AGATHOS

An International Review
of the Humanities and Social Sciences



Volume 17 Issue 2 (33-34) / 2026

AGATHOS:
An International Review of the Humanities and Social Sciences



Volume 17, Issue 2 (33-34) / 2026

FIAL-CAT Association

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Web: www.agathos-international-review.com
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The journal is indexed in: DOAJ; EBSCO; ERIH PLUS; ESCI-Web of Science, Clarivate Analytics; ProQuest
ISSN 2069–1025 e-ISSN 2248-3446 ISSN-L 2069-1025

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PHILOSOPHICAL AND CULTURAL AVENUES

The distinction between *metaphysica generalis* and *metaphysica specialis*: Origins, metamorphosis and critique

Florin Crîşmăreanu[*]

Abstract: The distinction between *metaphysica generalis* and *metaphysica specialis* is known in the history of philosophy primarily due to Immanuel Kant's in his *Critique of Pure Reason*. In this study, I aim to highlight the fact that this distinction has a venerable tradition predating Kant, spanning the key moments of the Western metaphysical tradition all the way back to Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. The Stagirite's teaching, refined through Neoplatonic and Arabic interpretations, would give rise to this distinction only within the 13th-century Franciscan school. For our research, Immanuel Kant is a *Janus bifrons*, as he looks both toward the roots of this tradition—passing through *Schulmetaphysik* / *scholastic metaphysics* (Wolff and Baumgarten), Suárez, Duns Scotus, and Avicenna, as well as toward its posterity, with the distinction between *metaphysica generalis* and *metaphysica specialis* reappearing in different terms in the texts of Hegel and even those of Husserl. The importance of this distinction stems above all from the fact that, ultimately, it led to the birth of a concept fundamental to the Western tradition: that of *ontology*.

Keywords: Aristotle, *metaphysica generalis*, *metaphysica specialis*, Suárez, ontology, Kant

In the "Introduction to 'What Is Metaphysics?'", Martin Heidegger ([1929] 1998, 287) highlights that "Metaphysics states what beings are as beings […]. But metaphysics represents the beingness of beings in a twofold manner: in the first place, the totality of beings as such with an eye to their most universal traits (ἂν καθόλον, κοινόν); but at the same time also the totality of beings as such in the sense of the highest and therefore divine being (ὸν καθόλον, ἀκρότατον, θείον). In the metaphysics of Aristotle, the unconcealedness of beings as such has

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AGATHOS, Volume 17, Issue 2 (33-34): 9-22, DOI 10.5281/zenodo.23357445
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specifically developed in this twofold manner (cf. *Metaphysics*, Γ, E, K) […]. According to its essence, metaphysics is at the same time both ontology in the narrower sense, and theology. This ontotheological essence of philosophy proper (πρώτη φιλοσοφία) must indeed be grounded".

The issue at hand (the distinction between *metaphysica generalis* and *metaphysica specialis*) appears to stem from a fundamental ambiguity found in Aristotle's texts, in which, in certain books of his *Metaphysics* - particularly Books A and Γ—he maintains that this science (πρώτη φιλοσοφία) - which later came to be called μετά τά φύσικα—that studies Being *qua* Being, and the properties inherent in it by virtue of its own nature (1003a), and on the other hand, in the same work, particularly in books E and Λ, maintains that this science (θεολογία) should deal with separate beings, which are eternal, immaterial, and eternal (1064b) (Duba 2014, 450)[1]. Martin Heidegger ([1930-1931] 1984, 157-159) himself pays close attention to this issue and speaks, in a lecture dedicated to *Hegels Phänomenologie des Geistes*, of a "dual" concept (*Doppelbegriff*) of philosophy that goes back to Aristotle's writings, understood sometimes as πρώτη φιλοσοφία, sometimes as θεολογία[2].

However, in this context, M. Heidegger overlooks a famous dispute that deserves credit for having opened the discussion on the unitary character of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*—the one between Paul Natorp (1888) and Werner Jaeger (1923)[3]. On Heidegger and his position on the Natorp-Jaeger debate, see J.-F. Courtine (2005, 56-63). Paul Natorp, in his classic study "Thema und Disposition der aristotelischen Metaphysik," rejects any attempt to propose a unified interpretation of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. In his view, Books A, B, and Γ of the

[1] For this topic, see, *inter alia*, Joseph Owens. 1963. *The Doctrine of Being in the Aristotelian Metaphysics*. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies; Panayot Butchvarov. 1979. *Being Qua Being: A Theory of Identity, Existence and Predication*. Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press.

[2] The question is taken up again in Martin Heidegger. 1949. "Einleitung", *Was ist Metaphysik?*, p. 18. Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann. See also: J.-F. Courtine. 1999. "Métaphysique et ontothéologie". In J.-L. Narbonne, L. Langlois (Eds.), *La métaphysique, son histoire, sa critique, ses enjeux*, pp. 137-157 (here p. 147). Paris/Laval: Vrin/Presse de l'Université de Laval; Enrico Berti. 1996. La métaphysique d'Aristote. Onto-théologie ou philosophie première? *Revue de philosophie ancienne*, 14 (1): 61-85 (here p. 63).

[3] See also Bertrand Dumoulin. 1986. *Analyse génétique de la « Métaphysique » d'Aristote*. Paris: Les Belles Lettres.

Metaphysics constitute an introduction to the science of substance in general, which is the subject of the "ousiological" books; Books Z, H, and Θ deal specifically with sensible substance, while Books Λ, M, and N address supersensible substance. The result of this tripartite division is that these different directions are incompatible, hence the subsequent, desperate attempt at reconciliation or unification in Chapter 1 of Book E (which the German exegete considers partially apocryphal). *Metaphysics* would in fact consist of two distinct and irreconcilable treatises (see Berti 1996, 72-74). P. Natorp (1888, 49) nevertheless attempts to highlight what he considers an "intolerable contradiction" (*unleidlicher Widerspruch*) between πρώτη φιλοσοφία (*Grundwissenschaft*) and a science of a specific part of being, more precisely that which is immutable and immaterial. It is interesting to note that P. Natorp's non-uniform interpretation of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* is considered to follow in the tradition of F. Suárez (*Disputationes metaphysicae*, 1597), an influence that is reflected above all in the distinction between *metaphysica generalis* and *metaphysica specialis*.

However, medieval thinkers were not confronted merely with the pure Aristotelian paradigm; rather, it had been transmitted along with all manner of influences inherited from the Neoplatonic and Arabic traditions. Following in the footsteps of Aristotle, Avicenna, in *Liber de philosophia prima sive scientia divina* ([c. 1027] 1977, 31-32), argued that the subject (*subjectum*) of metaphysics is *being qua being* (moreover, he argued that *ens*, *res*, and *necesse* are the notions immediately imprinted in the soul)[4]. Avicennian teaching raised the following problem: where could God be situated in this framework bequeathed to the medieval thinkers by the Persian philosopher? If God were made the cause, the principle of the subject of metaphysics, then God would have to be beyond being (that is, in pure Neoplatonism, which is not the case), or we include God within the framework of being; but if we do so, are we not sacrificing God's

[4] According to Avicenna, "Dicemus igitur quod res et ens et necesse talia sunt quod statim imprimuntur in anima prima impressione, quae non acquiritur ex aliis notioribus se". For a pertinent analysis, see Jan A. Aertsen. 2008. "Avicenna's Doctrine of the Primary Notions and Its Impact on Medieval Philosophy". In A. Akasoy and W. Raven (Eds.), *Islamic Thought in the Middle Ages: Studies in Text, Transmission and Translation, in Honour of Hans Daiber*, pp. 21-42. Leiden/Boston: Brill. See also Jean Jolivet. 1984. "Aux origines de l'ontologie d'Ibn Sinã". In J. Jolivet et R. Rashed (Eds.), *Études sur Avicenne*, pp. 11-28. Paris: Belles Lettres.

transcendence?[5] Among the scholastic authors, Duns Scotus pays close attention to this issue and chooses the second option, supported by the statement: "Avicenna has spoken well, however, and Averroes very badly"[6].

We find a different position in Thomas Aquinas, who holds that God cannot be known in metaphysics by starting from the first concept of being (*ens*)[7], since there is no such concept of being that is univocal with that of God[8]. For Thomas, God is absolutely transcendent; he thus opts for the first version in the tradition of Avicenna, following Averroes on this point. Averroes's conception of metaphysics is very interesting for the present research, since for him "God is perfectly being because He is perfectly actualized; He is being *qua* being insofar as He is being *qua* form. In this way there vanishes any opposition

[5] Avicenna says, "Each substance is either body or other than body. If [it is] other than body, then it is either part of a body or it is not part of a body but is something altogether separable from bodies. If it is part of a body, then either it is its form or it is its matter. If it is separable [and] not a part of a body, then either it has some administrative relation to bodies in terms of moving [them]-and this is called 'soul'- or it is free from material things in all respects and is called 'intellect'" (Avicenna. *The Metaphysics of The Healing*. A parallel English-Arabic text translated, introduced, and annotated by Michael E. Marmura. 2005, p. 48. Provo, UT: Brigham Young University. Some exegetes saw here an outline of what was later called "metaphysica specialis". Therefore, the distinction between "metaphysica specialis" and "metaphysica generalis" is the logical consequence of the classification of substance into *genus* and *species*.

[6] See John Duns Scotus. ([1302-1304] 2004). *Reportatio* I-A, Prologue, q. 3, art. 1, 215: "Sed Avicenna bene dicit et Averroes valde male". In Allan Wolter and Oleg Bychkov (Eds. and Transl.), *The Examined Report of the Paris Lecture*, p. 75. St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute. See also Jan A. Aertsen. 2007. Avicenna and Averroes on the Proof of God's Existence and the Subject-Matter of Metaphysics. *Medioevo*, 32: 61-97.

[7] Thomas Aquinas, *Sententia Metaphysicae*, lib. 5, l. 7, n. 1: "Subiectum autem huius scientiae potest accipi, vel sicut communiter in tota scientia considerandum, cuiusmodi est ens et unum: vel sicut id de quo est principalis intentio, ut substantia". The Marietti Edition, p. 229, n. 842. Idem. *In duodecim libros metaphysicorum Aristotelis exposition*, VI Metaph., lect. 3, n. 1220: "Sicut autem dictum est, ens inquantum ens est, habet causam ipsum Deum". Edited by M.-R. Cathala, revised by R. M. Spiazzi. 1971. Turin / Rome: Marietti, p. 308.

[8] Idem, *Scriptum super Sententiis*, Liber I, d. 29, q. l, a. 2, sol. l : "Potest autem origo considerari dupliciter: aut secundum communem rationem originis, quae est aliquid ab aliquo esse, et sic una ratio est communis ad originem personarum et originem creaturarum, non quidem communitate univocationis, sed analogiae : et similiter etiam nomen principii". Edited by Pierre Mandonnet. 1929. Paris: P. Lethielleux, I, p. 691.

between the *transcendent* and the *transcendental*, as well as any distinction between a *metaphysica specialis* and a *metaphysica generalis*" (di Giovanni 2014, 81).

During the Middle Ages, it appears that the anonymous author (whose Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics is preserved in the Mazarine Library, cod. 4390) of Albert Zimmermann (1965, 292), the Dominican Bernard of Trilia (1240–1292), according to O. Boulnois[9], first used a clear distinction between *scientia communis* and *scientia specialis*: "common metaphysics and special metaphysics do not constitute one and the same science" (Proemium, 2 ra: "quod metaphysica communis et metaphysica specialis non pertinent ad eandem scientiam") or "a special science is necessary to discuss separate beings" (Ibid.: "requiritur quaedam metaphysica specialis, quae est de entibus separatis")[10]. Thus, for the first time in its history, metaphysics is explicitly divided into two distinct branches. There is no single science bearing that name, as Aristotle's followers sought, but rather two metaphysics (at least in an initial stage).

Subsequently, the term *metaphysica specialis* appears sporadically in the works of Franciscan authors from the Scholastic period. I mention here only the most representative figures, such as Roger Bacon, Henry of Ghent, Augustine of Ancona, Francis of Marchia, and, above all, Duns Scotus, who held that *scientia generalis* studies being as being, while *scientia specialis* studies a particular being: "metaphysica transcendens erit tota prior scientia divina, et ita erunt quattuor scientiae speculativae: una transcendens, et tres speciales"[11].

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[9] Cf. W. Goris. 1998. Die Kritik des Bernhard von Trilia an der Lehre von Gott als Ersterkanntem. Einleitung und Textausgabe. *Recherches de théologie et philosophie médiévales*, 65 (2): 248-319.

[10] For a discussion on this topic, see J.-F. Courtine. 1990. *Suárez et le système de la métaphysique*, p. 334. Paris: PUF. See also O. Boulnois. 1999. *Être et représentation. Une généalogie de la métaphysique moderne à l'époque de Duns Scot (XIIIe - XIVe siècle)*, p. 466. Paris: PUF. Pius Künzle is the best-known scholar of the preserved writings of Bernard of Trilia. See, *inter alia*, Pius Künzle. 1957. Neu aufgefundene Quaestiones quodlibetales Bernhards von Trilia. *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie*, 4: 52-58. Idem. 1966. Mitteilungen aus Codex Mazarine 3490 zum Schriftum des Franziskaners Petrus Thomae, vorab zu seinen *Quaestiones in Metaphysicam*. *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum*, 59: 3-37. Bernardi de Trilia. 1969. *Quaestiones disputatae de cognitione animae separate. Ad fidem codicum edidit Pius Künzle O. P.* Editiones Francke Bernae.

[11] John Duns Scotus ([1298-1300, revised later] 1997-1998). *Quaestiones super libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis*, I, q. 1, n. 155. *Questions on the Metaphysics of Aristotle by John Duns Scotus*, p. 69. Translated by Girard J. Etzkorn, and Allan B.

In this sense, I find the position adopted by Francis of Marchia exemplary, as he clearly separates the two perspectives of Aristotle, which many commentators have attempted to reconcile: "Vel aliter dico quod duplex est metaphysica. Patet per Philosophum IV *Metaphysicae* capitulo 1: 'omnia entia in quantum entia speculatur una scientia genere, species autem specierum.' Ecce plane dicit quod est metaphysica generalis et specialis"[12].

This duality within the same science—which deals with being par excellence and with common being—reached, with the *Schulmetaphysik* of the 17th and 18th centuries, the canonical framework of "metaphysics" divided into *metaphysica generalis* (*sive ontologia*) and *metaphysica specialis* (*theologia rationalis, psychologia rationalis, cosmologia rationalis*). However, even at that stage, in *Disputationes metaphysicae* (*D.M.*), F. Suárez proposes—albeit in a manner not yet fully developed—the essential elements of the distinction between a *metaphysica generalis* and a *metaphysica specialis*. First, the Jesuit indirectly supports the distinction between what has been called *ontology* and *theology*, clearly affirming the distinction between the adequate object ("ens in quantum ens reale"—*D.M.*, I, sec. 1, § 26) and the principal object ("Deum esse praecipuum huius scientiae obiectum" — Ibid, § 9) of metaphysics. Evidently, Suárez's definition of the adequate object of metaphysics and the resulting bipartition fundamentally oppose the interpretation given by Thomas Aquinas, to whom F. Suárez remains, to some extent, faithful.

The Jesuit is always quite cautious in his writings, making frequent use of distinctions to describe a particular subject as precisely as possible. For example, at the beginning of *Disputationes metaphysicae*, he states in the *Ad lectorem* that: "It is impossible to be an accomplished theologian without first establishing a firm foundation in metaphysics" ("Quemadmodum fieri nequit ut quis Theologus perfectus evadat, nisi firma prius metaphysicae jecerit fundamenta"). For F. Suárez, God remains the principal object of metaphysics, and not the adequate object. This means that theology no longer functions as a model for metaphysics; on the contrary, God must be understood in accordance with the capacity of the human intellect. However, the distinction proposed by F. Suárez cannot avoid the paradoxical

Wolter, OFM, St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute; Jan A. Aertsen. 2005. Metaphysics as a Transcendental Science. *Quaestio*, 5 (1): 376-389 (here p. 385).

[12] Quoted excerpt from William O. Duba, *op. cit*., p. 451, n. 84.

situation that arises from this: universal science (*metaphysics*) comes before first science (*theology*), that is, what is first from an ontological point of view, God, is no longer first from a gnoseological point of view.

By separating the imperatives of metaphysics from those of theology, F. Suárez paved the way for the science that would come to be called ontology (Lorhardus 1606; Goglenius 1613. See Coujou 1999, 1-67). This science would no longer be subservient to theology. In fact, ontology emerged free of any theological presuppositions, quickly becoming "une ontologie sans théologie" (Gilson 1981, 172).

Benedictus Pererius (1535–1610) and Francisco Suárez (1548–1617) are the most representative authors who initiated what would come to be known in the 17th and 18th centuries as *Schulmetaphysik*, represented by Christian Wolff (1679–1754) and Alexander Baumgarten (1714–1762). However, unlike Suárez's "ontology," "l'ontologie wolffienne est ainsi une ontologie de la connaissance, une gnoséontologie: une ontologie de l'étant (et non de l'être) en tant qu'être pensé ; plus exactement en tant qu'étant pensable. En effet, si l'ontologie wolffienne est une ontologie de la connaissance, c'est aussi une ontologie du possible" (Arnaud 2002, 42). Indeed, C. Wolff can be considered responsible for a true return to methodological Aristotelianism, to a greater extent than G.W. Leibniz. On the other hand, C. Wolff, following in Leibniz's footsteps, develops a purely conceptual and a priori metaphysics[13].

Contrary to popular belief, in his youth Immanuel Kant was very faithful to C. Wolff's doctrine. It is evident that in his pre-critical works, the philosopher from Königsberg follows C. Wolff's method. For example, in *New Elucidation of the First Principles of Metaphysical Cognition* (1755), he begins the lecture with the principles of reason and contradiction, just as Wolff does in *Philosophia prima sive ontologia* (1729).

This context, briefly described above, I believe must be taken into account when analyzing the distinction between *metaphysica generalis* and *metaphysica specialis*, known in the philosophical literature primarily due to the critique undertaken by Immanuel Kant, especially

[13] F.W.J. Schelling criticizes the ontology promoted by *Schulmetaphysik*: within the School, ontology is reduced to "une succession de notions". See J.-F. Courtine. 1991. "La critique schellingienne de l'onto-théologie". In T. de Konninck et G. Planty-Bonjour (Eds.), *La question de Dieu selon Aristote et Hegel*, pp. 217-257.

in *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), but also in his later work, *What real progress has metaphysics made in Germany since the time of Leibniz and Wolff?*, unfinished, and published posthumously in 1804 by Frederich Theodor Rink (see Ingeborg Schüssler. 2006).

Right at the beginning of *Critique of Pure Reason*, Immanuel Kant observes that "the battlefield of the endless controversies is called *metaphysics*. There was a time when metaphysics was called the *queen* of all the science, and if the will be taken for the deed, it deserved this title of honor, on account of the preeminent importance of its object. Now, in accordance with the fashion of the age, the queen proves despised on all sides" (Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 1998, 99; see also Norbert Hinske (2009), "Ontologie oder Analytik des Verstandes? Kants langer Abschied von der Ontologie", and Robert Theis (1985), "Le sens de la métaphysique dans la Critique de la Raison Pure". Moreover, in "Introduction <B>" of *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant argues that this science, metaphysics, is „indispensable for human reason, and from which one can chop down every stem that has shot up without ever being able to eradicate its root" (Kant 1998, 148). General metaphysics (*ontology*) has as its object of study being as such—that is, the conditions of possibility of all knowledge—and is found in the section "The Transcendental Analytic."

Kant opposes any attempt to acquire knowledge "of things in general" through the formal concepts and principles of the understanding, because without the conditions provided by experience, it cannot produce any kind of knowledge (Ibid, 193-194), which is why "the proud name of an ontology, which presumes to offer synthetic a priori cognitions of things in general in a systematic doctrine (e.g., the principle of causality), must give way to the modest one of a mere analytic of the pure understanding" (Ibid, 358-359). Starting from this point, the German philosopher rejects, one by one, the three branches of *metaphysica specialis*: psychology, cosmology, and theology (Ibid, 405-406)[14], and this is most clearly evident in "The Transcendental Dialectic."

[14] "The thinking subject is the object of *psychology*, the sum total of all appearances (the world) is the object of *cosmology*, and the thing that contains the supreme condition of the possibility of everything that can be thought (the being of all beings) is the object of *theology*. Thus pure reason provides the ideas for a transcendental doctrine of the soul (*psychologia rationalis*), a transcendental science of the word (*cosmologia rationalis*), and finally also a transcendental cognition of God (*theologia transcendentalis*)".

The way in which the German philosopher distinguishes his approach from traditional metaphysics leads us to believe that the Kantian distinction between transcendental analytics and transcendental dialectics appears to correspond to the Suarezian distinction between *metaphysica generalis* and *metaphysica specialis*. Thus, even though he undertakes a critique of both ontology and the special metaphysics, Kant preserves, at least formally and methodologically, the traditional distinction of metaphysics at the very heart of the *Critique of Pure Reason*.

Paradoxically, the perspective of scholastic metaphysics—which "popularized" the term "ontology"—endures in Kant's legacy. For example, by changing the terminology, G.W.F. Hegel ([1812-1816] 2010, 11), in *Science of Logic*, distinguishes between *objective logic* (that of *being* and *essence*) and *subjective logic* (that of the *concept*)[15] . According to the German philosopher, "The objective logic thus takes the place rather of the former metaphysics which was supposed to be the scientific edifice of the world as constructed by thoughts alone" (Ibid, 42), that is, the science that "investigates the nature of being in general," namely *ontology*. "But objective logic comprises within itself also the rest of metaphysics (*die übrige Metaphysik*)" (Ibid.), which tradition calls *metaphysica specialis* (Aubenque 1991, 269).

Pierre Aubenque (1991) draws on Heidegger in his interpretation, as he argues that the structure of the Hegelian system is built upon the structure of *Schulmetaphysik* (see Heidegger, La « Phénoménologie de l'Esprit » de Hegel, cours de 1930-1931 / 1984, GA, t. 32; p. 30;.). Translated into Hegelian terms, *rational cosmology* is transformed into the *philosophy of nature*, and *rational psychology* is nothing other than the *philosophy of spirit*. Here a problem arises: where does *rational theology* fit within the Hegelian system? The German philosopher is not so explicit on this point. However, Aubenque identifies a passage in Hegel's text that includes rational theology among the special metaphysics encompassed by objective logic: „the metaphysics which sought to comprehend with the pure forms of thought such particular substrata, originally drawn from the imagination, as the soul, the world, and God, and in this type of consideration the determinations of

[15] According to Hegel ([1812-1816] 2010, 11), "This first volume of the Logic contains the Doctrine of Being, as Book One; Book Two, the second section of the same volume which contains the Doctrine of Essence is already in the presses; finally, the second volume will contain the Subjective Logic, or the Doctrine of the Concept". See also P. Aubenque, 1991, *op. cit*., p. 268 sqq.

thought constituted the essential factor" (Hegel 2010, 42). So, in the words of Aubenque (1991, 270), "la logique objective paraît donc émettre la prétention, au premier abord exorbitante, d'englober à elle seule la totalité de la métaphysique antérieure : l'ontologie d'une part et d'autre part les trois parties constitutives de la métaphysique spéciale".

The crux of this situation seems to me to be as follows: the identification of *ontology* with *theology* under the umbrella of *logic* constitutes a clear example of onto-theology, which causes the Heideggerian metaphysical tradition to be viewed through the lens of G.W.F. Hegel.

As Pierre Aubenque (1991, 271-272) emphasizes in his study, there are two clear aspects of G.W.F. Hegel's relationship with tradition:
i) La première innovation est que la place de l'ontologie est désormais occupée par la logique;
ii) La deuxième innovation est la disparition au moins apparente de la théologie.

Consequently, according to these two "innovations", there are no differences between the *ens commune* and the *ens summum* (Ibid, 277), since ontology merges with theology and both belong to Logic. What F. Suárez radically separates, G.W.F. Hegel identifies without reservation, thereby providing the clearest example of an onto-theological paradigm.

In conclusion, what logic was for Aristotle—that is, the *Organon*—became *metaphysics* in Scholasticism. For authors of the scholastic period, metaphysics had become a science (since it was taught in universities), eminent for some, still to be sought by others (Leibniz in particular). Certainly, however, for nearly two millennia, metaphysics amounted to nothing more than a simple commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. At some point, the question arises: is an analysis of metaphysics as an "object" of research possible? To my knowledge, in *Disputationes metaphysicae* (1597), the Jesuit Francisco Suárez speaks for the first time of an analysis of metaphysics as an "object" and no longer approaches this work merely from the perspective of a simple commentator. Consequently, Suárezian metaphysics interrogates its own meaning, thereby becoming an autonomous science (Coujou 1999, 66-67. In this context, for example, Immanuel Kant (who, in my opinion, is here merely a follower of F. Suárez) does not speak of

meta-metaphysics, but of the "metaphysics of metaphysics" (Kant 1999, 181)[16].

Thus, the distinction we have been considering emerged explicitly during the medieval period within the Franciscan school, which was decisively inspired by the teachings of Avicenna, whose interpretation was grounded in Aristotelian theses. Nor should we overlook Boethius's translations, especially Aristotle's *Organon*, for what later came to be called *metaphysica specialis*. What is certain is that, by imposing this distinction, a radical change occurred compared to the tradition up to that point: *God is no longer understood as the cause of metaphysics itself, but as being included within the subject of metaphysics*. God thus becomes a primary object, but is no longer the proper object of metaphysics. Ultimately, with the imposition of ontology, the proper object takes precedence, leading exegetes to speak of an ontologization of theology. Kant's critique, spectacular and effective in specific instances, does not resolve the fundamental problem, since the distinction between *metaphysica generalis* and *metaphysica specialis* is found not only in the structure of the *Critique of Pure Reason* but also at the core of Hegelian and Husserlian[17] thought, to mention only the most significant authors.

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[16] According to Immanuel Kant, 'Letter to Marcus Herz' ([after May 11, 1781] 1999), "This sort of investigation will always remain difficult, for it includes the metaphysics of metaphysics. Yet I have a plan in mind according to which even popularity might be gained for this study, a plan that could not be carried out initially, however, for the foundations needed cleaning up, particularly because the whole system of this sort of knowledge had to be exhibited in all its articulation".

[17] In *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*. First Book: *General Introduction to a Pure Phenomenology* ([1913] 1983), Edmund Husserl distinguishes between "formal ontology and the material ontologies", which is nothing more than the scholastic distinction between *metaphysica generalis* and *metaphysica specialis*. "Formal ontology" is defined as a-regional, i.e. general, and "the material ontologies" represents a region of knowledge. For the Husserlian distinction, see: Liliana Albertazzi (1996); Gilbert Null (1997).

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Qui est l'homme pour que tu l'aimes ?[1]
(Who is the human being so that you love them?)

Horia Bădescu[*]

Abstract: We recognize ourselves that we inhabit an increasingly aggressively secularized and technologized world—one in which humanity's foundational values and the moral guideposts that underpinned the evolution and accomplishments of *homo sapiens* (accomplishments achieved even over the self in the effort to embrace the transcendent spark that animates it) are more and more challenged and deemed obsolete. It is a world in which a shift in paradigms entails the primacy of matter over spirit, of mediocracy over meritocracy, of deviance over normality, and of science over consciousness. As such, it is a duty to remind man/woman of who he/she truly is and, as a poet of this age, to consider the mission poetry must assume in the face of the wayward judgments regarding human being and them destiny! And this is because poetry has the mission of restoring to the human the awareness of its own limits and guiding it toward a revelatory journey. Poetry is meant to tell human being that they are the celebration of creation and to help them fete themselves: to embrace a way of being that constitutes a value, their very sacredness.

Keywords: meaningfulness of being human, role of poetry and poet, creative human condition, revelation of the ultimate truth/to be into Being, sacredness of the human

J'ai pensé longuement quelle réponse pourrais-je offrir moi-même, écrivain de ce siècle, poète européen et citoyen du monde aux questions, si dramatiques pour la condition humaine, que nous pose la réalité agressive de « l'intelligence artificielle », cette « invention ultime de l'homme », comme l'appelait quelqu'un avec une tragique prémonition ? Une réponse après une vie de labeur au service de la

[1] Speech given on the occasion of the awarding of the Diploma of Corresponding Member of the Academy of Letters and Arts of Feira de Santana, Bahia, Brazil, on November 4th, 2025

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AGATHOS, Volume 17, Issue 2 (33-34): 23-26, DOI 10.5281/zenodo.23357985
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poésie et de l'homme. Parce que l'homme et la poésie ont besoin plus que jamais de se rappelaient qui sont-ils, les vrais !

Je voudrais commencer par une vérité qui ne souffre aucune contestation : « l'homme a toujours cherché à savoir qui il est et où il est. » Mais une question se pose : cherche-t-il à savoir « qui il est » en tant qu'homme ? En tant qu'espèce vivante ? En tant qu'être ? Ou en tant qu'existence ?

Deux questions me viennent à l'esprit à ce sujet :

La nature humaine est-elle seulement ou essentiellement une affaire de biologie ?

Et si nous admettons que le monde est infini (ce sur quoi, scientifiques ou non, nous semblons tous d'accord), quel sens peut alors revêtir l'expression « vérité de base » ? Quelles seraient ces vérités fondamentales, alors que, tout au long de l'histoire de la connaissance humaine, il apparaît clairement que derrière chaque vérité ultime se cache toujours une autre, encore plus profonde ?

Dans cette fantastique course vers l'ultime vérité, dans cette quête sans fin de quelque chose qui toujours nous échappe – et que la poésie connaît si bien – on oublie souvent que la seule vérité révélée à l'humanité depuis toujours est le miracle de l'existence du monde et de la vie, dans leur harmonie et leur cohérence.

Le mystère de cette existence, dont l'humanité témoigne, tient au fait que l'essence du monde ne réside pas dans son immensité, mais dans l'intensité avec laquelle il se manifeste comme tel.

Il ne s'agit pas de remettre en question les extraordinaires exploits de la science, ni leur nécessité. Il s'agit simplement de sortir de l'illusion selon laquelle ces exploits seraient en mesure de nous fournir la clef du monde, ou de nous faire connaître ce qui n'est pas connaissable.

Tout est une question d'approche.

Si nous persistons à accorder à la connaissance la seule mission de nous montrer comment les choses sont faites, comment s'articule leur matérialité, si nous continuons à croire que la découverte du génome humain nous dira « qui est l'homme », que le clonage est le visage de l'éternité, ou que la virtualité numérique est la voie d'accès à l'horizon de l'incréé, alors nous nous trouvons au cœur d'une grande illusion!

Une illusion d'autant plus grave qu'elle peut être exploitée par les potentats de cette planète. Réduire l'homme à son biologique, à sa seule existence matérielle, est la situation rêvée par tous les gens de pouvoir. Le résultat – dont les prémices sont d'ores et déjà visibles – de cette prodigieuse avancée de la connaissance pourrait bien être l'accroissement de notre capacité à être classifiés, manipulés, exclus, d'une manière de plus en plus intime, jusque dans nos propres maisons. Nous, déjà si bien préparés à approuver et à applaudir quand il faut, comme il faut.

Alors, quel rôle la poésie peut-elle espérer jouer dans le développement de la connaissance de l'univers, d'une part, et de la vie humaine, d'autre part ?

Et quel rôle ces deux immenses champs de découverte joueront-ils dans la conception et la création poétiques du nouveau siècle?

Ces deux questions se contiennent et se conditionnent mutuellement.

Le rôle que peuvent jouer les progrès de la connaissance de l'univers et de la vie humaine dans le domaine de la création poétique sera peut-être, une fois de plus, de rappeler que ce qu'on appelle « la vérité ultime » n'appartient pas au domaine de la science. Que l'homme soit tout autre chose que ce qu'on lui propose d'être. Que le véritable infini, l'espace de la vie et de la mort, se tient dans l'horizon insondable de l'esprit. Et que les vérités ultimes ne sont pas à décrire, mais à révéler.

On a déchiffré le génome humain. Mais sait-on vraiment ce qu'est un homme ?

On a déchiffré le génome humain. Mais l'homme n'est pas meilleur qu'autrefois. Ni pire, peut-être – peut-être.

On a déchiffré le génome humain, on a percé le secret de la particule, de la radiation de l'univers. Mais en chemin, on a perdu l'honneur, la mesure, la valeur de la parole donnée. On a perdu le sens de la morale, sauf celui, aseptisé, de la morale 'politiquement correcte'.

Alors, qu'avons-nous gagné ?

Et surtout : qu'avons-nous perdu de l'homme ?

Le rôle de la poésie dans le développement de la connaissance de l'univers et de la vie consistera alors à donner à l'homme la conscience

de ses limites, et à l'orienter – mais qui écoute encore la voix des poètes ? – vers une démarche révélatrice. Vers l'idée que ce qui importe, ce n'est pas de définir la vérité ultime, mais de prendre conscience qu'on y participe.

Le rôle de la poésie est de ne pas laisser l'homme seul face à l'immense solitude que la fuite de la transcendance et l'expulsion du Sens instaurent, jour après jour, dans nos sociétés modernes.

La poésie doit lui dire qu'il est la fête de la création. L'aider à se fêter lui-même. À assumer un mode d'être qui est valeur, qui est son sacré.

Car il faut bien constater : après un développement aussi prodigieux de la connaissance humaine, la seule et ultime vérité que l'on puisse dire de l'homme reste celle proclamée par les Grands Grecs, il y a plus de deux millénaires et demi :

Il est bien des merveilles en ce monde,
il n'en est pas de plus grande que l'homme.
Sophocle, *Antigone* (441 av. J.-C)

Personhood and personalism: Perspectives on the metaphysics of the person for the Digital Age

Constantin C. Lupaşcu[*]

Abstract: This article examines the ontological and ethical transformations of human subjectivity under the impact of expanding digital technologies. Structurally, it is divided into two thematic parts. The first explores the development of personalist philosophy by establishing its historical foundations through key milestones in Western thought. It traces the genealogy of the person, charting its evolution from the ancient Greek theatrical mask and the Roman institutionalization of identity to the moral philosophy of Marcus Tullius Cicero. Moving onward, it then follows this trajectory through patristic theological redefinitions, Boethius's formulation of the person as a rational substance, Immanuel Kant's moral philosophy, which endows it with the highest dignity, and Max Scheler's phenomenological analysis of affectivity, concluding with the post-war decline in the value of human personhood. The second part turns to identity in the virtual space, examining algorithmic determinism and technologies capable of behaviourally simulating specific persons, whether living or deceased. It addresses the dangerous depersonalization of the digital realm and argues that the rise of automated non-human agents could prove the "Dead Internet Theory" a reality by creating an environment devoid of authentic human presence. Ultimately, the study considers the future of personhood in the age of algorithms, arguing that while technology can reproduce personality with ever greater fidelity, it cannot reproduce the person. And it is precisely this distinction that constitutes the final—and most important—refuge of personalism.

Keywords: person, personhood, personalism, depersonalization, digital identity

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AGATHOS, Volume 17, Issue 2 (33-34): 27-54, DOI 10.5281/zenodo.23358469
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Person, personhood, personalism: A genealogical excursus

Although this is often the case, the modernity of personalism must not be confused with the antiquity of the problem from which it arose. A philosophy of the human person can be encountered, albeit sporadically and in forms very different from those assumed by its contemporary incarnation, much earlier—in ancient Greek philosophy, in Roman law, and, above all, in Christian theology. It was through these successive transformations, and later through the metaphysical upheavals of German idealism and the social and spiritual crises of modernity, that the question of the person gradually acquired the contours of a philosophical doctrine in its own right. The term, therefore, is modern, but the question is not.

The personalist movement did not emerge from a single philosophical school, nor can its origins be clearly traced to one intellectual tradition or another. Rather, it took shape gradually and most definitively towards the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, as a response to the various forms of depersonalization brought about by accelerated industrialisation and the increasingly impersonal structures of social life that it entailed. The rise of the industrial order, together with the growing authority of positivism, the emergence of collectivist ideologies, and the reduction of human existence to economic and biological categories, compelled philosophy to reconsider a question that modernity had by no means rendered obsolete: What, precisely, is a person?

The Greek word πρόσωπον (*prósōpon*) provides us with one of the earliest points of departure for this genealogy. The etymology of the word is habitually derived from πρός (*pros*), meaning "towards" or "before" something, and ὤψ (*ōps*), "eye", or that which is laid bare before the eyes (Beekes 2010, s.v. "πρόσωπον"). Its semantic field could thus denote a face, someone's outward appearance or countenance, the façade of a building, as well as a mask worn by an actor or the role they played on the stage (Liddell and Scott 1940, s.v. "πρόσωπον"). Πρόσωπον is therefore, from its origins, already marked by the paradox that would prove divisive for the later philosophy of the person, between that which appears before another and that which stands behind it.

One of its earliest recorded uses can be found in Homer (*Iliad* 7.212; *Odyssey* 8.85). It subsequently entered Greek philosophy from poetry, appearing in the works of Xenophon (*Anabasis* 2.6.11; *Agesilaus* 1.13; *De Re Equestri* 5.4; *Cynegeticus* 4.2), Plato (*Phaedo*

117b; *Politicus* 257d; *Symposium* 211a; *Phaedrus* 253e; *Alcibiades I* 130e, 133a; *Timaeus* 45c), and Aristotle (*Historia Animalium* 1.1; *De Caelo* 3.4.302b). All four employed πρόσωπον in a rather physiognomic sense, associating the attributes of the soul with those of the body, as is evident from the pseudo-Aristotelian treatise *Physiognomonica* (1.1–2.1). In Plato, however, the inquiry into one's personality is pursued through other terms used to describe the character and inner constitution of the human being, among them ἦθος (*ēthos*) (*De Republica* 2.375c, 9.577a), εἶδος (*eidos*) (*Rep*. 4.435a–e; *Phdr*. 271a–d), ψυχή (*psychē*) (*Rep*. 1.345b, 1.353d, 4.439d–e, 8.544e; *Phdr*. 246a–e; *Gorgias* 524a–525a), and τρόπος (*tropos*) (*Rep*. 8.544d). Most importantly, however, in his *Poetics*, Aristotle (1449a–b) discusses the concept within theatrical theory, describing the figures on stage and the manner in which their masks determine their character. He also makes another particularly important observation in his *History of Animals* (2.1), whereas his predecessors had not concerned themselves with this distinction, and nor did Aristotle himself always observe it, despite the fact that many of the organs are analogous, only human beings possess πρόσωπον, since one cannot properly speak of a face in the case of animals or inanimate objects (*Hist. An.* 1.8).

From here we arrive at the Romans, where the Latin *persona* would inherit virtually all the functions of the Greek πρόσωπον while adding several new, specifically juridical applications to it. There is, however, a problem with assuming that *persona* developed directly from πρόσωπον. Three hypotheses have been proposed concerning its origins: 1) that it was a borrowing from Greek; 2) that it was a word of Etruscan origin, although the Etruscans in turn may have adopted it from the Greeks as well; and 3) that it was a Latin compound derived from the acoustic root *sonō*, "to make a noise, sound", and *per*, meaning "through", hence "to sound through", as in the voice that is heard (Lewis and Short 1879, s.v. "persona"; Ernout and Meillet 2001, s.v. "persona"). The latter was the explanation given by the Romans themselves (Boethius, *Contra Evtychen et Nestorivm* 3.9–13). The Greek hypothesis, however, has long since been disproved, not least by the fact that *persona*, unlike πρόσωπον, never carried the meaning of the anatomical "face" (Ernout and Meillet 2001, s.v. "persona"). Nevertheless, it was its association with the theatrical mask that exercised the most enduring influence upon the history of the concept.

