérèglement de tous les sens »[24] par le fait d'offrir son corps à n'importe qui.

Cette face cachée de l'Ashram n'a pas pour but de dénigrer ces endroits spirituels. Sa finalité est forcément celle de nous faire poser une question qui devrait se retrouver sur les lèvres de toute personne aux mains de laquelle pourrait tomber ce roman : Quand est-ce qu'un lieu où la découverte de soi et l'épanouissement sont proclamés est devenu un lieu où les femmes sont traitées comme des objets ? ou encore une question : Quel est le prix qu'une femme est forcée à payer dans un pays où un animal a un statut beaucoup plus privilégié ?

Le livre a un thème bouleversant, mais qui doit être quand même présenté : la crise identitaire d'une femme qui touche la trentaine et qui n'a pas du tout ce qu'on pourrait appeler une situation sociale stable. Sophia n'a pas de mari, pas d'enfants, plus de parents : sa mère était morte depuis un an et elle n'avait jamais connu son père.

Le fait qu'elle n'a jamais connu son père pourrait aussi nous mener vers une autre piste de recherche : c'est peut-être ce manque de la figure paternelle qui l'empêche d'avoir une relation normale avec un homme, car, dans le cadre du roman, elle n'a que des rapports tendus et ambigus avec les hommes : au sein de l'Ashram, elle s'éprend pour un DJ allemand qui ne partage pas ses sentiments, tandis qu'en dehors de l'Ashram Sophia a une liaison passagère avec un jeune homme.

Les relations que Sophia a avec les hommes ne s'encadrent pas du tout dans ce qui pourrait être perçu comme normal. Si l'on choisit de les analyser, on pourrait découvrir que ses problèmes d'identité ont leur source dans les problèmes d'attachement affectif.

L'atmosphère du livre et le cadre exotique de l'Inde contribuent au parcours de la protagoniste.

La seule question qui reste au lecteur est la suivante : Quelle est la place de la femme dans la société indienne ? Quel est le prix qu'il faut payer pour se redécouvrir ?

La réponse à ces questions sera retrouvée seulement au moment où chaque lecteur donnera la chance à cette autrice franco-indienne et essayera de lire un de ses romans. Ils en valent vraiment la peine.

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[24] Rimbaud, Arthur, *La lettre du « voyant »*, Charleville, 1871.

Rethinking Metaphor

Fredric V. Bogel, *A Theory of Metaphor. Truth, Falsity, and the Uncanny* (New York: Routledge, 2025)

Adina Pruteanu[1]

Among the diverse studies that have explored the complexity of metaphor, that of Fredric Bogel, Professor Emeritus at Cornell University, *A Theory of Metaphor. Truth, Falsity, and the Uncanny,* distinguishes itself through the innovative viewpoint according to which metaphor is not a comparison but an expression of identity which incorporates the notions of truth and falsity, as well as the Freudian concept of 'the uncanny'.

F. Bogel starts his book by illustrating the most relevant semantic values given to metaphor throughout time, with the implicit aim of explaining the basis on which he founds his original theory. For instance, metaphors are interpreted as: the modality of acquiring knowledge (Aristotle), the flowing movement of an idea, like a dance (Paul Valery), the means of reflecting the endless play of meaning, generating a vast range of philosophical concepts (Derrida), the ubiquitous principle of language (I.A. Richards), or as the way to bring purpose into the world (K. Burke). The vast array of opinions on metaphor leads F. Bogel to the predictable question whether a compact yet detailed study of such an intricate and multifaceted phenomenon can be achieved. Various literary, linguistic, rhetorical or philosophical approaches to metaphor regarding its function and role within different cultural contexts have produced valuable results, but seem to be less sufficient in grasping the essence of the metaphor. According to F. Bogel, a powerful strategy to approach metaphor is to isolate one of its essential and constitutive features and follow it out from a simpler to a broader or more complex focus. This strategy proved its efficiency in Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790),

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where the repeatedly return to a single conceptual core – the tension between abstract reason and historical, social circumstances – using vivid imagery, allowed for greater depth, coherence and clarity.

F. Bogel's declared aim in examining the notion of metaphor is to develop a method similar to Burke's, therefore to begin by describing the metaphor's "heart" or conceptual center. In F. Bogel's opinion, this conceptual core has two elements, the first being the structure of metaphor as a statement of identity (A is B). The connection between the two constituents of a metaphor - the *tenor* and the *vehicle*, in I.A. Richardson terms – are implied or explicit, the first element entailing the second one. According to F. Bogel, metaphors may display falsity, not only truth. His idea of falsity was inspired by the 18th century Anglican bishop, Joseph Butler, according to whom each thing is *what it is*, not something else, this assertion being in contrast with the claim of metaphor that one thing is another. If metaphor, as an assertion of identity that is simultaneously true and false (A is B, but A is also not B), invokes something new and surprising, it may be *uncanny*. The interplays between truth and falsity in a metaphor, along with the vividness, the concreteness, the novelty and the indirectness brought by metaphors in a discourse are skillfully rendered through short but dense analyses of the examples taken from the works of E. Dickinson, Shakespeare, Fitzgerald, to mention but a few. The first chapter concludes with an investigation of the similarities and differences between metaphors and similes; F. Bogel's assumption, after drawing on theorists such as Jakobson, Brooke-Rose, Blackmur and Burke is that metaphors assert identity, functioning mainly on an ontological level and reshaping phenomena, while similes merely compare things.

In the second chapter, F. Bogel discusses metaphor as a modality of knowing, as well as a temporal and experiential process that unfolds gradually, creating new realities and reshaping the way in which we think. Relying on theories devised by Ricoeur, Goodman, Empson, Barany, Levin, Stevens, F. Bogel analyzes the way in which metaphors alter language and adjust our perception of reality itself.

The third chapter combines medieval typology, Christian theological concepts and theoretical notions on metaphor. The pattern of metaphor mirrors that of Christian thought where the reciprocity rather than hierarchy prevails in the relationship between the figure and the fulfillment, each completing the other while still preserving its distinct identity. The tenor and the vehicle, or the container and the contained, the inner and the outer retain their own identity while enhancing the overall significance. They are all essential components of meaning.

Chapter four is structured around the idea that metaphor generates meaning through the interaction between the tenor and the vehicle, the old and the innovative. The tenor encompasses historical, cultural features, while the vehicle brings novelty and imagination. F. Bogel illustrates these aspects through Fielding's satire, or through Shelley's poetical redefinition of the natural phenomena, or through St. Augustine showing that, in a metaphor, falsity enables the truth.

In Chapter five, F. Bogel refers to the longstanding debate over truth and falsity in literature, tracing from Plato's critique of poetry to Renaissance and modern theorists. While Plato feared that poetry could arise irrational passion and behaviour, the Renaissance writers appreciated the imaginative and creative power of poetry and its capacity to imbue the world of fiction with greater depth, making it more than simple imitation of life.

The next chapter offers a challenging exploration of the way in which literature makes use of the imaginative falsity to brighten human experience, trying to show that the most profound truth occurs only from the impossible. Bogel provides a large range of examples to illustrate this idea: the Martian narrator created by Craig Raine to defamiliarize humanity, Ted Hughes uses the voice of animals to disclose the human egocentricity, Randall Jarell reveals the horror of war through a posthumous narrator, Charles Johnstone resorts to an inanimate narrator, the effect being the satiric view of human life, while Diderot uses magical narrators to convey hidden truths. Moreover, F. Bogel provides theoretical approaches from Blackwell, Beardsley, Fried, Vaihinger and Wittgenstein.

Chapter seven illustrates the metaphor's uncanny facets oscillating from self to otherness, balancing familiarity and strangeness, bringing into analysis a large number of authors, such as Coleridge, Ricoeur, Punter, Jaynes, Cassirer, Black, Percy, Freud, and their views upon the interaction between the tenor and the vehicle.