Despite its disputed etymology, whatever the precise origins of the word may have been, its semantic development gradually led *persona* to denote the self, one's character and social role, and eventually the distinctive individuality and moral standing of a human subject. Its range thus records, in a rather compressed form, a shift from appearance towards identity, from the role assumed before others towards the interiority of the individual who assumes it. It would subsequently become the pre-eminent term through which the philosophy of the person was to be rendered in the Western world.

If the Greeks valued the metaphorical, almost kenning-like dimensions of πρόσωπον, the Romans, whom we may regard as jurists par excellence, assumed this legalistic bent in order to afford *persona* a greater clarity. The revolution here consisted in what might be called "the legalization of identity", the transformation of what had been a vague and often abstract notion into an institution of the state. For them, personhood was not simply a given. According to the *Institutes* (1.8) of the classical Roman jurist Gaius, Roman law distinguished between *personae* (persons), *res* (things), and *actiones* (actions). Being born a human did not automatically entail legal "personhood". An individual attained personhood when they were awarded a "role", when they acquired a "voice", to continue the theatrical allegory, within Roman society, and above all upon the "political stage", or at least a presence—even a silent one, since in theatre there is also the recognised role of a *persona muta* (silent character). To this public *persona* were subsequently attached the names, rights, and responsibilities of the individual, together with the dignities that accompanied it, first as a ritual rite of passage and later as a juridical formality (Mauss 1985, 14–17). This is a tradition that continues, in various forms, to be recognised in most societies today, where, alongside one's biological identity, one acquires a legal personality immediately upon birth. Although this did not automatically confer the same legal standing, nor ensure equal rights for all, as was the case with slaves, for example.

Under *ius naturale* (natural law), all human beings were recognised as persons, however, under man-made *ius civile* (civil law), a slave was treated as *res* (property) rather than as a legal person. Gaius (*Inst.* 1.9) himself refers to both *liberi* (freemen) and *servi* (slaves) as persons, but continues to regard the serviles as *res* (Ibid, 2.13, 2.14a). This is hardly paradoxical if we consider that modern examples of the same contradiction are not difficult to find, as in the pre-Civil War

United States, where the *Declaration of Independence* of 1776, although not a legally binding document, proclaimed as a self-evident truth "that all men are created equal" and that they possessed unalienable rights, among them liberty—a claim rendered manifestly false by the history of slavery in that country.

Roman law, however, did not operate according to a strict binary of person and non-person, but rather along a spectrum of *caput* (legal capacity). A full person was *sui iuris* (in one's own right) independent, while all others were in a certain form of dependency, either upon others or upon their masters. And just as one could attain personhood, so too could one lose it, either in part or altogether. Beyond slaves, there existed a veritable bestiary of juridical gradients: those who had lost, or never acquired, the full standing of a person, such as the *peregrini* (foreigners) and *barbari* (outsiders); those under *alieni iuris* (the law of another), such as women and children, who, although free, did not possess an independent legal personality but remained subject to the absolute power of the *pater familias* (male head of the household), whether the father or the husband; and those in a state of "civil death", such as the *infames* (persons deprived of honour), or persons affected by *capitis deminutio* (diminuation of status). The latter was divided into three degrees: *maxima*, *media*, and *minima*. The most severe, *capitis deminutio maxima*, entailed the loss of *libertas* (freedom), *civitas* (citizenship), and *familia* (family), effectively reducing the person to a condition of servility. Yet no other human beings were stripped of their legal personality and reduced to absolute objects in the manner the slaves were, as another famous Roman jurist, Domitius Ulpianus (*Digesta* 50.17.32), established: "Quod attinet ad ius civile, servi pro nullis habentur"—As far as civil law is concerned, slaves are regarded as nothing.

Another important turning point in the development of the concept of the person can be found in the works of Roman statesman and philosopher Marcus Tullius Cicero. It is he who shapes the transition from the social role of *persona* towards the conscious construction of one's identity behind it. Although he derives his interpretation of the notion from theatre rather than from jurisprudence, he transforms it into a principle of ethics, thus incorporating it into moral philosophy. In *De Officiis* (1.107, 1.115) he explains that every human being is endowed by nature not with one, but with four *personae*, or "masks", that one must assume in life in order to act rightly and harmoniously. The first of these masks represents the *universal nature* of the human

being *qua* human being. It is the aspect shared by humanity as a whole and derives from the fact that, by virtue of our very being, we are endowed with reason and are superior to beasts. This mask requires us to conduct ourselves as rational and therefore moral beings, as a matter of duty (Ibid, 1.107). The second mask represents *individual nature*. It is the expression of our particular traits and innate individuality—our temperament, physical abilities, and psychological inclinations (Ibid, 1.107). Even attributes that may appear less commendable or plainly bad at first sight can serve different purposes in different circumstances and for different individuals. Cicero insists that one must never turn against one's own nature, but rather remain true to it, provided that it is not outright vicious (Ibid, 1.110). As far as possible, one should avoid attempting to imitate the qualities of another, even when those qualities are good in themselves, and should not introduce anything foreign into one's actions or into one's life as a whole (Ibid, 1.111). The third mask is that which comes to us through *chance* or which is imposed upon us by *fate*. It is the station determined by the external conditions associated with the nobility or modesty of our birth, our social status, wealth and influence, and the historical circumstances of the age in which we happen to live (Ibid, 1.115). The fourth and final mask is that of our *deliberate choice*. This is the role we assume through our own volition and represents the profession, career, or way of life we elect to pursue (Ibid, 1.115). Cicero maintains that morally appropriate action requires the roles assumed through the third and fourth masks to remain in complete harmony with our inner and outer nature as expressed through the first and second masks. When one assumes a role that does not suit one's interiority, one's actions become inauthentic. In his view, any act that betrays one's own person is fundamentally morally wrong, because one thereby fails to fulfil one's proper nature. We should, therefore, devote ourselves, to the best of our ability, to the role to which we are most naturally adapted (Ibid, 1.114). This, in turn, opens the way toward the debate on the concept of authenticity. In this respect, Cicero can be credited with elaborating one of the earliest theories of personality in the sense understood by modern psychology.

While not a Stoic himself—Cicero was a skeptic, and a particularly uncompromising one at that, highly critical of Stoic epistemology, nevertheless, he explicitly presents his work as a continuation on the thought of the ancient Greek Stoic philosopher Panaetius (Ibid, 1.7). His treatment of individual nature would prove highly influential in the

subsequent development of Stoic philosophy, particularly through its recognition of the moral significance of the particular traits of each individual. What the Stoics would embrace most fully was the principle that to act morally is to live in harmony not only with nature in general, but also with human nature in particular. In this way, individuality acquired moral significance through the person as its self-conscious agent.

It was to be expected then that a term with so long and distinguished tradition in Greek literature would have been adopted by the Christians. The word πρόσωπον enters Christian theology through the *Septuagint*, where it occurs innumerable times: in Genesis 2:6, referring to the face of the earth; in Genesis 2:7, to the face of Adam before he was animated; in Exodus 10:11, to the face of the Pharaoh; in Exodus 34:35, to the face of Moses; and even in reference to the face of God in Exodus 33:20–23. It appears with equal frequency in the *New Testament*, for instance in 2 Corinthians 4:6 and Matthew 17:2, where it refers to the face of Christ.

In the 2nd century, the early Christian theologian Origen of Alexandria uses πρόσωπον in his commentaries on the *Old Testament*, particularly in his *Homilies on the Psalms* (15.1.2). Here, he employed a method of interpretation known as *prosopological exegesis* (Mas 2024, 160f). He explained that, as in theatre, the Holy Spirit assumes the "voice" of a particular character in order to speak through the scriptural text. When reading a psalm, Origen asks from which πρόσωπον the words are spoken.

In his earlier *Commentary on the Gospel of John* (2.16.114), however, we see a different attitude, criticizing the Sabellians, followers of the heretical theologian Sabellius, for employing πρόσωπον in its older sense of a "mask". Sabellianism was a form of Modalistic Monarchianism (Artemi 2019, 102), that is, its adherents maintained that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit were merely "modes", or temporary manifestations of the one God, rather than distinct persons, hence the designation Modalistic. Sabellius held that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit were not three distinct personal realities, but three successive modes of manifestation of the one God. Accordingly, πρόσωπα served to designate the three distinct "faces" or roles successively assumed by a single divine substance. This heterodox interpretation arose from the fear that the doctrine of the Trinity, following the model of the triune configurations of the pagan gods of antiquity, would encourage polytheism among Christians. In

order to preserve the unity of God as a single, supreme, and absolute divine entity, the Sabellians effaced any real distinction between the Persons of the Trinity in the strictest monotheistic sense, hence Monarchianism. Origen opposes this by reinforcing the meaning of πρόσωπον with that of ὑπόστασις (*hupóstasis*)—the underlying essence or subsistent reality of a thing (Ibid, 2.10.75). The Son is not just a "mask", a superficial appearance, or a role assumed by the divine substance, but possesses his own distinct existence.

Latin Christian theology did not merely "borrow" the term *persona*, but fundamentally redefined its conceptual status. Its meaning acquired an entirely new depth in Christian trinitarian theology during the 3rd and 4th centuries, when Christian thinkers such as Tertullian (*Adversus Praxean Liber* 11–15, 27) and Augustine of Hippona (*De Trinitate* 1.6.12, 1.9.19) turned to the notion of *persona* as the Latin equivalent of the Greek ὑπόστασις, rather than that of πρόσωπον, to describe the structure of the Trinity of God (Augustine, *De Trinitate*, 5.8.9–5.9.10; Boethius, *Contra Evtychen et Nestorivm* 3.5–9, 3.23–29). In fact, it was Tertullian (*Adv. Prax.* 3–4, 8) himself who coined the term *trinitas*, thereby furnishing the Latin Church with the precise vocabulary it needed to articulate the nature of its Godhead. Augustine, in *De Trinitate* (5.9.10), however acknowledged that the usage of *persona* was, in a sense, an artifice born of a "great poverty of expression", employed to convey the relation between οὐσία (*ousía*) and ὑπόστασις (*hupóstasis*) within the persons of the Trinity: μία οὐσία, τρεῖς ὑποστάσεις (*mía ousía, treîs hupostáseis*)—one substance, three hypostases. The Latin *tres personae*, *una substantia*—three persons, one substance—thus emerged as a terminological rendering of the Greek formula, seeking to express more precisely the mystery of the Holy Trinity to the Western half of the Roman Empire.

In the 6th century, Roman philosopher, statesman, and Christian theologian Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius (*Contra Evtychen et Nestorivm* 3.4–5), regarded as one of the last great thinkers of the ancient world and an intellectual bridge towards the Middle Ages, arrived at a definition of the person that would greatly influence scholastic philosophy and, indirectly, the very fabric of modern thought: a person is "naturae rationabilis indiuidua substantia"—an individual substance of a rational nature. This will become the standard definition of the person in Western philosophy.

Boethius' definition was later adopted and further refined by Thomas Aquinas in *Summa Theologiae* (1.29.1), who added to it—

long before Kant—what is perhaps the most important addition. Owing to the fact that "persona significat id quod est perfectissimum in tota natura"—the person signifies that which is most perfect in all of nature (Ibid, 1.29.3), it also enjoys the highest dignity: "hypostasis proprietate distincta ad dignitatem pertinente"—a hypostasis distinguished by a property pertaining to dignity (Ibid, 1.29.3).

The history of πρόσωπον and *persona* therefore anticipates one of the underlying challenges that personalism would eventually make explicit: whether the human being can be adequately understood through what appears, what is empirically observable, and what can be socially or psychologically probed and explored, or whether there remains within the person an irreducible dimension that exceeds every such determination.

Thus, the question of the person was no longer a matter of abstractions or metaphors, establishing itself definitively as a problem of concrete ontology. Applied once again to the human being, this understanding would confer upon the person a privileged dignity, grounded in the belief that man is created in *imago Dei*—the image and likeness of God, and therefore cannot be reduced to its mere created nature. The person is not simply a creature among other creatures, but a being whose very constitution bears the imprint of the divine and whose individuality acquires a metaphysical significance that transcends the limits of existence. Modern thinkers such as the Frenchmen Jacques Maritain, Étienne Gilson, and Gabriel Marcel, the Italian Cornelio Fabro, and especially the Polish theologian and philosopher Karol Wojtyła, the future Pope John Paul II, would inherit from Aquinas this "metaphysical kernel", out of which a robust Christian personalism would later develop.

After Boethius, the definition of the person would not undergo any major changes in the following centuries. Some thinkers would occasionally further clarify the particular faculties that belong distinctively to it, without compromising its rational nature. English philosopher John Locke ([1689] 2011, 335, § 9) placed an even greater emphasis on the attribute of self-consciousness and offered a comprehensive definition of the person: "This being premised to find wherein *personal Identity* consists, we must consider what *Person* stands for; which, I think, is a thinking intelligent Being, that has reason and reflection, and can consider it self as it self, the same thinking thing in different times and places; which it does only by that consciousness, which is inseparable from thinking, and as it seems to

me essential to it [...]". The passage is reproduced almost word for word by the German polymath Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz ([1704] 1765 / 1926, 247, § 9) in *New Essays on Human Understanding*, his unpublished polemic against Locke. As a deeply religious man, Leibniz emphasized the moral character of the person, elevating it to a soteriological dimension. In his earlier *Discourse on Metaphysics* ([1686] 1846 / 2002, 98, § 34), he specifies that the immortality promised by religion is not merely the mechanical survival of the soul, but the preservation of personality, that is, the memory of who one was.

German philosopher and early psychologist Christian Wolff ([1734] 1740, 660, § 741) also emphasized self-consciousness as well as memory as the defining features of the person, describing it as a being that preserves the memory of itself: "Persona dicitur ens, quod memoriam sui conservat, hoc est, meminit, se esse idem illud ens, quod ante in hoc vel isto fuit statu"—A person is said to be a being that preserves the memory of itself, that is, it remembers that it is the very same being which was previously in this or that state. He calls this conscious being *individuum morale*—a "moral individual". For a physical individual to become a moral individual, it must first be a person. On the basis of the immortality of the soul, he establishes the permanence of memory as the grounds for psychological identity and, consequently, for the capacity to be held accountable before God and before other human beings (Ibid, [1734] 1740, 661, § 742).

Ultimately, this conceptual evolution finds its culmination in Kantian ethics. German philosopher Immanuel Kant elevates the person into a structural foundation intrinsically bound to practical reason and moral agency. For him, a moral obligation cannot derive from a purely phenomenal being, it requires an ultimate ground for morality, which he establishes through the *categorical imperative* —"an action as objectively necessary of itself, without reference to another end" (Kant [1785] 1996, 67).

The moral law is, in other words, for the will of a perfect being a law of holiness. But for the will of every finite rational being, it is a law of duty, of moral necessitation, and of the determination of one's actions through respect for this law and reverence for one's duty (Kant [1788] 1996, 206). The premises of this vision were initially formulated in the *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, where Kant ([1785] 1996, 80) introduces the famous formulation of humanity as an end in itself: "So act that you use humanity, whether in your own

person or in the person of any other, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means". The human being, and every rational being in general, exists as an end in itself, not merely as a means to be used. The person therefore possesses an intrinsic dignity that excludes its reduction to a mere instrument of another's purposes (Kant [1785] 1996, 79).

In the *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant returns to what he calls the "awe-inspiring" idea of personality, which reveals to us the "sublimity" of our nature (Kant [1788] 1996, 210). As a being situated within the sensible world and subject to the physical laws of nature, the person remains subject to instincts, biological desires, and the "mechanism of nature", that is, physical causality. In this capacity, the human being is merely a phenomenon within space and time. Personality, on the other hand, designates that dimension of the human being belonging to the noumenal, intelligible world—the rational capacity to act from duty, independently of biological drives and egoistic inclinations. Because the human being belongs to both worlds, Kant maintains that one must regard one's own nature in reference to this second and highest vocation only with reverence, and its laws with the utmost respect (Ibid). His definition of personality synthesizes this duality: "It is nothing other than *personality*, that is, freedom and independence from the mechanism of the whole of nature, regarded nevertheless as also a capacity of a being subject to special laws—namely pure practical laws given by his own reason, so that a person as belonging to the sensible world is subject to his own personality insofar as he also belongs to the intelligible world [...]" (Kant [1788] 1996, 210).

The sublime value of the human being therefore does not derive from its biological nature, but from the fact that the human being, as a "person", must submit to its own moral "personality". At the deepest level, this is the source of human dignity—the fact that we carry within us a moral law that we give ourselves through reason, thereby making us free beings and ends in themselves. Kant ([1785] 1996, 85) draws the conclusion explicitly: "Autonomy is therefore the ground of the dignity of human nature and of every rational nature". This moral dimension of personality is subsequently translated into the philosophy of rights. Echoing a conceptual legacy already seen in Christian Wolff, Kant ([1797] 1996, 378) definitively establishes in the *Metaphysics of Morals* that a person is a subject whose actions are susceptible to imputation. Consequently, a person is a free subject, capable of bearing

rights and duties precisely because of their inalienable moral autonomy.

Personalism as a philosophical movement in its proper sense emerged only toward the end of the 19th century against the background of a revolt directed at the principal forms of reductionism of the age: Hegelian panlogism, in which the individual risked becoming no more than a link in the mechanism of Absolute History, materialism, and positivism, which tended to reduce the human being to rudimentary biological, physiological, and chemical processes. This response took the form of a philosophical defence of human dignity in the face of the depersonalization associated with modern industrial society. The fundamental concern of personalist thinkers was to recover the person from the forces, be they economic, political, social, or ideological, that threatened to subdue the individual and crush them into the inert "mass-man"—a concept described by the Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset ([1929/1930] 2022, 41–45) as one who is content with their own condition of mediocrity and refuses to assert in any way their personality.

However, as Maritain ([1947] 1972, 12) would later observe, although personalism arose from a rejection of the errors of both individualism and totalitarianism, it is by no means a homogeneous school of thought. We can therefore speak only of "personalist aspirations", rather than of a unified doctrine: "There are, at least, a dozen personalist doctrines, which, at times, have nothing more in common than the term «person»" (Ibid, 12f).

Personalist currents began to emerge independently in several intellectual circles across Europe and the United States. The term "personalism" itself—*Personalismus*, made its first appearance in Germany as a lexical coinage by the theologian and philosopher Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher in his 1799 *Über die Religion*. Here, it is used to describe classical theism, which insists upon the personality of God, hence the designation "personalism", placing it in direct opposition to pantheism. Schleiermacher (1799, 256) argues that both are merely *Vorstellungsart*—modes of representation, borne out of human psychology rather than belonging to the essence of religion itself.

In the English-speaking world, the term was introduced by the American pedagogue and philosopher Amos Bronson Alcott. It was subsequently adopted and popularized by his friend, the poet Walt Whitman. Alcott's biographer, Odell Shepard (1937, 494), presumed

that he borrowed it from the Saint Louis Philosophical Society, known then as the Saint Louis Hegelians—a circle of American philosophers invested in European continental philosophy, particularly German philosophy and above all Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel—which had formed around Heinrich Conrad Brokmeyer, a migrant from Prussia. For Alcott, personalism described a theological and metaphysical doctrine: "the doctrine that the ultimate reality of the world is a Divine Person who sustains the universe by a continuous act of creative will" (Ibid). He also established a strict antinomy between personality and individuality: "The unity is the Personality; the difference is the Individuality" (Ibid), attributing to the latter the various forms of human ignorance and its remedy "integrating" oneself into one's Person (Ibid, 493f). In his 1868 essay *Personalism*, Whitman turned the concept into a fierce critique of the shallow materialism that was beginning to permeate American society in the aftermath of the Civil War. He conceived of earthly society as requiring two opposing, "centripetal" forces in order to remain in balance. The "first principle" was the average—the ideal of community, equality, and assimilation into the crowd—whereas the "second principle" was individuality, or personalism—the conviction that true human identity requires a fierce and protective sense of selfhood capable of resisting the very pressures of the masses. And only these two together, he maintained, could sustain a healthy democracy (Whitman 1868, 540). Along with the philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson and the naturalist, poet, and philosopher Henry David Thoreau, Alcott and Whitman were to become central figures in the development of American Transcendentalism.

In France, in 1903, philosopher Charles Bernard Renouvier published *Le Personnalisme*, defending human freedom and morality in a Kantian spirit and in opposition to scientific determinism. In Germany, in 1906, psychologist and philosopher William Stern published *Person und Sache*, contributing to the development of a psychologically oriented and critical form of personalism, which would, in part, inspire Romanian philosopher and psychologist Constantin Rădulescu-Motru's own definition of *Energetic Personalism*. In the United States, in 1908, Christian philosopher, theologian, and minister Borden Parker Bowne published a highly influential work, *Personalism*, laying the foundations of what came to be known as Boston Personalism, a deeply theistic conception

according to which the ultimate reality of the universe is personal and spiritual, God being the Supreme Person.

In the time of the Great War, German philosopher Max Scheler introduced a final radical turn in the development of personalism. In a break with his colleague Edmund Husserl, he shifted the focus of phenomenological examination from pure reason towards human emotions, values, and the spiritual essence of the individual, laying the foundations for personalistic phenomenology. In 1916, he completed his *Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Values*, a work directed explicitly against Kant and his formal, rule-based ethics. One thing that Scheler could not accept was that, despite endowing the person with a series of exceptional qualities, Kant ultimately continued to treat the person as an object, even if as a logical subject (Scheler [1913–1916] 1973, 370f). More precisely, Scheler objected to Kant's reduction of the person to a purely logical concept, a mere binding point for duty, thereby removing the concrete human life from the sphere of moral consideration. There is no place in Kant's moral philosophy for "feeling", "loving", or "hating", except insofar as such experiences constitute "erroneous deviations" from rational ethics (Ibid, 65). Instead of lifting the person to the level of the "dignity" that he claims to bestow upon it, he imposes a condition that undermines this very dignity. Thus, Scheler rejected Kantian apriorism and proposed, in its place, an *emotive apriorism*, claiming that the phenomenology of life can have an existence independent of Kant's rational phenomenology of values (Ibid, 64f). And in place of Kant's ethics of "bronze and steel," he introduces a new ethics of "flesh and blood".

Against the classical definition of the person as a substance, Scheler insists that we must never consider it as nothing more than a "thing" exercising "faculties" and "powers", not even if one of those faculties or powers is reason itself (Ibid, 371). It is not a static entity or a thinking *ego* alone, and must never be treated as such, rather, it is "the immediately coexperienced unity of experiencing" (Ibid). Far from being a theoretical construct hidden behind and outside what is immediately experienced, it manifests as an ongoing unity of intentional, spiritual, and loving acts. Therefore, as "a concrete unity of all possible acts", it exists only in their execution and stands outside the entire sphere of "objects" (Ibid, 29).

This becomes ever more compelling when considered through its relation to others. Personality loses its meaning outside of its

connection with the community to which it belongs (Ibid, 519). And herein lies Scheler's innovation in defining the person, that relation becomes more than something that surrounds the person, it becomes constitutive of the person itself. Thus, the person is never merely the isolated individual, nor simply the visible figure through which an individual becomes recognizable to others; rather, it gradually comes to mean a being that possesses a particular identity of their own, and a relation to others that cannot be exhausted by the functions or roles that they may happen to perform.

Although Scheler was not an existentialist, his conception of the person as a concrete, living, acting, and relational reality would prove essential to 20th century existentialism. His influence would extend well beyond philosophy proper. Before his consecration, Pope John Paul II was particularly interested in Scheler's assortment of personalism, which would later become a central pillar of his own philosophical creed.

The most influential form of personalism, however, was to emerge during the 1930s in France, around Emmanuel Mounier and the journal *Esprit*, which he founded in 1932, developing into a militant and ideological current recognized as such. The historical context was one of profound crisis, marked by the rise of communism following the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, the emergence of fascism in 1919 in Italy, and the mounting failures of Western capitalist liberalism, which culminated in the Wall Street Crash of 1929 and the ensuing Great Depression. These circumstances were not altogether different from those confronting the world at the beginning of our own century. It was against this background that Mounier proposed what he regarded as a "third way", rejecting alike capitalist individualism, which isolates the human being and reduces it to a creature governed by egoism and private interests, and totalitarian collectivism, which obliterates the person in the name of the state, class, or race.

At the same time, the concept entered the field of psychology as the idea of "personality". This formal appropriation of the person as a distinct object of psychological investigation took place gradually during the 1920s, and by the late 1930s the study of personality had become an autonomous branch of psychology. The work of the American brothers Floyd Henry and Gordon William Allport played an important role in popularizing the emerging notion, with the latter becoming particularly influential in providing it with a systematic theoretical foundation.

Beginning in 1923, the American Psychological Association likewise organized the first symposia devoted explicitly to "personality". Until then, character, temperament, intelligence and human traits had largely been studied in a fragmented manner, either through philosophical speculation or as secondary concerns within experimental psychology and psychiatry. By establishing a dedicated thematic forum, the Association provided an institutional platform for bringing together new approaches to the study of the individual.

Jewish-American psychologist Abraham Aaron Roback ([1927] 1931, 1–30, 160), in his 1927 *The Psychology of Character*, argued for the scientific superiority of the term "personality" over that of "character", which he regarded as obsolete, morally charged, and biased towards philosophy. Subsequently, he published a series of studies in the *Journal of Personality*, then known as *Character and Personality*, including one from 1934 in which he criticized the methods of earlier psychological research and proposed "personalysis" as the appropriate designation for the study of the "total picture" of the whole person as a unified entity (Roback 1934, 152), while also introducing systematic empirical and clinical methods for the study of human traits and needs.

Yet among these developments, Gordon Allport's work was by far the most important in establishing a comprehensive definition of personality. In 1937, he published *Personality: A Psychological Interpretation*, in which he undertook an extensive linguistic and historical examination of the term, identifying fifty different meanings that had been ascribed to it over time. On this basis, he sought to formulate a definition capable of synthesizing the principal applications of the term already in circulation: "Personality is the dynamic organization within the individual of those psychophysical systems that determine his unique adjustments to his environment" (Allport 1937, 48).

At this point, a fundamental distinction must be drawn between person and personality. Personality denotes the ensemble of forms through which the person actualizes, expresses, and realizes itself in existence. The person, by contrast, refers to the irreducible ontological reality that underlies these manifestations. Psychology may describe personality and, to a certain extent, explain how it comes into being. It cannot, however, by means of its own methods, exhaust the metaphysical question of what the person is, or the more radical issues of how its existence is possible in the first place. Here the limitations

which the post-war generation would seek to overcome begin to emerge. Psychology may describe the mechanisms through which personality is formed, biology may identify its organic foundations, and sociology may trace its collective manifestations. What remains unanswered, however, is the question of the ontological ground of the person. What is the human being beyond what it does? What, if anything, subsists beyond the sum of its empirical determinations?

It is precisely this growing preoccupation with the distinctive status of the person that was to exert a considerable influence on the intellectual climate in which the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* would be elaborated. The Preamble to the Declaration, in its fifth paragraph, affirms "faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person". This emphasis is noteworthy; it is the person, rather than the individual, who occupies the centre of this most distinguished affirmation of human dignity.

The Digital Age, a necrologue

In the latter half of the 20th century, however, the human person has undergone a profound devaluation, as the criteria by which human worth is understood have come to be subordinated to the imperatives of technological efficiency and individual self-interest. The cultivation of human potential has progressively receded behind the pursuit of economic prospects, while the ideal of self-actualization has been displaced by an ever more radical form of self-absorption. What was once conceived as the realization of the person's higher calling has thus come to be more and more closely identified with the expansion of the self, its desires, its preferences, and its material possibilities. In this transformation, the person risks being reduced from an "end in itself" to an instrument of production, consumption, and self-gratification. Materialism continues to gain ground, even as the ecological consequences of this logic become increasingly difficult to ignore and the prospect of an impending eco-apocalypse casts doubt upon the sustainability of a civilization so deeply committed to the indefinite expansion of material needs (Francis 2015, § 109).

If the first conceptual transition from antiquity to modernity marked a shift from appearance—the mask—to interiority—identity, the digital era propels the person in the exact opposite direction, triggering a re-exteriorization of interiority through digital profiles. With the emergence of this new virtual social dimension, the *virtual persona* is born. What was once an inward reality, manifested through the

individual's immediately perceptible presence in the world, is now projected into an *online avatar*. Borrowed from the Sanskrit *avatāra* (Monier-Williams [1872] 1899, s.v. "ava-tara"), in Hindu metaphysics the term literally signifies a "descent", the manifestation or incarnation of a timeless, infinite deity within the cyclical, mortal realm. In the cybernetic space, however, this vector is inverted, and the finite human subject projects a selectively idealized, malleable extension of the self into the infinite digital multiverse (Belk 2013).

The moment we access the Internet, we are compelled to create a digital account, which may or may not truthfully reflect our reality, but with which we identify and by which we can subsequently be identified by others. This *virtual persona* operates structurally under the auspices of Scottish philosopher David Hume's *bundle theory of identity*. Deprived of any fixed ontological substance, it becomes a pure construct in which a fluid aggregate of data, metrics, affiliations, and interactions coalesces.

This technological landscape turns the public sphere into what Korean-German philosopher Byung-Chul Han ([2013] 2017, 9) conceptualizes as a "swarm"—an aggregate of isolated individuals without a collective body, spirit, nor soul, trapped within a self-referential chamber that screens out everything unfamiliar. It eliminates the radical alterity of the Other (Han [2016] 2018, 1), replacing genuine confrontation with a comfortable swarm of digital echoes. Thus, the very status of the person becomes precarious. *Homo digitalis* is anything but a person, it is a node in an automated matrix, reacting to the impulses of the crowd (Han [2013] 2017, 11).

Under the digital paradigm, visibility becomes the primary currency of existence itself. The centuries-old Cartesian dictum "Cogito, ergo sum" undergoes a fundamental mutation, supplanted by the technological imperative "Digito, ergo sum"—a kind of "I am connected, therefore I exist". The colloquial expression "if you do not have social media accounts, you do not exist" is no longer a hyperbole employed by the younger generations, but reflects an undeniable sociological reality. In this "inverted panopticon", people struggle desperately to remain visible, willingly exposing themselves and turning recognisability into a form of social validation. Invisibility is no longer perceived as freedom or privacy, but becomes tantamount to the ultimate punishment—erasure from the social radar. Slowly but surely, social platforms have ceased to be mere instruments of communication, becoming instead veritable existential infrastructures.

To remain outside social networks is to be amputated from an essential dimension of modern existence (Pohl, Wessel, and vom Brocke 2025).

Consequently, the refusal to participate in social networks is increasingly regarded as an eccentric gesture and may precipitate an acute ontological crisis. Disconnection deprives the individual of access to the continuous flow of information, updates, and social interactions, while contributing to the erosion of interpersonal relations and to an existential sense of irrelevance, condemning them to structural marginalisation and ultimately to a form of "social death".

Yet the paradox of the digital condition lies precisely in the fact that the relentless accumulation of information does not necessarily produce greater intelligibility. On the contrary, oversaturation generates a form of informational entropy in which the incessant multiplication of data, images, opinions, and stimuli progressively undermines the possibility of distinguishing what is meaningful from what is merely present. The corresponding response is withdrawal. Not necessarily a rejection of connection itself, but an attempt to recover a space in which experience can once again acquire continuity, hierarchy, and meaning. The problem, however, lies not in the apparently limitless capacity to accumulate, but equally in the capacity to dissimulate—to obscure contradictions, suppress unwanted realities, and construct appearances capable of sustaining the illusion of coherence.

If previous centuries struggled either to resist or to embrace a long succession of determinisms—fatalistic, biological, psychophysical—the 21st century appears to be defined by yet another of its own—the algorithmic. Although far less ambitious in scope, since algorithmic determinism neither seeks to decipher the world nor concerns itself with its deeper phenomena, and nor can it exist on its own in the concrete world outside the Internet, it may prove the most destructive in its effects, for its aims are to influence human behaviour—not even for the sake of understanding or mastering it, but simply and subtly to direct it for the profit and economic gain of those who control the algorithms themselves. This transformation ushered in the era of "surveillance capitalism", a socio-technological paradigm in which human experience is unilaterally claimed as free raw material to be translated into behavioural data, ultimately weaponizing the apparently neutral economic mechanisms of online advertising against the very autonomy of the person (Zuboff 2019, 8).

The problem of the person and its personality acquires an altogether different urgency once the conditions of human existence themselves begin to change. If personality denotes the forms through which the person becomes manifest in existence, then the technological transformation of those forms raises a question that could scarcely have been posed in the same terms by the earlier personalists: What becomes of the distinction between person and personality when personality itself can be predicted, reproduced, recorded, and technologically manipulated?

It is no longer a matter of reducing human personality to a set of entries in a data bank, but of the possibility that the very space in which such data circulate may itself become increasingly less human. With these considerations in mind, what has come to be known as the "Dead Internet Theory", originally dismissed as a conspiratorial theory of digital culture, acquires an increasingly grave reality when considered not as a literal claim about the disappearance of human users, but as a diagnosis of a virtual environment increasingly populated, shaped, and mediated by non-human agents (Muzumdar et al. 2025). The issue at hand is no longer whether the Internet is literally "dead," but whether it remains in any meaningful sense still "alive", thus raising the question of what happens to the ontological status of the digital world when automated and synthetic activity assumes an ever greater share of its traffic and content production. A quantitative inversion of this kind, insofar as it is taking place, entails a qualitative transformation in the very structure of the digital environment.

Thus, from the Foucauldian concept of *biopower*, which denotes power over life, we move towards a context increasingly deprived of life—at times, even in the literal sense of *necropower*—in which the capability of digital platforms to deploy and administer populations of other than biologically alive entities becomes a substantial new basis of power, particularly, though not exclusively, political.

On 11 April 2017, the digital conglomerate Microsoft filed a patent (Abramson and Johnson 2020) for what was benignly described as "a conversational chatbot". In order to develop such a technology, the patent envisaged the compilation of a "personality index" based on scraping the social data related to a specific person—including images, image data, voice data, social media posts, written letters, user profile information, behavioural data, transactional data, geolocation data, and other forms of data—and the creation of a chatbot capable of mimicking "a past or present entity" and reproducing as faithfully as

possible “the personality of the specific person”. Among other things, the patent explicitly identifies a possible application involving deceased persons. The news immediately provoked an almost universal backlash over the potentially disconcerting effects on the emotional and mental well-being of prospective users. Tim O’Brien, then General Manager of AI Programs at Microsoft, acknowledged that the proposal was indeed “disturbing”, while denying that any plans for its implementation existed at the time (Robitzski 2021; Kay 2021).

On 29 November 2023, Meta, the parent company that owns Facebook, the most popular social media platform of the moment, filed a patent similar to Microsoft’s (Bosworth 2025). This time, a language model would maintain a persistent digital identity by organically uploading content and interacting with other users by liking, commenting on, and distributing their posts. The original project targeted individuals with a strong online presence who require a continuous account activity. Yet once again, we encounter the explicit mentioning of death: “The language model may be used for simulating the user when the user is absent from the social networking system, for example, when the user takes a long break or if the user is deceased”.

We are witnessing the emergence of an increasingly self-referential ecosystem in which content is synthetically generated, optimized through artificial intelligence, and circulated through forms of automated engagement generated by other non-human agents. Within such a loop, the human element ceases to constitute either the teleological end of information or the critical arbiter in its validation. The human being risks being left outside the loop, displaced from the position of a knowing subject to that of a passive spectator—or, more radically, reduced even further, to a residual statistical presence within an informational system whose operations no longer require their conscious participation.

From a Baudrillardian perspective, this development suggests the possibility of the Internet becoming a near-perfect simulacrum: synthetic agents simulate desire, curiosity, attention, and outrage, producing a hyperreality that increasingly mimics social life while becoming progressively detached from any human presence. The autonomy of algorithmic systems thereby gives rise to a new form of cybernetic architecture of isolation, in which machines communicate with machines about data generated by machines, leaving the human as a peripheral anomaly within an indefinitely expanding digital monologue.

If personality is the manner in which the person becomes manifest in existence, then the digital world increasingly acquires the capacity to extract, model, reproduce, and circulate those manifestations independently of the person from whom they originate. The danger is therefore not simply that machines might imitate human personality, but that the traces through which this personality becomes recognizable might begin to populate a world in which the person is no longer required. The digital reproduction of personality could thus precede—and perhaps ultimately render conceivable—the disappearance of the person.

This is where the distinction upon which personalism rests assumes its greatest significance for the contemporary world. An algorithm may reproduce patterns of preference, language, behaviour, affect, and even apparent individuality. It may construct an increasingly persuasive representation of who we are, but representation is not existence, and the reproduction of personality is not the reproduction of the person. If the person is, as the personalist tradition maintains, an ontological reality rather than merely the sum of observable manifestations, then no accumulation of behavioural traces can exhaust what the person is. An inherent paradox of the Digital Age is therefore that the more perfectly personality can be reproduced, the more important becomes the question of what cannot be reproduced at all.

Thus, completing the circle, we return to the original definition of πρόσωπον, only now as a concrete reality that presents itself before us. In this sense, a phenomenology of direct experience as advanced by existentialist philosophers, acquires a renewed relevance in the face of algorithmic determinism. If automated predictive systems can use our past behaviour to dictate in advance what we will purchase, anticipate the political choices we will make, or even tell us who we are, then the very act of living beyond the reach of the algorithm, outside the increasingly lifeless world of mechanical calculation, may become a genuine principle of resistance against the death of the Digital Age.

The challenges of personalism for a human tomorrow

Contemporary personalism no longer confronts, as we have seen, the collectivism and scientism of the previous century, against which arguments had already been formulated. It now encounters technological, social, and conceptual realities of an altogether different order. A personalist philosophy grounded in the absolute value of the

human person, in dignity, freedom, and direct relation must respond to questions that previous generations could scarcely have anticipated.

The first of these concerns the crisis of digital identity and the process of the datafication of the self. The identity of contemporary human beings is fragmented and translated into algorithms, metadata, and network profiles. If personalism regards the person as an indivisible, unique, and profoundly interior unity, how can this uniqueness be defended when human behaviour can be anticipated and transformed into a digital construct, algorithmically administered so as ultimately to be monetized in one form or another?

The second problem is posed by the ascent of so-called artificial intelligence and transhumanism. Transhumanism seeks to overcome the biological limitations of the human being through biotechnology, neural implants, the artificial prolongation of life, and other forms of technological augmentation, while generative artificial intelligence has become capable of increasingly convincing simulations of forms of consciousness and creativity. The philosophical danger lies in the emergence of a confusion between the functions of intelligence—that is, what a machine or an augmented brain is capable of doing—and the ontology of the person, that is, what the human being is at its essence. Personalism is therefore challenged to determine what, in the face of the machine, remains irreducibly human.

The third problem concerns hyperconnected solitude and the dissolution of community. Although technology connects us more extensively than ever before, contemporary society is marked by profound atomization and a veritable epidemic of loneliness. Authentic relations, expressed in what the Austrian-Israeli philosopher Martin Buber ([1923] 2022, 9f) designated as the *I–Thou* relation, risk being displaced by utilitarian and transactional interactions into relations of the *I–It* kind. Yet for personalism, the person does not exist in isolation but finds fulfilment through communion. In this respect, the idea of human fellowship and spiritual community may acquire an unexpected contemporary relevance. The task of contemporary personalism becomes, at the same time, one of restoring the social fabric in a world profoundly estranged from itself.

A fourth problem concerns the relation between personalism and anthropocentrism. Classical personalism has often been criticized on the grounds that, by placing the human being at the centre of the universe, it could indirectly legitimate the exploitation of nature. In an age of climate change, this criticism can no longer be disregarded. A

concern addressed in both theological and existential terms by the late Pope Francis (2015, §§ 109, 115–117), who systematically challenged the dominant technocratic paradigm by anchoring ecological stewardship, understood in its biblical sense as humanity's responsible care for creation, directly in the irreducible dignity of the human person. If the person is indeed the culmination of all cosmic strivings, then it cannot stand in opposition to nature. Any contemporary philosophy of the person must therefore be capable of integrating an ecological dimension—a possible "eco-personalism"—and of explaining how the responsibility of the person may extend to the whole of creation and to the non-human world without dissolving human distinctiveness into a radical movement that would, in turn, place nature above the human being.

A fifth problem concerns hedonistic individualism and irresponsible freedom. Contemporary culture often confuses the person with the consuming individual and freedom with the absence of all constraint and the immediate satisfaction of desire, thereby emptying freedom of moral responsibility and communal obligation. This distinction was already present among the Interwar thinkers. The individual, understood in purely biological and egoistic terms, must be distinguished from the person, who is capable of responsibility, vocation, and orientation towards higher values. Personalism is therefore called upon to formulate a culture of responsibility in an age in which the assertion of rights risks becoming detached from the assumption of corresponding obligations.

Finally, radical relativism and the culture of "post-truth" raise the question of the metaphysical foundation of human dignity. If truth is regarded as a purely subjective construction or as an expression of relations of power, metaphysical points of reference dissolve. Yet personalism, particularly in the tradition represented by religious personalists, presupposes the existence of an objective metaphysical order and the possibility of an authentic encounter with truth. The question therefore becomes how human dignity can still be grounded as an absolute value within a culture that contests the very existence of the absolute.

What remains to be determined, then, is whether personalism has become an obsolete school of thought, destined to remain on the antiquarian's shelf as a curious relic of a bygone intellectual age, or whether, on the contrary, the very technological transformations of the present are once again bringing its fundamental problem to life. The

answer can only be negative. Personalism has not exhausted its relevance, because the problem of the person endures beyond the passing of the historical circumstances in which the doctrine emerged. On the contrary, it reasserts itself in a new form precisely when technology acquires the capacity to reproduce what had until recently appeared inseparable from the concrete individual. Thus, we must ask not whether personalism still has any relevance for the future, but whether the future itself has any relevance without personalism.

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Studying the self-organization of things at different levels of the world's structural organization

N. N. Kozhevnikov and V. S. Danilova*

Abstract: The central question of the methodology for studying the self-organization of things in the world is the coordination of the world's nonlinearity, conditioned by its ubiquitous nonequilibrium states and processes, with its extraordinary stability and optimality. This is possible by focusing on the interactions of the equilibrium boundaries of a specific thing with three areas: the environment, the level of the world's structural equilibrium, and the domain of rhythms. This approach also allows these things to connect with their limit equilibria, the totality of which, arising in the processes of their self-organization, creates a coordinate system for the world. The "equilibrium dynamic boundary of a thing" is supported by the "domain of formation of the thing's equilibrium boundary." It is often more convenient to consider, instead of this boundary, its projections onto the three aforementioned areas, which leads to the identification of "boundary-environment," "boundary-structure," and "boundary-rhythm." The approach we are developing is not associated with the desire to identify a universal philosophical category or concept, but rather explores the unity of analogies between processes and phenomena in the interaction of things at various levels of the world's organization through their equilibrium dynamic boundaries.The tendencies of self-organization are examined for four levels of the world: physical-material, organic-living, mental, and historical-spiritual. Everywhere, there is a confrontation between the ordering tendencies that occur in the interaction of things with the environment (gravity, development, individual consciousness, free consciousness) and processes of chaos, which allows us to identify the equilibrium boundary as the foundation of the structural sublevels of the world. These sublevels are: energy, life, the unconscious, and spirituality, which also become chaotic, resulting in the emergence of boundaries of stable rhythms. The chaotization of the latter again leads to boundaries in the interactions of things with the environment.

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AGATHOS, Volume 17, Issue 2 (33-34): 55-72, DOI 10.5281/zenodo.23358903
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Keywords: equilibrium dynamic boundary of a thing, areas of formation of the equilibrium boundary of a thing, environment, level of the world, rhythm, phenomenon of identification, horizon, order, chaos, interaction

Relevance of the problem under consideration and basic concepts

Equilibrium dynamic boundaries of things and their limiting states are present at all levels of the world's organization, across all types of quasi-equilibrium interactions. Therefore, they are most suitable as the basis for a universal approach to studying the self-organization of the world. Anything at all levels of the world's structural organization strives for self-organization. Elementary particles are bound together into atoms, then into planetary systems and galaxies. Living things exist as cells and individual organisms. Products of the spirit strive to find their identity in ideas, concepts, theories, and artistic creations. On the other hand, any defined thing strives to interact with similar things and form a stable system of elements. Everything in the world is connected into systems (molecular, organismic, mental, spiritual, etc.) through interactions.

Equilibrium interactions of a specific thing with limiting dynamic equilibria must be considered in three areas: 1. Within the structural level of the world, that is, the interaction of the thing under study with its surrounding environment. 2. Directly with the very level of the world's structural equilibrium. 3. With the realm of rhythms (signs) that generate these interactions and accompany them, providing the interconnection between various tendencies of self-organization. This is due to the existence of different types of order-chaos inherent in various substances and their interactions, as well as the fact that the parameters and tendencies of self-organization in these areas differ. Especially in physical, chemical, and biological concepts, rhythms are closely linked to self-organization. Humans have traditionally viewed themselves in interactions with the environment, the level of structural equilibrium, and the fundamental rhythms of the world. In Christianity, the Fathers of the Church believed that rhythms ensure the process of the world's emergence.

The set of limiting dynamic equilibria arising in the processes of self-organization of things creates a coordinate system for the world. This coordinate system is accessible to study through the interactions of things with their limiting boundary equilibria, created by these things themselves, and allows us to examine the processes of self-

organization of a thing from the perspective of these limits (see Kozhevnikov 2020).

The approach we are developing is not associated with the desire to identify a universal philosophical category or concept, but is aimed at exploring the unity of analogies between processes and phenomena at various levels of world organization through the boundaries of dynamic equilibria of things with the environment, structure, and rhythm of these levels.

Research methodology

The fundamental problem of the self-organization of things in the world is the coordination of the world's nonlinearity, caused by the ubiquitous nonequilibrium states and processes, with its extraordinary stability and optimality. Let us consider the main characteristics of this problem.

The equilibrium dynamic boundaries of a thing arise because of its simultaneous interaction with three "areas of interaction." We will designate them: with the environment (E), the world level and its structures (S), and rhythms (R). The rationale for separately examining the self-organization of a thing in the three aforementioned areas is due to the existence of different types of order-chaos inherent in different substances of things and their interactions within these domains. While it is difficult to visualize a general equilibrium boundary, it is much easier to consider the projections of this boundary onto the three aforementioned areas. Moreover, although the boundary projection is considered, for example, only in the environmental area (level, rhythms), processes from all these areas participate in its creation and functioning, and they all influence each other. Let us denote the thing as T, the equilibrium dynamic boundary as B, and the boundary projections: "boundary-environment" as B_E, "boundary-structure" as B_S, and "boundary-rhythm" as B_R.

Equilibrium boundaries of things and their interaction areas are the most "visible" of all random, rapidly changing boundaries. They are the simplest "docking points" of interactions, since nature, society, and humans rely on the equilibrium boundaries of things and areas in their development.

Equilibrium boundaries have the following characteristics and parameters: 1. An equilibrium boundary links together sets of equilibrium processes in a thing, its environment, level, and rhythms, forming an equilibrium region within which its formation occurs. 2.All

areas with which a thing interacts must be interconnected; otherwise, there would be no stable formations in the world. This can only be achieved through a common equilibrium boundary. 3. An equilibrium boundary acts as an attractor and catalyst, which explains the excessively rapid pace of evolution. 4. The boundary becomes the site (along with the region of its formation) of the structural transformation of chaos into order and vice versa. 5. Spiritual, mental, and life practices, as well as quasi-equilibrium interactions at all levels and sublevels of the world, are based on such a boundary.

The formation of equilibrium boundaries of things and their interaction areas does not occur immediately, but rather because of a lengthy process of additions and refinements. For example, the "Boundary formation area" C includes the processes of identification, communication, and rhythmization and is characterized by the parameters P, H, and R, where P is the identification phenomenon, H is the communication horizon, and R is the reference rhythm. The identification phenomenon of an equilibrium boundary is its element (marker), so the equilibrium boundary consists of a set of them. The limit state of an identification parameter is its complete coincidence with the corresponding boundary. The communication horizon H delineates the area from which resources are supplied or withdrawn to clarify and strengthen the equilibrium boundary. All "areas of interaction of a thing" supply resources for boundary formation and have horizons for these resources. Its limit state is a completely chaotized state of the boundary formation areas. The supporting rhythm R ensures stable interaction between the boundary projections participating in this formation process. The parameters P, H, R are constantly changing and being refined, but remain stable because they continually interact with one another. No matter how the process of chaos is ensured within a thing, self-organizing interaction is guided by boundaries.

The process of forming the equilibrium boundary of a thing and the areas of its interaction is characterized by the following: 1. The area of formation of the equilibrium boundary C is the place of intersection of the areas of its interaction. 2. The boundary exists for a sufficiently long time, so that the processes of forming a certain stage of it have time to be realized. 3. The area of formation of the boundary C is limited by the parameters P - the identification phenomenon, H - the communication horizon, R - the internal support rhythm. 4. The process of self-organization of the parameter P tends to the limit - a

fully identified boundary. 5. The communication horizon H can use this resource to clarify the equilibrium boundary until it is completely exhausted. 6. The support rhythm R corresponds to stable rhythms between the equilibrium boundaries of the beginning and the end of the boundary formation process (see Kozhevnikov 2019). Rhythm is necessary in this process as an external characteristic of time that better corresponds to its comparison with some order "...time is one of the concepts that cannot be defined... The point, however, is not how to define the concept of "time", but how to measure it" (Feiman 1965, 86).

The limit equilibrium dynamic boundaries of a thing (limit equilibria) serve as the basis for all equilibrium dynamic boundaries and are characterized by the following: 1. They are common to all these areas (environment, level, rhythm) due to the completeness of all processes of identification, communication, rhythmization in comparison with other equilibrium boundaries. 2. They are a single basis (attractor) for all other non-limit equilibrium boundaries. 3. The areas of formation of the equilibrium boundaries of a thing and the areas of their interaction, on which these boundaries rely, are chaotized formations. 4. The boundaries of limit dynamic equilibria consist of elements of order (see Kozhevnikov 2022). Similarly, the parameters of limiting equilibria and resources of a thing for the environment, the level of structural equilibrium, and the area of rhythms can be identified.

General trends in the self-organization of the world based on identifying equilibrium boundaries of interacting things

Let us consider self-organization trends for four levels of the world: inanimate, animate, psychic, and spiritual. N. Hartman's classification, which identifies the "physical-material, organic-living, psychic, and historical-spiritual levels" (Hartman 1958, 333), is convenient, illustrative, and profoundly meaningful. Their study involves the following stages, which can be used to identify equilibrium boundaries for individual levels of the world.

For a specific level of the world, three boundaries are identified for each areas: "boundary-environment," "boundary-structure," and "boundary-rhythm." For each of these projections, the mechanisms of its formation are examined: the parameters of identification, communication, and rhythmization. Limit dynamic equilibria that determine the relationships between these areas are identified. The

main parameters characterizing the boundary are compared with parameters associated with limit equilibria or with the resources of the thing. The contribution of each "area of interaction of a thing" to the parameters of equilibrium boundary formation is assessed. The processes for these boundary-projections occur simultaneously, but in accordance with the approach being developed, it is appropriate to consider them sequentially. Various sublevels of a thing interact simultaneously with many sublevels of the environment, the world level, and the area of rhythms. Elementary particles, atoms, molecules, cells, specimen, the biosphere, etc., presuppose various sublevels of the environment. To clarify the basic ideas of the concept being developed, it is sufficient to examine the simplest or most universal of these sublevels.

For clarity, let us begin with the environment, although we could also begin with the world or rhythm level. The interaction of a thing and its environment forms an equilibrium "boundary-environment" between ordering tendencies and opposing chaotic tendencies. This boundary becomes the foundation of the corresponding sublevel of the level of structural organization of the world. The interaction of the resulting sublevel and the opposing chaotic tendencies forms an equilibrium "boundary-structure," which becomes the foundation of the rhythm sublevel. The interaction of the rhythmic sublevel with its corresponding chaotic tendencies forms an equilibrium "rhythm-boundary," which becomes the foundation for the surrounding environment. The process of self-organization of things that non-self-organizing else begins with the influence of external rhythms from already self-organizing things.

The approach being developed focuses not on the things themselves or the environment (the world level, the realm of rhythms), but on their boundaries. All possible interactions with other things and fields naturally interact with equilibrium boundaries, since self-organization chooses simpler and less resource-consuming paths. All these boundaries become most "noticeable" during interactions with other things at this level.

Identification, communication, and rhythmization of the boundary-forming area are viewed as elementary processes of self-organization, ensuring the interaction of a thing with the aforementioned spheres. The evolution of these interactions occurs sequentially, gradually. Changes can occur in one, two, or three of these spheres, each of which influences all the others. Consequently, it can be said that the

evolution of the world at its various levels is subject to the same laws: the emergence of an ordering tendency as a result of an "explosion," evolution striving for the formation of order, and its compensation through the disruption (chaotization) of this order.

Self-organization at specific levels of the world's structural organization

The physical-material level of the world is characterized primarily by space, time, gravity, energy, inertia, heat (thermal energy). Space is of decisive importance here, while at other levels of the world, its significance weakens, and at the mental and spiritual-historical levels it practically disappears. In the simplest case, a thing is understood as a physical body, and an interaction is understood as gravitational, but all other processes are related to them.

The "boundary-environment" deals with the physical body and the tendencies of gravity to order the environment of this level of the world. It is opposed by processes of chaotization. The result is intermediate structural formations—galaxies, stellar-planetary systems, molecular, atomic, and other structures characterized by a certain energy level that ensures their stability. As an example of B_E (boundary-environment), we consider the boundary of the Earth-Sun equilibrium interaction. The full boundary encompasses all possible equilibrium interactions of the Earth: with the planets of the Solar System, their satellites, the Moon, the Kuiper Belt, the Oort Cloud—that is, with all subsystems of the Solar System up to its boundaries—1.2 light years, where the Sun's gravitational pull becomes equal to the galactic background gravitational field. However, not all of these interactions may be in equilibrium. The phenomenon of identification here is the stable, emerging boundary of the Earth-Sun interaction. The communication horizon H outlines the resource necessary to ensure the equilibration of the equilibrium parts of a thing and the environment up to the limit, which is the boundary of the Solar System. The environment here corresponds to the region of active gravitational interaction within this boundary. In the early stages of their existence, interactions between planets and other bodies in the Solar System were nonequilibrium. Numerous collisions of planets occurred until the elements of this system created a universal equilibrium boundary of interactions and began to interact across it.

The "boundary-structure" of the B_S is associated with stable energy sublevels, encompassing all possible types of energy: mechanical,

internal, electromagnetic, chemical, nuclear, subnuclear, “dark matter”, “dark energy”. The “dark energy” sublevel is the most extensive here. Each energy sublevel corresponds to opposing chaotic tendencies of destruction. The energy of the limit energy sublevel can be associated with the temperature of absolute zero. Heat is the most striking characteristic of the tendency of chaotization opposing order. The phenomenon of identification here is the emerging “boundary-structure,” the horizon associated with the “boundary-environment.”

The “boundary-rhythm” of the B_R corresponds to the supporting rhythm, ensuring stable oscillations (interactions) between the emerging “boundary-rhythm” and the “boundary-structure,” which is the foundation of these formation processes. The “boundary-environment” corresponds to the boundary of the “essence” of the physical body (thing). The “structure boundary” corresponds to the boundary of “thing in existence”.

The organic-living level of the world

Space, time, birth, death, and levels of life are the main characterizes of this level. The thing here is the cell, the specimen, the biosphere. In the simplest case, this is the specimen. Here, two fundamental tendencies of self-organization exist: 1) development, beginning from the moment of the individual’s birth, or more precisely, from conception; and 2) the degradation of the individual, caused by chaotic processes. These processes are associated with the reproduction and raising of offspring. There are concepts (Morozov 1984, 35) that life arose because of its own biological explosion. That is, the existence of both the individual and the living world as a whole are subject to the same stages: explosion, evolution, striving for the formation of order, and its compensation through the chaotization of this order.

The “boundary-environment” balances the tendency of the individual’s birth with the tendency of its death and creates stable sublevels of vital energy (life) capable of existing for a sufficiently long time. The moment of conception is characterized by maximum order and is associated with a fundamental set of signs. The process of birth transitions into the process of development. These processes are quite lengthy, associated with the formation of new structures and corresponding equilibrium boundaries in the womb, childhood, adolescence, and youth. The stability of these equilibrium boundaries ensures the existence of life’s levels.

For a cell, a specimen, a population, and the biosphere, the sublevels of the environment vary. The interaction of a thing with its environment (with the participation of two other areas of its interaction) forms an equilibrium "boundary-environment," which becomes the foundation for the sublevels of vital energy. The foundation of the process of this boundary's formation is the "boundary-rhythm." The phenomenon of identification is the emerging "boundary-environment." The horizon rests on the "boundary-rhythm."

The fundamental tendency of an individual can be considered creativity, striving to reproduce offspring or realize oneself as the most vivid manifestation of vital force. This creativity can be associated with eros or libido, according to Freud. Processes of chaos oppose them. The transition to other areas (levels, rhythms) occurs through limiting equilibria, since they are common to all areas of a thing's interaction. When all processes in one area are balanced, they continue in another. Birth and death, as limiting boundary equilibria, are unattainable for a thing (specimen) energy, matter, and information with the environment and are characterized by a decrease in their entropy due to an increase in the entropy of the environment, which is consistent with the laws of thermodynamics.

The "boundary-structure" is associated with the sublevels of life (vital energy). Typically, these sublevels are molecular, cellular, body tissue, organ, organismal, population-species, biogeocenotic, and biospheric. Each sublevel of life encounters its own chaotic tendencies, also conditioned by death (of that sublevel). These sublevels possess the most stable elements and structures in the organic-living world. For example, the species that have existed for millions of years. The phenomenon of identification here is the forming "boundary-structure" of the sublevel of life. The horizon is the "boundary-environment," providing the foundation for this formation process. The self-organization of life levels leads to the formation of a "boundary-rhythm."

"Boundary-rhythm" arises from the chaotization of order corresponding to the levels of life and is characterized by its corresponding sign. They are fundamental to the ecosystem, genetic code, homeostasis, and so on. All specimens, including humans, are surrounded by over a hundred circadian rhythms determined by the rhythmic rotation of the Earth, the Sun, the Galaxy, the metagalaxy, and so on. Population waves are crucial for the evolution of life too.

The phenomenon of identification here is the emerging "rhythm boundary." The horizon is the "structure boundary." The limiting equilibria of this level are primarily associated with birth and death.

The organic-living level of the world clearly distinguishes the sublevels of life and clearly defines their fundamental characteristics. This level of the world has been repeatedly examined from the perspective of dynamic equilibria (*Dialectics* 1984); it correlates well with the postulates and principles of the adjacent laws of the material-physical and mental levels of the world. The "environment boundary" corresponds to the boundary of the essence of a specimen (thing). The "structure boundary" corresponds to the boundary of the individual's - "things in existence".

The mental level of the world

According to N. Hartmann (1997, 510), "the level of the soul is consciousness with its acts and contents". The defining factors in this world are the individual's consciousness, mental phenomena and processes, and the unconscious. Heraclitus already pondered the boundaries of the soul: "You will not find the boundaries of the soul, no matter what path [in what direction] you take: so profound is its measure..." (see *Fragments* 1989, 231). Apparently, the concept of the soul extends far beyond humans, encompassing a significant portion of the animal kingdom.

The individual's consciousness is balanced by the chaos of mental processes, ultimately forming levels of the unconscious where order balances chaos. Thus, individual consciousness is delimited by a "boundary-environment," which becomes the foundation of the levels of the unconscious. These levels are then chaotized by their corresponding processes, creating a "boundary-structure," which becomes the basis for the formation of supporting rhythms. After the corresponding chaotization, these create a "rhythm-boundary" as the foundation for the environment.

The "boundary-environment" corresponds to the balanced consciousness of the individual. "Mental life is tied to the individual; it arises and dies with them. Spiritual life is never the work of an individual, no matter how perfect and unique that individual may be as a personality" (Hartmann 2003, 95). Because of the balancing of conscious processes, levels of the unconscious emerge. Individual consciousness is limited a small volume, while the unconscious is much larger, providing a communication resource for the balanced part

of consciousness. A boundless consciousness would prevent the individual from finding their stable, balanced boundary.

The phenomenon of identification here is the emerging "boundary-environment," the horizon resting on the "boundary-rhythm." Chaotic mental processes and events (actions, emotions, feelings, etc.), behaviour patterns, and states of mind that are subjective and ambivalent, which is explained by the varying significance of certain objects and phenomena for different people balance individual consciousness. The balance of various types of psychological processes is ensured by the personal and collective unconscious, leading to the formation of levels of the unconscious. For a tribe, an ethnic group, or humanity, the balance of various types of "social consciousness" is ensured by the collective unconscious.

The "boundary-structure" is associated with the levels of the unconscious that are inherent in any living being. The self-organization of the levels of the unconscious is the result of their chaotization, which leads to the emergence of levels of rhythms - supporting rhythms. The unconscious also cannot be limitless. This limitation is characterized, among other things, by rhythm (sign). The phenomenon of identification here is the emerging "boundary-structure" of the unconscious level; the horizon rests on the "boundary-environment" necessary to ensure the stability of this process of formation. Mental equilibria should be measured relative to the unconscious. The levels of the unconscious find their expression in culture, society, and language, being institutionalized within them. The extraordinary stability of individual social, cultural, and linguistic structures is conditioned by their reliance on the corresponding unconscious.

"Boundary-rhythm" arises from the chaotization of rhythms and is characterized by an order parameter and its corresponding sign. All individuals, including humans, are surrounded by rhythms that are rooted in stable structures conditioned by mentality, myths, and adats (systems of archaic traditions, customs, values, social practices, and norms passed down from generation to generation). The desire for such equilibria is driven by the social and economic discomfort of individuals, and is sometimes supported by the state. If they are based on extreme equilibria encompassing all aspects of the life of a particular ethnic group, they can be very stable. The structures of many of these are outdated, and their evolution in the wake of the realities of modern life presents a complex problem. If interaction with the unconscious is built through an equilibrium boundary, it becomes an

important creative factor; otherwise, interaction with the unconscious will be destructive. The phenomenon of identification here is formed by the "boundary-rhythm," and the horizon is based on the "boundary-structure."

Simpler mechanisms for forming individuals into a crowd based on a single characteristic, without regard for equilibrium boundaries. Examples include religious fanaticism and totalitarian ideologies. People are predisposed to creating various forms of communication formations, readily entering into them, and then unable to part with them. The collective is simpler than the individual; the latter easily dissolves within it completely. This is why collectives arise in which individuals work for decades, despite disadvantages such as low wages, bad locations, and hazardous working conditions. The connections of such a communication system prove simplest than everything else. The "boundary-environment" corresponds to the boundary of the essence of the individual. The "structure boundary" corresponds to the boundary of the individual's "thing in existence".

The historical-spiritual level of the world

At this level, the concepts of "personality", "personal consciousness" or "free consciousness", "super-consciousness" (religions, ideologies, social institutions, etc.), "spirituality", and "God" are of particular importance. The thing of the historical-spiritual level is personality. "It is believed that the level of spiritual life is the most 'highest'; the process of its formation connects generations with each other" (Slinin 2003, 560). By analogy with the Big Bangs at the previous levels, one can consider the "Big Bang of spirituality". In Christianity, such an explosion is characterized by the "immaculate conception" - the most important (third) dogma, according to which God the Son was conceived through an influence from the level of the spiritual world, but not the living. Here, as well as at other levels of the World, a general pattern takes place: the primordial explosion of substance, which orders its further evolution; counteracting it through chaos, which leads to intermediate quasi-equilibrium states—stable sublevels of spirituality.

The "boundary-environment" is associated primarily with the free consciousness of the individual attempting to bring order to the surrounding world. It interacts with the chaotic processes of the superconsciousness. As a result, a "border-environment" is formed, which becomes the foundation for the creation of highly stable

sublevels of spirituality. The phenomenon of identification here is the "boundary-environment," which limits the individual's free consciousness, the "boundary-rhythm" horizon. Ideas related to the study of this process can be found in the concepts of personalism, existentialism, pragmatism, God-manhood, and so on.

"*Boundary-structure*" is associated with levels of spirituality. Here, chaotization of spiritual levels occurs, resulting in the formation of "boundary-structures." Spirituality—both personal and universal—can approach these boundaries (limits), traditionally called God. The approach being developed does not encroach on the mystery of God, but only on His boundaries and the set of rhythms that characterize them. Direct communication with the boundary of God is possible provided that a person has reached the limits of their spiritual powers and resources, connecting with the ultimate dynamic equilibria. The boundlessness of the spirituality of individuals or of all humanity, as well as the boundlessness of their consciousness, would not make humans powerful; on the contrary, they would lose reliance on their stable intermediate equilibria (levels of spirituality). It is no coincidence that theological and related philosophical concepts speak of humility, while "natural religions" (Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, Zen Buddhism) consider not God himself, but paths to him.

In biblical religions (Judaism, Christianity, Islam), the object of study is the transcendental God, which is the focus of two fundamental theological schools: cataphatic and apophatic. The former ascribes positive attributes to God and understands "God through his diverse manifestations and energies" (Gaidenko 2001, 229). For our approach, apophatic theology is more important, consisting of "a consistent ascent from the created world to the Creator" (Gaidenko 2000, 151). Apophatic theology delineates the boundaries of God and cognizes him based on them. A similar approach is found in other religions; for example, in Judaism and Islam, images of God are prohibited. In Hinduism, the concept of Brahman— "the highest spiritual principle of all that exists... Incomprehensible to ordinary consciousness or various rational-speculative constructs, Brahman is cognized only by the highest religious intuition, which lies at the foundation of holistic experience" (Ibidem).

What is important about apophaticism is that "the Fathers of the Eastern Church... were able to maintain their thought on the threshold of mystery and not replace God with His idols... Unknowability does

not mean agnosticism or a rejection of the God of knowledge... The task is not to eliminate antinomy by adapting dogma to our understanding, but to transform our minds so that we can come to contemplate God-revealing reality...” (Lossky 1991, 35-36) Vladimir Lossky considers the Trinity to be the limit of apophatic theology. Spirituality, based on unbalanced structures and striving for infinity, can be a destructive factor in evolutionary processes.

“Boundary-rhythm” characterizes the levels of rhythms and their limits. It is formed as a result of the chaotization of spiritual levels, its foundation is the “boundary-structure.” In the most philosophical books of the New Testament, “the Corpus of St. Joann”, the word is at the foundation of everything, corresponding to the rhythms that initiate the process of self-organization. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. It was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not” (*The Bible* 1991, 311).

The interaction of the fundamental aspects of life and death as ultimate equilibria, considered at the two previous levels, is also of fundamental significance at the spiritual level. Plato called philosophy a meditation on death. Death manifests itself much more in life than in the death itself. “Every moment you live you steal from life; you live it at its expense. The continuous occupation of your whole life is to cultivate death. While you are in life, you are in death, for death will not leave you until you have left life. Or, if you prefer, you become dead by living your life, but you live it by dying: death, of course, strikes the dying man far more severely than the dead, much more acutely and deeply” (de Montaigne 1996, 85). Schopenhauer (2018) paid tribute to the organizing influence of death. “Death is the inspiring muse of philosophy: without it, philosophy would hardly exist”. The part of a person's life that deals with death may be shorter than the first, but it proves far more important, as it is conducted under the slogan “To have time to do everything that is necessary.” Max Scheler (2011) believed that in existence “in the face of death, a person finds meaning in life, since he is freed from the false goals and activities imposed on him by technogenic civilization”. Martin Heidegger’s (2003) “Being-towards-Death”, as a vivid illustration of the limits of dynamic equilibria, also directs a person toward

"authentic" existence, as opposed to "inauthentic" existence, where, oblivious to death, he drags out an impersonal existence.

Two fundamental ideas of the *Bible*, with their immense depth and antinomy, defy human understanding. First, how could such a victorious, omnipotent God appear in such a pitiful, humiliated form, subjected to execution in the most humiliating manner of that time? Second, the idea of the Trinity, which combines three hypostases in the One God. However, both fit well with the tenets of the concept being developed. The first corresponds to the idea that balance, in terms of a coordinate system, is far more important than activity and action. And God himself, who sets an example of humility, can be seen as an element of such a coordinate system. As for the second, the names of the Trinity correspond well to the boundaries discussed above. Thus, "God the Son" is a "boundary-environment," a boundary of God's identification well known to educated people of Christian cultural backgrounds, elaborated in detail in various Christian denominations, art, and literature. "God the Father" is a "boundary structure" inaccessible to human understanding, open to a multitude of interpretations, the limit of the unknown, the name of a great mystery. "God the Holy Spirit" is a "boundary rhythm," corresponding to a specific religious mood—a connection, a synergy between man and God—characterized by the rhythms of rituals, prayers, and life. It should be noted that many aspects of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit are inaccessible to rational understanding, being objects of faith and comprehended through spiritual practices, as attested by the Fathers of the Church. The same can be said of the mysterious realms in the unconscious spheres of the soul and in the spiritual realm. Here, we can turn to Plato's concept of "noumenon" and Kant's notion of the "thing-in-itself." The unknowable and the mysteries of the world will always exist, since at all its levels, chaotic processes counterbalance the ordering tendencies and create boundaries beyond which no interaction can penetrate. The "environment boundary" corresponds to the boundary of the essence of a person (thing). The "structure boundary" corresponds to the boundary of the "thing in existence" of a person.

Equilibrium boundaries also serve as the basis for the development of ideas about cultural (secular) asceticism, which, unlike religious asceticism, has received little attention. Meanwhile, this asceticism represents a stable framework for culture, capable of ensuring stable and optimal interactions between its various varieties. The world is

complex, but the coordinate system is simple, and it is on this basis that universal asceticism is possible.

Conclusion

The causes of a thing's self-organization are the striving of its equilibrium boundaries, formed by the interaction of order and chaos, toward their ultimate states. The interaction of a thing with one of these boundaries ("environment-structure-rhythm") allows them to be identified as the basis for the self-organization process. The interaction of a thing with its environment is embroiled in a confrontation between the ordering tendency and the processes of chaos, resulting in the "environment-boundary" becoming the foundation of the world's structural sublevels. The chaotization of interactions within the structural level of the world leads to the identification of a "structure-boundary," which corresponds to the foundation of rhythmic sublevels. The chaotization of a thing's ordering interactions in the rhythmic domain ensures the formation of a "rhythm-boundary" as the foundation of the environment's sublevels. Rhythm participates in the formation of the environment and also interacts with a new thing, initiating its self-organization process as a "triple self-organizing spiral of the world." The formation of a boundary can begin in any area of a thing's interaction, since they are all interconnected.

The set of limiting dynamic equilibria arising in the processes of self-organization of things creates a coordinate system of the world. This coordinate system is accessible to study through the interactions of things with their limiting equilibria, created by these things themselves. On the other hand, the coordinate system of the world allows us to consider the processes of self-organization of a thing from the perspective of these limits. The equilibrium boundaries of a thing are homeomorphic and interconnected. The coordinate system of the world tends to interact with a specific thing and with its limiting dynamic equilibria, which is always definable. If the boundaries of dynamic equilibria do not tend toward their limiting equilibria, they will disintegrate. When a thing (physical body, individual, personality) interacts directly with the three above-mentioned areas without relying on an equilibrium boundary, it begins to interact with "false" boundaries, which are the basis for religious fundamentalism, totalitarianism, and so on.

A view of the world from the perspective of this coordinate system represents the recording of the presence of a specific thing in the

context of the interactions of order and chaos, linking them to its ultimate dynamic equilibria. The bearer of this "view" is not a human being with their consciousness, not an observer, but a "presence" recording the presence of a thing in the world. Any other thing can record such a presence in the context of all its quasi-equilibrium interactions.

The observer and all analogous concepts (Absolute, Spirit, Absolute Idea, etc.) are somehow connected to human consciousness, God, or some transcendental entity or principle. Meanwhile, the vast majority of things and their classes do quite well without consciousness. At the level of electrons, molecules, planetary-stellar systems, and many other levels of the world, human or Spiritual consciousness is not used, yet the processes occurring there are unusually stable and optimal. The broad extrapolation of consciousness to the entire world, adopted in a number of philosophical systems, is not always justified. On the other hand, the level of world organization associated with consciousness emerged relatively recently, and its inherent processes have not yet found stable states, possessing significant imbalances.

On the spiritual and mental levels, the idea that modern human life must be constantly connected to a coordinate system and that the "melody" of this connection, its rhythms, must be heard, is of particular significance. Each individual, ethnic group, and culture can make their own unique contribution to its formation, and the more such contributions, the more stable the coordinate system will be. All processes and phenomena in the world interact with it in one way or another. The concept of a coordinate system of the world based on extreme dynamic equilibria boils down to various forms of asceticism based on natural chaos.

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Mediterranean esotericism of Éliphas Lévi and English literature: A cartography of influence

Volha Korbut Salman*

Abstract: This study examines the important, yet underexamined, influence of Éliphas Lévi's Mediterranean esotericism upon English literature at the turn of the twentieth century by tracing the way his Hermetic philosophy was received and transformed by the literary imaginations of W. B. Yeats, Arthur Machen and Aleister Crowley. Fundamental to Lévi's venture was the rehabilitation of magic as a sacred science, which is grounded in universal correspondences, rather than superstition, a vision that is articulated through his doctrine of analogy and his symbolic reframing of the Mediterranean as a living matrix, linking theology, occultism and artistic creation. Through the dissemination of Lévi's ideas by A. E. Waite and their integration into the ritual practice of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, his cosmology of correspondences, Kabbalistic symbolism and Tarot hermeneutics entered directly into the creative practice of key modernist writers. Thus, Yeats's cyclical theory of history, Machen's reconfiguration of Pan as an instrument of cosmic revelation, and Crowley's Thelemic appropriation of Egyptian gnosis - each exemplifies the translation of Lévi's esoteric grammar into literary form. Hence, by employing a methodology that integrates textual analysis, hermeneutic interpretation (drawing upon Paul Ricoeur's theory of the symbol), and the intellectual history of Western esotericism (via Antoine Faivre and Wouter J. Hanegraaff), the study demonstrates that Lévi's Mediterranean worldview provided an operative poetics based on a symbolic imagination, capable of accessing metaphysical truths through aesthetic means. This poetics, grounded in the Hermetic axiom 'as above, so below', enabled English writers to transform myth into ritual and poetry into invocation. By locating Lévi at the confluence of esoteric philosophy and literary modernism, the study posits that Lévi's Mediterranean hermeneutics anticipated modernist strategies of symbolic layering and mythic recurrence by establishing a persistent dialogue between the occult and the literary,

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AGATHOS, Volume 17, Issue 2 (33-34): 73-87, DOI 10.5281/zenodo.23359129
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which reimagined the Mediterranean as a spiritual topography and an enduring source of poetic renewal.

Keywords: Éliphas Lévi, Mediterranean hermeticism, Western esotericism, English literary modernism, English occult revival

Introduction

The Mediterranean has long occupied a distinctive position in European cultural and literary imagination, functioning simultaneously as a site of historical memory, a philosophical reflection and a point of mythic resonance, inspiring authors, from classical antiquity to modernism, to invoke its seas, cities, mountain ridges and landscapes as symbolic sites, in which human experience intersected with the divine, the mysterious, the strange and the hidden. Within this cultural topology, Éliphas Lévi (1810-1875), born Alphonse-Louis Constant, emerges as a crucial figure, whose esoteric philosophy reframed the Mediterranean as a symbolic matrix, which linked theology, magic, occultism and artistic imagination. Lévi's writings, particularly *Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie* (1854), proposed a hermeneutic, in which "the sea, light, and celestial cycles operate as metaphors for spiritual knowledge and the interconnection of all things" (Faivre 1994, 15), thus marking the convergence of Enlightenment rationalism, Romantic mysticism and religious syncretism within a framework, which sought to recover, what he termed, the *haute magie*, or the "high science of divine correspondences" (Ibidem). As Lévi (1856, 1, 4) declared, "to practice magic is to be a quack; to understand it is to be a sage" - in this way, he encapsulated his project of philosophical rehabilitation of magic as a sacred science, grounded in universal law, rather than superstition, and envisioned the Mediterranean as the cradle and the continuum of this wisdom tradition, with its symbolic geography stretching from Egypt and the Levant to Greece and Rome and encompassing the sources of Western civilization and spirituality alike.

Lévi's intellectual path was deeply influenced by his early training in Catholic theology at Saint-Sulpice and by his subsequent exposure to revolutionary socialist thought, reconciled in his later esoteric synthesis through the Mediterranean idea of unity-in-diversity, standing for the belief that multiple faiths and philosophies ultimately express one divine truth. "All symbols conceal the same mystery [Lévi (1856, 2, 87) writes] and the sages of Egypt, of Greece, of India, and of Judea spoke in parables of a single dogma". This notion of perennial philosophy, or *prisca theologia*, echoed the Hermetic tradition of

Alexandria and provided the platform for his esoteric system, in which the Mediterranean functioned as a cosmological metaphor, encircled by lands of revelation, including Egypt, Israel, Greece, Italy, and became an image of the universal circulation of wisdom. Lévi's own maps of correspondences between planetary forces, angelic hierarchies and mythic deities parallel the interconnected world of the ancient Mediterranean, in which religions and philosophies interpenetrated, while his engagement with the *Corpus Hermeticum* and the Kabbalah reveals his conviction that Western knowledge was never truly divided from its Eastern origins. As Wouter J. Hanegraaff (2012) notes in *Esotericism and the Academy*, Lévi "proposed a new Christian Cabala in which ancient wisdom could be reconciled with Catholic orthodoxy" (190), thus reimagining the sacred as a living language of symbols accessible to poets as well as magi, and providing a reconciliation, which was aesthetic as well as theological.

It was through this symbolic language that Lévi's Mediterranean esotericism entered English letters, with his ideas, translated and disseminated by A. E. Waite in the 1890s, finding fruitful ground in the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn - a society, the rituals of which explicitly drew from the diagrams of the Kabbalistic Tree by Lévi, his interpretation of tarot as the "alphabet of the mysteries" (Lévi 1856, 2, 112), and his assertion that "the Magus is the hierophant of universal analogies" (Ibidem). The members of the Golden Dawn, among them W. B. Yeats, Arthur Machen, and Aleister Crowley, absorbed Lévi's teachings into their creative practice, translating his Mediterranean syncretism into mythic and literary forms. Thus, W. B. Yeats in *A Vision* (1925), for instance, explicitly echoes Lévi's assertion that "history itself is the reflection of celestial cycles" (Lévi 1856, 1, 146), in this way fortifying his own cyclical theory of gyres, in which the Platonic and Hermetic ideals of eternal return coalesce with a poetic interpretation of cosmic law. Similarly, *The Great God Pan* (1894) by Arthur Machen reconfigures Lévi's symbol of Pan - "the Great All" (Lévi 1856, 1,146) into a modern parable of the sacred and profane intermingled, while Aleister Crowley, who called Lévi "the master who first gave me the key to magic" (Crowley 1954, Letter XLVII), reanimated the Egyptian aspects of Lévi's Mediterranean esotericism, by situating his Thelemic revelation in the same mythic topography that had inspired Hermeticism two millennia earlier.