Chapter eight brings into discussion the metaphor, the doubleness and the uncanny. Metaphor is more than a simple association of terms; it is a continuous movement between them. This movement influences the relations between the tenor and the vehicle, as well as the tenor relation to itself, but also proves the transformative power that metaphor may contain. The idea of metaphor as opening ways to new forms of understanding is illustrated in the ingenious analysis of *Star Trek: The Next Generation – Darmok*, where metaphor is a means used for connection, shaping the way in which we understand ourselves and others.

Chapter nine deals with the concept of uncanny both in

metaphor and psychoanalysis. The uncanny in metaphor means the presence of an unfamiliar element that causes disruption and reorganization in the way we perceive the world, while, in psychoanalysis, the uncanny emerges from the return of the repressed trauma. The author conveys the idea that the power of the uncanny in metaphor lies in its dual ability to deconstruct and to renew the meaning, as well as the cultural and linguistic structures.

Chapter ten explores the way in which metaphor, an assertion of identity that is simultaneously true and false, is experienced not only cognitively, but also affectively. Metaphor is seen as containing both order and disorder, mystery and contradiction, even impurity as it brings forth the idea of otherness. The last chapter analyzes the notion of impurity and its diverse manifestations in art, philosophy and language. Impurity is regarded as having a great creative force that may lead to more profound understanding of reality.

F. Bogel's book reveals the complexities of metaphor, its ability to disclose and conceal meaning, to disrupt and reconstruct linguistic and cultural realities. Through his original endeavor, F. Bogel succeeds not only in reshaping the theory of metaphor, but also in reasserting the essential role metaphor plays in the way in which we communicate and perceive the world.

Moving Grammar along the Political Chessboard

Steve Buckledee, *The Language of Brexit. How Britain Talked Its Way Out of the European Union*, Bloomsbury Academic, 2018.

Dana Sala[1]

Steve Buckledee has written the book on the grammar of Brexit slogans as a way to retrieve some answers even after the game was over and it could not be undone.

The volume *The Language of Brexit. How Britain Talked Its Way Out of the European Union* is very precise in the corpus of texts it gathers for an accurate analysis. The book is innovative through its unique mixture of theories of language, applied linguistics, and analysis of otherwise elusive political commentaries.

Re-reading the book now, in 2025, we remark an epiphenomenon. Brexit was the incipient process of a polarization of society bigger than the stakes it undertook. The polarization divided not just the political parties, but also families, siblings, friends, colleagues, classmates, peers and dates. How did the two parties, Remain versus Leave, evolve ? What shockwaves did they send to other parts of Europe? The voices reclaiming sovereignty and stating that the Others (in this case Europe and its institutions) are attempting to exert control over Britain have become increasingly swollen in other countries, sabotaging the achievements of European Union thorough lies, half-truths and faked pictures or videos. The so-called sovereign movements of some European countries blaming Europe have embraced narratives that are blatantly false. In the case of Romania, the sovereignty-backed narratives even seem to have forgotten about the Gulag induced by a severe sovietization, and bring back the mystification of history that was present in the 1950's and 1960's. A vital difference is that nowadays free speech is allowed. Therefore, the consequences of Brexit are not just political and economic, they outweigh the time lapse that had clear economic Brexit-driven

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frictions.

The lesson of Brexit seems to be the main focus of the book. The author does not favour the Remain side very much, but uses his commonsense to see the arguments of the Leave campaign.

Other facts invoked from the political sphere are related to the impossibility to vote for UK citizens who were in other countries of residence. Had they been allowed to vote, the results might have been completely different.

The book is written with objectivity. Both sides are given equal parts corresponding to the chapters of the book. Yet Steve Buckledee shows his passion for the topic in the way he tries to understand why it was possible and what was the path. He exemplifies the political errors between 2015 and 2016 and how the intelligentsia could not yet accept that the referendum might have the opposite results of what was commonsense for them.

What does the language of Brexit say?

The Remain campaign used mainly coordination in their speech. The Remainers wanted to point the complexity of the issue, that is why they used very much the coordination through 'but'. Their approach was honesty. Honesty was also their playing card. They showed that remaining in EU is the lesser of the two imperfect choices.