The centrality of the Mediterranean to Lévi's vision derives from its historical role as the crossroads of civilizations, with Egypt offering

him the archetype of initiatory science, Greece - the grammar of symbolism, Rome - the endurance of sacred order, and Judea - the revelation of divine unity. These cultures, Lévi believed, encoded a single esoteric grammar or 'alphabet of nature' that could be deciphered through analogy: "To know the law of analogy [he wrote] is to read the soul of the world" (Lévi 1856, 1, 23). The Mediterranean, in this light, became the ocean of correspondences, binding East and West through the harmony of hidden forms, and found resonances within English Romanticism and later within modernism. The Romantic fascination with the East, exemplified by Percy Bysshe Shelley's Hellenism, George Gordon Byron's Levantine imagery, John Keats's Greco-Roman syncretism, prepared the imaginative soil for Lévi's esotericism, yet, where Romantic poets idealized the Mediterranean as aesthetic inspiration, Lévi sacralised it as metaphysical matrix. His followers in English letters extended this sacralization, transforming myth into ritual and poetry into invocation, since "Lévi's rehabilitation of symbolism was decisive: he made the symbol the operative key of the imagination" (Faivre 1994, 39). That imaginative key would unlock new forms of literary modernism, in which the sacred past returned through esoteric allusion.

In contextual terms, Lévi's Mediterranean worldview also intersected with broader currents of nineteenth-century philology and comparative religion, as the emergence of Orientalist scholarship and the rediscovery of ancient Near Eastern texts reactivated interest in the spiritual prehistory of Europe. Lévi's part-theological, part-poetic synthesis offered an alternative to the disenchantment brought by scientific rationalism: "The materialist sees matter [he wrote] but the initiate sees God manifesting through matter" (Lévi 1856, 1, 92). This epistemological stance of seeing through rather than at phenomena found a literary analogue in symbolist aesthetics and in W. B. Yeats's (1928, 3) invocation of "the artifice of eternity", thus linking multiple discourses: theology, philosophy, mythography and literature, and positing the Mediterranean as a spiritual topology, in which divine revelation is perennial, cyclic and universal. By tracing Lévi's influence upon English writers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the study simultaneously discerns the transmission of occult ideas to England and the transformation of English literature itself, since the Mediterranean ceased to be a mere backdrop of classical reference; it became, through Lévi's mediation, a site of initiation, symbol, as well as poetic renewal. As such, this study

contends that Lévi's esoteric hermeneutic served as a vital axis, around which modern literary imagination revolved - a hidden geometry linking Alexandria to London, and the mystic sea to the printed page.

This study explores Lévi's influence on key figures of English literature, including W. B. Yeats, Arthur Machen, and Aleister Crowley, and demonstrates how Mediterranean esotericism permeated art, poetry, fiction and occult practice in the late Victorian and modernist periods by means of the concept of the symbolic imagination - a creative method that functions epistemologically, enabling authors to access metaphysical truths through literary form. At the same time, Lévi's (1856, 1, 12) doctrine of correspondences, with its insistence that "all that is below is like that which is above", offers a theoretical bridge between mystical knowledge and literary aesthetics and provides a framework for understanding the recurrent motifs of cycles, water and spiritual ascent in English literature. What is more, in tracing Lévi's reception, this study situates the Mediterranean as both, imaginative geography and esoteric grammar, a space of mediation between visible and invisible realms within broader currents of Western esotericism, including Hermeticism, Neoplatonism and Kabbalistic cosmology, since for W. B. Yeats, the Hermetic sea becomes a symbolic passage from mortality to the immortal city of Byzantium; for Arthur Machen, the ancient gods of Greece resurface as instruments of psychological and cosmic revelation; and for Aleister Crowley, Egypt and the symbolic Mediterranean landscape serve as the stage for ritual enactments and theurgy. Furthermore, this study argues that Lévi's Mediterranean hermeneutics anticipate modernist literary strategies of symbolic layering, mythic repetition and cyclicality, as by integrating esoteric structures into literary form, these English writers enact what Gadamer (2004, 306) terms the "fusion of horizons", merging historical symbolic systems with contemporary aesthetic values. The paper examines these intersections and argues that Lévi's influence extends beyond the occult, so as to shape narrative technique, poetic imagery, as well as the very conception of artistic initiation in late-Victorian and modernist literature.

Methodologically, this research employs a combination of textual analysis, hermeneutic interpretation and intellectual history: textual analysis of W. B. Yeats's *A Vision* and *Sailing to Byzantium*, Arthur Machen's *The Great God Pan* and Aleister Crowley's *The Book of the Law* demonstrates how the symbolic universe engendered by Lévi was translated into English literary forms; hermeneutic interpretation draws

upon the theory of symbols by Paul Ricoeur (1967), brought forward in *The Symbolism of Evil*, while the intellectual history of Western esotericism contextualizes Lévi within broader Mediterranean and European traditions, scrutinised by Antoine Faivre in *Access to Western Esotericism* (1994) and Wouter J. Hanegraaff in *Esotericism and the Academy* (2012). Together, these approaches illustrate the ways, in which Lévi's Mediterranean vision informed the English literary imagination and created a symbolic ecology, in which history, myth and esoteric knowledge continuously intersect to provide a symbolic framework for English writers to direct questions of metaphysical knowledge, artistic creation and cultural memory, so as to establish a persistent dialogue between the esoteric and the literary.

The Mediterranean hermeneutics of Éliphas Lévi

The theoretical foundation for examining Éliphas Lévi's influence on English literature through Mediterranean esotericism requires an understanding of how the symbolic imagination functions as an epistemology and a creative method. In fact, Lévi's work stands at the crossroads of theology, philosophy and mythology, while his Mediterranean hermeneutic, his symbolic reading of the sea as a nexus of sacred exchange, unites these domains. For this reason, his thought can be read through the lenses of Western esotericism, symbolic hermeneutics and mythopoeic literary theory, each providing a different, yet convergent pathway to understanding how Lévi's system shaped the imaginative practices of English late-Victorian modernist and writers.

In *Access to Western Esotericism* (1994), Antoine Faivre defines Western esotericism through six fundamental characteristics: correspondences, living nature, imagination and mediation, transmutation, concordance and transmission. These categories, especially imagination and correspondence, are essential for understanding Lévi's theoretical method, whose approach places symbols as links between the visible and invisible worlds, since "the esoteric imagination enables the symbolic restructuring of reality itself, permitting both epistemic insight and aesthetic innovation" (Hanegraaff 2012, 49). Within this framework, the Mediterranean geography functions as an analogical and archetypal structure, a semantic field where spiritual and cultural meanings converge, described by Lévi (1856, 1, 27) as "the cradle of light, where divine knowledge first touched the waters of the world". In this way, the

Mediterranean becomes an epistemological metaphor and the visible manifestation of invisible truths – hence, to study Lévi through this framework is to study how esoteric symbols migrate, transforming from theological doctrines into aesthetic forms.

That said, first and foremost, Lévi's hermeneutics rests upon the doctrine of correspondences, the belief that "all that is below is like that which is above, to accomplish the miracle of the one thing" (Lévi 1856, 1, 12). This principle, which derived from the *Tabula Smaragdina* (c. 700-800) attributed to Hermes Trismegistus, became the structural foundation of Lévi's magical philosophy, yet, in his reinterpretation, this axiom becomes a linguistic and artistic law, as the poet, for Lévi, is a hierophant, who translates divine symbols into human language: "Every word is a sigil; every poem, an invocation" (Blackwood 1910, 214). This stance anticipates the symbolist notion of the *correspondence*, as articulated by Charles Baudelaire in *Correspondances* (1855) and transmitted into English literature through the aestheticism of the 1890s and the ritual poetics of W. B. Yeats, wherein the aesthetic "serve[s] as a medium through which the artist as well as the viewer can come in touch with the more fundamental level of being" (Lahelma 2018, 12).

From a theoretical standpoint, Lévi's Mediterranean esotericism is inseparable from what Hans-Georg Gadamer later termed in *Truth and Method* (1960) as the 'fusion of horizons' (*Horizontverschmelzung*), or a process, by which past symbolic systems and contemporary "understanding is always the fusion of these horizons supposedly existing by themselves" ([1960] 2004, 306). For Lévi, the Mediterranean world provided precisely this fusing horizon, as Egyptian Hermeticism, Greek philosophy, Jewish Kabbalah and Christian mysticism were coalesced into a unified symbolic syntax. What is more, his reading of history was far from being linear; it was circular, anticipating the modernist fascination with recurrence and cyclicality, resonating with W. B. Yeats's *A Vision*, in which history unfolds through "gyres" (1925, 17) or spirals of repetition and transformation. Hence, Lévi's symbolic geography becomes a hermeneutic model for Yeats's historical imagination.

Yet, to approach Lévi theoretically is to encounter a philosophy of mediation, since symbols, for him, are ontological, rather than ornamental: "[The symbol] speaks by evoking thought" (Lévi 1856, 1, 3). This principle, drawn from Neoplatonism and reanimated by Lévi through his interpretation of the *Sepher Yetzirah* and the Kabbalistic

notion of divine emanations (*Sefiroth*), each corresponding to planetary and psychological states, underlies the concept of *imaginatio vera* or the 'true imagination' capable of perceiving the intermediate realm between matter and spirit. In *The Symbolism of Evil*, Paul Ricoeur (1967, 347) observes that "the symbol gives rise to thought" - a claim that once again situates Lévi as a catalyst for metaphysical reasoning in literature, in which such mediation translates into the creative process itself, envisioning poetry as ritual, narrative as initiation, art as theurgy. Hence, W. B. Yeats's claim that "poetry is the revelation of the self to the self" (1961, 509) can be read as a modern echo of Lévi's (1856, 1, 65) maxim that "magic is the exercise of the will through symbols", according to which the Mediterranean turns into a symbolic field, a cultural and imaginative ecology, in which meanings circulate, evolve, and, ultimately, return.

What is more, Lévi's Mediterranean esoterism proposes an archetypal topology that mirrors the Hermetic cosmos, which is animated by a polarity of light emerging from shadow - "In the beginning, water was the first mirror of the light; it was by the motion of the spirit upon the waters that the shadow was born" (Lévi 1913, 45); the generative union of opposites – "kabbalistic phallus/ cteis, vertical/ horizontal, masculine/ feminine, gnostic stauros" (Lévi 1856, 1, 123-126), and crowned by the endless circulation of "horizontal and vertical correspondences" (Lahelma 2018, 7) between visible and invisible worlds. This dual symbolism of creation and death permeates English modernist literature, particularly T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922), in which the drowned Phoenician Sailor becomes a cipher for cyclical death and rebirth: "As he rose and fell/ He passed the stages of his age and youth/ Entering the whirlpool" (lines 317-319). Although T. S. Eliot's direct engagement with Lévi is uncertain, his reliance on esoteric archetypes situates him within the same symbolic framework.

Lévi's theoretical synthesis also offers a model of gnostic poetics, since his Mediterranean imagination reflects the Gnostic worldview of exile and return, in this way emphasizing knowledge (*gnosis*) as salvific illumination: "To know, to dare, to will, and to keep silent" (Lévi 1856, 1, 98). In fact, his famous magical maxim encapsulates both - the ritual discipline and poetic practice, with each verb corresponding to a mode of artistic creation: knowing (intuition), daring (imagination), willing (form), and silence (contemplation), thus providing a template for literary creation that integrates spiritual discipline and aesthetic practice, "orient[ing] an individual to the

dream consciousness level, which is the productive level [...] a creative consciousness" (Campbell 1990, 60-61). This fourfold structure reappears in W. B. Yeats's ritual poetics and in the discipline of symbolist aesthetics, in which revelation emerges from restraint.

In Lévi's cosmology, language itself becomes sacramental, since the Logos, the creative Word, operates as both a principle and a medium, with each Mediterranean culture holding fragments of this primordial Word: Egyptian hieroglyphs, Hebrew scripture, Greek philosophy, and Christian liturgy. Hence, Lévi's theory of correspondences transforms these into a single esoteric lexicon - a universal grammar of the sacred, with English writers, such as W. B. Yeats and Aleister Crowley, appropriating this esoteric grammar and translating Lévi's theology of language into poetic form. W. B. Yeats (1954, 210) explicitly linked his occult studies to poetic creation, remarking that "If I had not made magic my constant study, I could not have written a single word of my Blake book, nor would *The Countess Kathleen* ever have come to exist". Indeed, the verse in these literary pieces deployed charged symbols and esoteric rhythm intended to evoke deeper states of consciousness. Yet, it was in the popular imagination of the First World War that this literary magic took on its own life, as it happened with the rapid mythologization of Arthur Machen's short story "The Bowmen" (1914), written in memoriam of the Battle of Mons (August 1914), as "within a week Machen's fictional bowmen had been transformed into real angels, and what he had written as palpable fiction was soon credited as fact" (Fussell 1975, 169). As a consequence, Lévi's Mediterranean esotericism furnished a technology of enchantment based on a lexicon of symbols - a poetics that, in the act of reading, re-enacts a creative mode akin to the divine fiat that speaks the stars.

Hence, the Mediterranean ceases to be a mere geographical locus and turns into a linguistic archetype and a space, in which meaning is continuously born, submerged and born anew, privileging metaphor over definition and symbol over sign. In this sense, Lévi's Mediterranean hermeneutics foresees the modernist critique of positivism and foreshadows the twentieth-century transition toward mythic structures, as seen in the works of T. S. Eliot, D. H. Lawrence and James Joyce, each, in different ways, inheriting Lévi's conviction that myth is perennial and is a living force within language itself. The theoretical framework, thus, positions Lévi at the juncture of esoteric philosophy and literary modernism, with his Mediterranean

imagination becoming the symbolic matrix, through which English writers re-envisioned history, identity, ontology and revelation, and in which art itself became a vessel of initiation. As a result, Lévi's influence illuminates the way esoteric hermeneutics and literary aesthetics can coalesce into a single intellectual enterprise, which is guided by the pursuit of hidden unity beneath the multiplicity of forms.

The Lévi heritage within the esoteric tradition in English literature

Éliphas Lévi's Mediterranean hermeneutic took root in English literature through the works of W. B. Yeats, Arthur Machen, and Aleister Crowley, with each author, working within overlapping yet distinct esoteric networks, engaged Lévi's philosophy of correspondences, magical symbolism and sacred analogy, reconfiguring it to suit their literary and ritual agendas. As has been mentioned above, the Mediterranean, in Lévi's symbolic system, functions simultaneously as literal geography, archetypal space and esoteric paradigm; hence, its representation in English literature illustrates a process, in which the esoteric imagination intermediates between historical consciousness, mystical insight, and, above all, literary creation.

For W. B. Yeats, Lévi's ideas entered through the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, under whose auspices he studied *Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie* under MacGregor Mathers, his magical mentor. Yeats himself described his purpose in such studies as the search for "a system of thought that would leave my imagination free to create as it chose and yet make all that it created, or could create, part of the one history, and that the soul's" (Harper 1975, 25). Hence, in *A Vision* (1925), Yeats reimagines Lévi's cyclical cosmology, based on his assertion that "history itself is the reflection of celestial cycles" (Lévi 1856, 1, 146), as the metaphysical engine of history. The 28 phases of the lunar cycle in Yeats's system parallel Lévi's doctrine of the Sephiroth as emanations of divine consciousness: "All things are made from a conflict of opposites, and the cycle completes when those opposites are reconciled" (Yeats 1925, 57), reflecting Lévi's Mediterranean ideal of unity through multiplicity, in which ancient traditions converge into a single symbolic law.

The poem *Sailing to Byzantium* (1928) offers the most noteworthy expression of Yeats's Mediterranean esotericism, as Byzantium, historically situated at the crossroads of East and West, becomes a Hermetic city of transformation, in which "sages stand in God's holy

fire" (Yeats 1928, line 17). Indeed, the opening line, "That is no country for old men" (Ibid, line 1), initiates a symbolic voyage across the Mediterranean, from the sensual world of nature to the spiritual city of art, in this way mirroring Lévi's magical ascent from the material to the divine plane, wherein the soul, purified through symbolism, becomes immortal: "The soul is a voyager upon the sea of the world, seeking the port of the Infinite" (Lévi 1856, 1, 23). Yeats's image of the soul "fastened to a dying animal" (Yeats 1928, line 22) similarly dramatizes the Hermetic struggle for transcendence within material form. Hence, Yeats's Byzantium poems transform Lévi's doctrine of correspondences into aesthetic metaphysics, in which the golden bird, "set upon a golden bough to sing" (Ibid, line 30), functions as an emblem of Lévi's *philosophical stone*, signifying the perfected synthesis of art and spirit. In this way, Yeats adapts Lévi's concept of *haute magie* as "the science of divine harmonies" (Lévi 1856, 1, 19) into a poetics of transmutation, in which poetry itself becomes the alchemical vessel and "in actuality a process of initiation into ancient mysteries" (Psilopoulos 1995, 1).

Arthur Machen's fiction reintroduces the Mediterranean's pagan undercurrents into late-Victorian England, as in *The Great God Pan* (1894), he reconfigures Lévi's symbol of Pan or "the Great All" (Lévi 1856, 1, 83) into a tale of terror that exposes the persistence of divine immanence beneath modern rationality. The novella's central experiment, in which a woman is made to "see the god" (Machen 1894, 62), literalizes Lévi's claim that to evoke a god is to awaken a power within oneself, thus demonstrating both the potency and peril of esoteric knowledge when being stripped of the discipline of initiation. Hence, Machen's narrative "transposes Mediterranean mystical paradigms into Gothic horror, producing a liminal space where the sacred and the terrifying coexist" (Jackson 1981, 45). Lévi had described Pan as the visible form of the invisible life, which is directly reflected in Machen's Pan, who serves as a manifestation of cosmic vitality that shatters human perception. The Mediterranean context of Machen's work, Pan as a Greek god, ancient yet eternal, anchors Machen's story within the continuum of esoteric revelation, while the oscillation of the novella between horror and transcendence parallels Lévi's magical paradox, positing enlightenment as both illumination and annihilation.

Machen's prose is saturated with esoteric syntax, and his invocation of "the infinite world that lies beyond the veil of sense" (Machen 1894,

41) transforms Lévi's metaphysics into narrative tension. Critical readings have emphasized that Machen's narratives perform a kind of literary theurgy, through enacting Lévi's concept of *haute magie* through text. Hence, by integrating classical deities, mystical practices and landscapes into the text, Machen transforms the Mediterranean into a repository of esoteric knowledge, accessible, yet perilous, while his Gothic sensibility underlines the liminality of esoteric experience and illustrates the tension between human perception and transcendent reality. As a result, the Mediterranean re-emerges symbolically through Machen's depiction of ancient ritual landscapes, groves, temples and mountains, in which the divine continually breaks through and "imbues the Victorian literary imagination with the residue of classical Mediterranean spirituality, a space where the uncanny remains ever-present" (Ellmann 1979, 78). Hence, Machen's "infinite world that lies beyond the veil of sense" (Machen 1894, 41) exemplifies a literary translation of Lévi's ontological Hermeticism, wherein the visible world reflects hidden cosmic realities and foregrounds the Mediterranean as both a historical and symbolic terrain, in which the psychic resonance of antiquity persists in contemporary narrative forms.

If Yeats and Machen spiritualized Lévi's philosophy, Aleister Crowley enacted it. Crowley's self-identification as Lévi's reincarnation, articulated in *Magick Without Tears* (1954), signalled both continuity and reinvention, as his Cairo revelation of *The Book of the Law* (1904) reactivates the Egyptian dimension of Lévi's Mediterranean esotericism. Hence, through Crowley, the Mediterranean turns into a functional space of initiation, ritual and, above and beyond, the manifestation of cosmic law. Even though Lévi had written that "Egypt is the mother of all initiations, where the science of divine correspondences was first perfected" (Lévi 1856, 1, 102), Crowley's encounter with the deities of Nuit, Hadit and Ra-Hoor-Khuit transforms this symbolic inheritance into a new religious dispensation - the Aeon of Horus.

Crowley's adaptation of Lévi's principles is most visible in his redefinition of will and love as cosmic laws, which are exemplified in his central axiom of *The Book of the Law* (1904): "Love is the law, love under will" (I, 57), and in a further statement, in which the Mediterranean imagery of solar deities and celestial cycles persists: "Every man and every woman is a star" (Ibidem), transforming Hermetic maxim of unity between the microcosm and macrocosm into

a moral imperative. Hence, where Lévi sought reconciliation between science and faith, Crowley radicalized it into a theology of individual sovereignty, "sacraliz[ing] the authority of the self, making individual will the ultimate spiritual principle" (Owen 2004, 221).

Crowley's Egyptian symbolism also perpetuates Lévi's aesthetic of sacred theatre. Thus, in *Magick in Theory and Practice*, Crowley (1929, 15) describes ritual as "the dramatization of the mysteries of the universe", reflecting Lévi's assertion that "words unconfirmed by acts are idle words […] Thought formulated by speech and confirmed by acts constitutes a good work or a crime" (Lévi 1856, 1, 203). Both conceive of performance as revelation, in this way linking ancient initiatory rites of the Mediterranean to modern imagination. Hence, through Crowley, Lévi's Hermetic Christianity metamorphoses into a "modern occult ethic grounded in cosmological law and personal sovereignty, accompanied by a turn toward pagan and solar symbolism" (Asprem 2014, 99), in which Mediterranean symbols, from solar deities to the cycles of the Nile and the Egyptian pantheon, function as operative signifiers, linking human consciousness to cosmic order. Consequently, in Crowley's hands, Lévi's Hermetic principles were transformed from a doctrine into a unified practice of writing, ritual, as well as spiritual self-realization.

As a result, Lévi's Mediterranean esotericism functions across Yeats, Machen, and Crowley as an imaginative grammar uniting poetry and prose with ritual. Yeats transforms the Hermetic Sea into a voyage of artistic transmutation; Machen reawakens the buried gods of the Mediterranean as psychological and metaphysical forces; Crowley revives its Egyptian mysteries as instruments of self-divinization. Each author draws from Lévi's doctrine of correspondences, based on the conviction that "analogy is the last word of science and the first word of faith" (Lévi 1856, 1, 23), yet rearticulates it according to the needs of their era: Yeats - through symbolism, Machen - through mystic horror, and Crowley - through ritual theurgy. Hence, English writers "invoked Lévi's authority in [their] own occult project[s]" (Kaczynski 2002, 62) to elaborate a literary lexicon, through which they could negotiate the sacred in the modern world. The Mediterranean esoterism, thus, becomes an operative symbol and a dynamic horizon, in which the imaginative logic of myth, the transformative aims of magic and the formal concerns of literature intersect.

Conclusion

Lévi's Hermetic cosmology presents the Mediterranean as a locus, in which correspondences between the macrocosm and microcosm are manifest. At the same time, the Mediterranean in English literature, mediated by Lévi, functions as a Hermetic geography with an imaginative topology, in which spiritual and artistic insights are cultivated, providing both a literal and figurative horizon for the exploration of esoteric and mystical knowledge in modernist writing. Thus, through W. B. Yeats's Byzantium, the sea facilitates the transcendence of temporal decay into aesthetic immortality; through Arthur Machen's Pan, it harbours hidden, often dangerous forces of revelation; through Aleister Crowley, it structures ritual space and enactment - each writer, accordingly, enacts a different aspect of Lévi's esoteric geography, demonstrating the symbolic elasticity of the Mediterranean as a literary device. Furthermore, the Mediterranean operates as a temporal and cultural bridge, with its ancient civilizations, serving as repositories of esoteric knowledge, accessible to modern imagination through Lévi's symbolic framework. At the same time, the Mediterranean may be envisioned as a palimpsest of myth and ritual, with its waters carrying the sediment of centuries of occult thought and religious practice. Hence, by situating their literary and ritualistic work within this space, Yeats, Machen, and Crowley recontextualize it for contemporary spiritual and artistic aims. Lévi's Hermeticism emphasizes the performative and experiential dimensions of esotericism, making ritual, art and literature inseparable. As a consequence, Yeats transforms the Mediterranean journey into a metaphorical pilgrimage, in which artistic creation becomes an initiatory practice; Machen's fiction renders the supernatural into narrative tension, dramatizing Hermetic principles through Gothic form; and Crowley's ceremonial magic actualizes the Mediterranean's esoteric heritage, enacting correspondences between the microcosm of the practitioner and the macrocosm of the cosmos. Collectively, these authors demonstrate that the Mediterranean esoterism of Lévi operates as a unifying symbolic grammar and a stage, on which literature, art, culture and ritual intersect, and provides a perennial locus for the transformation of consciousness, the articulation of myth, as well as the realization of the sacred in modern English literature.

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Constructing ethnic identity: Azerbaijani Mountain Jews in late 19th century Caucasian ethnography

Afag Ramazan*

Abstract: The *Collection of Materials on the Description of the Territories and Peoples of the Caucasus* (SMOMPK) remains one of the most significant ethnographic sources documenting the history, everyday life, and folklore of the peoples of the Caucasus in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Published between 1881 and 1929 in forty-six volumes, the series assembled extensive materials on ethno-national composition, domestic life, ritual practices, settlements, and oral traditions across the region. Among the communities represented in this corpus were the Mountain Jews. This article focuses on the works of Mikhail Bezhanov published in the fourteenth (1892) and eighteenth (1894) volumes of SMOMPK. In his article "Brief Information about the Village of Vartashen and Its Inhabitants" Bezhanov provides detailed observations on the Udins and Jews of the area, drawing on personal experience and local knowledge. His descriptions encompass aspects of material and spiritual culture, including family structure, customs and traditions, wedding and mourning rituals, birth ceremonies, and children's games. In a subsequent publication devoted specifically to the Mountain Jews of Vartashen (Elisavetpol Province, Nukha District of Azerbaijan), he addresses questions concerning their language and origin. Rather than serving merely as descriptive accounts, these ethnographic texts participated in shaping a structured image of the Mountain Jews within the broader framework of late nineteenth-century scholarly discourse. Through an analysis of narrative strategies and classificatory language, the study demonstrates how ethnic identity was articulated through religious, linguistic, and cultural markers that reflected both academic inquiry and the intellectual paradigms of the period.

Keywords: SMOMPK, Azerbaijani Mountain Jews, Caucasian ethnography, identity construction, Bezhanov

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AGATHOS, Volume 17, Issue 2 (33-34): 89-104, DOI 10.5281/zenodo.23359279
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Introduction

In 1881, the *Collection of Materials on the Description of the Territories and Peoples of the Caucasus* (SMOMPK) began publication in Tbilisi under the auspices of the Caucasus Educational Department. Over nearly five decades (1881–1929), the series produced forty-six volumes. The first forty-four volumes were published in Tbilisi between 1881 and 1915, while the final two appeared in Makhachkala in 1926 and 1929. During this period, SMOMPK became one of the most extensive ethnographic enterprises devoted to documenting the peoples of the Caucasus, assembling materials on language, customs, folklore, everyday life, demography, and social organization.

The establishment of such a large-scale ethnographic project in the context of the Russian Empire was not ideologically neutral. Like many scholarly initiatives of the late nineteenth century, it was embedded within broader imperial frameworks of knowledge production. Ethnographic research functioned not only as a descriptive discipline but also as a mechanism for systematizing and classifying the diverse populations incorporated into imperial structures. Through detailed accounts of religious practices, linguistic features, social customs, and cultural traditions, ethnographic writing contributed to the construction of structured representations of ethnic difference.

Contemporary intellectuals were aware of this dynamic. In 1936, Azerbaijani scholar Hanafi Zeynalli observed that imperial authorities demonstrated particular interest in studying the Turkic and Caucasian peoples within the framework of colonial policy:

> The Russian bourgeoisie, from the point of view of its colonial policy, tried to study the Turkic people more "zealously" than the Turkic masters. That is why, in Tiflis under the editorial office of Lopatinsky, he was publishing a collection describing the natives and tribes of the Caucasus (Zeynalli 1936, 2). [my transl.]

His remarks suggest that ethnographic documentation was understood not merely as scholarly activity but as part of a broader political and intellectual project.

Despite these ideological dimensions, SMOMPK remains an invaluable historical and ethnographic source. Its volumes contain extensive materials on the communities of the Caucasus, including those settled in present-day Azerbaijan. Among them were the

Mountain Jews, whose cultural life, traditions, and linguistic characteristics were described in several publications within the series. Although SMOMPK has long been recognized for its documentary value, its role in shaping ethnic representations has received comparatively limited critical attention. Existing studies have tended to emphasize the descriptive richness of the materials rather than examining the discursive mechanisms through which identities were articulated and stabilized. The case of the Azerbaijani Mountain Jews provides a particularly revealing example of how late nineteenth-century ethnographic writing participated in defining communal boundaries and interpreting cultural distinctiveness.

This article therefore seeks to analyze how Azerbaijani Mountain Jewish identity was constructed in late nineteenth-century Caucasian ethnography, focusing on the publications of 1892 and 1894. By applying textual and historical-discursive analysis, the study explores the narrative strategies, classificatory language, and conceptual frameworks through which the community was represented, situating these representations within the broader intellectual paradigms of the period.

Methodology

The study is based on a close reading of two articles by Mikhail Bezhanov published in the SMOMPK collection in 1892 and 1894. These texts are examined as nineteenth-century ethnographic documents produced within a specific scholarly and institutional environment. In addition to these two articles, related SMOMPK materials and later scholarly assessments are used to clarify authorship, context, and reception.

The analysis focuses on how the Mountain Jews are described in the texts and which categories are used to define them. Particular attention is paid to recurring themes such as language, settlement history, economic activity, religious life, family structure, ritual practices, and folklore narratives. The quotations are preserved in the original Russian, accompanied by English translations, in order to maintain textual accuracy while allowing analytical interpretation.

A comparative perspective is applied to identify the difference between the two publications: in the first article, the Mountain Jews appear within a broader multi-ethnic setting, while in the second they become the central ethnographic subject. The study therefore approaches these materials not only as historical sources but also as

examples of how ethnic identity was framed within late nineteenth-century Caucasian ethnography.

Ethnographic representation of the Mountain Jews in SMOMPK

A close examination of the complete SMOMPK series shows that two substantial articles devoted specifically to the Mountain Jews were published in the collection during the late nineteenth century. Both were authored by Mikhail S. Bezhanov and appeared within a short interval of time.

The first article, "Краткие сведения о селе Варташен и его жителях" / "Brief Information about the Village of Vartashen and Its Inhabitants", was published in the fourteenth volume of SMOMPK in 1892 (Bezhanov 1892, 214–261). Spanning nearly fifty pages, the study provides a detailed account of the population of Vartashen, including the Udins, Tatars (Azerbaijanis), and Jews residing in the area. Although the article addresses several ethnic groups, it contains extensive material concerning the social life, occupations, and cultural characteristics of the local Jewish community.

Two years later, Bezhanov published a second and more focused study in the eighteenth volume of SMOMPK, entitled "Евреи села Варташен (Елисаветпольская губерния, Нухинский уезд)" / "Jews of the Village of Vartashen (Elisavetpol Province, Nukha District)" (Bezhanov 1894, 110–227). This article, covering more than one hundred pages, is devoted entirely to the Mountain Jews of Vartashen. Its scope is notably broader, offering detailed descriptions of everyday life, religious practices, and elements of spiritual culture.

The scholarly value of these publications has been recognized by later researchers:

> Two very valuable articles by M. Bezhanov about the village of Vartashen date back to the end of the 19th century. One of them gives brief information about the Jews of Vartashen, while the second is directly devoted to the description of the daily and spiritual culture of the Jews of Vartashen. M. Bezhanov describes in particular detail the preparatory work of local Jews for Passover and also provides examples of their oral folk art, mainly of religious content. (Semyonov 2018, 162) [my transl.]

These assessments underline the significance of Bezhanov's contributions not only as ethnographic documentation but also as key textual sources for understanding how the Mountain Jewish community was represented within late nineteenth-century Caucasian scholarship.

Mikhail Bezhanov as a local author of imperial ethnography

The publication of SMOMPK required not only editorial coordination but also a broad network of contributors capable of documenting the diverse communities of the Caucasus. Given the vast geographical and ethnic scope of the collection — encompassing North Caucasian peoples such as the Ossetians, Chechens, Avars, Aysors, Turukhmen, and Jews, as well as Azerbaijanis, Armenians, Georgians, Tats, Udins, Talyshes, and Mountain Jews — the involvement of locally educated individuals was essential. The systematic study of such a wide and culturally complex region could hardly have been accomplished without the participation of those who lived within these communities. As noted by Efendiyev, local teachers played a particularly significant role in this process:

> In this work the Teaching Department was closely helped by teachers who taught in village schools. Each of these authors, with little experience and competence, studied the village and settlement in which they lived, described the facts and events that he or she saw with the eye and heard with the ear through the filter of his/her personal observations. (Efendiyev 1999, 17) [my transl.]

This approach was also applied in the case of the Vartashen materials. The author of the articles on the Mountain Jews, Mikhail Bezhanov, was himself a resident of Vartashen and served as a school supervisor and teacher. In the fourteenth volume of SMOMPK (1892), in the article "The information about the village of Vartashen and its population," he is introduced as the supervisor of the Vartashen school. The same designation appears in the eighteenth volume (1894), confirming his institutional role within the local educational structure.

Further references within SMOMPK indicate that Bezhanov was deeply involved in educational and cultural activities. In the sixth volume, he is described both as Head of the Vartashen two-year school and as a teacher. His ethnic background is explicitly stated in the note accompanying the Udi tale "Rustam":

> This tale was delivered by the Teacher of the Vartashen School, Mikhail Bezhanov, an Udin from Vartashen. (Bezhanov 1888, 7) [my transl.]

Bezhanov also provides autobiographical information in his 1892 publication:

> There are two schools in Vartashen: General and Armenian Church. The general school was opened in 1860 by my father Stepan Bezhanov; in 1876 my father left the teaching profession and his place was taken by his student Mr. Kotiev; in 1880 my brother, Georgy Bezhanov, was appointed as a teacher from the Society for the Restoration of Orthodox Christianity in the Caucasus; but in 1883 the school was closed. The current two-year school was opened at the expense of the local authorities in 1887. (Bezhanov 1892, 216) [my transl.]

Additional evidence from volume XXX (1902) reveals the broader intellectual environment of the Bezhanov family:

> The translation of the Bible into Udi was carried out in 1893 by the priest Semyon Bezhanov. Its publication was delayed. Late S. Bezhanov, who was from Vartashen, was originally an Udin and together with his brother Mikhail Bezhanov worked in collecting and studying folk songs, fairy tales, proverbs and compiling a dictionary about the Udins. All these materials were to be published in two editions: in the first - folk songs, fairy tales, proverbs with a dictionary, in the second - a translation of the Holy Bible, now only the second edition is printed. (Foreword 1902, 1) [my transl.]

These materials demonstrate that Mikhail Bezhanov was born into an educated Udin family of Vartashen and was actively engaged in scholarly, educational, and linguistic work. His background as a local intellectual and cultural mediator is particularly significant for the present study. The articles devoted to the Mountain Jews were not written by an external observer unfamiliar with the region, but by an individual embedded within the local social and cultural environment. This positionality strengthens their documentary value while also inviting careful consideration of the perspective from which ethnic identity was interpreted and articulated.

Ethnographic representation of the Mountain Jews in SMOMPK

The first article “Краткие сведения о селе Варташен и его жителях” / “Brief Information about the Village of Vartashen and Its Inhabitants” (1892, Volume XIV) constitutes the earliest reference point for examining the representation of the Mountain Jews in SMOMPK. Although described as “brief” in its title, the publication is extensive and systematic in scope, covering geographical, economic, demographic, and cultural aspects of Vartashen. While the Udins are the principal focus of the study, the Mountain Jews are mentioned within the broader multi-ethnic composition of the settlement. Their portrayal, though fragmentary, reveals several thematic dimensions through which identity is described.

The language of the Mountain Jews

Linguistic distinction is presented as one of the primary markers differentiating the communities of Vartashen. Bezhanov introduces this distinction in the following way:

> The Udins live in the villages of Vartashen and Nij and speak the mountain language that contains many Tatar (Azerbaijani) words. ... Orthodox and Gregorian Udins speak the Udin language among themselves. The Jews speak the Persian language. (Bezhanov 1892, 215) [my transl.]

Here, language functions as a defining ethnic marker. By identifying the Jews as Persian-speaking, the author establishes a clear linguistic boundary that separates them from other local groups and situates them within a distinct cultural-linguistic category.

The occupation and economic activity of the Mountain Jews

Economic differentiation is another important aspect of the description. The occupational structure of the Mountain Jews is characterized in contrast to that of the Udins and Tatars:

> … the Udins and Tatars (Azerbaijanis) are engaged in agriculture, sericulture, horticulture, gardening, cattle-breeding and partly in trade; ... but the Jews are engaged in tobacco growing and trading; the rich of them are engaged in trade and the poor in tobacco farming: they sow shag on foreign lands for half the harvest and receive food from the owner. (Bezhanov 1892, 215) [my transl.]

The emphasis on tobacco cultivation and commerce constructs a specific socio-economic profile for the community. The internal division between "rich" and "poor" further reinforces this structured economic portrayal.

The land ownership of the Mountain Jews

The issue of land ownership introduces an additional structural distinction within the local hierarchy. Bezhanov explicitly notes:

> There are about 10,000 dessiatines of land behind the village of Vartashen, divided into plots that residents use by lot; they sow wheat, millet, barley, rice and so on. The Jews have no land… (Bezhanov 1892, 215) [my transl.]

The statement that "the Jews have no land" implies a differentiated economic position within the village structure. Land ownership is

implicitly associated with stability and integration into the agrarian system, and its absence marks a distinctive communal status.

The religion of the Mountain Jews
Religious organization is described through spatial and ritual details. The synagogue is presented as follows:

> The Jews have two synagogues. The synagogue is a large hall, in the middle of which there is a pulpit for a rabbi; there are many niches in the walls where the Jews put their prayer books and white shawls; the floor is covered with carpets – the Jews sit cross-legged on them during worship" (Bezhanov 1892, 219) [my transl.]

This description highlights confessional distinctiveness while presenting religious life as structured and orderly within the broader multi-ethnic setting.

The clothing culture of the Mountain Jews
Cultural identity is further marked through clothing. Bezhanov draws a comparative distinction:

> The Jewish men dress the same as all Tatars, but wear long garments; the Jewish women dress almost the same as Tatar women, but with a slight change in the headdress and wear a special veil. (Bezhanov 1892, 219) [my transl.]

The comparison emphasizes both similarity and difference. While outward resemblance to Tatars is acknowledged, specific elements of attire serve as visible markers of communal identity.

The household ceremonies and marriage practices of the Mountain Jews
Family structure and marriage customs also contribute to the portrayal of communal specificity. Bezhanov notes:

> Among the Jews the groom is 12 years old and the bride is 5 and 7 years old; in this case, the groom's parents educate the bride at their place (Bezhanov 1892, 232) [my transl.]

The reference to early marriage practices introduces a culturally specific detail that further distinguishes the Mountain Jews within the ethnographic narrative.

In this first article, the Mountain Jews appear not as the central ethnographic subject but as one element within a broader multi-ethnic composition. Their representation is organized through thematic

categories — language, occupation, land ownership, religion, clothing, and family practices. These categories function as classificatory tools through which identity is described and implicitly structured. Although fragmentary, the portrayal reveals a systematic process of categorization that frames the community within the ethnographic discourse of the period.

A comprehensive ethnographic portrait of the Mountain Jews

The second article published in SMOMPK, "Евреи села Варташен (Елисаветпольская губерния, Нухинский уезд)" / "The Jews of the Village of Vartashen (Elisavetpol Province, Nukha District)" (1894, Vol. XVIII), represents a far more systematic and comprehensive study of the Mountain Jews than the earlier publication. Written in accordance with the editorial program established by SMOMPK's editor, the article follows a structured ethnographic scheme designed to ensure complete and organized documentation of ethnic communities. As a result, it offers an extensive portrayal of the material, social, religious, and folklore life of the Mountain Jews at the end of the nineteenth century.

The article consists of two main parts: the first provides detailed ethnographic information, while the second presents recorded folklore texts. The second part is considerably larger in volume, indicating the author's particular attention to oral tradition.

The key ethnographic themes in the first part may be outlined as follows:

The settlement of the Mountain Jews

M. Bezhanov situates the Mountain Jews within a historical narrative of migration: The Jews settled in the village of Vartashen about 200 years ago. (Bezhanov 1894, 111) [my transl.]

By dating their arrival to approximately two centuries earlier, the author establishes temporal depth and local rootedness. This information aligns with later historical accounts confirming migration from Gilan in the late seventeenth century. The confirmation from later sources further reinforces the historical framework:

> The Jews moved to Vartashen at the end of the 17th century from the Persian province of Gilan and settled on the lower edge of the village. In the 18th century the Jewish population of Vartashen increased due to refugees from the neighboring villages of Zelem and Gutkashen". (*The Jews*. 2023, 38) [my transl.]

This convergence between ethnographic description and later scholarship strengthens the documentary value of the account.

The number and demographic development of the Mountain Jews
The article also emphasizes demographic growth:

> At first there were about 60 houses, and now, in terms of the number of souls, they surpass the rest of the inhabitants. (Bezhanov 1894, 112) [my transl.]

The focus on population expansion suggests not only stability but also communal consolidation within the settlement. Later demographic data confirm the significant presence of the Mountain Jews in Vartashen during the nineteenth century:

> In the 19th century the Jewish population of Vartashen made up about a third of the total population of the village. In 1873 there were 1,628 Jews living in Vartashen and in 1885 there were already 2,282 Jews. Later, the number of Jews began to gradually decrease due to migration to Baku and Tbilisi. In the 1990s about 1200 Jews lived in Vartashen. In recent years, the Jewish population has sharply decreased due to migration and does not exceed more than 300 people. (*The Jews*. 2023, 38) [my transl.]

Making a margin, it should be noted that on the official website of the Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, as on the 1st of January 2022 the information is that 85 Jews live in Oghuz (Vartashen) now (statistics). However, according to the information received from ”the place”, that is, directly from the region, 70 Jewish families currently live in Oghuz (Vartashen). The comparison between historical and contemporary statistics highlights long-term demographic transformation and migration patterns.

The language of the Mountain Jews
Linguistic identity is briefly but clearly indicated: “They speak Persian” (Bezhanov 1894, 113).

Although concisely formulated, this statement reinforces the linguistic distinctiveness already mentioned in the earlier article. The reference to the Persian (Tat/Juhuri) dialect situates the community within a specific linguistic tradition.

The occupation of the Mountain Jews
Economic specialization is described in categorical terms: “They are exclusively engaged in trade and tobacco cultivation.” (Bezhanov 1894, 112) [my transl.]

The adverb "exclusively" underscores occupational differentiation. The detailed explanation of tobacco cultivation further illustrates the economic arrangements under which the Mountain Jews operated:

> Tobacco is sown on the lands of Christians and Muslims under such conditions: the owner plows and fertilizes the land, the Jew makes beds, plants seedlings, looks after them before harvesting, dries and makes bunches with roots, - the owner gives the Jew wheat, rice, money for meat and butter, and clothing all this time; the harvest is divided in half between the owner and the Jew. (Bezhanov 1894, 112) [my transl.]

This depiction presents a structured economic relationship between Jewish cultivators and Christian/Muslim landowners.

Trade practices are also described:

> Some of the Jews trade in bazaars, while others are the door-to-door peddlers. The latter are especially convenient for women who cannot go to the bazaar themselves and choose goods they like - they pay extra for it. (Bezhanov 1894, 112) [my transl.]

The portrayal suggests integration into local economic networks while maintaining occupational distinctiveness.

Institute of mutual assistance in the Mountain Jews

From the article it is clear that the institution of mutual assistance in the Jews is very developed. It is interesting that even those Jews who are not on good terms with one another follow the rules of the same institution and in this way try to prevent those of the same religion from living poorly. Even those Jews who are in an enemy relationship manage to unite in the event of a difficulty and danger. The institution of communal solidarity receives particular emphasis:

> But how they take care of their co-religionists... Every Saturday, especially on big holidays, they collect a lot of money for their poor; once a month wheat is collected from the rich for them. There is no begging among Jews. Often Jews from other villages also come to help and always return, receiving many generous gifts. In general, they support one another strongly: they protect even their personal enemies (Jews) from non-Jews. (Bezhanov 1894, 112) [my transl.]

The author stresses internal cohesion and strong communal bonds. The absence of begging and the protection of co-religionists are presented as defining moral characteristics of the group.

Institute of family in the Mountain Jews
Respect for elders and patriarchal authority is highlighted:

> The Jews respect their elders and rabbis: young people do not dare to sit in front of them and behave very modestly. The father of the family is a complete ruler; even married sons, without his permission, cannot do anything or dispose of anything." (Bezhanov 1894, 113) [my transl.]

The description portrays a hierarchical but internally stable family structure centered on paternal authority.

The status of a woman in the Mountain Jews
Gender relations are briefly addressed:

> Women are not as oppressed as Muslim women (they are not allowed to go to the synagogue). (Bezhanov 1894, 114) [my transl.]

The comparative formulation situates the community within a broader regional framework, presenting Jewish women's status through contrast with neighboring groups.

The clothing culture of the Mountain Jews
Clothing is described in extensive detail:

> The clothes of the Jews are: a short, waist-length shirt, wide shawls, an upper dress (silk or calico) to the knees (chakpant/chapkan-A.R.) with silver buttons on the sleeves, a wide, silver belt; the head is tied with a silk scarf. Shoes – koshi (galosh); many people walk barefoot. The fingers are decorated with silver and gold rings. Girls wear beads on their chests, paint their hands with henna and chew sakhkuz (keva). Men's clothing is a chokha made of shawl or cloth, a long arkhaluk, a short shirt, tight trousers; they fasten the backrest with a belt or silver belt, - in winter they wear fur or sheepskin coats; on the head a high cone-shaped hat and under it is a yarmolka / kipa; shoes are bast sandal, galoshes, chust. The costume is the same in summer and winter. (Bezhanov 1894, 115) [my transl.]

The meticulous inventory of garments functions as a visible marker of cultural identity, reinforcing both continuity and distinctiveness.

The structure of houses in the Mountain Jews
Domestic architecture is also characterized:

> Houses are built of raw brick (recently made of stone). The walls are not plastered, except for the front part, which is plastered with clay and bleached (white clay); the new stone buildings are whitewashed with lime and the wooden ones are painted with oil paint." (Bezhanov 1894, 115) [my transl.]

The description situates housing practices within local material traditions while noting gradual changes (stone construction).

Festive culture, ritual life and the calendar ceremonies of the Mountain Jews

The author lists major religious holidays:

> The Jews of Vartashen strictly observe their religious rituals. I will name some of the holidays:
> 1. Песах - Passover (Pesach)
> 2. Пурин – Purim
> 3. Шомуный Асрит - Shemini Atzeret
> 4. Шарана Раба – Hoshana Rabbah
> 5. Кипр/Кипур - Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement)
> 6. Сокут - Sukkot
> 7. Шоут - Shavuot
> 8. Гатил – Tish`a be-Av
> 9. Руш ашана - Rosh Hashanah (New Year) (Bezhanov 1894, 117)

These holidays are fully described with all the elements. The systematic enumeration of festivals demonstrates strict observance and structured ritual life.

The article further documents ceremonial cuisine, birth, wedding, and mourning rituals, as well as songs associated with henna ceremonies. It also records beliefs about diseases and traditional remedies, indicating a rich system of folk medicine and mythological perceptions concerning heaven, hell, and taboos during pregnancy.

The second part of the article consists of twenty-six legends and tales organized into sixteen thematic sections. These texts range from narratives about King Solomon and Moses to moral-didactic stories and accounts connected with Rambam. The structured thematic organization reflects both religious orientation and ethical concerns within the recorded tradition.

The Mountain Jews appear within a broader multi-ethnic framework in the first article, whereas the second publication constructs a more comprehensive ethnographic portrait of the community. The structured presentation — covering settlement history, demography, economy, religion, family life, ritual practice, and folklore — transforms the group from a marginal mention into a central ethnographic subject. Through systematic categorization and detailed description, the article contributes to the consolidation of Mountain Jewish identity within late nineteenth-century Caucasian ethnography.

The further fate of the materials of the Mountain Jews in the journal SMOMPK

The materials on the Mountain Jews published in SMOMPK did not remain confined to the nineteenth century. In subsequent scholarly literature devoted to the Mountain Jews, Bezhanov's articles consistently served as primary references and foundational sources. Their documentary value ensured that they became an enduring point of departure for later historical and ethnographic research.

An important retrospective re-publication of these materials appeared in 1993, when historian Igor Semyonov edited and reissued part of the folklore corpus under the title "Сказания горских евреев Кавказа" / "Tales of Caucasian Mountain Jews" (*Tales*. 1993). In his preface, Semyonov evaluates Bezhanov's work and emphasizes the collector's effort to preserve the narrative style of the original storytellers. At the same time, Semyonov notes certain limitations in Bezhanov's translations, pointing to cases in which literal rendering weakened the expressive qualities of the original oral speech. Thus, Semyonov's assessment combines recognition of the originality and cultural color preserved by Bezhanov with critical remarks regarding translational precision. This dual evaluation confirms both the importance and the limitations of the nineteenth-century ethnographic record.

In preparing his edition, Semyonov selected fifteen of the twenty-six folklore texts originally published in SMOMPK, noting that only "the best of them were chosen". The selected tales include narratives devoted to Shabbat observance, figures such as Rambam and King Solomon, moral-didactic stories, and legendary accounts connected with biblical and historical themes. The volume also contains illustrations corresponding to each tale, and both the selected texts and the preface were later made available in audio format on the website stmegi.com.

The later republication and reinterpretation of these materials demonstrate the continued relevance of Bezhanov's work. Although subject to critical reassessment, his ethnographic and folklore records remain indispensable for understanding the cultural and ritual life of the Mountain Jews of Vartashen at the end of the nineteenth century. The transmission of these texts into new editorial and digital formats further illustrates how nineteenth-century ethnographic documentation continues to shape contemporary representations of Mountain Jewish heritage.

Conclusion

Although more than a century has passed since the publication of the articles analyzed in this study, they continue to retain their importance as primary and indispensable sources on the Mountain Jews settled in Azerbaijan. The materials published in SMOMPK represent one of the earliest systematic attempts to document the social structure, religious life, economic organization, and folklore traditions of the Mountain Jewish community of Vartashen.

The comparative analysis of Bezhanov's two articles demonstrates a shift from fragmentary references within a multi-ethnic framework to a more comprehensive and structured ethnographic portrait. In the first publication, the Mountain Jews appear as one component of a broader local composition, described through thematic categories such as language, occupation, land ownership, and ritual life. In the second article, however, the community becomes the central object of ethnographic attention, and its material, spiritual, and folklore culture is presented in a systematic and organized manner.

Through linguistic classification, economic differentiation, descriptions of communal solidarity, family hierarchy, religious practice, and folklore narratives, these texts contributed to shaping a particular representation of Mountain Jewish identity within late nineteenth-century Caucasian ethnography. The categories employed by the author function not merely as descriptive tools but as structuring elements that defined communal boundaries and articulated cultural distinctiveness.

At the same time, the later reception and reinterpretation of these materials — including critical assessments and republications — confirm both their documentary value and their enduring influence. Despite certain inaccuracies noted by subsequent scholars, Bezhanov's work remains a foundational reference for the study of Mountain Jewish history and culture.

Thus, the articles published in SMOMPK not only preserve valuable ethnographic and folklore data but also illustrate the processes through which ethnic identity was recorded, framed, and transmitted within the scholarly discourse of the late 19th century.

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The margins speak:
Kendrick Lamar, identity, and Bhabha's third space

Daniel Kharumnuid and Dimpy Bania*

Abstract: This research is an analysis of rapper Kendrick Lamar's works in his albums *Good Kid*, *M.A.A.D. City*, *To Pimp a Butterfly*, and *Damn*, through Homi K. Bhabha's concepts of hybridity and third space. The album displays the intersections of different social experiences and cultures providing a unique perspective of the African American cultural experience within America which has for been, for long, marked by racial tensions and historical trauma. Lamar's work draws from African American artforms and musical styles such as jazz and funk, while addressing themes of oppression, racism, materialism and identity influenced by the greater mainstream American culture, creating a dynamic 'third space' where African American identity is both affirmed and redefined while also exemplifying Bhabha's notion of hybridity, revealing the complexity of identities shaped by multiple cultural influences and historical legacies.

Keywords: artforms, cultures, identity, musical styles, oppression

Introduction

Kendrick Lamar Duckworth, known professionally as Kendrick Lamar is an American rapper, songwriter, producer and musician. Lamar was born on 17th June 1986, in Compton, California, USA, whose environment greatly influenced his songwriting and lyrical themes of his music. Lamar is considered one of the most important and influential hip hop artists of his generation with his artistry and music contributing significantly to the shaping of subsequent cultural outputs globally. Lamar is often heralded widely with the title of 'greatest of all time'.

Beginning his career in the mid-2000s under the stage name K. Dot, Lamar released several mixtapes before, putting out his alternative rap, studio album debut *Section.80*, in 2011, which displayed his potential

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AGATHOS, Volume 17, Issue 2 (33-34): 105-118, DOI 10.5281/zenodo.233594
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and established himself as a distinct voice in the hip hop and rap music sphere. His mainstream recognition however came with his 2012 sophomore effort, *Good Kid*, *M.A.A.D. City*. It was also critically acclaimed and earned Lamar a Grammy nomination. Following this, in 2015 Lamar released what is considered to be one of the greatest albums of the decade with *To Pimp a Butterfly*. His third studio effort saw Lamar draw influence from African American music styles such as jazz and funk, with highly political, abstract and introspective lyrics that spoke on the themes of oppression, racism, resistance, black identity, materialism and love, which even won him a Grammy award. 2017 saw the release of his fourth studio album *DAMN*, which saw similar critical and commercial success and won the Pulitzer Prize for Music, making Lamar the first non-jazz or classical artist to receive the prestigious honour. In 2022 Lamar released *Mr. Morale & the Big Steppers*, which similar to his previous works also earned widespread critical and mainstream success.

In the context of 'third space', a concept introduced by Homi K. Bhabha, *To Pimp a Butterfly* functions as a metaphorical space where multiple cultural influences and histories intersect. The album itself is a fusion of past and present, incorporating elements of jazz, funk, soul, and hip-hop, much like the fusion of African, European, and American musical traditions described by Bennett Jr. in the era of slavery. Lamar's work exists in a liminal space—where African Americans simultaneously navigate the legacy of their past and assert their cultural identity in a society that continues to marginalize them. This 'third space' allows for both a reassertion of African American identity and a critique of systemic oppression, much as the spirituals, blues, and jazz music did in earlier periods.

Methodology

This research employs the use of a qualitative research methodology. This method involves the close examination, analysis and interpretation of ideas and concepts highlighted and found in the primary and secondary resources used. Using Homi Bhabha's postcolonial concept of the 'third space', this research will highlight how this very idea is reflected in Kendrick Lamar's songs, and also how Lamar through his art contemplates on this idea of cultural plurality from the African American perspective.

The primary source of this research constitutes Kendrick Lamar's album *To Pimp a Butterfly*, while secondary sources include various research articles, journals, and books from various disciplines.

Objectives

This research titled 'The Margins Speak: Kendrick Lamar, Identity, and Bhabha's Third Space' aims to analyse how Kendrick Lamar's *To Pimp a Butterfly* can be examined and understood through the postcolonial concepts of third space and hybridity. Additionally, it also explores how the album portrays the full scope of African American cultural experience and struggles in contemporary America.

The following are the objectives of this research:

- To examine how the album demonstrates hybridity in its lyrical content and musical production
- To explore how the album displays Bhabha's concept of third space
- To analyse how the songs in *Good Kid*, *M.A.A.D. City*, *To Pimp a Butterfly*, and *Damn* reflect themes of race, conflict, black identity, and how Lamar uses these ideas to comment on the struggles of the African American in contemporary America
- To highlight how Lamar uses the album as a tool to convey complex relationship between an individual and the greater society through a postcolonial perspective

Results and discussion

Homi K. Bhabha, in *The Location of Culture* describes the 'third space' as a "nonsynchronous temporality of global and national cultures opens up a cultural space … where the negotiation of incommensurable differences creates a tension peculiar to borderline existences." (Bhabha 1994, 218) This 'cultural space' thus created allows for the overlapping of diverse cultural experiences and identities, through an intersection and representation of various cultural elements, enabling a sort of hybrid cultural ecosystem. Lamar's work represents a fusion of various elements of his own cultural and ethnic background that is a strong characteristic highlight; drawing inspiration from his own African and African American cultural heritage as well as mainstream America, reflecting a hybridity in its engagement of themes of race, gender, oppression and identity, and how all these various elements essentially reflect the contemporary African-American or "black" experience in America. Bhabha's

concept of the 'third space' thus, enables a close study of the hybridised experience Lamar talks about in *To Pimp a Butterfly*, not only as a way to analyse the extent of this hybridised existence but also of the confusion, dread, and conflicting identities.

Furthermore, the application of Bhabha's theoretical concepts within the framework of Postcolonial Studies situates this research within a critical examination of Lamar's work and songs in relation to the historical and systematic oppression. A close examination of the content and lyrics of Lamar's musical output sheds light on the evident struggle of the marginalised communities against the oppressive forces of the dominant culture. As Bhabha (1994, 32-33) has expressed, "The transmutation and translation of indigenous traditions in their opposition to colonial authority demonstrate how the desire of the signifier, the indeterminacy of intertextuality, can be deeply engaged in the postcolonial struggle against dominance power and knowledge". This very relationship serves as a strong basis on the various themes found within the album reflecting Lamar's postcolonial narrative and his struggle for identity and autonomy within the confines American culture and society, and his struggle against the deeply rooted seeds of colonialism present in contemporary American society. Lamar's perspective on race, identity, culture and how this view is ultimately shaped by the African American's relation to the greater dominant culture is a strong postcolonial element within the work that is worth highlighting.

This relationship expressed by Bhabha and Lamar, in essence strongly overlap with ideas of Critical Race Theory where the movement and idea is, according to *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction* by Richard Delgado and Jean Stefanic, expressed as "studying and transforming the relationship among race, racism, and power." (Delgado and Stefancic 2006, 1) This definition and, on a larger scope, the theory itself, provides a critical interpretation and ideological basis for the racial struggles and the systems behind which these relationships and structures exist, especially through the perspectives that Lamar provides in *To Pimp a Butterfly*. Additionally, as this research explores the ways in which dominant (or colonial) powers exert influence over the marginalised thereby further creating a system of racial divide, it is essential to understand this relationship of racial identity through a critical perspective. Bhabha's notion of hybridity allows for a critical understanding of identity as fluid and negotiated rather than fixed, which resonates with critical race theory's

emphasis on the socially constructed nature of race and the complexity of racial identities.

Lamar's albums can be studied as cultural artefacts where the sound and sonic elements, lyricism and narrative performances intersect and converge to observer how the artist calls into question and challenges the fixed notions of identity, race and their relationship with power through the album. By framing it as the site of cultural negotiation, this research attempts to explores how Lamar uses, appropriates, reclaims and remixes cultural symbols like religion, blackness, violence, and hope in an artistic medium and conceit that he has carefully constructed through musical genre and sonic experimentation, all while positioning himself as both participant and critic in the socio-political landscape to resist and essentialist definition of cultural identity, and in doing so inhabits the hybridity of 'the third space'. Homi K. Bhabha in *The Location of Culture* provides a critical basis for understanding this, where he states:

> The intervention of the third space of enunciation, which makes the structure of meaning and reference an ambivalent process, destroys this mirror of representation in which cultural knowledge is customarily revealed as an integrated, open, expanding code. Such an intervention quite properly challenges our sense of the historical identity of culture as a homogenizing, unifying force, authenticated by the originary past, kept alive in the national tradition of the People. In other words, the disruptive temporality of enunciation displaces the narrative of the Western nation which Benedict Anderson so perceptively describes as being written in homogeneous, serial time (Bhabha1994, 37).

Good Kid, M.A.A.D. City, Lamar's 2012 album, in this instance, works not just as a music album but serves as an ethnographic sound document of Compton, California. In its use of skits, voicemails, ambient sounds of the street, and highly personal narrative testimony, the album builds what can be read as a sound archive of black urban life today.

This act of sonic archiving subverts the legitimacy of state-authorised histories and hegemonic cultural narratives by placing black subjectivity in a legitimate and oppositional mode of historical inscription.

A clear example of this sonic archiving can be found in *The Art of Peer Pressure*, where Lamar's narration of a teenage robbery functions as a form of autoethnographic testimony. The song's structural shifts in tempo and tone, alongside Lamar's nuanced vocal modulation, reflect

the internal fragmentation and external conditioning experienced in environments marked by systemic violence and surveillance. The song opens, immediately marking the track as an oral testimony, situating Lamar not just as performer, but as narrator and witness. This narrative approach positions the song as a form of aural documentation, echoing the function of an ethnographic artefact. The song's structure enacts a sonic third space: it begins with subdued beats and a laid-back vocal tone, mimicking calm introspection, but this shifts as the narrative escalates. When Lamar and his friends commit a robbery, the beat intensifies, symbolizing a rupture in moral certainty and selfhood. Lamar (2012) notes, "But I'm with the homies right now", a refrain that repeats throughout the track functioning as both justification and confession. This refrain marks the tension between the individual self and collective identity, suggesting that identity is not static but shaped through situational performance.

In speaking this fractured sense of self: "Really I'm a peacemaker, but I'm with the homies right now" Lamar (2012) makes visible the ambivalence of cultural identity formation. He is neither fully internalised into the position of 'gangsta' nor external to it; rather, he lives it reflexively. By doing so, he resists both the romanticization of violence and the pathologizing gaze often thrown upon Black urban youth. The track thus serves as a cultural negotiation artefact, in which sound, language, and narrative all combine to destabilise the prevailing representations of Black criminality and masculinity.

Another vivid illustration of how Lamar utilizes narrative and sound structure to create a cultural object is the song 'Fear' from *Damn* (2017). Formed in three stanzas, each of which corresponds to a discrete phase in the life of Lamar: 7, 17, and 27, the song serves as a multitemporal autoethnography, narrating the passage of fear as encountered by an adolescent Black male working his way through changing regimes of control: family, street, and finally, self.

The opening verse, spoken in the voice of child Lamar, contains the lines: "I'll probably die anonymous / I'll probably die with promises / I'll probably die walkin' back home from the candy house" (Lamar 2017) a group of worries based on domestic discipline, structural abandonment, and local brutality. These lines function not simply as individual memory, but as archival shards of cultural experience, highlighting a mode of black epistemology grounded in precarity and vulnerability. This makes the song an artefact that documents and

critiques overlapping systems of control: parental, institutional, and racialized.

By shifting viewpoint over time, Lamar performs what Bhabha (1994, 37) calls the "disruptive temporality of enunciation", wherein identity is not established through a linear developmental trajectory but ambivalent repetition and fragmentation. The repetition "Why God, why God, do I gotta suffer?" (Lamar 2017) occurs like a religious lament, grounded in Biblical rhythm yet filled with existential confusion.

This blend of religious rhetoric, combined with hip-hop structure and intensely personal suffering, demonstrates how Lamar appropriates cultural symbols not as fixed signifiers, but as negotiated ones, variable by age, location, and moment in history. In *Fear*, Lamar is not merely describing his life; he is enacting the instability of identity as it gets negotiated in terms of institutional violence, self-doubting internalization, and ancestral memory. The track then becomes a 'third space' in which contradictory cultural scripts (family, religion, masculinity, capitalism, blackness) are neither taken in nor thrown away, but continually questioned.

Along with its complexities in both lyricism and musicality, Lamar's fourth studio album *To Pimp a Butterfly* released in 2015 serves as an object that not only reflects the times in which it was created but actively participates in shaping conversations about race, identity, and power within the postcolonial world, by acknowledging, addressing and creating art around them. The album essentially serves as a marker of the contemporary black experience in America offering a layered narrative that refuses to conform to the ideas of a fixed culture and racial identities. The album's release during a period of heightened awareness around police brutality, systemic racism, and the 'Black Lives Matter' movement situates it firmly within ongoing struggles for racial justice. In this sense, the album can be viewed as a document of resistance, one that participates in the larger dialogue about the decolonization of black identity. Lamar's use of genre, historical references, and self-representation throughout the album presents a challenge to the colonial structures that have sought to define blackness in narrow, monolithic terms.

The first track of the album *Wesley's Theory* is presented with a dense and layered landscape that draws heavily from funk, psychedelic soul, and jazz fusion featuring funk pioneer George Clinton and contemporary bassist Thundercat. The track opens with a sample of

Boris Gardiner's 'Every Nigger is a Star' a deliberate invocation of black cultural pride and historical reclamation. In doing so, Lamar situates his music in the expansive culture and tradition of resistance in African American music that not only acknowledges the generational continuity of black struggle but at the same time reconfigures these ideas into the contemporary context of Lamar's artistry.

The track is a funk inspired rap song that merges live instrumentation with layered production to create a rich and textured composition. In *Funk: The Music, The People, and The Rhythm of The One* coincidentally forwarded by George Clinton himself, author Rick Vincent explores the relationship between funk and rap stating "Rap music has become the focal point of the resurgence of The Funk—a continuation of the funk in the digital age. By replicating original funk tracks, albeit in dehydrated form, Hip Hoppers have found themselves reiterating the stylistic and philosophical aspects of The Funk while repeating the groovy hooks. This should come as no surprise, since rap and funk both come from the same demographic group: the rebellious youth of the outcast urban underworld" (Vincent1996, 178). Through this, Vincent emphasises the idea of funk and rap as both artistic forms that enable the continuation of African American musical culture and tradition of resistance. Funk as he describes, emerged from a lineage of struggle, identity and collective resistance. Similarly, Vincent acknowledges that rap music, despite its seemingly chaotic or violent energy, carries forward the same themes of resistance, yearning for justice, and the fight for belonging that were central to the earlier traditions of black music. Rap, much like funk, draws on the frustrations and desires for social change in the face of systemic oppression, and in essence reflects the lived experience of marginalized communities. The second half of the quote underscores how the fusion of historical black musical traditions like funk with the modern voice of rap produces a form of artistic expression that is both rooted in the past and speaking to the present. Vincent highlights that this combination gives the artist 'knowledge of self' and 'knowledge of the streets': tools that empower the artist to navigate and critique societal systems. This 'timely strength' refers to how artists use their musical legacy to comment on and challenge current social and political issues.

In context of *Wesley's Theory* this blending and fusion of genres in the track, can be used as a way to highlight the roles of funk and rap in how they act as forms of cultural resistance, in an artistic form that

moves beyond the lyrical. The use of funk's rhythmic and harmonic complexities with featured artists funk pioneer George Clinton and contemporary musician Thundercat, combined with Lamar's incisive, direct lyricism, establishes a complex cultural space where resistance is not only rapped but felt. The rhythmic drive of funk, paired with the storytelling tradition of rap, creates an experience understands and viscerally engage with the socio-political struggles Lamar articulates. Thus, Lamar's practical approach to this form provides a musical manifestation of the themes and ideas of race, struggle, oppression and resistance that Lamar explores lyrical in the album.

Lamar's engagement within musical genres, the track then becomes a 'third space', as Bhabha describes, a location of cultural negotiation. Lamar uses the sonic elements of funk with its historical context of black resistance, and the present current struggles against racial capitalism in his rap and art; and in doing so, he creates a space where identity is fluid and dynamic, resisting any essentialist and fixed definitions of black culture.

Another track where Lamar explores and experiments with genre is in his use of funk again as a platform and musical basis in *King Kunta*. In his review of the song in the music website *Pitchfork*, Winston Cook-Wilson (2015) describes the track as "equal parts 'The Payback'-era James Brown and the irascible chipmunked Prince from 'Housequake'" again recalling the funk sounds of the past. He continues "The track builds carefully in militant energy" and qualifies the track as "It's G-funk with the screws loosened" (Cook-Wilson 2015). These quotes are a significant marker of the kind of energy and spirit that Lamar embodies in the track. While *Wesley's Theory* in its musical sense served as a quasi-ironic, mixing cultural pride with subtle critique, *King Kunta* on the other hand with its evolved version of funk called 'G-Funk' is playful and unapologetic pushing a more direct, confrontational energy.

According to Gus Fisher (2021) in the article "We Want The Funk: From P-Funk To G-Funk & Beyond, A Brief History", 'G-Funk' arose in the West Coast Hip-Hop scene as a genre that "took the hard-hitting beats of East Coast pioneers like Public Enemy, Ice-T, and Run D.M.C., and smoothed out their edges by sampling the great soul and funk artists of the previous generation". Essentially again, culminating into a new and modern sound that not only paid homage to the culture from which these artists came, but also told the truths of the time.

The spirit, energy and ethos of G-Funk can be summed up with two pioneering songs of the genre, 'Nuthin' But a 'G' Thang' by Dr. Dre ft. Snoop Dogg released in 1992, where they express in the song, "We're from the streets—but we're in charge now" (Broadus Jr. 1992) and Warren G's 'Regulate' released in 1994, where he raps, "Even when the night goes south, we bounce back, stylishly" (Griffin III 1994).

Lamar, in *King Kunta*, channels this energy in his own interpretation of the genre to tell his own truth of survival and success and as he raps in the song: "Now I run the game, got the whole world talkin' King Kunta, everybody wanna cut the legs off him King Kunta, black man taking no losses, oh yeah" (Lamar 2015). Against the funky backdrop of the music, these lines are significant because they perfectly embody the tradition of resistance especially in relation to the context of G-funk itself. Lamar's acknowledgement of Kunta Kinte, a fictional slave character from the 1976 novel *Roots: The Saga of an American Family* by Alex Haley, as a symbol of victory in 'king' and taking 'no losses' is a perfect embodiment of the G-funk spirit, facing calamity with the spirit of winning.

Another extremely significant cultural aspect of hip-hop seen in the album is in the usage of sampling again in *Wesley's Theory* with the song *Every Nigger is a Star* which was originally part of the soundtrack to a 1973 Jamaican film of the same name, created during the postcolonial period when Caribbean nations were grappling with black self-definition, nationalism, and cultural identity. As Deborah A. Thomas describes in *The Emergence of Modern Blackness in Jamaica*:

> Anti-colonial struggles had to be as serious about decolonizing the realm of culture as they were about the domains of politics and economics. During the 1950s and 1960s, nationalist intellectuals and artists—many of whom had been educated in the United Kingdom—were determined to build a national cultural identity that would both assert a distinctive way of life at a time when U.S. cultural influences were becoming increasingly pervasive, and recuperate and revitalize those cultural practices that were prohibited or quietly discouraged during the periods of slavery and colonial rule. Jamaica's independence from Britain in 1962 was thus marked by the establishment of new cultural institutions and the 'Jamaicanization' of old ones. These institutions were designed to promote aspects of Jamaica's 'folk' culture, now understood as its African heritage. (Thomas 2019)

This context gave rise to works like *Every Nigger is a Star*, which emerged during the 1970s: a decade shaped by black power, Pan-

Africanism, and cultural nationalism in Jamaica. The song's title and lyrics recontextualize the pejorative term, into a symbol of dignity and visibility, aligning with efforts by Caribbean artists to reclaim black identity in the wake of colonialism.

Lamar's sample of this song thus functionally operates in the same critical breath as the fusion of genres in the track. It provides a strong cultural empowerment in the face of oppression and struggle with the song reappropriating the pejorative term as a word of heritage and pride. Lamar's decision to sample the song, at the very beginning of *To Pimp a Butterfly* in the first track itself, is not merely an aesthetic choice but a deliberate act of cultural and historical alignment. By invoking a song born from postcolonial Jamaica's struggle to define and affirm black identity, Lamar bridges the Caribbean and African American experiences, highlighting a shared lineage of resistance and cultural reclamation across borders. In doing so, he performs again, what Homi Bhabha would describe as an articulation of the 'third space', a hybrid space where new meanings are negotiated through the merging of cultural signs, histories, and voices. The inclusion of Gardiner's track thus becomes a form of diasporic dialogue, one that resists both the colonial erasure of blackness and the commodified, monolithic representations of black culture in the United States. It places *Wesley's Theory* and by extension the entire album, within a broader genealogy of postcolonial cultural resistance that spans geography and time.

Furthermore, the sample's musical warmth and optimism create a stark contrast with the dark themes of exploitation, commodification, and internal conflict that follow in the verses, intensifying the ironic tension of the track. It is through this tension between pride and pain, past and present, across different genres that Lamar carves out a space for black expression that is as critical as it is celebratory. The musical reference becomes a tool for contextualizing black identity as dynamic, fractured, and constructed within historical frameworks of power and resistance.

Other examples and instances of this idea of sampling and the recontextualising of culture and history can be seen in tracks like King Kunta (2015), which draws from James Brown's *The Payback* (1973) and Ahmad's *We Want the Funk* (1994). Similarly, 'I' reworks the Isley Brothers' *That Lady* (1973) into a declaration of self-love and psychological resilience, transforming a 1970s soul classic into a therapeutic anthem for a generation grappling with trauma and

identity. However, the most interesting of these occurs in the track *Mortal Man* (2015) where in the interlude of the song, Kendrick Lamar directly engages in an interview with late hip-hop figure and icon Tupac Shakur. By essentially resurrecting Tupac's voice through archival interview audio, Lamar stages a transhistorical dialogue that collapses the boundaries between past and present, creating a 'third space' in which generational wisdom and contemporary crisis collide. An excerpt from this section of the song, that highlights this idea brilliantly is as follows where Lamar says "Sometimes I can like, get behind a mic and I don't know what type of energy I'ma push out or where it comes from Trip me out sometimes" (Lamar 2015) to which Shakur responds "Because it's spirit, we ain't even really rappin' We just letting our dead homies tell stories for us" (Ibidem).

To Pimp A Butterfly in Kendrick Lamar's artistic endeavour also directly engaged with the struggle within contemporary culture and this is most evident with the usage of the song *Alright* in the Black Lives Matter movement in America, to protest against structural racism against African Americans in the country. The song was used as an anthem of hope in struggle within the movement and served as a critical identifier of the time and culture during which the movement was taking place.

As Jessica McKinney (2020) describes in her *Complex* article "Protesters jumped, danced, and marched to 'Alright' on Colfax Avenue in Denver, Colorado. Tay Anderson, Denver Public Schools director and one of the organizers of the march, says 'Alright' was included in a playlist of songs meant to unify the people". She continues: "For decades, artists have used their music to speak out against injustice. In 1964, Sam Cooke released 'A Change Is Gonna Come' in response to the Civil Rights Movement. The following decade, Marvin Gaye released 'What's Goin On,' an introspective record that explores poverty and the Vietnam War." (Ibidem)

Lamar thus finds himself situated in this space of cultural negotiation, which actively reinterprets and reestablishes the dynamics of cultural signification and meaning in society through his art and music. Thus, Lamar creates a hybrid space where past struggles for justice intersect with present-day demands for equality, facilitating a continuous process of cultural transformation and political engagement which Bhabha (1994, 6) describes "the cultural hybridity of their borderline conditions to 'translate', and therefore reinscribe, the social imaginary of both metropolis and modernity".

Conclusion

In analyzing Kendrick Lamar's *Good Kid*, *M.A.A.D. City*, *To Pimp a Butterfly* and *Damn* through Homi K. Bhabha's concept of 'third space', it is evident that Lamar's work transcends the boundaries of conventional hip-hop culture and presents itself as a medium of resistance. Through his work, Lamar weaves a complex narrative that not only reflects the lived experience of African Americans but also challenges the existing notions of identity and culture in a historically stratified society. The 'third space' conceptualized by Bhabha emerges in Lamar's musical composition as a site of resistance. By drawing on memory and collective struggle, he uses the notion of space not merely to express fragmentation and chaos caused by racism and marginalization; rather it also becomes a source of self-realization, healing and empowerment. This 'third space' allows for revisiting black identity as a means of asserting its legitimacy.

Mortal Man, the closing track of *To Pimp a Butterfly*, operates as a philosophical code, posing questions about trust, legacy, and responsibility. It is this perceived dialogue with Tupac Shakur that enables Lamar to conduct this kind of hybrid conversation — spanning generations, mediums, and realities. Hybridity here operates not just as a pastiche of style and identity, but also as a historical conversation space: a third space in which past and present, self and society meet in mutual dissolution.

This study has argued that Lamar's albums, when taken as a collective cultural project, function as postcolonial texts. They construct hybrid identities through both form and content, while also making space for resistance, critique, and transformation. Whether through the jazz-funk fusion of *To Pimp a Butterfly*, the raw narrative realism of *Good Kid*, *M.A.A.D. City*, or the spiritual introspection of *Damn*, Lamar's work pushes listeners into the uncomfortable but necessary terrain of cultural negotiation, the space where meaning, memory, and identity are contested.

Finally, Kendrick Lamar's albums do more than document the African American experience; they reimagine it. Developing a 'third space' both in sound and story, he creates a powerful sphere of voiced contradictions into black identity within postcolonial America and resistance to their very formulation and reconfiguration. The hybrid self is not a fractured one but is constituted as creativity, resistance, and radical possibility in Lamar's music.

Kendrick Lamar's work is more than an artistic expression. It is a profound exploration of the notion of self, race, culture and identity. Lamar urges his listeners not just to consume his work, but to engage with it critically and reflect deeper into the emotions that celebrates black identity.

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Between gods and colonizers: Achebe, Soyinka, and the theological politics of resistance

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Abstract: This article examines how Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka mobilises religious cosmology and ritual to articulate resistance to colonial and postcolonial power. It argues that both authors employ religious and cultural symbols to express resistance against colonial domination. Achebe's fiction, particularly *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*, foregrounds the tension between indigenous Igbo cosmology and the disruptive forces of colonial Christianity. By contrast, Soyinka's dramatic works, especially *Death and the King's Horseman* and *The Strong Breed*, deploy Yoruba ritual not simply as cultural affirmation but as a tragic and often unsettling critique of colonial and postcolonial authority. Through situating these texts within the framework of what may be called the "theological politics of resistance," this paper argueshow Achebe and Soyinka analyse the moral, spiritual, and political consequences of empire. Their works treat religion not as narrative background but as a contested arena in which authority, identity, and justice are continuously negotiated. A comparative reading reveals Achebe's investment in cultural survival through communal faith, set against Soyinka's emphasis on ritual sacrifice as a mode of ethical and political critique.The argument underscores the relevance of African literature for global theology by showing how religious imagination serves as a resource for addressing oppression and envisioning postcolonial futures.The paper concludes that foregrounding indigenous religious imagination as a site of resistance enables the paper to position African literature as an active contributor to global theological debates on empire, power, and postcolonial identity.