The Leave campaign was more aggressive. It did not use *but*. In turn, it used more subordination in grammar. Therefore, they put the accent on another part of the truth, by reframing it as the main sentence. A slightly different nuance, made with passion. They did not show doubt in their campaign. They did not care about the individual freedom to choose. At the beginning, the lies were not present, just small alterations of truth. Closer to the referendum, they used blatant lies and malevolent statistics, statistics that could never be true. The constituents bought their lies. Such lies were the sum of the millions of pounds saved to go to NHS. It was a future act and it painted the European Union as a greedy monster who prevented UK citizens from funding their National Health System which needs so much financing. The figures were fake. Yet they had an effect of citizens, pushing them in the Leave 'civil army'. Another lie was that UK would be invaded by Turkish immigrants because Turkey was to adhere soon to the European Union.

Brexit showed the fissures of democracy. The author does not discuss the aftermath of Brexit, what did the Leave party do with all its exaggerated claims. How could the Leave party, after winning, align itself with the 'truths' it proclaimed?

Steve Buckledee shows the academic courage to resort to reason.

He does not state whether Brexit was good for democracy and economy or bad for these two. But his grammar analysis shows that the Leave party was with the exaggerated claims and with bending the truth. The volume summons the grammar of the two types of slogans as an objective instrument for dealing with a complex issue, a process combining live politics and grammar.

The language of Brexit. How Britain Talked Its Way Out of the European Union by Steve Buckledee undertakes a complex research on sound, reliable principles, draws with finesse multiple interfaces (between language and society, between language and the galvanization of common ideals), and engages with an extensive bibliography, highlighting the evolution of political slogans and their shift in precise contemporary contexts.

Women's Voices, Emotional Expression, and Manuscript Materiality in *Medieval Love Letters: A Critical Anthology*

Myra Stokes & Ad Putter, *Medieval Love Letters: A Critical Anthology (Cambridge University Press, 2025)*

Éva Székely[1]

Medieval Love Letters: A Critical Anthology opens a window onto the varied ways medieval writers shaped and recorded emotional experience. Drawing on Latin, French, German, and English sources, Stokes and Putter gather fictional, instructional, and documentary letters into a single, carefully structured collection. Their presentation highlights the fluid relationship between poetic convention and personal sentiment, offering a clear and engaging view of how medieval love writing functioned within its manuscript environments.

The Introduction (Section I) orients the reader with clarity. Stokes and Putter outline the *ars dictaminis*, describe the structure expected of a medieval letter, and explain the continued prominence of French as an epistolary language in England. Their discussion of verse in love letters is particularly illuminating. They show that verse was not merely a stylistic choice but a conventional mode for articulating affection, one that shaped both the cadence and the emotional nuance of the text. They are also attentive to how writers balanced sincerity with formula, recognising that medieval expressions of feeling often move through established rhetorical patterns rather than unmediated confession. The result is a balanced and accessible account of the literary and cultural forces that informed medieval love-letter writing.

Chapter 2 turns to gendered voices and the presence—sometimes slight, sometimes surprisingly candid—of women in the surviving corpus. The editors describe the rhetorical strategies women employed to express longing while maintaining propriety, and they pay close attention to the conditions in which these traces have endured. Drafts written in blank spaces, brief entries on flyleaves, and occasional

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additions to manuscripts with entirely different primary purposes all contribute to the fragmentary yet compelling picture of women's written emotional expression. Stokes and Putter present these pieces with sensitivity, allowing their careful, hesitant, or deliberate tones to remain visible.

Chapter 3 widens the perspective, exploring letters produced in clerical and conventual settings. These examples demonstrate that emotional or affectionate expression circulated even in environments where one might not expect it. Here the editors reconstruct the textual and devotional frameworks in which such letters were produced, showing how spiritual language, literary convention, and personal sentiment sometimes converged. This material broadens the understanding of where emotional writing could appear and reveals the variety of contexts in which love letters might be composed, copied, or preserved.