Keywords: Chinua Achebe, Soyinka, postcolonial theology, indigenous religion, colonial Christianity, politics of resistance

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AGATHOS, Volume 17, Issue 2 (33-34): 119-134, DOI 10.5281/zenodo.23359669
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Introduction

Colonial rule in Africa reconfigured not only systems of governance but also the religious and cosmological frameworks through which communities understood themselves. Religion quickly emerged as a contested site, where indigenous cosmologies confronted the impositions of Western Christianity. These encounters were not merely theological disagreements but struggles over authority, cultural legitimacy, and the right to define moral order within colonized societies.

African literature offers one of the most sustained imaginative engagements with this encounter, tracing both the disruptive force of colonial intrusion and the resilience of indigenous worldviews. Writers such as Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka foreground these tensions by placing indigenous religious practices in direct confrontation with imported faiths, positioning literature as a critical space for theological reflection and cultural negotiation.

Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) illustrates with particular force, the fractures introduced into Igbo communal life by the combined pressures of colonial administration and missionary zeal. Through the experiences of Okonkwo and his community, Achebe exposes how spiritual identity and social cohesion are destabilized when external belief systems impose themselves upon local traditions. As the narrator observes, "He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart" (Achebe 1958, 176). This moment encapsulates the disintegration of a once-cohesive society in which ritual, kinship, and worship had functioned as mutually reinforcing pillars of communal life.

Soyinka approaches the question of religion and power not only through dramatic form but also through sustained theoretical reflection. In *Myth, Literature and the African World* (1976), he articulates the significance of myth and ritual as foundational frameworks for interpreting African existence. For Soyinka, these practices are not relics of a pre-modern past but living systems of meaning that continue to shape ethical relations and communal identity. As he insists, African ritual expresses "a conception of the world as a continuum of the living, the dead, and the unborn" (Soyinka 1976, 43–48). From this perspective, colonial Christianity's dismissal of indigenous spirituality as superstition, represents not merely religious intolerance but a profound erasure of metaphysical depth and moral philosophy. This

clash between indigenous cosmologies and colonial Christianity lies at the centre of the postcolonial condition. As Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o argues in *Decolonising the Mind* (1986), "colonial domination sought not only political control but also a form of 'spiritual subjugation' enacted through language and religion" (Ngũgĩ 1986, 16–18). In this context, African literature operates not merely as representation but as an active mode of resistance and reclamation, restoring cultural memory and reasserting indigenous religion as a source of theological and ethical insight.

The works of Achebe and Soyinka therefore move beyond narrating the effects of colonialism to stage a deeper struggle over meaning itself: who defines the sacred, who determines communal values, and whose gods are to be served. By placing their narratives at the intersection of religion and power, both writers reimagine African identity through theology, literature, and cultural memory, affirming indigenous agency in the face of colonial domination.

Research problem and significance

Although a substantial body of scholarship has examined the relationship between religion and colonialism in African literature, critical attention has largely favoured sociological, political, and cultural interpretations. Explicitly theological engagements, particularly analyses that consider how African writers themselves construct, interrogate, and reimagine religious meaning, remain comparatively underexplored. While scholars have demonstrated how colonial Christianity destabilized indigenous belief systems, fewer studies attend to the ways literary texts function as sites of theological reflection, where narrative, ritual, and myth articulate resistance, survival, and moral renewal.

It is within this critical gap, that a comparative study of Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka becomes both necessary and productive. In *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*, Achebe examines the encounter between Igbo cosmology and Christian missionary influence, revealing how colonial religion sought to displace indigenous systems of meaning and reorganize communal life around foreign spiritual and political authority. Religion, in Achebe's fiction, emerges as a terrain of profound contestation, where faith, power, and identity are renegotiated under colonial pressure.

Soyinka, by contrast, often approaches ritual and myth not simply as endangered cultural inheritances but as dynamic resources for

critique, renewal, and resistance. In plays such as *The Strong Breed* and *Death and the King's Horseman*, ritual sacrifice and communal rites are dramatized as sites of theological and ethical struggle, transforming the sacred into a force that confronts both colonial domination and internal moral failure. As Wright (1997, 51–61) observes, Soyinka's dramaturgy "renders ritual not simply as heritage, but as a mode of social regeneration." This emphasis foregrounds the capacity of indigenous religious forms to generate ethical insight and communal accountability in moments of historical crisis.

A comparative reading of Achebe and Soyinka thus reveals the potential for sustained dialogue between African literature and theology. Their works do not merely depict religious experience but actively perform theological inquiry, interrogating spiritual meaning within contexts of colonial disruption and cultural negotiation. While Achebe's narrative realism contrasts with Soyinka's mythopoetic imagination, these divergent artistic modes illuminate both the intersections and tensions between literary form and theological thought. Taken together, their writings affirm literature as a vital partner in theological discourse, capable of articulating resilience, ritual continuity, and moral renewal while retaining its distinctive imaginative autonomy.

Aim and scope of the article

The aim of this article is to undertake a comparative literary-theological analysis of Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka, focusing on how religion, both Christian and indigenous, functions as a site of resistance, identity formation, and ethical reflection in their works. The study examines Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and *Arrow of God* (1964), alongside Soyinka's *The Strong Breed* (1964), *Death and the King's Horseman* (1975), and his theoretical reflections in *Myth, Literature and the African World* (1976).

Through interrogating the dynamics of ritual, myth, Christian intrusion, and indigenous belief systems, the article maps both convergences and divergences in Achebe's and Soyinka's theological imaginaries.

Ultimately, it positions both writers not only as major literary figures but also as theological interlocutors whose works engage broader postcolonial concerns of cultural survival, moral responsibility, and the reconstitution of meaning in the aftermath of colonial disruption.

Research questions

This study is guided by the following questions:

1. How do Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka represent the encounter between Christianity and indigenous African religions?
2. In what ways do their texts deploy ritual and myth as theological strategies of resistance and renewal?
3. How does African literature itself function as a mode of theological reflection, constructing and contesting religious meaning?
4. What contributions do these comparative readings make to global and postcolonial theological discourse?

Theoretical and analytical framework

Postcolonial theory

The colonial encounter in Africa was not only political and economic but also cultural, spiritual, and psychological. Postcolonial theory provides a critical framework for examining these layered legacies, particularly the ways colonialism sought to fracture African identities and displace indigenous knowledge systems. Frantz Fanon, in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963, 170), observes that "colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip … it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures and destroys it". This insight captures the depth of the colonial project, which extended beyond territorial control to the reconfiguration of history, cosmology, and spiritual meaning. Within this context, Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and *Arrow of God* (1964) may be read as literary responses to the epistemic and theological violence Fanon describes. By recovering Igbo cosmology, ritual authority, and moral order, Achebe's novels function as acts of narrative resistance that contest colonial representations of African religion as primitive or incoherent. Similarly, Wole Soyinka's dramatic works engage colonial legacies through myth and ritual, exposing how power, violence, and spirituality remain entangled in both colonial and postcolonial formations.

Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) further illuminates this struggle by demonstrating how colonial discourse produced the colonized as "other," thereby legitimizing domination through cultural and intellectual misrepresentation (3–4). In the African context, Achille Mbembe extends this critique in *On the Postcolony* (2001, 102-106), examining how ritual, performance, and spectacle continue to shape

political authority and subjectivity in postcolonial societies. Taken together, the insights of Fanon, Said, and Mbembe offer interpretive tools for reading Achebe's realist narratives and Soyinka's mythopoetic dramaturgy as theological acts of resistance, texts that confront colonial disruption while affirming African cultural and spiritual agency.

Theological hermeneutics and African religious thought

While postcolonial theory exposes structures of domination, theological hermeneutics offers analytical tools for examining how Achebe and Soyinka reconstruct meaning through religion, ritual, and myth. Paul Ricoeur's conception of narrative as a "symbolic mediation of human experience" suggests that literary texts function as models of the world, shaping moral imagination and reconfiguring spiritual understanding (Ricoeur 1974, 64–65). From this perspective, African literature is not merely reflective of religious culture but actively participates in theological reasoning, using narrative and performance as modes of interpretation and revelation.

These hermeneutical insights gain particular depth when read alongside African religious thought, where belief and being are inseparable. John Mbiti's *African Religions and Philosophy* (1969, 1) famously asserts that "to be is to be religious in a religious universe", underscoring the pervasive presence of the sacred in African social, political, and metaphysical life. This continuum situates African literature within a living cosmology in which the divine, the communal, and the ethical are deeply intertwined.

Soyinka's dramaturgy strongly aligns with this worldview. His invocation of Yoruba ritual and cosmology in plays such as *The Strong Breed* (1964) and *Death and the King's Horseman* (1975) transforms the theatrical space into a site of metaphysical encounter, where ritual reenactment articulates a theological vision of renewal and cosmic balance that resists colonial fragmentation. In a similar vein, Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and *Arrow of God* (1964) dramatize the theological foundations of Igbo society, where divine authority underwrites social order and communal responsibility. In *Arrow of God*, the conflict between Ezeulu and the colonial administration represents not only political struggle but also a contest over sacred legitimacy—what Ogbu Kalu (2008, 29–33) describes as Africa's "religious economy," in which indigenous belief systems persist, adapt, and negotiate power under colonial modernity.

From this standpoint, literature itself becomes a space where theology is both performed and contested. Achebe's realist prose and Soyinka's mythic poetics demonstrate that narrative and performance are not peripheral to faith but central to exploring divine–human relations and ethical community. As Kwame Bediako (1995, 102–104) argues, African theology derives vitality from sustained dialogue with indigenous religion. Achebe and Soyinka participate in this dialogue artistically, employing narrative and ritual as hermeneutical instruments for recovering spiritual memory and rearticulating African moral vision.

Ethical considerations

This study follows established ethical standards in humanities research, including the guidelines of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE). As a textual and theoretical inquiry, it involved no human participants and generated no new empirical data; accordingly, no institutional ethical approval was required. Limited and supervised use of AI-assisted tools supported editorial clarity and manuscript organisation. These tools were employed solely for selective rephrasing to enhance readability, verification of citation formatting, and summarisation of secondary sources already familiar to the author. They did not contribute to the development of arguments, theoretical frameworks, or interpretive analysis.

All analytical insights, interpretations, and conclusions presented in this study are the sole responsibility of the author. The AI functioned strictly as an editorial aid, under full authorial oversight, thereby ensuring transparency, scholarly accountability, and the integrity of the research.

Limitations

As a hermeneutic and theoretical inquiry grounded in textual analysis, this study does not seek empirical generalization but aims to deepen interpretive understanding of theological imagination within African literature. It recognizes interpretive subjectivity as an inherent dimension of literary and theological analysis and remains open to alternative readings shaped by differing cultural, historical, and theological perspectives. Rather than offering definitive conclusions, the study seeks to contribute to an ongoing scholarly conversation on religion, literature, and postcolonial resistance.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative and interpretive research methodology grounded in close textual analysis and comparative criticism. It draws on literary hermeneutics, postcolonial thought, and theological criticism to examine how Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka mobilize religious ideas, ritual practices, and mythic structures as instruments of cultural resistance and postcolonial self-assertion. The methodological approach is premised on the understanding that African literary texts do not merely represent religious experience but actively participate in the production and contestation of theological meaning within historically specific contexts.

The analysis proceeds through sustained close readings of selected primary texts: Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and *Arrow of God* (1964), and Soyinka's *The Strong Breed* (1964) and *Death and the King's Horseman* (1975), supplemented by Soyinka's theoretical reflections in *Myth, Literature and the African World* (1976). These texts are examined comparatively to identify convergences and divergences in how each writer engages indigenous religious systems and Christianity as sites of moral authority, communal identity, and political struggle.

Interpretive attention is given to narrative voice, symbolism, ritual enactment, character construction, and dramatic structure, particularly as these elements articulate tensions between indigenous cosmologies and colonial or postcolonial power formations. Rather than treating religion as a static cultural backdrop, the study analyzes it as a dynamic field in which ethical values, communal obligations, and theological claims are negotiated and contested.

Postcolonial theory provides a critical lens for situating these texts within the broader historical realities of colonial domination and cultural disruption, while theological criticism enables an engagement with the spiritual and moral questions embedded in literary form. Literary hermeneutics, in turn, guides the interpretive process, allowing meaning to emerge through attentive reading rather than the imposition of predetermined conclusions.

The methodology is deliberately non-empirical and text-centered, relying on primary texts and established critical scholarship rather than fieldwork or quantitative data. This approach is appropriate to the study's aim of illuminating how African literature itself functions as a mode of theological reflection. By integrating literary analysis with theological inquiry, the study foregrounds the capacity of imaginative

writing to interrogate religious authority, articulate resistance, and envision alternative moral and spiritual futures in postcolonial contexts.

Interdisciplinary perspectives: Theology, literature, and cultural studies

The works of Achebe and Soyinka resist disciplinary boundaries, operating at the intersection of theology, literature, and cultural studies. As Graham Ward (2000, 8) notes, both theology and literature are concerned with how stories "create worlds in which readers live, move, and have their being." Literature, therefore, becomes a medium of theological imagination, a site where transcendence, community, and ethical meaning are actively explored. Achebe's reconstruction of Igbo cosmology and Soyinka's dramatization of Yoruba metaphysics demonstrate how storytelling itself enacts theology, shaping moral consciousness and reinforcing collective identity.

Homi Bhabha's concept of hybridity in *The Location of Culture* (1994) further illuminates the dynamics at play. This framework captures the creative tension through which colonized peoples generate new identities within the "interstices of power" (Bhabha 1994, 113–15). Achebe exemplifies this hybridity by reshaping the English novel to convey Igbo moral thought, transforming colonial language into a tool for cultural reclamation. Soyinka, in turn, fuses Yoruba ritual structures with Western dramaturgy, producing a mythic poetics that transcends binaries between local and global, sacred and secular.

Situating these authors within an interdisciplinary framework allows African literature to be read as a form of cultural theology: dialogical, resistant, and attentive to indigenous spiritual traditions. Achebe and Soyinka extend theology beyond ecclesiastical confines, showing that the sacred can be enacted through art, narrative, and performance. Engaging their work is thus inseparable from engaging theology itself, a continual negotiation of meaning, liberation, and communal renewal.

Religion, resistance, and colonial disruption in Chinua Achebe

Achebe's fiction consistently foregrounds the intersection of religion, colonialism, and cultural survival. In *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and *Arrow of God* (1964), Igbo cosmology forms the backbone of communal identity, highlighting how colonial Christianity disrupts indigenous religious structures. Religion is portrayed not merely as

spiritual practice but as a theatre of political struggle, where the legitimacy of African values is asserted against colonial denigration.

In *Things Fall Apart*, Okonkwo's tragedy emerges partly from the intrusion of Christianity, which undermines the authority of the Oracle of the Hills and Caves and weakens communal cohesion (Achebe 1958, 121–23). This disruption exemplifies what Oguejiofor (2002, 67) terms the "epistemological violence" of colonialism: delegitimizing African religion in favor of imported faiths. Similarly, in *Arrow of God*, Chief Priest Ezeulu's refusal to compromise on ritual obligations places him in conflict with colonial authorities, exposing indigenous authority to colonial pressures (Achebe 1964, 214–18). As Chidi Amuta (1989, 85) observes, Achebe frames colonialism as a struggle between moral universes, with religion as both battleground and prize.

Christianity and the narrative strategies of resistance

Achebe presents Christianity as a complex and paradoxical force. While missionary intrusion fragments Igbo communities, it also exposes internal tensions within indigenous religion. Nwoye's conversion in *Things Fall Apart*, for example, reflects both the alienating strictness of Okonkwo's traditionalism and the appeal of Christian narratives of compassion (Achebe 1958, 152–54). Lamin Sanneh (1989, 171) notes that Christianity in Africa spread not only through coercion but also through linguistic and moral adaptation, and Achebe captures this duality.

Achebe's narrative style functions as a form of resistance. By writing in English while incorporating Igbo proverbs, cosmological terms, and ritual idioms, he reclaims colonial language to assert indigenous knowledge. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986, 7) emphasizes that language is central to cultural domination; Achebe's use of English undermines colonial authority by foregrounding African perspectives. At the same time, he situates religion within the *longue durée* of Igbo society, highlighting both its ethical depth and social logic. Scholars such as Emmanuel Obiechina (1990, 112) and Gikandi (1991/1996, ix–xvii) underscore Achebe's skill in blending oral registers with the realist novel to reclaim narrative authority from colonial misrepresentation.

Achebe's characters navigate the tensions between affirmation and critique. Nwoye's conversion represents spiritual rupture, while Ezeulu's role demonstrates the persistence of indigenous religious power under colonial constraint. The tragedy of Okonkwo's isolation

and eventual suicide illustrates the broader cultural disruption caused by colonial and missionary intervention, transforming literature into both a theological and political act of resistance (Fraser 1980, 45–48).

Theology, cosmology, and culture in Achebe

Achebe depicts religion as a dynamic sphere in which continuity and change coexist. Colonial Christianity challenged Igbo cosmology but could not erase the resilience of local belief systems. Elizabeth Isichei (1976, 235) observes that Igbo religion survived by adapting, blending, and resisting colonial influence. Achebe captures this process of negotiation, showing indigenous religion as a living force shaping postcolonial identity.

Kwame Bediako's (1995, 102) "hermeneutics of continuity" parallels Achebe's literary approach, emphasizing that African theology draws strength from both traditional and Christian thought. Lamin Sanneh's (1989, 211–13) notion of "vernacularisation" further illuminates how communities reinterpret Christianity through indigenous lenses. Achebe mirrors this strategy by infusing English prose with Igbo idioms, proverbs, and ritual references, translating indigenous theology for global readership while resisting colonial erasure.

Feminist theologians, including Mercy Amba Oduyoye (2001, 73–75), note that African Christianity must engage social and cultural life. Achebe anticipates this by depicting women's spiritual roles: Chielo, the priestess in *Things Fall Apart*, embodies female religious authority, balancing male power and demonstrating the inclusivity of African religious systems. Achebe's work reflects Ogbu Kalu's (2008, 29–33) "religious economy," where indigenous traditions continue to shape and inform African Christianity through narrative, ritual, and moral values.

Theological imagination and ritual in Wole Soyinka's *The Strong Breed*

Soyinka extends the dialogue between religion and literature by presenting African spirituality as an active, lived system shaping ethics, identity, and communal life. His mythic and poetic approach renders ritual visible on stage, illustrating John Mbiti's (1969, 25) notion of "ontological totality," where life, death, and the sacred are inseparable. Through Soyinka, literature becomes theology in action,

expressing social, moral, and spiritual struggles within both colonial and postcolonial contexts.

In *The Strong Breed* (1964), Eman embodies the communal scapegoat, accepting death to restore balance to his society. Soyinka's portrayal of sacrifice reveals the centrality of Yoruba cosmology, where ritual preserves harmony among the living, the dead, and the unborn. This theatrical enactment constitutes a theology of renewal, demonstrating that African spirituality survives and regenerates creatively even under colonial disruption.

The collision of cosmologies in *Death and the King's Horseman*

In *Death and the King's Horseman* (1975), the tension between indigenous cosmology and colonial intervention reaches its climax. Elesin, the king's horseman, is expected to follow his ruler into the afterlife through ritual suicide, a duty meant to maintain the cosmic balance between the living and the ancestors. When the British officer Pilkings intervenes, the sacred order collapses, plunging the community into crisis. Soyinka, however, cautions against interpreting the play merely as a "clash of cultures." As he notes in his author's preface, the conflict is primarily spiritual and metaphysical rather than cultural (Soyinka 1975, Author's Note). The drama reflects Frantz Fanon's (1963, 170) assertion that colonialism distorts indigenous systems of meaning, while Yoruba cosmology resists such intrusions, asserting a worldview beyond colonial logic. Through the interplay of ritual duty and colonial interference, Soyinka demonstrates that African religion remains a moral and cultural force even under historical disruption.

Myth, ritual, and theological imagination

In *Myth, Literature and the African World* (1976), Soyinka develops the concept of the "fourth stage," a spiritual realm bridging life and death where myth, ritual, and artistic creation link the human and divine (Soyinka 1976, 140–44). This space exemplifies African spirituality, where sacrifice functions as a conduit between human responsibility and cosmic order. Ritual acts are not symbolic alone; they possess tangible cosmological significance, restoring balance, reaffirming ethical norms, and sustaining communal life.

Through this lens, Soyinka challenges colonial stereotypes that dismissed African religion as primitive. Yoruba cosmology emerges as a coherent and sophisticated system, wherein myth and ritual operate

simultaneously for spiritual insight and social cohesion. Achille Mbembe's analysis of ritual and power (2001, 104–6) further underscores this dynamic, showing how African ritual reconfigures authority and meaning in postcolonial contexts. For Soyinka, the stage becomes a theological arena in which sacred and political dimensions intersect, making theatre itself a spiritual practice of reflection, renewal, and moral critique.

Soyinka's theological contribution

Across his oeuvre, Soyinka uses ritual and sacrifice to articulate a theology of resilience and regeneration. Spirituality functions not only as faith but as a medium for cultural survival. Unlike Achebe, whose realist narratives depict the disruption of Igbo cosmology, Soyinka celebrates the endurance of Yoruba metaphysical thought. Ritual in his theatre is a living practice of resistance, through which communities assert spiritual and cultural identity. Sacrificial acts, whether literal or symbolic, restore cosmic and social order, transforming performance into a sacred space where art enacts theology. Memory, ritual, and dramatized sacrifice converge to model faith as a communal and transformative practice.

Comparative insights: Achebe and Soyinka

While Achebe and Soyinka employ different literary forms—realist prose versus mythic dramaturgy—both perceive religion as a contested site within colonial and postcolonial experience. Religion, in their works, serves as a form of counter-discourse that preserves dignity, meaning, and cultural identity. Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958, 36) and *Arrow of God* (1964, 209) depict Christianity disrupting Igbo cosmology, whereas Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman* foregrounds Yoruba ritual as a metaphysical challenge to colonial authority (Soyinka 1975, Author's Note). In each case, African literature performs theology, asserting the sacred against forces of domination.

Realism, myth, and theological meaning in global context

Despite methodological differences, Achebe and Soyinka converge in their theological vision. Achebe's historical realism depicts how colonial Christianity simultaneously undermines and reshapes indigenous belonging, reflecting Paul Ricoeur's (1974, 64–65) insight that narrative reshapes moral and spiritual understanding. Soyinka's mythic dramaturgy illuminates metaphysical dimensions of colonial

disruption, expressing Yoruba cosmology as a theology of sacrifice and renewal. Achebe emphasizes sociopolitical realities; Soyinka, by contrast, focuses on the spiritual and existential dimensions of human experience under colonialism (Fanon 1963, 170).

Together, they expand postcolonial theology. Achebe demonstrates how Christianity catalyzes new religious identities, while Soyinka affirms that myth and ritual preserve theological depth, echoing Mbiti's (1969, 1) assertion that "to be is to be religious in a religious universe." Both writers show that African literature does more than describe theology: it performs it, transforming narrative and theatre into spaces where faith, resilience, and continuity are enacted.

Although anchored in Nigerian contexts, their theological insights resonate globally. Their works illustrate three enduring lessons for global theology: indigenous cosmologies provide legitimate vocabularies of the sacred; ritual and sacrifice are efficacious theological acts; and theology must remain accountable to historical power structures to avoid complicity in oppression. Achebe and Soyinka exemplify Homi Bhabha's (1994, 113–15) notion of cultural negotiation, showing how the sacred is rearticulated through postcolonial literary registers.

Ultimately, their works compel theology to broaden its scope, recognizing literature and performance as rigorous modes of theological reasoning. Narrative and drama, in their hands, become arenas where resistance is enacted, meaning is reimagined, and the sacred is reaffirmed as a resource for cultural restoration and global dialogue.

Conclusion

This comparative study of Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka demonstrates that African literature cannot be fully understood without attending to its theological dimensions. Achebe's novels document the social and cultural disruptions introduced by colonial Christianity, revealing how external religious systems fractured indigenous structures while simultaneously generating new avenues for negotiation, survival, and moral recalibration. In contrast, Soyinka's dramaturgy illuminates the metaphysical resilience of Yoruba ritual and cosmology, showing how theatre enacts sacred continuity even under the pressures of colonial intrusion. Together, their works reveal that literature functions not merely as cultural expression but as a theological practice—one that remembers, contests, and reconstructs

religious meaning within contexts of domination, struggle, and renewal.

Situating Achebe's historical realism alongside Soyinka's mythopoetic imagination enables this study to highlight the ways African writers resist epistemic violence and reclaim indigenous religion as a valid framework for meaning. Achebe's narrative recovery of Igbo cosmology (Achebe 1958, 36; 1964, 209) and Soyinka's dramatization of Yoruba ritual (Soyinka 1975, Author's Note) collectively articulate a postcolonial theology of resistance, showing that storytelling and performance themselves can operate as theological acts. These works affirm continuity amidst rupture, uphold communal identity, and sustain cultural integrity in the face of colonial erasure.

This study underscores the value of interdisciplinary approaches that integrate literature, theology, and cultural studies, demonstrating that texts and performances serve as living arenas where communities negotiate transcendence, morality, and survival. For global theological discourse, the implications are significant: African literature offers resources for decolonizing inherited frameworks, modelling pluralistic, resilient, and morally creative modes of religious life.

Future research might extend this comparative approach to other African literary voices, including Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, Ama Ata Aidoo, and Zakes Mda, whose works similarly dramatize theological struggles in postcolonial contexts. Engaging African Christian theologians such as Lamin Sanneh (1989, 171, 211–213) and Kwame Bediako (1995, 102) would further enrich this dialogue, situating literature within broader debates on mission, inculturation, hybridity, and identity. Achebe and Soyinka thus emerge not only as literary innovators but also as theological interlocutors, whose works continue to shape global conversations about faith, culture, and resistance, inviting theology to recognize narrative and performance as vital sites of meaning-making in a postcolonial world.

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Personal experience and theology: St. Symeon the New Theologian

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Abstract: The theological work of St. Symeon the New Theologian, long marginalized by ”official” academic theology and preserved mainly within monastic circles, has in recent decades become the subject of growing scholarly interest. This article examines the originality of St. Symeon’s theology—rooted firmly in Scripture and Patristic Tradition, yet distinguished by the central place it gives to the author’s personal mystical experience. Set against the backdrop of 11th century Byzantium, an era marked by political and cultural flourishing but also by theological formalism and scholastic conservatism, St. Symeon’s insistence on the conscious, personal encounter with the uncreated light of God provoked considerable controversy among his contemporaries. The study explores the ascetic-monastic tradition that prepared the ground for his teaching and shows how Symeon transformed the principle that spiritual practice underlies true theological knowledge into an explicit and normative theological stance. Examining key Symeonian themes—divine light, dispassion, ecstasy, and deification—the article argues that his epithet “New Theologian” reflects not doctrinal innovation but a restoration of authentic, experiential theologizing, uniquely uniting doctrine with the personal revelation of the Holy Trinity. The article concludes by considering the enduring relevance of Symeon’s ”theology of self-consciousness”, according to Dumitru Stăniloae, for the contemporary Christian’s search for a living, personal relationship with Christ.

Keywords: St. Symeon the New Theologian, personal experience of God, Byzantine theology, mystical theology, deification / theosis, divine light, monastic spirituality

The theological work of St. Symeon the New Theologian — a body of work that throughout history has been somewhat avoided by “official,” academic theology, circulating instead in a more clandestine and

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AGATHOS, Volume 17, Issue 2 (33-34): 135-143, DOI 10.5281/zenodo.23360069
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fragmentary way, especially within monastic environments - has, in the contemporary era, returned to the forefront. Studies devoted to the life, activity, and theology of St. Symeon the New Theologian have become increasingly numerous and varied, addressing the most diverse aspects from differing perspectives, which has led to a differentiated assessment of this body of work. (Icǎ Jr. 2001, 42-43) The phenomenon is understandable if we take into account the fact that Symeon's writings have a particular character, probably unique within the context of Orthodox theological literature - a literature inclined toward traditionalism, restraint, and conformity - in that they are, to the same degree, both provocative and rigorously traditional. Thus, starting from an initially rather critical assessment (Hausherr 1928), the tone of studies concerning St. Symeon the New Theologian gradually became more nuanced and moderate, as his theology - or, more precisely, his manner of doing theology - came to be better understood and appreciated in relation to its original setting: the monastic world of 11th century Byzantium.

Born approximately 1,000 years ago, the theological work of St. Symeon the New Theologian stirred up, even at the time, powerful controversies which, as is well known, played a role in shaping it. The principal source of the disputes concerning the theology of St. Symeon the New Theologian - a theology of strong originality, not so much in content (since it is firmly anchored in Holy Scripture and Holy Tradition) as in its expression - is the primary role that the author's personal experience plays in its formulation. Symeon's theology is a mystical theology, one that, as he himself testifies, was born out of a participation, through the grace of the Holy Spirit, in divine glory, in the unfathomable depth of the love of God, One in Essence and Three in Persons, who, revealing Himself as light, urged him to bear witness of Him to others, his brothers in Christ:

> …I would like to remain silent - if only I could! - but the awe-inspiring wonder stirs my heart, opens my defiled mouth and, without my willing it, makes me speak and write. (St. Symeon the New Theologian. [c. 995-1005] 2001b, "Hymn 1", 53)

St. Symeon the New Theologian is thus a proponent of a kind of "theodidacticism" (Zamfirescu 1958, 411) - he maintains that all his teaching is inspired by the Holy Spirit and must, precisely for this reason, carry the same authority as the teaching of the biblical

prophets, the Apostles, and the Holy Fathers who wrote under the Spirit's inspiration:

> All of you, people, emperors and powerful ones, priests and bishops, monks and married people, do not consider it unworthy to hear the voice and words of me, a humble man. But open the ears of your hearts, listen and understand what the God of all and before all ages, the Unapproachable One, the Sole Almighty, in whose hand is the breath of all who exist, is saying. (St. Symeon the New Theologian. [c. 995-1005] 2001b, "Hymn 58", 291)

This claim, openly expressed on numerous other occasions by St. Symeon the New Theologian in his writings, caused a scandal in his day, provoking from representatives of official theology a strong reaction of opposition - directed not so much against his teachings as such, but against the author himself. And yet this claim, this particular emphasis placed on personal experience, on the conscious, mystical knowledge of God as light which, shining forth, clarifies the deep meanings of human existence for the soul freed from passions and prepared through tears, repentance, and asceticism, represents precisely the original note, the unique aspect, of the theology of St. Symeon the New Theologian - the hallmark of his writing, which during his lifetime earned him the epithet "New Theologian" and which in our own day secures his relevance, because through this feature:

> …Symeon's writings vividly illustrate what might be called the irradiating-explosive force of tradition in its charismatic, 'vertical' sense - as the handing-down and coming-to-pass of the divine presence 'as the life of the Holy Spirit in the Church' (in V. Lossky's famous formula) - rather than as the mere, socially organized transmission of certain ecclesial texts or religious practices. (Ică Jr. 2001, 9)

The purpose of our study is precisely to reveal to what extent, and in what sense, this original way of understanding and practicing theology - of speaking about God - represented a novelty in the age in which it appeared, as well as the interest it may still hold for the Christian of today. To achieve this goal we must first analyse the historical-cultural context in which the work of Symeon the New Theologian was born, then the main themes he addresses, as well as the relevance of his answers for the Christian of today and, why not, of tomorrow and of all time - because, as one of the finest contemporary Orthodox scholars of Symeon's work observed: "Although he spoke and wrote for an audience made up chiefly of monks, St. Symeon the New Theologian

felt that his message applied to all Christians, to every person seeking a personal encounter with Jesus Christ, the Risen Lord." (Golitzin 2001, 393)

As for the era in which St. Symeon the New Theologian lived and wrote, it should be noted that historians consider it to be the period of greatest flourishing of the Byzantine world, in every respect distinctive to it - political, economic, cultural, and theological. It is the period in which the Empire largely recovered, both territorially and administratively, with centralized control ensuring the smooth functioning of economic and social life; this in turn gave rise, on the cultural plane, to a new Hellenism through the revival of philosophy within the so-called "Byzantine humanism", represented by Michael Psellos and John Italos, while on the level of ecclesiastical life it produced a preoccupation with finalizing dogmas and canons, with codifying rites and liturgical offices. What was largely lacking within the life of the Byzantine Church of the period, however, was an authentic spiritual life - living, dynamic, creative, as in the first Christian centuries -, this having been replaced by a dangerous theological and ecclesiastical formalism, marked by a strong intellectualism and exegetical-dogmatic scholasticism, focused on immobility and conservatism, and largely confined to the simple, compiling transmission of the exemplary theological achievements of the earlier, patristic age. The role of philosophy in developing and clarifying the doctrinal distinctions necessary to counter the influences of the West or of heresies was, as always in Eastern theological thought, very important; but what was missing was the anchoring of philosophical speculation in the interior experience of the Spirit, so that, despite a considerable advance in erudition and refinement, the problems, arguments, and solutions proposed remained largely the same.

Against the backdrop of this society, which generally favored immobility and conservatism in every respect - but especially in theology, which had become somewhat of an ideology, a form of identity-discourse meant to preserve the theocratic Empire - there appears, at the turn of the first two millennia, an exotic figure who allows himself to speak freely, in the first person, without observing the accepted intellectual and stylistic canons, and whose legitimacy rests not on titles or advanced study but on his own mystical experience, on his personal encounter with the Holy Spirit: St. Symeon the New Theologian.

We must not imagine, however, that he appeared out of nowhere, for throughout the crystallization of Byzantine society and theology, one of the forces that constantly accompanied and contributed fully to its development - even if in a less visible, though not necessarily less influential way - was ascetic, monastic spirituality. This had already made its presence and importance felt in events such as the struggle against the iconoclasts, and also through the development of Christian doctrine in the writings of some of its notable representatives, such as Dionysius the Areopagite, St. Maximus the Confessor, Evagrius Ponticus, Diadochos of Photiki, Mark the Ascetic, Isaac the Syrian, Macarius of Egypt, John Climacus, and others. These authors, while maintaining respect for the dogmas and stressing the importance of patristic writings for the life of the Church, nonetheless brought - on the basis of personal mystical experience - certain additions and developments to patristic theology, bringing out and explicitly setting forth certain truths that were only implicit in the teaching of the Fathers, insisting on the necessity of purification from the passions as an initial condition which, as it is achieved, allows the Christian to "sense", or "see" - to contemplate - God, leading him to "the suffering of deification."

The whole of ascetic spirituality thus favored, as the source of true knowledge of God, prayer, holding that practice - the concrete spiritual life devoted to the ascetic effort of freeing oneself from the passions, combined with the glorification of the Holy Trinity through liturgical acts - represents the path that must be followed to attain the highest vision (*theoria*) of God, revealed through contemplation.

The principle that practice - life in the Holy Spirit within the Body of Christ, the Church - is the foundation of theory was thus a principle that constantly accompanied the development of Christian doctrine within Eastern theology; but it becomes a major force, explicitly recognized and affirmed as such in Orthodox teaching, through the theological work of St. Symeon the New Theologian. This does not mean, of course, that Holy Scripture or the dogmas as established by the Holy Fathers at the Holy Councils are to be ignored, but rather that, in order to understand and interpret them correctly, in order to draw out from them the true Face of Christ, spiritual experience is needed - an awareness of the personal presence of Christ within ourselves. This inward presence of Christ is the supreme reality, and only it allows for the knowledge of the treasure contained in the Scriptures and in the dogmas; only it allows for the surpassing and, at the same time, the

fulfillment of mere worldly, strictly intellectual knowledge, toward a new form of knowing God - a new, spiritual form of doing theology, based above all on the fulfillment of the commandments, but which does not stop there, overflowing instead into a conscious and personal experience of the Godhead:

> Likewise, he who has consciously acquired within himself God, who gives knowledge to men (Ps. 93:10), has traversed the whole of Holy Scripture and gathered all its benefit from reading, and will no longer have need of reading its books. For how could one who has acquired as his conversation-partner the One who inspired the divinely-inspired Scriptures to those who wrote them, and who was taught by Him the unspeakable mysteries of hidden things, still have such a need? Such a one will himself become, for others, a God-inspired book, bearing written within him, by the finger of God, things new and old (Matt. 13:52), as one who has fulfilled all things and has rested in God from all his labors, having attained to original perfection. (*Practical and Theological Chapters by Saint Symeon the New Theologian*, 1997, 88)

This requirement - of conscious and personal experience of Jesus Christ - applies, in Symeon's vision, to every Christian individually, and is possible for every Christian to attain, insofar as all participate in the life of the Spirit in the Church as members of the Body of Christ. Every Christian - be the emperor, bishop, priest, monk, or layperson - must, and can, in order to be saved, encounter Christ directly, just as the Apostles encountered Him. True Christian theologizing must reflect the unique and specific Christian religious experience of the believer's personal communion with the Holy Trinity, inscribed within the broader communion of the Church and the saints, and must not be limited to a mere scholastic transmission of dogmatic formulas:

> For if the recognition of true wisdom and the knowledge of God were to be given to us through letters and study, brothers, what need would there then be of faith, or of divine Baptism, or of the Communion of His Mysteries? None at all. (St. Symeon the New Theologian. [1003-1009] 2001a, 293)

It is precisely this emphasis - this struggle waged by St. Symeon against the conservative, repetitive, formalistic, and scholastic theology that dominated Byzantine spiritual life in his day - that most likely earned him, from his contemporaries, the unusual and exceptional epithet "New Theologian." Unusual, because within the highly conservative Byzantine world, as we have seen, novelty was usually associated with heresy; yet in Symeon's case the term does not designate an innovator of doctrinal content, a heretic, but rather, one might say, "the theologian anew" - that is, a restorer of the authentic

way of doing theology, born of and centered on the personal, existential living-out, within the Church, of the mystery of the Trinity, revealed through prayer and the Holy Mysteries. Exceptional, because before him only two saints had ever been called "theologian" - St. John the Evangelist and St. Gregory of Nazians - and to this day the Orthodox Church, in her liturgical worship, gives the title "theologian" only to St. Symeon and to the two saints just mentioned; a fact due, according to one contemporary scholar of Symeon's work, "to the crucial historical role played by these figures in defending the Holy Trinity - the ultimate 'object' of all theology - and to the manner of theologizing proper to Trinity-founded theology, a manner inseparably bound up with the personal experience of the Revelation of the Holy Trinity, which the theologian undergoes in beholding (contemplating) the uncreated glory of Its love, radiating from the Spirit-filled and ecclesial humanity of Christ."(Ică Jr. 2001, 26)

The "novelty" of Symeon's theology is thus more a matter of psychology - having more to do with the way it was received by his contemporaries, unaccustomed to his manner of expression, to his use of the first person and his recounting of the most intimate personal mystical experiences within a theological text - than with any genuine doctrinal novelty in his teaching.

Yet even though it remains firmly anchored in Holy Scripture and Holy Tradition, Symeon's theology does not, as already noted, represent a mere repetition of these, but is rather a living, renewing theology, one that develops - in the light of the Spirit, of personal experience - traditional themes and questions, unveiling the whole wealth of truths contained within them. A mystic par excellence, St. Symeon the New Theologian addresses in his writings the defining experiences of the spiritual life, such as divine light and the vision of God, dispassion, ecstasy, and deification. Through his insistence and his mastery - unique in Eastern mystical literature - in describing the personal experience of the vision of divine light, as well as the fruits of this encounter with the uncreated glory of the Holy Trinity - salvation, or perfection, the suffering of deification, a state accessible to all Christians desiring an improved spiritual life even in this present life - St. Symeon fully justifies his renown as the "New Theologian", being the "new" apostle of the divine light, successor to the Apostle John, and the "new" theologian of the Trinity, successor to Gregory of Nazians.

We might call him, following a suggestion of Father Dumitru Stăniloae, "the theologian of self-awareness", because through his writings he calls Christians of every time and place to the mystical search for the divine light, to the conscious and personal encounter, even in this present life, with Jesus Christ, to a personal dialogue with Him — a dialogue without which one cannot attain salvation, deification, and without which a true theology, a true knowledge of God, cannot be articulated. This is because, before being discourse, authentic theology is a mode of existence; it presupposes deification and dwelling in the light, "face to face" with God and with others, in full self-awareness and in boundless mutual love - apart from which there is the risk, so often underscored by St. Symeon the New Theologian, of falling into formalism and scholasticism.

We too, those of today and those of tomorrow, can be creative in theology — we can adapt and develop the teachings of Holy Scripture and Holy Tradition, keeping them living and dynamic, contributing to the fulfillment of their deep purposes - only if, understanding and following the example of St. Symeon the New Theologian, we do not merely read the Fathers, but transpose into our own personal existence their way of living within the light of the Glory of the Trinity — a light that is shared with all believers, and with each one individually, through the Spirit, in the Church, the mystical body of Christ.

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The development of writing systems during the Mongol Empire: Historical, cultural, and social aspects

Maryam H. Seyidbayli, Solmaz N. Namazova and Shafiga J. Imanova*

Abstract: The Mongol Empire's expansion in the thirteenth century catalyzed a profound transformation in the administrative and cultural structures of Eurasia. A central element of this transformation was the strategic implementation of diverse writing systems, which functioned as instruments of governance, markers of cultural identity, and tools for political consolidation. This article analyzes the evolution of Mongol scriptural culture from its origins in the Sogdian-based Uyghur script to the creation of the imperial Phags-pa alphabet and later national scripts such as Soyombo and Todo. By examining these systems through historical, social, and linguistic lenses, the study demonstrates that the transition from oral traditions to a multi-script bureaucracy was a deliberate political strategy to manage a diverse, transcontinental domain. The analysis demonstrates that these writing systems were not merely communicative tools but were vital in maintaining social order, facilitating intercultural exchange, and preserving the empire's administrative legacy across diverse ethnic groups.

Keywords: writing systems, Sogdian script, Uyghur script, Khitan script, Phags-pa script, Galik script, Mongol Empire, intercultural exchange

Introduction

The Mongol Empire, as one of the most expansive political entities in human history, serves as a unique laboratory for studying the intersection of nomadic statehood and bureaucratic institutionalization. While traditional historiography often emphasizes the military prowess of the Mongols, the transition from an oral-based steppe society to a complex administrative state required a sophisticated approach to written communication. The strategic adoption and development of

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AGATHOS, Volume 17, Issue 2 (33-34): 145-160, DOI 10.5281/zenodo.23360355
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various writing systems—ranging from the Sogdian-based Uyghur script to the imperially commissioned Phags-pa alphabet—reflect the ideological and pragmatic needs of a multi-ethnic empire.

In the early stages of state-building, the Mongols encountered established literate civilizations, leading to the strategic adoption of existing scripts to meet immediate governance needs. This was exemplified by the integration of the Uyghur script, which provided the linguistic framework for Mongol law and diplomacy. However, as the empire expanded into sedentary regions across the Near East and East Asia, the need for a universal, "international" alphabet became paramount. This led to the creation of the Phags-pa script under Kublai Khan, intended to serve as a unified medium for the empire's diverse subjects.

Despite the wealth of individual studies on specific scripts, there remains a need for a comprehensive socio-historical analysis that bridges the gap between the ancient Turkic runic traditions and the modern scriptural transitions in Mongolia. This article aims to analyze the historical development of these diverse writing systems—ranging from the Sogdian and Uyghur alphabets to the Phags-pa, Soyombo, and Cyrillic scripts—examining their role in state formation, legal standardization, and the preservation of cultural identity.

Methodology

This research employs a multi-disciplinary approach, integrating methods from historical linguistics, socio-political history, and diplomatics to provide a comprehensive analysis of the writing systems used during and after the Mongol Empire. The study utilizes the comparative-historical method to trace the evolution of scripts from their Sogdian and Aramaic roots to the classical Mongol alphabet, specifically focusing on the structural and phonetic adaptations of the Uyghur script. Central to the research is source criticism (heuristics), which involves the cross-referencing of primary materials—such as the Bugut inscription, the Secret History of the Mongols, and the Chinese chronicle Yuan shi—with secondary scholarly literature to validate script adoption chronologies. Furthermore, a socio-historical analysis is applied to examine the Phags-pa script as a political instrument of the Yuan Dynasty, investigating how social assimilation and shifting political loyalties led to the decline of certain writing systems. Finally, through descriptive and qualitative analysis, the study highlights the phonetic innovations and socio-religious roles of post-imperial scripts

like Todo, Soyombo, and Vagindra. The synthesis of these methodological frameworks allows for a holistic understanding of how writing functioned as a catalyst for state consolidation and cultural synthesis in the Mongol world.

The Mongol script: Historical development and cultural influences

The available information concerning the Mongol script is limited, and it is generally assumed that prior to the time of Chinggis Khan the Mongols did not possess a writing system of their own. However, as the vast empire established by Chinggis Khan expanded across a wide geographical area, diverse administrative and communicative needs emerged. In this context, the Mongols began to learn and employ written language.

Chinggis Khan drew upon the statecraft experience of the Turks, particularly adopting the administrative structures developed by them. Among the Turks, the Uighurs possessed a highly developed and extensive written culture. As the first civilized people encountered by the Mongols, the Uighurs quickly became the teachers and scribes of the Mongols (Quliyev 2021, 26).According to sources, taking into account the illiteracy of the Tatar tribes, Chinggis Khan instructed the Uighurs to teach reading and writing to Tatar children (Juvaini 1958). This measure played a significant role in the development of the Mongols' statecraft and administrative systems. The adoption of the Uighur script facilitated the establishment of more organized and robust state structures by the Mongols.

Chinese sources also support this view, noting that letters and decrees issued by the Mongols were written in Uighur, with the Uighur script being employed as their official writing system. The influence of the Uighur alphabet on the Mongol script is clearly evident, and it is noted that this alphabet consisted of 21 characters. One of the oldest extant materials related to the Mongol script is a monument erected in 1225 in the name of Chinggis Khan's nephew, which was inscribed using Uighur characters.

Some researchers, including the Mongolian historian T. Damdinsuren, report that the Mongols used the Uighur alphabet during the 12th–13th centuries (Dalai 1983, 150). According to the Russian Mongolist B.Y. Vladimirtsov (1929), the Naimans, who neighbored the Mongols, also adopted and employed the Uighur script. There is, however, scholarly debate regarding the precise date when the Mongols officially adopted the Uighur alphabet. According to the

Chinese chronicle "Yuan shi", this process took place in the early 13th century. These sources indicate that, to promote the spread of the Uighur script, Chinggis Khan captured Tata-Tonga, the vizier of Naiman Khan Tayan, and instructed him to teach the alphabet to his children.

The Mongolian scholar Danzan, however, argues that the Mongols had adopted the Uighur script before the 10th century (Choymaa 2003, 212). This represents a significant example of cultural interaction in Central Asia. The advanced writing system of the Uighurs in the 8th–9th centuries enabled the Mongols to establish connections among the literary cultures of Central Asia. Other researchers, including Shagdarsuren, assert that both the Mongols and the Uighurs derived their writing systems from the Sogdian script. The Sogdian script was widely used in Central Asia during the 6th–7th centuries, and the transmission of religious terminology into the Mongol and Uighur languages via Sogdian supports this view (Ersoy 2007, 393–404).

Chinese chronicles indicate that the Mongols used a script similar to Uighur, yet there are differing views regarding the precise date of the formation of the Mongol script (Shagdarsuren 2001, 34–35). According to Xiu Ting, prior to establishing a state, the Mongols employed three different types of writing: simple strokes on wooden boards for recording numbers, the Uighur script, and Chinese characters. This suggests that the Mongols initially did not possess their own writing system and instead adopted the writing systems of various peoples (Budak 2020, 243).

Between the 15th and 17th centuries, the Mongol script developed into a classical language and orthographic system. Significant contributions in this field were made by scholars such as Gungacaltsan, Choymaa-Odser, R. Danzandagva, and A. D. Lhaaramba. The main writing systems used by the Mongols were as follows:

Sogdian Script: The Sogdian script, considered one of the earliest writing systems used by the Mongols, is believed to have influenced the development of Mongol written culture. The preservation of monuments inscribed in the Sogdian alphabet in Mongolian museums attests to this influence. For example, the Bugut inscription, discovered by the Mongolian archaeologist S. Dorjsuren in the valley of the Khanuygol River, a right tributary of the Selenge River, is currently housed in a museum in Seserleg, Mongolia (Qipchaq 2012, 8). The Bugut inscription is regarded as one of the earliest examples of Mongol written culture. Such monuments assist historians and

archaeologists in understanding the evolution of the Mongols' writing system and language.

Uyghur Alphabet: In terms of form, the Uyghur alphabet resembles the Sogdian script. However, precise information regarding the origin and development of the Sogdian script is lacking. Some researchers claim that this writing system was derived from Aramaic (ancient Hebrew) script, while others argue that it was created from Estrangela, distinct from Sogdian. It is generally assumed that this script represents a variant of the Syriac script, with its ultimate origin in Aramaic. Among these ancient scripts, only the Uyghur alphabet became highly developed, widely disseminated, and significant for civilizations throughout history. The Uighurs adopted this alphabet from the Sogdians. Historically known as the Uighur script, Mahmud al-Kashgari referred to it as the "Turkic script." Unlike the Sogdians, who wrote from right to left horizontally, the Uyghurs wrote vertically from left to right, as attested in the Turfan catalog documents. Initially, the Mongols also utilized this script; however, as it did not fully represent Mongol phonetics, they gradually introduced new letters into the writing system (Sechkin 2012, 6).

Hyatan Script: Only a few fragments written in this script have survived. The Hyatan script is divided into two parts: the Greater Script and the Lesser Script. The Greater Script is thought to consist of several thousand characters and is considered similar to Chinese writing. No documents written in this script are extant. The Greater Script was created in 920, while the Lesser Script was developed in 925 to improve upon the Greater Script. To date, 378 characters from the Lesser Script have been identified. Both scripts played a significant role in the transcription of the Mongolian language and the development of culture. The study of the Hyatan script contributes to the understanding of ancient Mongolian literature and history (Namazova 2025, 182).

Phags-pa or *Square Script*: This script was created in 1269 under the directive of the Mongol ruler Kublai Khan. Kublai Khan was an educated and highly worldly individual, distinguished among Mongol rulers for his intelligence, wisdom, and capabilities. During his reign, all of southern China was under Mongol control.

After bringing China under his rule, Kublai Khan decided to adopt a new writing system, taking into account the difficulties posed by Chinese ideograms. In this transition, Kublai Khan's political interests were paramount. By moving the capital of his empire to Khanbaliq

(present-day Beijing), he aimed to create an international alphabet that would allow representatives of various peoples—Mongols, Chinese, Turks, Tibetans, and others—to write in their own languages (Vladimirtsov 1929, 22). During Kublai Khan's reign, the square script was invented. In 1260, Kublai Khan commissioned the Paqba Lama to develop a new alphabet for the Mongol Empire. The process of creating the alphabet lasted nine years, culminating in 1269. The extended duration of this work was due to the challenges of adapting the alphabet to the phonetic structures of both the Mongolian and Chinese languages. At the same time, Kublai Khan issued a decree mandating the study of the newly created script—the "square script"—and its use throughout the entire territory of the Mongol Empire.

The creator of the new alphabet was the Paqba Lama Lodaycontsan from the Sanya Monastery in Tibet. He was born in Tibet in 1235. Recognizing Paqba Lama's literacy and abilities, Kublai Khan presented him to Khagan Munke. In 1258, Khagan Munke invited Paqba Lama to the court and tasked him with translating Buddhist texts into the Mongolian language. Paqba Lama passed away in 1279. In 1321, by the order of Khagan Gegeen, a magnificent temple was built in honor of Paqba Lama.

The script invented by Paqba Lama was employed in official documents. Vladimirtsov referred to this writing system as the "13th-century international alphabet". According to Shen Si-Min's "Fan-Shu-Kao", the script consisted of 43 characters. However, the Chinese chronicle "Yuan shi" records that it comprised 41 characters. Of these 41 characters, 23 were used for Mongolian words, while the remaining characters were employed for foreign words. The form of the script was compared to the Tibetan script, and its writing direction, like Mongolian, was from top to bottom. Thus, the script's form resembled Tibetan, while its rules were adapted to Mongolian (Choymaa 2003, 218). The Mongols referred to this script as "Dörbeldiskin", while the Tibetans called it "Horyik" or "Sop" (Faulmann 2001, 129). During Paqba Lama's lifetime, the Passe-pa script was the only writing system used by officials throughout the Mongol Empire. This script was also reflected on coins issued in the name of the Mongol emperors. However, after Paqba Lama's death, the use of the square script he had invented began to decline. The period during which this alphabet was most extensively used in the Mongol imperial chancery spanned 1272–1310. Overall, the last known document written in this alphabet is

considered to be a decree issued in 1321 by the widow of the Mongol Khagan Darmabala.

The sources in which this script appears are as follows:

a. Various decrees issued by Khagans and other individuals.

b. Certain documents known as “Payz”.

c. Various works, some of which have survived to the present day; among them is the work entitled “Subashid”. One page of this work has been discovered. Ramstedt claimed that it was a page from a book on Buddhism, but Aalto later demonstrated that it was part of “Subashid”.

d. Traces of this script are also found on seals and coins, as well as on various inscriptions in temples (Choymaa 2003, 220–221).

Despite the introduction of the square script, various populations within the Mongol Empire continued to use the Uyghur script alongside it. This is evidenced by the discovery in 1930 of a birch bark manuscript from the Golden Horde period in the Lower Volga region. Its fragments were written in both Uyghur and Mongolian languages, using Uyghur and square characters, respectively. After the fall of the Yuan dynasty, the use of the square script declined significantly. For a long time, it was employed mainly as a mark on seals (even appearing on the seal of Dalay Lama in square characters). Such seals were used especially on ceremonial occasions.

There are several reasons for the decline and eventual disappearance of the Passe-pa script. First, learning this alphabet was extremely complex, and the difficulty of its written form added to the challenge. When the alphabet was created, it was based not on the spoken language of the Mongol people but on the elevated courtly style used by the aristocracy. For these reasons, despite governmental pressure, the majority of Mongols continued to use the Uyghur script as they had before. Other factors also contributed to the abandonment of the Passe-pa script. Like all nomadic peoples (such as the Huns and the Göktürks), the fate of the Mongols in China was not favorable. When the Mongols transitioned from horseback nomadism to a sedentary lifestyle, they were assimilated by the Chinese. In a country where each Mongol was outnumbered by three hundred Chinese, the situation could hardly have been different. The state language at the imperial court began to be Chinese rather than Mongolian. The Mongol emperors and aristocracy had to adapt to Chinese norms in order to maintain their power. As a result, the Chinese script gradually replaced the Passe-pa script.

Texts written in the Passe-pa script are rare. Therefore, it is not possible to provide extensive information about them. The Turkish texts composed in the Passe-pa script represent only a small part of Turkish cultural heritage. Consequently, the publication and scholarly study of these texts could shed light on certain aspects of the history of the Turkish languages.

There is no concrete evidence of the use of the Passe-pa script in Azerbaijan. During the Ilkhanid period — the second half of the 13th century —, the Mongols in Azerbaijan wrote in Mongolian using the Uyghur script. This is confirmed by the inscriptions on coins minted in various cities of Azerbaijan, such as Tabriz, Ardabil, Ganja, and Shamakhi. Some of these coins also contain individual characters of the Passe-pa script.

Galik Script. In 1587, Ayuush produced a transcription system for the Mongolian language. This new writing form not only made it easier to distinguish the letters j and y, but also allowed sounds absent from the Uighur script—such as p, f, ts, k, and lh—to be represented. According to Rinchen, after the introduction of this script, a large number of books was written and many translations undertaken (Rinchen 1959, 1-4). This signified an important stage in the scholarly and written codification of Mongolian, marking the start of a new period. Following 1587, translations from other languages began to emerge. In 1648, drawing on this model, the Todo script was devised. Choymaa notes that the development of this script laid the foundation for the Classical Mongolian written language, which served as the literary standard in the Mongolian Republic until the late twentieth century and is still used today. In its appearance, the Galik script resembles the Uighur script:

GALİK

Göst.	Değer	Göst.	Değer	Göst.	Değer	Göst.	Değer	Göst.	Değer	Göst.	Değer
	a		au		ga		ṭha		pa		sa
	ā		ā		gha		ḍa		pha		ša
	i		aḥ		ṅa		ḍha		ba		šа
	ī		ṛ, ri		tša		na		bha		ha
	u		ṝ, rī		tša		ta		ma		ksa
	ū		ḷ, li		dža		tha		ra		*durak-lama*
	e		ḹ, lī		džha		da		la		*nokta*
	ai		ka		ña		dha		ya		
	o		kha		ṭa		na		wa		

Todo Script. Drawing upon the model of the Classical Mongolian script, the Oirat monk and scholar Zaya Pandita Namkhaijamts (1599–1662) devised a new alphabet in 1648. This writing system became known as the Todo script, a name that literally translates as "clear" or "distinct." Zaya Pandita's aim was to refine and regularize the Mongolian orthography so that it would be more precise and could serve as a unified script for all Mongol groups. To achieve this, he introduced modifications to the traditional script in order to represent a wider range of sounds more accurately and to make distinctions between similar phonemes clearer. For example, whereas the Classical Mongolian script employed the same sign for different vowel sounds —such as "u" and "ö"—the Todo script provided separate symbols, thereby eliminating such ambiguities. This reform not only improved the readability and consistency of Mongolian writing but also facilitated translation, education, and religious literature among the Oirat and other Mongol communities.

Soyombo Script. Approximately four decades after the creation of the Todo script, in 1686, Öndör Gegeen Zanabazar, the first spiritual leader (Bogdo) of the Khalkha Mongols, designed a new script which he named "Soyombo". Inspired in part by the Indian Lantsa (Ranjana) alphabet, this system's name derives from the Sanskrit word "soyombo", meaning "spontaneous light". Zanabazar developed the script with two principal objectives. The first was to provide a symbol of freedom for the Mongols under Manchu domination; the second was to create a versatile writing system capable of rendering Mongolian, Tibetan, and Sanskrit texts accurately.

The Soyombo script is a genuinely multi-functional writing system. It contains about ninety characters that could be used to transcribe not only the Mongolian language but also various dialects of Tibetan and Sanskrit. Because of its originality and historical symbolism, it came to be regarded as an emblem of independence and appeared for centuries on the national flag of Mongolia. This symbolic role demonstrates that the script functioned not merely as a tool of communication but also as a marker of cultural and political identity.

Among the notable works written in Soyombo is "Itgel" (Faith), which preserves important information about Mongolian culture and its writing traditions. By presenting this text to European audiences, Rinchen contributed significantly to the international scholarly understanding of the Soyombo script and Mongolian heritage. His

collaborative studies with D. Kara offered a detailed examination of both the script itself and the contents of "Itgel". In places such as the Erdene Zuu Monastery and other temples, numerous books, alphabets, inscriptions, and even graffiti in Soyombo have been discovered, attesting to its historical spread and use.

Following Mongolia's separation from Manchu rule in 1911, the Soyombo script experienced a revival and wider dissemination. This period marked a turning point in both the history and the cultural significance of the script. Its renewed use and public visibility reflected the Mongolian people's commitment to safeguarding their cultural identity and historical legacy (Shagdarsüren 2001, 49–50). Thus, the Soyombo script stands today not only as a unique writing system but also as a lasting symbol of Mongolia's cultural resilience and identity.

Vagindra Script. Known in Mongolian as "Agvandorc", "Agvaan", or "Agvaanhamba", Vagindra Script was developed in 1905 by the scholar Agvandorc as a new writing system for the Buryat people. Although its initial creation is often cited as 1905, Rinchen notes that the script was fully established by 1907. The main goal behind its development was to create a writing system capable of capturing both Buryat linguistic traits and Russian influences within the same textual framework. By doing so, Agvandorc sought to provide a more precise and versatile method for representing the spoken and written language of the Buryat community.

The Vagindra script is notable for its ability to incorporate phonetic elements from multiple languages and to reflect the sociolinguistic context of the time. Its design demonstrates an effort to balance tradition with the practical needs of bilingual or multilingual communication. The principal characteristics and structural features of the Vagindra script can be summarized as follows (Choymaa 2003, 233):

1. It was developed with the Classical Mongolian and Todo scripts serving as primary models.
2. The design of the script was influenced by characters from the Cyrillic alphabet.
3. One of its objectives was to represent all letters of the Cyrillic system accurately.
4. The script was based on the Buryat dialect. Since Buryat is a variety of Mongolian, it reflects the specific phonetic and sound patterns of that dialect.

5. The script employed new symbols, which made it less suited to rapid writing than the traditional Mongolian script.

Cyrillic Alphabet in Mongolia. The adoption of the Cyrillic alphabet in Mongolia traces back to the 1930s. During the 8th Congress of the Mongolian Communist Party in 1930, a decision was made emphasizing the necessity of prioritizing the Latin script. Following this decision, for about a decade, the Latin script was used alongside traditional Mongolian writing. On February 21st, 1941, a joint decree by the Central Communist Party and the Council of Ministers confirmed the continued use of the 29-letter Latin alphabet. However, on March 25th, 1941, it was decided to transition to the Cyrillic script. Subsequently, on May 9th, 1941, the Central Committee of the Communist Party officially adopted a 35-letter Cyrillic alphabet.

The Cyrillic script was specifically designed to represent all the sounds of the Mongolian language. Its introduction marked the end of the Latin script's official use, and from January 1st, 1946, all publications, official documents, and correspondence were required to be produced using Cyrillic (Shagdarsüren 2001, 53). This transition not only standardized written communication but also facilitated literacy campaigns and educational reforms throughout the country.

Katzner identifies 1941 as the year when Mongolia officially adopted the Cyrillic alphabet. His evaluations regarding this transition are presented in his works published in 2005. In these studies, he discusses the adoption of the Cyrillic script in detail and confirms that the transition indeed took place in 1941. Katzner's works serve as an important source for understanding the changes in language and writing systems during this historical period (Katzner 2005, 203). Poppe, on the other hand, notes that the traditional Mongolian script continued to be used until 1944. According to him, Mongols began to use the Cyrillic alphabet consistently from that year onward. The Buryat population had abandoned their previous script earlier, in 1931 (Poppe 1965, 15).

In the process of adopting the Cyrillic alphabet in Mongolia and establishing the rules of the new writing system, Sh. Damdinsuren played a key role. He made significant contributions to the organization and implementation of the new Cyrillic script. The 35-letter Cyrillic alphabet, officially adopted in 1941, was designed to more accurately reflect the phonetic characteristics of the Mongolian language. To represent the language's unique sounds, additional

letters such as Ö and Ü were incorporated into the alphabet (Shagdarsüren 2001, 53).

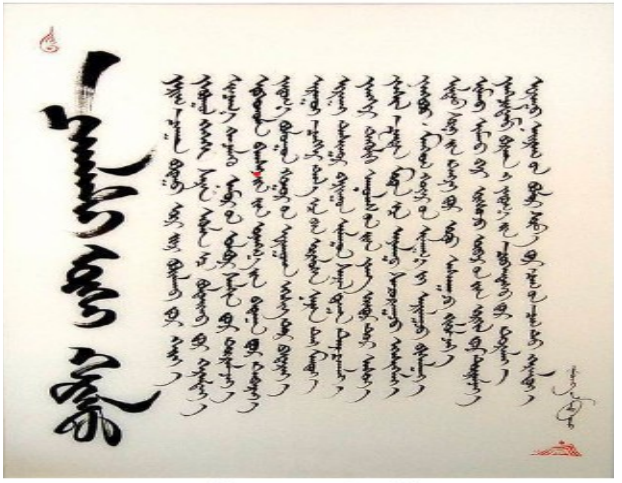
The overarching principle of the new writing system was to create a script that closely corresponded to the spoken language. This approach aimed to ensure that the written form of Mongolian better mirrored the natural features of everyday speech, thereby improving the alignment between the written and spoken forms of the language.

As can be seen, various writing systems were used during the period of the Mongol Empire. Given that the empire encompassed vast territories and was home to diverse cultures and language groups, it provided a fertile ground for the development and implementation of multiple scripts. Mongolian writing not only reflects the language itself but also incorporates influences from other cultures, making it an important source for understanding the historical and social context of the era. This written heritage allows for a broader exploration of Mongolian culture, language, and history. Consequently, the literary legacy of the Mongol Empire reveals not only historical events but also the cultural exchanges and interactions among different ethnic groups.

The 1224 Inscription of Genghis Khan



An example of elegantly written Mongolian script



نمونه متن خوشنویسی شده‌ی مغولی

On the history of research into the ancient alphabetic scripts of the Turkic world (Runic Scripts)

The creation of writing is a complex process closely connected with a people's culture, history, moral values, and mentality. Ancient peoples of the Eurasian Steppe recorded non-verbal written information through petroglyphs and symbolic signs engraved on rocks, stone slabs, and in caves. These signs provide rich data on the lifestyle, history, and ethnic culture of nomadic communities. Historical sources and scholarly studies indicate that the ancient Turks maintained a long-standing tradition of state organization and written culture. The original homeland and centers of civilization of the Turks are generally considered to be Central Asia, Mongolia, the Altai region, and Siberia. In these areas, the Huns and their successors—the ancient Turks—established vast and powerful state formations. The influence of Chinese, Iranian, Indian, Byzantine, and other ancient cultures is clearly reflected in these civilizations.

Throughout history, the Turks have employed various writing systems to record their language. Historical sources indicate that the written Turkish language can only be traced back to the 7th century CE. Among the scripts used during this period were the Old Turkic, Sogdian, Uyghur, Manichaean, Brahmi, Tibetan, Assyrian, Arabic, Greek, Hebrew, Cyrillic, and Latin alphabets. Each writing system developed in response to the needs of its time and the prevailing

cultural influences. The frequent changes in scripts among the Turks can be explained by their wide geographical expansion, incorporation into diverse civilizations, and adoption of various religions.

The ancient Turks mastered the Sogdian, Manichaean, and Brahmi scripts in depth. In the early period, the Sogdian script was even elevated to the level of the official state script of the Turkic Khaganate. Brahmi, which emerged in the 8th century BCE, is considered the oldest syllabic Indian script. The ancient Turks made certain modifications when using this alphabet (von Gabain 1986, 180–182). Buddhist texts based on the Brahmi script, such as individual manuscripts and missionary literature, were widely circulated.

The Manichaean script, as its name suggests, was widely used among the followers of this religion. From 763 CE, Manichaeism was declared the official religion of the Uyghur Khaganate, though it was later replaced by Buddhism. The "Book of Omens" (in Old Turkic, "Irk bitig"), compiled in 930 CE, was written in runic script on Chinese paper (Stebleva 1970).

The ancient Turkic runic alphabet mainly consisted of consonants, with some characters representing multiple sounds. During the reign of Khagan Istemi, this alphabet was taught to officials and soon spread among the general population. The runic script fully corresponded to the norms of the Old Turkic spoken language and was regarded as a major cultural achievement of the Turkic peoples (Shukurlu 1993).

Runic scripts were widely used in Central Asia from the 8th to the 10th centuries and served the language of the Orkhon-Yenisei inscriptions. Through these writings, detailed information about the phonetic system and historical development of the Turkic languages can be obtained. Ancient Turkic inscriptions were primarily created in various regions of Central and Middle Asia, as well as Siberia, and have been found in the territories of present-day Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, China, and Mongolia.

Overall, the ancient Turkic runic writings were not merely a means of communication but also emerged as a factor shaping the development of human culture.

Conclusion

The evolution of writing systems within the Mongol Empire and its successor states represents a unique historical trajectory from nomadic oral traditions to a sophisticated, multi-script bureaucratic apparatus. As this study has demonstrated, the adoption and development of various scripts—ranging from the Uyghur and Phags-pa to the Soyombo and Cyrillic—were not merely linguistic transitions but strategic responses to the exigencies of imperial governance and cultural preservation. The Mongol leadership's pragmatic approach to literacy facilitated the integration of diverse ethnic groups and enhanced significant intercultural exchange across Eurasia.

The research highlights that the Uyghur script served as the foundational pillar for Mongol statehood, providing the necessary framework for the codification of the "Yassa" and the institutionalization of diplomacy. Furthermore, the creation of the Phags-pa script under Kublai Khan illustrates an early attempt at "universal literacy," aimed at bridging the phonetic and administrative gaps between the nomadic elite and the sedentary subjects of East Asia and the Near East. The numismatic evidence from Ilkhanid Azerbaijan, particularly from centers like Tabriz and Ganja, further confirms that these writing systems were vital instruments of economic and political legitimacy.

Beyond the imperial era, the emergence of scripts such as the Todo, Galik, and Soyombo reflects the resilience of Mongol cultural identity and the continuous effort to refine linguistic tools in response to shifting geopolitical realities. The 20th century transition to the Cyrillic alphabet marks the final stage of this evolutionary process, aligning Mongolia's rich scriptural heritage with the requirements of modern global integration. In conclusion, the history of Mongol writing systems is a testament to the empire's role as a cultural bridge, where the written word functioned as the essential fabric for maintaining social order and fostering intellectual continuity in the Turkic and Mongolic worlds.

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From indenture to identity: Religion, culture, and diaspora in Mauritius

Dharmveer Singh Yadav, Vinita Mohindra and Mudasir Ahmad Mir*

Abstract: Mauritius, a small island nation in the Indian Ocean, stands as a testament to the enduring legacy of diasporic religiosity and cultural diversity. The rich tapestry of religious beliefs, practices, and cultural traditions woven into the social fabric of Mauritius reflects the complex history of migration, colonization and intercultural exchange that has shaped the island's identity. This paper examines the impact of indentured diasporic religious practices and cultural identity in Mauritius. It explores how religious traditions introduced by indentured labourers from India alongside contributions from African, Chinese and European migrants were transmitted, adapted, and preserved in a multicultural island society. Drawing on diaspora theories of lived religion, and postcolonial perspective, it analyzes the transmission and adaptation of Hinduism, Islam, Christianity and indigenous beliefs among migrants, highlighting the role of religious institutions in fostering community cohesion. The study traces the establishment of indentured service in post-1838 Mauritius, driven by global demand for sugar, and explores how migrants from diverse Indian regions contributed to the island's Creole identity. It discusses religious pluralism, facilitated by colonial policies, and the enduring influence of Indian culture on language, attire, cuisine and politics. The paper also addresses the significance of sites like Aapravasi Ghat, reflecting Mauritius' history, and debates surrounding its renaming. Ultimately, it portrays Mauritius as a multicultural society shaped by immigration and religious diversity, with diasporic religiosity playing a pivotal role in shaping national identity.

Keywords: diasporic religiosity, cultural identity, Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Aapravasi Ghat, Mauritius

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AGATHOS, Volume 17, Issue 2 (33-34): 161-173, DOI 10.5281/zenodo.23360830
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Introduction

Mauritius, a small island nation in the Indian Ocean, stands as a testament to the enduring legacy of diasporic religiosity and cultural diversity. The rich tapestry of religious beliefs, practices, and cultural traditions woven into the social fabric of Mauritius reflects the complex history of migration, colonization, and intercultural exchange that has shaped the island's identity. At the heart of this intricate mosaic lies the experience of indentured laborers and their descendants, whose journey from distant shores brought with them a kaleidoscope of religious and cultural expressions.

This paper aims to delve into the dynamics of diasporic religiosity and its profound impact on cultural identity in Mauritius (Mohammed 2021). Through a historical lens, we will explore the transmission, adaptation, and preservation of diverse religious traditions among indentured migrants, including Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, and indigenous belief systems. By examining the role of religious institutions such as temples, mosques, churches, and festivals, we seek to unravel the intricate interplay between religious practices and social cohesion within the Mauritian context.

The establishment of indentured service in Mauritius in the aftermath of the abolition of slavery in 1838 marked a pivotal moment in the island’s history. Driven by the burgeoning demand for labor in the sugar plantations and propelled by global economic forces, thousands of laborers from India, Africa, China, and other regions embarked on a journey to Mauritius.

Despite enduring hardships and exploitation, many migrants chose to settle permanently in Mauritius, contributing to the island’s burgeoning multicultural society. Furthermore, we will explore how religious pluralism flourished in Mauritius, facilitated by the colonial government's tolerance of diverse religious practices and the construction of religious institutions. The coexistence of Hindu temples, Muslim mosques, Christian churches, and indigenous shrines served as testament to the spirit of religious tolerance and mutual respect among Mauritians.

Moreover, this paper will analyze the enduring influence of Indian culture on Mauritius, as evidenced by the widespread adoption of Indian languages, attire, cuisine, and religious practices. The dominance of individuals of Indian descent in Mauritius’ political

landscape underscores the enduring legacy of Indian migration and its impact on the nation's identity.

Lastly, we will examine the significance of sites such as the Aapravasi Ghat, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, in commemorating Mauritius' rich history of indentured labor and intercultural exchange. By critically analyzing the renaming of the site from *Coolie Ghat* to *Aapravasi Ghat*, we will unpack the complexities of memory, identity, and representation in postcolonial Mauritius (Mohammed 2021).

This paper seeks to unravel the multifaceted layers of diasporic religiosity and cultural identity in Mauritius, shedding light on the enduring legacy of migration, resilience, and cultural exchange that continues to shape the nation's collective consciousness.

Historical context

The institution of indentured servitude was established upon the historical precedent and practices of slavery. Following the emancipation of slaves in Mauritius in 1838, landowners turned to India as a primary source of inexpensive labor.

In the 1820s and 1830s, laborers on five-year contracts began arriving in Mauritius, with a small percentage coming from China, Southeast Asia, and Africa, though the majority was of Indian descent (Allen 1999). Between 1834 and 1909, Mauritius received nearly 452,000 indentured servants, making it the largest recipient among British plantation colonies (Northrup 1995).The global demand for sugar, coupled with changes in the economic landscape, particularly the British trade policy regarding sugar production, spurred the transformation of Mauritius into a sugar colony. The abolition of a favorable tax on Caribbean sugar by the British government in 1825 incentivized planters in non-Atlantic territories to shift their focus to sugar cane cultivation. Additionally, the resilience of sugar cane in the face of natural disasters, such as the storms that devastated other crops in Mauritius in 1824, further contributed to this shift (Teelock 1998). The proliferation of sugar mills and the expansion of sugar plantations in Mauritius during the 19th century underscored its significance as a hub for sugar production. By the 1860s, over 20% of the island was devoted to sugarcane cultivation, with Mauritius contributing a substantial portion of the global sugar output (Allen 1999).

Indentured labor played a crucial role in sustaining the sugar industry's growth, necessitating the establishment of new trade networks and infrastructure. While early interpretations likened

indenture to a form of slavery (Tinker 1974), subsequent scholarship has offered more nuanced perspectives (Allen 2012; Hurgobin and Basu 2015).

Indentured laborers, unlike slaves, were considered paid workers rather than property. Despite enduring some characteristics reminiscent of slavery, they were legally contracted and had the expectation of eventual repatriation. However, a significant proportion of migrants chose to settle permanently in Mauritius, contributing to the colony's demographic and cultural transformation. Indentured laborers hailed from diverse regions of India, representing a variety of cultural, religious, and caste backgrounds. While they brought with them distinct linguistic and cultural practices, they also assimilated into Mauritian society, shaping its unique Creole identity (Hurgobin 2016). The recruitment of indentured laborers often involved returnees facilitating the migration of individuals from their home regions, resulting in the formation of cohesive groups on plantations. Despite the hardships they faced, including exploitative working conditions, many indentured laborers forged new lives in Mauritius, leaving a lasting impact on the colony's socio-economic landscape (Carter 1995; Bates 2017).

Theoretical framework and methodology

The rich tapestry of religious beliefs, practices, and cultural traditions woven into the social fabric of Mauritius reflects the complex history of migration, colonization, and intercultural exchange that has shaped the island's identity. At the heart of this intricate mosaic lies the experience of indentured labourers and their descendants, whose journey from distant shores brought with them a kaleidoscope of religious and cultural expressions.

The analysis in this paper is framed within diaspora theory (Safran 1991; Clifford 1994; Vertovec 2000) and concepts of lived religion (Vasquez 2011). Additionally, we draw on postcolonial perspectives (Hall 1990; Bhabha 1994) to examine how cultural identity is both preserved and rearticulated in the Mauritian context under colonial and postcolonial conditions.

Methodologically, this study adopts a historical-interpretive approach. It relies on archival materials, government reports, and secondary scholarship on Indian indentured (Allen 1999; Carter 1995; Lal 2000; Anderson 2009), alongside ethnographic accounts (Eriksen 1998; Peerthum 2017). Through textual and discourse analysis, the

paper interrogates colonial records, oral histories, and commemorative practices, including the contested memory of sites such as the *Aapravasi Ghat*.

This multi-sourced method allows for nuanced understanding of how religious and cultural practices migrated, transformed, and embedded themselves into the Mauritian landscape. By examining the role of religious institutions such as temples, mosques, churches, and festival, we seek to unravel the intricate interplay between religious practices and social cohesion within Mauritian context. Furthermore, we situate diasporic religiosity not simply as cultural survival but as an arena of identity politics, memory-making, and negotiation of belonging.

Religious practices and beliefs

The historical trajectory of Mauritius has been shaped by successive waves of colonization, beginning with the Portuguese, followed by the Dutch, French, and ultimately the British. Notably, the island lacked a native population, with each colonial power leaving its imprint on the demographic and socio-cultural landscape.

French colonial rule, which commenced in 1715, marked the first sustained settlement on the island and witnessed the flourishing of sugar cane farming. The French administration imported slaves from various African regions, particularly Madagascar and Mozambique, to labor on sugar plantations, laying the groundwork for the dominance of sugar production in Mauritius. The descendants of French colonists, known as Franco-Mauritians, continue to wield significant influence, particularly in land ownership (Eriksen 1998).

The socio-cultural fabric of Mauritius reflects its diverse immigrant population, encompassing Chinese, African, and Indian communities. The latter, descendants of Indian indentured laborers, constitute a substantial portion of the population, with Hinduism and Islam emerging as the predominant religions among Indo-Mauritians.

The Chinese community, engaged primarily in trade and retail, contributes to the island's ethnic mosaic, alongside the Creoles, who are the mixed-race descendants of former slaves (Eriksen 1998).