Section II turns to fictional and instructional models, offering insight into the literary and pedagogical influences that shaped epistolary practice. Boncompagno da Signa's *Rota Veneris* stands at the intersection of instruction and literary performance, illustrating how writers learned to frame persuasive declarations of affection. The Anglo-French model epistles in Harley 3988 reinforce the expectation that love letters should be written in verse, while *The Parliament of Love* demonstrates how narrative works themselves could include exemplary letters, integrating emotional expression into literary storytelling. Taken together, these texts show how young writers encountered the language of desire within structured templates and familiar poetic forms.

Section III is the core of the anthology, bringing together letters that were either demonstrably written by historical individuals or that bear strong signs of having been composed for genuine exchange. The Norfolk Letters, for example, reveal how verse written from personal motive could find a place within a manuscript devoted primarily to ecclesiastical matters. The draft preserved in Corpus Christi MS 154— written, it seems, in an unoccupied space—offers a rare glimpse of an individual voice caught in a moment of composition. Its mixture of hesitancy and directness makes it one of the most striking items in the collection. The Armburgh correspondence, where personal exchanges incorporate recognisable lines or motifs from familiar poetry, provides a vivid illustration of how literary authority and emotional expression might merge within a single document. The letters associated with Remiremont further underscore the role of manuscript environment, shaped by both the institution in which they were produced and the

hands that later copied or preserved them.

Throughout the anthology, the editorial work is careful, measured, and transparent. The translations maintain the tone and rhythm of the originals while remaining accessible, and the glosses provide helpful guidance without intruding on the reading experience. The editors offer a concise note on their choices regarding normalisation, which allows readers to understand how the texts have been prepared. Although the volume does not foreground codicological analysis, it offers enough manuscript context to anchor each letter in its material environment and to suggest how these texts entered the written record.

Taken as a whole, *Medieval Love Letters: A Critical Anthology* presents a cohesive and finely balanced selection of texts that illuminate the range of emotional writing preserved in medieval manuscripts. By attending to both the literary conventions that shaped these letters and the manuscript environments in which they survive, Stokes and Putter offer a clear and engaging view of how medieval writers negotiated the boundaries between art and lived experience. The anthology invites close reading and rewards attention to both its details and its broader narrative of how affection and rhetorical craft intersect in the medieval record.

Sandra Glatigny, *Gérard de Nerval : Mythe et lyrisme dans l'œuvre*

Simona Şuta[1]

Avant d'entrer dans la lecture approfondie de l'ouvrage, il est primordial de situer brièvement son autrice, Sandra Glatigny, et le format du livre. Spécialiste de littérature française du XIXe siècle, Glatigny s'est imposée, au fil de ses travaux, comme une voix particulièrement sensible aux dimensions symboliques, spirituelles et psychiques de l'écriture romantique. Elle appartient à une génération de chercheurs qui ont réouvert le champ de l'analyse mythique après plusieurs décennies de domination des approches structurelles ou purement historiques. Sa démarche, à la fois érudite et intuitive, fait dialoguer l'histoire littéraire, l'analyse poétique, la critique thématique et une réflexion sur la fonction anthropologique du mythe.

Son ouvrage, *Gérard de Nerval : Mythe et lyrisme dans l'œuvre*, publié dans un format court (autour de 100 à 120 pages selon l'édition), en 2008, se présente comme un essai critique synthétique mais profond, destiné à offrir une lecture cohérente et sensible de l'univers nervalien. Loin des monographies volumineuses qui tentent de couvrir tous les aspects de la vie et de l'œuvre, ce livre privilégie une voie plus resserrée, concentrée sur la dynamique interne des textes et sur ce qui fait la singularité de leur fonctionnement symbolique. La structure du livre suit une progression logique : sources mythiques, transformations poétiques, particularités du lyrisme, puis analyse des *Chimères*. La clarté et l'élégance de l'écriture en font un ouvrage accessible mais exigeant, qui peut servir autant de première approche que d'outil d'approfondissement.

L'essai de Glatigny se distingue immédiatement par la manière dont il renouvelle la réflexion sur la place du mythe dans l'œuvre nervalienne. Beaucoup de critiques ont souligné la dimension mythologique de l'univers de Nerval, mais Glatigny évite deux écueils fréquents : la simple érudition, qui se contente d'identifier des sources

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et des références, et la psychologisation excessive, qui réduit le mythe à un symptôme de la folie. Sa démarche consiste au contraire à montrer que le mythe représente pour Nerval un langage fondamental, une manière de penser et de percevoir le monde. Selon elle, Nerval ne convoque pas les figures mythiques pour se donner un vernis culturel ou pour construire un décor exotique : il les convoque parce qu'elles incarnent des vérités psychiques, des archétypes qui rendent compte de réalités intérieures incommunicables autrement. Le mythe est ce qui relie l'individu à un horizon plus vaste que lui ; ce qui donne au moi une profondeur que la simple introspection ne suffirait pas à atteindre.

C'est là que le texte de Glatigny trouve une pertinence remarquable : elle met en évidence la manière dont Nerval, à travers les mythes, cherche à ordonner un monde intérieur fissuré. L'auteur des *Chimères* est hanté par la fragmentation du moi, par les crises psychiques, par la dissolution des repères rationnels. Le mythe apparaît alors comme un filet de sens, une matrice de reconstruction, une architecture qui permet de donner une forme poétique à l'informe. Glatigny montre que Nerval ne fuit pas la réalité dans le mythe ; il y cherche au contraire un point d'ancrage, une continuité, une raison symbolique là où la raison quotidienne échoue.

Cette lecture est particulièrement éclairante lorsqu'elle est appliquée aux *Chimères*, ce cycle poétique réputé hermétique. Glatigny analyse chaque sonnet comme une chambre symbolique, un espace rituel où le poète rejoue — sous des masques mythiques — sa propre quête identitaire. Dans « El Desdichado », la perte d'identité se dit à travers les images de chevaliers déchus et de royaumes effondrés. Dans « Delfica », la nostalgie d'un monde disparu devient une métaphore de la quête impossible de l'unité. Dans « Antéros », la violence de l'amour se transforme en tension cosmique entre forces opposées. Elle parvient ainsi à montrer que le mythe n'explique pas le poème : il en révèle les couches profondes, comme une lumière intérieure.

L'autre grande dimension étudiée par Glatigny est celle du lyrisme nervalien. Son approche est particulièrement fine : elle insiste sur le caractère indirect, voilé, presque secret de la parole lyrique de Nerval. Contrairement à un lyrisme romantique héroïque ou expansif, Nerval choisit la voie de la discrétion, de la retenue. Son « je » n'est jamais pleinement présent, jamais stable ; il apparaît en fragments, en reflets, en échos. Glatigny lit cette fragmentation non comme un défaut de maîtrise, mais comme une stratégie poétique et spirituelle. Nerval ne cherche pas à dire la vérité de son moi : il cherche à la transfigurer, à la faire passer par le filtre du rêve, du symbolisme, du mythe.

Cependant, un compte rendu critique doit aussi relever les

limites de l'ouvrage. L'une d'elles réside dans le choix assumé par Glatigny de lire Nerval comme un auteur de la cohérence symbolique. En cherchant les correspondances, les symétries, les continuités, elle tend parfois à minimiser la part de chaos, de rupture et d'inachèvement qui fait pourtant la modernité de Nerval. Certains critiques contemporains insisteraient davantage sur l'aspect déchiré, lacunaire, fragmenté de son œuvre, sur cette impossibilité de stabiliser le sens. Glatigny reconnaît ces aspects, mais les subordonne à une recherche d'unité symbolique : ce choix interprétatif, cohérent, peut néanmoins paraître réducteur à certains égards.

Une autre limite réside dans la faible contextualisation. La critique nervalienne récente insiste beaucoup sur l'environnement intellectuel du XIXe siècle : renaissance des sciences occultes, essor de l'égyptologie, vagues orientalistes, influence du magnétisme et du spiritisme, recherches archéologiques. Glatigny mentionne ces courants, mais sans les intégrer pleinement à son analyse. Or, comprendre Nerval nécessite aussi de comprendre le monde de symboles dans lequel il vivait. Une mise en contexte plus dense aurait renforcé la dimension anthropologique de son propos.

Malgré ces limites, le livre de Glatigny reste une contribution précieuse, lumineuse, et surtout cohérente. Son écriture claire, élégante, parfois lyrique, rend justice à l'objet qu'elle étudie. Elle réussit à offrir une synthèse intelligible d'un auteur réputé difficile sans jamais simplifier à outrance sa profondeur. L'essai met en lumière l'essentiel : la fusion intime du mythe et du lyrisme, cette alchimie qui fait de l'œuvre de Nerval non seulement un monument du romantisme, mais une méditation intemporelle sur l'âme humaine.

En définitive, l'ouvrage de Sandra Glatigny n'est pas seulement une analyse littéraire : c'est aussi une invitation à lire Nerval autrement, non comme un poète fou perdu dans ses visions, mais comme un créateur qui, face au chaos intérieur, a choisi les images les plus anciennes de l'humanité pour retrouver un chemin vers lui-même.

Medical Humanities and the Imagery of Illness in Romanian Literature

Emanuela Ilie (coord.), *Infernul cotidian. Imaginarul bolii în literatura română,* Eikon, Bucharest, 2025.

Anca Tomoioagă[1]

The volume *Infernul cotidian. Imaginarul bolii în literatura română* is the first within the *Medicine and Literature* collection, published by Eikon and is intended to be an interdisciplinary study, positioned in the sphere of medical humanities, as specified by the volume's coordinator, Emanuela Ilie (8). Thus, the book shows the openness of literary criticism and theory to the areas of intersection between literature and other fields of knowledge such as medicine, anthropology, sociology, and theology.

This openness is particularly necessary in the recent context of the publication of more and more Romanian literature on the experience of illness, trauma, and on corpor(e)ality. In fact, this is not Emanuela Ilie's first volume to focus on areas of interdisciplinary study. Her book *Corpuri, exiluri, terapii* (Cartea Românească Educaţional, Iaşi, 2020) anticipated the present volume and revealed the author's interest in areas of work that highlight the intersections between literature and other fields of knowledge. Emanuela Ilie is not only interested in the places where literary studies meet cultural, sociological, and anthropological research, but also in the places where people can meet through their common concerns in the study of literature. The book *Un dicționar al exilului feminin românesc*, published in 2024, was also a collective volume, as is *Infernul cotidian*. Both bring together researchers, some experienced, others younger, but equally valuable: Bako Alina, Băcilă Florina-Maria, Handru Ciprian, Ilie Emanuela, Negură Luiza, Pietraru Iulia, Victoria Sorina, Rucăreanu Alina Marieta (Nun Alexandra).

Although it is the result of the work of several authors, Emanuela

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Ilie's book has thematic coherence across all axes and strong scientific consistency. On the one hand, it offers a serious theoretical bibliography, useful for exploring the imaginary of illness in literature. On the other hand, as Diana Câmpan observes in the book's preface, the authors' research revolves concentrically around the illness as a *topos* (9). From this thematic core, other lines of research emerge that focus on disabilities, neuroses, anxieties, in other words, the illnesses of the body, mind, and soul, sublimated in novels, poetry, and memoirs. The literary works considered do not belong only to recent Romanian literature, but also to canonical writers, and goes from Ioan Slavici to George Cornilă.

Organized into two sections, the chapters of the book are distributed according to their thematic area. The four chapters of the first section, belonging to Alina Bako, Emanuela Ilie, and Iulia Petraru, have a primarily thematic approach. In her well-researched chapter, Alina Bako writes about disabilities in Romanian novels, attempting to identify a typology of disability (26-27), preceded by a theorisation of the concept of disability and how it influences the definition of identity. In Romanian literature, she traces instances of disability (especially those resulting from infirmities) up to the middle of the 20th century. Sometimes, disabilities are also linked to power and therefore to politics (33). From this point of view, Alina Bako's study extends diachronically to the observations of chroniclers. Also, by studying disability as a form of marginalization, we find examples in this chapter from the literary works of Slavici or Rebreanu (36). This type of social marginalization caused by disability creates the prosthetic character in novels, the character "who supports the narrative of the text" (40).

The second chapter, by Emanuela Ilie, deals with characters with addictions (to drugs, sexuality, and alcohol) (63), traumas, and "pathologies of excess" (86) in postcommunist prose, based on a multidisciplinary bibliography. The author of the study considers the literature of narcotics as a manifestation of "ruptures or even convulsions of identity of extreme harshness" (67). Literary works by Mircea Cărtărescu, Alexandru Vakulovski, Claudia Golea, Ioana Baetica, Radu Aldulescu, Doina Ruşti, Octavian Soviany, Bogdan Coşa, Cristian Fulaş, George Cornilă (with *Silex*, 2024) and many others are mentioned.

Iulia Petraru's well-written chapter focuses on contemporary Romanian poetry and discusses anxiety and depression, but not before analysing psychopathology as a social and historical construct. The study is drawn on the theories of Michel Foucault and Susan Sontag. It discusses the military metaphor that shows the confrontation with

illness and the phenomenon of ghosting that leads to the marginalization of the sick, stigmatization and social exclusion (98). Also, psychopathology is seen from a diachronic perspective (from romantic melancholy to the fragility of the human psyche in the 20th century), starting with the poetry of Bacovia and Mircea Ivănescu and continuing with the poetry written by Ionel Ciupireanu, Dan Coman, Judith Mészáros, Svetlana Cârstean, Şerban Axinte, Teodor Dună, and Radu Vancu. The last chapter of the section, written by Emanuela Ilie, is dedicated to cancer memoirs, the illness diary. The chapter focuses on the experience of illness and hospitalization, on therapies and coping strategies. Memoirs written by Rosana Nedelciu, Matei Călinescu, Camelia Răileanu, Oana Stroe, and Mădălina Andronache are being analysed.

The second section of the book, which is more extensive, comprises eight chapters that maintain the thematic line, of course, but which start from the writers and move towards the theme. Thus, the chapter that opens the section, written by the volume's editor, analyses pathology in Sorana Gurian's novel. The second chapter, by Florina-Maria Băcilă, focuses on Traian Borz's poetry and deals not so much with illness as with convalescence and healing. The emphasis is also on the kiss as a "symbol of understanding, reverence, and affection" (207), being the central element of the poems. In the third chapter, Ciprian Handru re-reads the work of writer Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu, referring in particular to the novel *Balaurul*, "a (false) war diary" (253) and to the way in which war, a generator of pathologies and suffering, becomes itself a cure for the minor sufferings of the self through the humanitarian activities in which the self is involved. Luiza Negură dedicates the next chapter to Ilena Mălăncioiu's poetry and the avatars of illness (273), while Alina Marieta Rucăreanu (Nun Alexandra) writes, also in an optimistic tone, a chapter about Vasile Voiculescu, about suffering and salvation, about pain and healing love. Alina Bako deals with Romulus Guga's prose in a chapter about the morphologies of illness, about the body and the spaces of illness. The researcher proposes new ways of reading literature and pathographies, similar to the act of pathomorphology. The second last chapter, written by Victoria Sorina, considers Rodica Braga's poetry and the condition of poetry as illness. Starting from Susan Sontag's perspective, the chapter analyses illness as a metaphor and trope, not as a physical condition (361). The book ends with a chapter written by Emanuela Ilie about lupus in Radu Aldulescu's novel, *Ana Maria şi îngerii*.

Overall, *Infernul cotidian. Imaginarul bolii în literatura română* proves to be a coherent, well-documented research and an

example of how literary studies can engage in a fruitful dialogue with the field of medical humanities. The diversity of approaches, the rigor of the research, and the relevance of the topics analyzed make this book not only a necessary contribution to understanding representations of illness in Romanian literature, but also an invitation to reflect on how the fragilities of the body and spirit shape the cultural imagination.

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Next Issue's Topic:

Thématique du prochain numéro:

Thematik der nächsten Ausgabe:

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The executive editors and the advisory board shall decide on any change about the frequency of the journal.

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Confluente, Annalen der Universität Oradea, Faszikel für moderne Literatur, ist eine akademische, doppelblind begutachtete Zeitschrift, die einmal im Jahr erscheint.

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