Religious practices play a central role in Mauritian society, with Hindu temples and Muslim mosques serving as focal points for communal worship and celebration. Despite the diversity of religious affiliations, Mauritians coexist harmoniously, with communal cohesiveness evident in shared religious observances and customs. The

colonial era witnessed the construction of religious sites by sugar plantation owners, fostering a sense of unity among residents irrespective of their faiths (Teelock 2012). The concept of the *baithka*, a communal gathering place for Indian laborers, epitomizes the fusion of cultural and religious traditions among indentured immigrants. Serving as a nexus for social interaction and religious rituals, the *baithka* facilitated the preservation and transmission of cultural heritage, with members organizing festivities such as *Divaliand Holi*, alongside solemn occasions like funerals and weddings (Ramchurn 2018).

Despite the passage of time and societal evolution, Mauritius remains deeply rooted in its multicultural heritage, with religious practices and communal traditions enduring as integral components of national identity. The enduring legacy of indentured laborers and their communal institutions underscores the resilience of Mauritius's diverse populace in forging a collective sense of belonging and shared cultural heritage.

Transmission of religious identity to descendants

During the migration period, the influx of Indians to Mauritius brought with it a rich tapestry of caste affiliations, customs, languages, and religious practices, which continue to influence the cultural landscape of the island.

The contemporary Indo-Mauritian population remains deeply rooted in its ancestral Indian heritage, adhering to traditional customs and religious rituals (Parekh, Singh & Vertovec 2003). The majority of Indian migrants hailed from regions such as Bombay, Bihar, Madras, and the northwest Indian provinces, contributing to the diverse cultural mosaic of Mauritius (Hazareesingh 1966).

Despite the plurality of socioeconomic backgrounds and cultural identities among Indian immigrants, communal cohesion prevailed throughout the indentured period, fostering a sense of shared experience and solidarity among laborers working in the sugarcane fields. This shared heritage laid the foundation for the predominance of Indian culture in contemporary Mauritius (Hazareesingh 1966).

Marriage customs among Indo-Mauritians often reflect traditional Indian practices, with arranged marriages common among individuals of similar socioeconomic status and cultural backgrounds. Rituals such as the application of *tika* by Hindu women and the vermilion division

of hair by married women in urban areas underscore the enduring influence of Indian cultural norms in Mauritius (Eriksen 1992).

The caste system, intrinsic to Indian society, was transplanted to Mauritius by Indian migrants, though its manifestation differed from its Indian counterpart. British clerks overseeing the recruitment process were often unfamiliar with caste distinctions, leading to the ambiguous classification of individuals based on regional identities rather than caste affiliations. Despite attempts to preserve caste distinctions for political gain, caste identities in Mauritius have evolved and become less rigid over time (Mishra 2006).

Religious practices, including Hindu *puranic* ceremonies and the worship of various deities such as Shiva, Vishnu, and Krishna, remain integral to Indo-Mauritian identity. The construction of religious sites and the observance of religious holidays reflect the enduring influence of Indian cultural and religious traditions in Mauritius (Hazareesingh 1966).

While ethnic identification has superseded caste identity in contemporary Mauritius, caste-based organizations continue to advocate for the preservation of cultural heritage and political representation. These organizations serve as significant interest groups, leveraging caste affiliations to negotiate for resources and political patronage (Niksniketa 2013).

The relationship between India and Mauritius is characterized by a shared cultural affinity and historical connection, with both nations embracing a diverse yet interconnected heritage. The celebration of religious festivals and the preservation of linguistic and cultural traditions underscore the enduring bond between the two nations (Prasad 2000). Despite their geographical separation, Mauritius and India share commonalities in their multicultural ethos and collective consciousness, exemplifying the concept of 'Little India' (Hazareesingh 1966).

Impact on Mauritian culture and society

Mauritius stands as a harmonious nation where diverse cultures and religions peacefully coexist. Indian, African, European, and Chinese influences converge within various national communities, creating a rich tapestry of shared values and traditions.

The island's cultural diversity is exemplified by the celebration of numerous holidays and the active participation of its populace in communal events a defining characteristic of Indo-Mauritian culture

(Hazareesingh 1966). Referred to as 'Little India', Mauritius boasts a plethora of temples, mosques, churches, and *gurudwaras* reminiscent of those found in India. The construction of religious sites, such as the Siva temple in the village of Gokula and the Jamma Mosque, underscores the enduring influence of Indian cultural and religious practices (Ibid.).

The term 'Chhota Bharat' (Little India) gained prominence in 1920 among the upper classes of Hindi-speaking Mauritians, reflecting the island's strong cultural ties to India. Indian nationalist leaders, including Ravindra Nath Tagore, lent their support to the commemoration of Indian immigration anniversaries; further solidifying Indo-Mauritian cultural identity (Prasad 2000).

Despite British colonial rule in Mauritius until 1968, the island's indigenous practices and customs persisted, contributing to what is often referred to as the "Indian atmosphere" that permeates Mauritian society. The Indian diaspora, comprising a significant portion of the population, maintains its cultural identity through daily language usage, traditional attire, and the culinary arts (Hazareesingh 1966).

Indo-Mauritians remain closely connected to their Indian counterparts, sharing customs, philosophies, and cultural practices. Religious ceremonies conducted in Indian languages, accompanied by interpretations in Creole, highlight the fusion of Indian and Mauritian cultural elements (Bissoonauth 1998; Prasad 2000).

A myriad of Indian festivals, including *Holi*, *Diwali*, *Eid*, and *Maha Shivaratri* are enthusiastically observed in Mauritius, serving as occasions for communal celebration and cultural expression (Bissoonauth 1998; Hazareesingh 1966; Prasad 2000).

The culinary landscape of Mauritius reflects the diversity of its Indian population, with traditional dishes such as rice, pickles, *laddu*, and *chutney* contributing to the preservation of culinary heritage (Hazareesingh 1966).

The historical visit of Mahatma Gandhi in 1901 marked a turning point in Indo-Mauritian history, advocating for education and political participation among the Indian diaspora. Subsequent milestones, including Mauritius' independence in 1968 and the establishment of the Mahatma Gandhi Institute in 1970, further solidified the island's cultural ties to India (Prasad 2000).

The enduring bond between Mauritius and India is reflected in contemporary diplomatic relations and cultural exchanges. The affectionate term 'Chhota Bharat' continues to resonate among

Mauritians of Indian descent, symbolizing the island's status as a vibrant hub of Indian culture and heritage (Tiwari 2014; Deccan Herald 2011).Mauritius stands as a testament to the enduring legacy of Indian culture and heritage, fostering a sense of pride and belonging among its diverse populace. The island's vibrant multicultural fabric serves as a living testament to the shared values and traditions that bind its people together.

Challenges and future directions

The *Aapravasi Ghat*, established in 1849, underwent a series of transformations and served diverse functions throughout its history. Initially known as the Immigration Depot, it functioned as temporary lodging for indentured laborers upon their arrival in Mauritius.

Under British colonial rule, despite the transfer of authority to British governance in 1810, French plantation owners retained economic control, employing indentured laborers predominantly on sugar estates. The depot also served as a venue for registering complaints from laborers and addressing immigration-related matters. Even after the abolition of indenture, the facility continued to handle immigration-related affairs until its gradual abandonment in the mid to late 20th century. In addition to its functional role during the indenture period, the site served as a hub facilitating intercultural interaction among individuals from diverse ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Initially referred to as the *Coolie Ghat* in the 1970s, it was later renamed *Aapravasi Ghat* upon its designation as a national monument in 1987. However, this renaming process from 'Coolie Ghat' to 'Aapravasi Ghat', meaning 'immigrants' landing place' in Hindi, presents several problematic implications. Firstly, it marks a departure from the derogatory term 'coolie,' associated with the perceived lowly status of indentured laborers. Secondly, the label 'immigrants' overlooks the fact that many indentured laborers intended to return to their countries of origin.

Additionally, the term *Hindi* in *Aapravasi* reflects a privileging of Hindi-speaking cultural identity, neglecting the linguistic diversity of the indentured diaspora, which encompassed speakers of Bhojpuri, Telugu, Tamil, Urdu, and Mandarin. This renaming may be interpreted as a political and nationalist statement against Indo-Mauritian hegemony, obscuring the history of indentured labor involving workers from Madagascar, Africa, and China.

Following its inscription as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 2006, critical assessments of the *Aapravasi Ghat* have become increasingly complex. UNESCO, founded in 1945 to promote global collaboration in culture, education, and research, has faced scrutiny for potential issues related to its organizational operations and decision-making processes.

While beyond the scope of this research, such inquiries underscore potential challenges arising from the site's inclusion in the World Heritage program, Mauritius, characterized by its diverse demographic makeup resulting from successive waves of immigration, grapples with defining a cohesive national identity.

The island's multicultural ethos, encapsulated by the philosophy of 'unity in diversity,' seeks to foster peaceful coexistence among its various ethnic communities. However, scholars such as Thomas Hylland Eriksen question the feasibility of reconciling national unity with the preservation of distinct ethnic identities, highlighting potential tensions between these objectives.

The *Aapravasi Ghat* serves as a tangible symbol of Mauritius' complex history of immigration and labor exploitation. Its renaming and recognition as a World Heritage Site reflect broader debates surrounding cultural heritage, identity politics, and the challenges of fostering national unity in multicultural societies (Forest 2013).

Conclusion

Diasporic religiosity encompasses the religious beliefs, practices, and expressions of a diaspora community residing outside its original homeland. In the case of indentured laborers in Mauritius, this phenomenon manifested through the transmission and adaptation of diverse religious backgrounds, including Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, and indigenous belief systems. These laborers imbued their practices with local contexts while retaining their original faith traditions. Such diasporic religiosity played a pivotal role in shaping cultural identity and fostering social cohesion, with religious institutions like temples, mosques, churches, and festivals serving as pivotal points for community gatherings and solidarity.

The establishment of indentured service in Mauritius post-1838, subsequent to the emancipation of slaves, was driven by a confluence of factors including the global demand for sugar and capital market dynamics, ultimately transforming Mauritius into a sugar colony.

Indentured laborers, representing the diversity of Indian culture, religion, and caste, hailed from various regions such as northeastern states, Madras, and the environs of Mumbai. Despite their distinctive cultural traits, many endured forced displacement from their homelands and were subjected to exploitative conditions on plantations. Nonetheless, a substantial portion of the indentured migrants, approximately 294,000 out of 452,000, opted for permanent settlement in Mauritius, fundamentally altering the demographic landscape and contributing to the evolution of the island's unique Creole identity.

Mauritius, historically a French colony, harbors a heterogeneous population comprising immigrants from China, Africa, India, and descendants of French colonists. Economic power is concentrated among Franco-Mauritians, the progeny of French settlers, and the mixed-race populace referred to as *gens de couleur*.

The predominant religious groups among Indo-Mauritians, descendants of Indian indentured laborers, are Hindus and Muslims, with further divisions along social, linguistic, and caste lines. The Mauritian populace is demarcated into four primary ethnic groups and four major religious factions, each with distinct cultural and religious practices. Despite the presence of caste, regional, linguistic, and cultural differences, indentured laborers fostered communal bonds and established cohesive communities in Mauritius, particularly from the 1910s onward. Religious pluralism flourished in Mauritius, with the colonial government facilitating the construction of temples and mosques, and diverse religious traditions coexisting harmoniously. The cultural legacy brought by Indian immigrants, encompassing their castes, customs, languages, and religions, persisted in the modern Indo-Mauritian population. The majority of migrants hailed from Bombay, Bihar, Madras, and northwestern Indian provinces, practicing puranic ceremonies and venerating various deities such as Shiva, Vishnu, and Krishna.

Despite challenges in maintaining caste identity, Indo-Mauritians continue to identify with their caste, albeit with a shift towards ethnic identification in Mauritius. The enduring influence of Indian culture in Mauritius is evidenced by the pervasive "Indian atmosphere" and the widespread adoption of Indian languages, attire, and cuisine.

Indo-Mauritians maintain strong cultural ties with their Indian counterparts, celebrating Hindu religious ceremonies and festivals with fervor.

Furthermore, the political landscape of Mauritius has been shaped significantly by individuals of Indian descent, who have dominated the nation's politics since its inception. The Mauritian government's initiative to grant Indian tourists visa-free entry for 60 days in 2014 further underscores the strengthening cultural ties between India and Mauritius.

The *Aapravasi Ghat*, established in 1849 and later inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2006, serves as a tangible testament to Mauritius' rich history of indentured labor. This site, initially known as the Immigration Depot, facilitated intercultural contact among diverse ethnic and socioeconomic groups, symbolizing the enduring legacy of diasporic communities in Mauritius. The renaming of the site from *Coolie Ghat* to *Aapravasi Ghat* reflects a political and nationalist assertion against Indo-Mauritian hegemony, highlighting the contested narratives surrounding Mauritius' colonial history. It embodies a multicultural society shaped by successive waves of immigration and diverse religious practices. The dynamics of diasporic religiosity, alongside socio-political developments, have played a pivotal role in shaping Mauritius' cultural landscape and national identity.

Despite challenges and tensions, Mauritius stands as a 'model' postcolonial state, navigating the complex interplay between nationhood and cultural diversity with relative success.

Acknowledgment: The authors extend their appreciation to Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University, Al-Kharj, Saudi Arabia, for funding this research work through project number (PSAU/2026/1448).

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The genealogy of propaganda: The historical evolution of the concept and today's technologies for manipulating consciousness

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Abstract: This article examines the origins of propaganda by analyzing the historical evolution of the concept, and contemporary techniques for manipulating public opinion. Particular attention is paid to the problem of defining propaganda, which has long remained a subject of debate in academic circles. It is shown that the main difficulty lies in distinguishing propaganda from other forms of persuasive communication, such as advertising, political lobbying, and public relations, which may employ similar methods of psychological and rhetorical influence. The study explores both critical and pragmatic interpretations, within which propaganda is understood either as a tool for manipulation, the imposition of opinions and perceptions, and control over narratives, or as an inalienable feature in the functioning of contemporary society and the political system. Specific focus is placed on the relationship between propaganda and the concepts of 'soft power' and 'public consensus engineering'. Finally, most relevant techniques and methods for influencing public and personal opinion are studied, including the replacement of concepts, appeals to emotions, to authority, and to the majority, the use of stereotypes and labels, as well as the de-contextualization of information. The conclusion is drawn that propaganda is a sophisticated and multifaceted phenomenon requiring further comprehensive interdisciplinary studying, as the means of disguising

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AGATHOS, Volume 17, Issue 2 (33-34): 175-192, DOI 10.5281/zenodo.23367352
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propagandistic techniques (enhanced with digital technologies, social media, and algorithms) continue to evolve.

Keywords: information, influence, public opinion, advertising, constructive propaganda, destructive propaganda, manipulation

Introduction

The problem of identifying propaganda occupies a prominent place in contemporary humanities, situated at the intersection of philosophy, political science, sociology, and communication theory. Despite the long history of this phenomenon, dating back to the earliest civilizations, there is still no single, universally accepted definition of propaganda. The main difficulty lies in distinguishing propaganda from other forms of persuasive influence, such as advertising, public relations, and journalism.

The relevance of this study stems from the fact that, amid the constant growth of information flows and technological advancements, the potential to influence individual and public consciousness has expanded significantly. The use of visual media, social networks, the circulation of fake news and automated propaganda campaigns - taken together - increase the pressure on people's ability to critically comprehend the around reality. Under these conditions, there is a growing need for a theoretical reflection on the essence of propaganda, its forms, and mechanisms of influence on our minds and worldviews, as well as understanding how they evolve.

The purpose of this article is to examine the genealogy of the phenomenon of propaganda through the lens of historical-philosophical, dialectical, functional, and socio-communicative approaches, as well as to identify the key methods and techniques, which are still actual and widely used to manipulate public opinion and individual consciousness.

Methodology

The methodological framework of this study is based on the dialectical method, the comparative method, the structural-functional method, and the systemic approach. In particular, we use the dialectical method to examine the contradictions in interpretations of propaganda (in its constructive, neutral, and destructive dimensions). The comparative method is applied to the study of the genealogy of the term 'propaganda', to the analysis of its semantic layers, and to its comparison with certain non-Western analogues. The structural-

functional method helps determine what social functions propaganda performs (from shaping public opinion and maintaining ideological attitudes to consolidating or, conversely, disorienting social communities), and how these functions are realized through specific mechanisms and practices. The systemic approach is applied for a comprehensive study of propaganda as a multidimensional socio-communicative phenomenon functioning in broad interrelation with the political, cultural, informational, and psychological environment; it allows propaganda to be viewed not isolated, but in the context of its interaction with other elements of the social system (with mass media, civil society, state institutions, consumers, public opinion, and technological infrastructure).

The problem of defining propaganda

Defining propaganda has always been a challenge. The main difficulty has been in distinguishing propaganda from other types of persuasion. First and foremost, it should be noted that any form of communication involves an element of persuasion to some degree. Advertising, political rhetoric, educational practices, and even the popularization of science - all of these are aimed at shaping certain ideas, attitudes, or patterns of behaviour. In this sense, propaganda is not a separate phenomenon: it belongs to a broader class of persuasive communication.

The phenomenon of propaganda dates back at least to the time of Darius the Great. There is the famous "Behistun Inscription" of the 6th century BC. This is a 400-line cuneiform text carved on a rock in western Iran, created by order of the Persian king Darius I in three languages - ancient Persian, Babylonian, and Elamite. This petroglyph justifies the legitimacy of Darius' rule, with the reinforcement of certain facts, and (probably) the omission of others.

Why is there a widespread belief that this historical monument is one of the earliest examples of propaganda? The fact is that Darius came to power as a result of a coup, having killed Bardiya (or the 'impostor Gaumata-Smerdis', as Darius himself claimed). It was critically important for Darius to prove that he was not merely a fortunate military commander, but the legitimate inheritor to the throne. Among other things, the Behistun Inscription recounts that Darius himself asserts his belonging to the royal dynasty. He states that eight in a row from his dynasty were kings before him, and he is the ninth. Darius also states that he is king by the grace of the god Ahura

Mazda, who granted him the kingship. Darius further lists many satrapies (provinces) under his rule and mentions the battles he successfully waged throughout the year, suppressing the uprisings that arose after the death of Cyrus the Great. However, Darius presumably belonged to a different branch of the Achaemenid dynasty, and his claims to kinship with Cyrus the Great still raise serious doubts among historians. Therefore, some studies suggest that one of the motivations behind the Behistun Inscription, created at Darius's initiative, was his desire to resolve his legitimacy problem. In particular, Albert Olmstead writes:

> Such was the official version, followed by the Father of History and his Greek successors. Yet there are not lacking indications that it was not quite true to the facts. We have already observed that Darius belonged to the former imperial family only in the broader sense. (Olmstead 1938, 395)

But even if we assume that Darius I is telling the pure truth about his direct kinship with Cyrus the Great, immortalizing it in the rocks of today's Kermanshah Province in Iran, this does not change the essence of the matter. It is still a form of political propaganda, but not so much to legitimize his rise to power as to emphasize his greatness and his honourable place in the glorious Achaemenid dynasty.

Some researchers even say that the phenomenon of propaganda has been known since the time of the Babylonian king Hammurabi, in the 1750s BC. Thus, in the preamble to the *Code of Laws of Hammurabi*, it was said that these laws were created to establish justice in the country and to protect the weak from the strong. But in reality, the content of the laws themselves was mainly aimed at protecting the interests of the wealthy at the cost of the poor. This is an example of the so-called 'fake intention'. Norman Yoffee (2005), in his work *Myths of the Archaic State*, writes that the Code of Hammurabi was not actually used by Babylonian judges in practice (at least, we find no references to it in the judicial documents of that era). According to Yoffee, it was political propaganda aimed at winning over the minds of citizens in recently conquered city-states by presenting them an image of the ideal ruler. Thus, the Code of Hammurabi is used as a tool for self-presentation. Its preamble and epilogue create a literary framework of fairness support by the 'good shepherd', which stands in sharp contrast to the casuistic laws that uphold a rigid social hierarchy (Yoffee 2005).

Anyway, since ancient times, elites have been using propaganda. And of course it's much more easier to do nowadays, when technical capabilities have grown incomparably, and the development of such sciences as psychology, sociology, political science, and philosophy contribute to the development of even more intellectually sophisticated technologies for influencing individual and mass consciousness.

A generalized view is that 'propaganda' is a specific type of communication aimed at shaping public opinion, persuading an audience, or promoting a particular agenda. In this context, information is often presented selectively and may be distorted in such a way as to steer people toward predetermined conclusions or perceptions. One of the distinctive tools used here is so-called 'loaded' language - a form of verbal influence designed not so much to elicit rational understanding as to provoke an emotional reaction. Such techniques are particularly prevalent in the media, where they help amplify the desired effect of the information being conveyed.

The Latin word *propaganda* literally means "something to be spread," from the Latin verb *prōpāgo*, which means "to spread". And in this sense, its semantics is close to "agitation". But this type of communication may have an ambiguous nature. This kind of explanation can be found in a number of dictionaries. Particularly, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (2025):

> The systematic dissemination of information, especially in a biased or misleading way, in order to promote a particular cause or point of view, often a political agenda. Also: information disseminated in this way; the means or media by which such ideas are disseminated. (Another possible meaning) An organization, scheme, or movement for the propagation of a particular doctrine, practice, etc.

The *Encyclopedia Britannica* provides the following explanations:

> Propaganda, dissemination of information - facts, arguments, rumours, half-truths, or lies - to influence public opinion. It is often conveyed through mass media. Propaganda is the more or less systematic effort to manipulate other people's beliefs, attitudes, or actions by means of symbols (words, gestures, banners, monuments, music, clothing, insignia, hairstyles, designs on coins and postage stamps, and so forth). [...] The word propaganda itself, as used in recent centuries, apparently derives from the title and work of the Congregatio de Propaganda Fide (Congregation for Propagation of the Faith), an organization of Roman Catholic cardinals founded in 1622 to carry on missionary work. To many Roman Catholics the word may therefore have, at least in missionary or ecclesiastical terms, a highly respectable connotation... (Smith 2026)

However, in the modern sense, propaganda is mostly understood as a pejorative word that refers to the practice of disseminating views, facts, arguments, opinions, rumours, theories, information (including distorted information, or deliberately false information) in order to shape the desired public opinion. It can be used to manipulate people's consciousness, or to spread and popularize a particular ideology or narrative.

At the same time, some of these non-English terms retain a generally neutral connotation. For example, in official Chinese Party discourse, the term *xuanchuan* refers to the Communist Party of China's practice of influencing domestic and international public opinion in favour of its policies. The term itself is formed by combining two words: *xuan*, which can be translated as "to declare, to proclaim", and *chuan* with an array of meanings, from "to transmit; to teach; to spread" to even "contaminate, infect" (i.e. to infiltrate certain ideas into people's minds). *Xuanchuan* as a specific informational, administrative, and educational practice first appears in the third-century historical text *Sanguozhi* / *Records of the Three Kingdoms*, where it was used to refer to the dissemination of military skills. In pre-modern times, the term was used in China to indicate the transfer of ideas and information by the ruling elites. They considered *Xuanchuan* was the best means of the state governance (Lin 2017, 455).

In a comparative study of terminology examining Western and Chinese understandings of propaganda, the following statement is made:

> My first assumption is that xuanchuan culture in part operates as a substitute for the missing state religion to unify the nation in a quasi-religious way. One thing that religion and propaganda share in common is that both encourage and demand devotion. Xuanchuan, derived from Confucian teachings, can be seen as a kind of 'rationalized religion' like Confucianism itself... (Lin 2017, 458)

Such a specific use of the term *xuanchuan* can be explained by the features of the Confucian cultural tradition, which for centuries determined the development dynamics of the Sinitic civilization. And in the Western world, different practices of propaganda have been actively used for political consolidation and shaping of the 'nations' (Stovpets et al. 2023, 298). These examples show a variety of contexts applicable to propaganda.

Thus, throughout the 20th century, the word "propaganda" in English gradually took on a consistently negative connotation and came to be associated primarily with manipulative influence. However, in its earlier usage, the term had a neutral meaning and referred to any materials aimed at disseminating certain views or ideological positions. As practice shows, a wide variety of forms and media channels can be used to spread such messages. Naturally, they have been changing with the invention of new visual means, including paintings, caricatures, posters, brochures, comics, movies, radio and television programs, websites, podcasts, video hosting, messengers, and social networks.

In the first quarter of the 21st century, with the advent of the digital age, fundamentally new mechanisms for disseminating propaganda have emerged. In particular, there has been an increasing use of bots and algorithmic systems capable of automatically generating content - ranging from outright fabrications to biased interpretations of news - and rapidly spreading it through social media, including with the use of emerging emotionally pre-trained artificial intelligence (Stovpets 2024, 69).

Differing views on propaganda in intellectual circles

Propaganda has also been conceptualized as a form of influence aimed at building a social consensus. When researchers began to study the impact of the media (newspapers and radio) almost a hundred years ago, a fierce debate broke out between them.

American minister and writer Everett Dean Martin (1929, 142) argued that "Propaganda is making puppets from us. We are moved by hidden strings which the propagandist manipulates." On the contrary, advocating propaganda, Edward Bernays (1928, 9) writes:

> We are governed, our minds are molded, our tastes formed, our ideas suggested, largely by men we have never heard of. This is a logical result of the way in which our democratic society is organized. Vast numbers of human beings must cooperate in this manner if they are to live together as a smoothly functioning society.

Harold Lasswell (1980) proposed a general understanding of propaganda: it is not merely about the transmission of ideas, but about purposeful activity - whether intellectual or practical - carried out by individuals or groups of people with the intention of altering the attitudes and behaviour of others. Such influence is inherently aimed at achieving predetermined results and, as a rule, relies on mechanisms of psychological influence. There is also a widespread view in academic

circles that propaganda is closely intertwined with a system of values and beliefs: communication in this context functions as an instrument of 'soft power', implemented through the development and systematic introduction of relevant conceptual frameworks.

For instance, both commercial advertising and public relations use the same methods (techniques) of psychological influence. So both advertising and PR can be considered as two types of propaganda, with the difference that PR is a political practice, while advertising often becomes a propaganda for irrational, excessive consumption, as it popularizes some commercial products or shapes the consumers' opinion about companies and their trademarks.

In post-war language of the mid-20th century, the term *propaganda* was mainly associated with the political (for example, nationalist, conservative, socialist and other) use of methods to promote a set of ideas. Later, in order to reduce this unfavourable tone of the term, political technologists avoided using the phrase "political propaganda" and instead suggested using the term "political marketing". Nevertheless, its essential meaning has not changed, and mostly meant certain attempts (financed by governments and other political groups of influence) to persuade the public to support explicit and implicit interests. Sophisticated propaganda techniques were invented by pioneers of the newly formed field of public relations, such as Walter Lippmann, Edward Bernays, and Paul Lazarsfeld.

If we turn to the theory of journalism, the principles of fair journalism require that news reports be objective and provide readers with factual information, and analysis of the topic at the heart of the matter. Advertising, meanwhile, has undergone significant changes: from standard product promotions - to new types of latent advertising, in the form of sponsored articles in journalistic and even academic publications, in the form of broadcasts presented either as 'news' or as 'expert opinions'. They mostly highlight issues from a very subjective and one-sided perspective, with the aim of persuading rather than informing. If the recipient of the information truly perceives paid advertising as a 'journalistic report', then the content that the advertiser is striving to convey is more easily taken on faith as 'independent opinion'. Such advertising is considered a classic example of hidden commercial propaganda, as it is trying to appear as objective information. That is why the laws of different countries mostly require that advertising information, presented in the course of news reporting,

must be labelled as 'prepaid advertising' or 'information provided for promotional purposes'.

Propaganda can also be used as part of governmental public awareness campaigns aimed at encouraging or eliminating certain behaviours. For instance, the 'road safety propaganda' is designed to inform people to always wear seat belts, obey the speed limit, not be distracted by phones while driving. Another example of governmentally inspired propaganda campaigns are the cases aimed at promoting a sober lifestyle, or requiring people not to smoke in public places, no littering, etc. These are examples of the so-called 'constructive propaganda'. However, quite often, propaganda is either harmful or even 'destructive', aimed at discrediting, misinforming, discriminating, and posing over-ideologization on people's life.

So why did this term acquire a strongly negative emotional coloration during the 20th century? This re-definition occurred mainly because both the Soviet Union, and the right-wing radical governments of the 1930s in Germany, Italy, and Japan openly used propaganda to incite hatred, xenophobia, and militarization. Over time, certain symbols became indispensable logos of this or that kind of propaganda (most famous are swastika, hammer and sickle).

Not much has changed in terms of meaning today: we can trace this unpleasant transformation in symbolism on the example of the Saint George's Ribbon, which has turned from a symbol of victory over fascism in the World War II - into a symbol of Russian aggression against Ukraine, occupation, annexation, and incitement to separatism in the Donbas region of Ukraine. Therefore, this symbol is now banned and officially prohibited in Ukraine, because it is associated with extremism along with the Nazi swastika and communist symbols (Ukraine's Parliament 2015; Ukraine's Parliament 2017).

An influencer may use propaganda to transform people's attitudes toward a particular matter, in order to alter people's behaviour in a way that is desirable for the interested group. In this sense, propaganda has a specific relationship with censorship. They use different mechanisms for handling information. In the case of censorship, manipulative goals are achieved without filling people's minds with edited or distorted information, but simply by preventing people from coming into contact with conflicting views (all such views are simply eliminated, blocked, suppressed, so they have no place in the public media space). Propaganda is more flexible than censorship because it is a form of persuasion that involves trying to change people's basic comprehension

through misrepresentation and disorientation, instead of honest persuasion and improving understanding of controversial issues.

How propaganda works: Examples of key techniques

Numerous methods (often grounded on social psychology research) are used to carry out propaganda. Many of these methods are based on deliberate logical fallacies, as propagandists use arguments that may look rather convincing but are not always accurate. Now, we shall look at some most powerful methods and techniques often used to deliver propaganda and disinformation.

Among these methods, there is *Argumentum ad hominem*, or 'Getting personal' case. *Ad hominem* is a Latin phrase that literally is translated as "to the person", which means attacking the opponent, not his or her arguments (i.e. getting personal). This method is also called 'poisoning the well'. In rhetoric, this technique is a pre-emptive attack, which consists in a negative description of the person being presented to the audience, with the intention of discrediting everything that may be said by this person in the future, in front of this audience. 'Source poisoning' is a special case of *argumentum ad hominem*, which is carried out by negatively portraying an opponent, before he or she enters the discussion.

Another technique is 'appeal to authority'. This method seems to be the opposite of the one mentioned earlier. It consists in the manipulative use of public statements made by well-known and respected people, in favour of a certain position, or against some position, idea, argument, or someone's actions.

'Appeal to fear' is another method. The person, using this propaganda technique, tries to gain support for his or her ideas or views by playing on the existing fears and prejudices of the audience. For example, Joseph Goebbels used Theodor Kaufmann's radical book *Germany Must Perish!* to claim that 'the Allies wanted to destroy the whole German nation'. Similarly, today Russian propagandists claim that 'NATO wants to destroy Russia', or 'If Russia had not attacked Ukraine, then Ukraine would have attacked Russia', and other similar nonsense. Some people in Russia believe in these deceptive affirmations while others are sceptical about them. And even long before the full scale invasion in 2022, inside Russia they used 'appeal to fear' method to justify the intensifying suppression of opposition. In particular, Russian policymakers reinforced the belief that the region was undergoing some form of democratic contagion when they

referred to this phenomenon as the 'orange plague' or 'orange virus' (Ambrosio 2010, 376). Along with that, after 2013, Russian propaganda has introduced some figurative expressions, which were used to disguise incitement to separatism in eastern Ukraine: the separatist rebellions in Donbas were called by the Kremlin 'the Russian spring' (Banasik 2015, 20).

Another manipulative technique can be described as 'appeal to the people, to the majority'. It is a method of obtaining broad public support for a particular conclusion or statement, as a result of the propagandist's attempt to convince the target audience that such support is already available from the absolute majority, from the 'people'. This method involves stimulating the sentiments and passion of the common people. This encourages the audience to endorse certain controversial viewpoints or goods, by generating the illusion that everyone else is already thinking or acting the similar way, and now it's time for you to join the majority. On the one hand, the so-called 'herd instinct' is activated (you have to be like everyone else), and on the other hand, this approach capitalizes on people's natural tendency to side with the winners. In other words, technique of 'appealing to people' is employed to persuade the public that a particular idea reflects the unrestrained movement of the masses, and therefore it would be the best for separate listeners or viewers also to join it.

The use of prejudice, biases, *clichés*, stereotypes, etc. is another method of influence. This technique is also known in propaganda theory as "labelling", when someone is immediately labelled as a 'neoliberal', or a 'nationalist', 'fascist', 'Marxist', 'racist', 'inquisitor', 'loan-shark', 'traitor', or vice versa: 'patriot', 'hero', 'martyr', or other epithets. The use of such emotionally significant terms helps to form a certain attitude towards the person marked with the corresponding "label" - as a morally perfect or dishonourable person, as a virtuous person or a villain. Labeling can be viewed as a subtype of the logical fallacy: guilty - because associated with guilty. For example, in Soviet propaganda, even moderate, non-radical, and liberal-minded Ukrainian patriots were called nothing more than 'Ukrainian bourgeois nationalists', adding the label 'bourgeois', which at the time had an obviously negative anti-socialist connotation in society.

There is also a kind of manipulation named 'beautiful people', which became especially successful in the era of mass-media. This is a type of propaganda that is associated either with images of famous

people who are popular and loved in society, or with an indefinite circle of some little-known but attractive, beautiful, seemingly happy people. This technique works in two ways. First, it may encourage all other (ordinary) people to think like this: if our favourites (actors, singers, other celebrities) buy this product or follow a certain ideology, then we, following their example, will also be happy or successful if we consume a similar product or adhere to similar ideas. Second, an event successfully organized with the participation of little-known but visually attractive people will subconsciously encourage others to use a specific product that is now associated with that event (and those beautiful people).

In this sense, there is example of the election campaign of the thirtieth president of the United States, Calvin Coolidge, who, being a little-known politician at the time of his candidacy, following the advice of political strategist Bernays, invited the most popular actors and actresses of the time to breakfast at the White House. The fact was that the American public simply didn't know how to react to Coolidge as a potential president, since he had not expressed himself as a vice president. The breakfast of presidential candidate Coolidge (along with famous actors) was broadcast on television. So in 1924 the US citizens decided that the man from the White House, laughing and chatting with their favourite actors, simply could not be cold and unsympathetic, and his support in the elections grew incredibly after this PR campaign. A variation of this kind of manipulative practice is the well-known desire of politicians to be photographed or filmed with kids, showing themselves to be child-friendly and caring people, ideal family men, supporters of traditional values, etc.

'Replacement of concepts' is another effective manipulative trick. This deceitful technique in the theory and practice of propaganda is also associated with the name of salesman guru and PR expert Edward Bernays. The 'Lucky Strike' tobacco company commissioned him to create an advertising campaign to promote their product, and Bernays presented smoking as a symbol of 'feminine independence'. In 1929, he organized a huge action when women, walking the streets of New York, simultaneously lit cigarettes (and even cigars), as an 'act of freedom', as a symbol of women's emancipation. It was represented as a manifestation of women's equal rights to do what men do - smoke cigarettes, which were pompously called 'torches of freedom'. At the same time, this effect was reinforced by mass-media, as doctors paid by Bernays were discussing on TV the 'benefits of nicotine', including

its 'beneficial effects on eating less sweets' (Amos & Haglund 2000, 4). It was thanks to this propaganda campaign that women's smoking became socially acceptable, first in the United States and later in other countries.

The image of a romantic and stylish woman with a cigarette was massively introduced in cinema and photography for many years during the so-called early decadence period. It was one of the first examples of contextual branding, in order to create and instil a false need among women - the need to smoke. Though, as some researchers note:

> At the beginning of the 20th century few people could ever have imagined how such a stigmatised behaviour as female smoking would be transformed, with the aid of judicious marketing, into a socially acceptable and desirable practice. (Amos & Haglund 2000, 8)

Another persuasive method is known under the names 'Plain folks', or the 'Ordinary people', a 'common person', an 'average Joe', a 'plain Jane', or 'one of the lads'. This technique tries to assure the public that propagandists' statements fully correspond to the logic of average people ('normal' or 'simple' people). This approach is intended to gain trust of the target audience by communicating in anti-elite style, 'in a simple way'. The propagandist uses simple language and appropriate manners, trying to equate the desired view with that of the 'average person'. For example, propaganda can promote arguments in favour of unpopular socio-economic reforms like cutting unemployment aid, or raising the retirement age, or reducing healthcare expenses. To make its arguments more convincing, propaganda may picture on TV a 'common citizen' philosophizing on future reforms and saying statements, such as 'when times are tough, we all need to tighten our belts', or 'the government simply has to act in this way because of the financial situation in our country, and we all just have to be patient', and so on.

In sociology, there is a well-known concept - the Overton Window. This is a kind of manipulative technology for shifting discourse in order to change gradually the public opinion. As a result of such a shift, it sometimes happens that something previously seemed unthinkable, radically unacceptable - invisibly passes into category of 'possible' (probable, but highly undesirable). If a message is beyond the perception of an individual or group, most techniques will cause psychological reactive resistance: simply presenting the argument

doesn't make the message receptive enough. There are two methods of expanding the boundaries of perception. First, you can take an extreme position from the beginning, which will then make a more moderate position much more acceptable. It's the same principle as if you want to sell something for a certain price, set a higher price, and then make a 'discount'. Alternatively, you can make your own position more moderate by lowering it to the point of acceptability, and then slowly move to the desired position over time (giving a certain time to the targeted audience to get used to new, previously unacceptable ideas).

The last technique (among those being studied in this research) is named 'de-contextualisation', i.e. extracting statements out of their context. Selective quote extraction is often used to change or distort the meaning of certain statements, expressions, or texts. It may also be intended to discredit an opponent or an opposing political view. It is a manipulative technique where a whole text is taken, and a passage is removed from it so as to misrepresent its genuine ideas. This is called contextomy, quoting out of context, and can be either intentional or accidental (the latter happens if a person doesn't get the point and skips something important to the explanation, thinking it's not essential or relevant).

As a type of manipulation, out-of-context citation differs: it may take the form of a so-called 'false attribution' (fake citation); another case is that the out-of-context quote is still attributed to the correct source, but the meaning of the quoted material is distorted by artificially shortening and isolating it from the overall context. A destructive effect of using this manipulative technique has become an object of special research, where we find the following:

> A contextomized quotation not only prompts audiences to form a false impression of the source's intentions, but can contaminate subsequent interpretation of the quote when it is restored to its original context. (McGlone 2005, 511)

Among the examples of 'de-contextualization', we could draw the attention to several ones. One is rather famous: it's the Churchill's statement that 'democracy is the worst form of government ... but mankind has not yet invented a better one, and all other forms are even worse' (he specifies). But sometimes the whole statement is replaced by a truncated version, in which it looks like 'Churchill believes, democracy is the worst form of government' (i.e. the following clarifying part of his statement is eliminated, and this completely

changes the semantics of the entire phrase). The original phrase in Winston Churchill's speech (11 November 1947) in the House of Commons of the United Kingdom was:

> ...Indeed it has been said that democracy is the worst form of Government except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time... (International Churchill Society 2016)

In a more recent discourse, an example from Russian propaganda and disinformation can be provided. Let's take the full statement, from an interview, where the U.S. State Department official Victoria Nuland (2013) said:

> Since Ukraine's independence in 1991, the United States has supported Ukrainians as they build democratic skills and institutions, as they promote civic participation and good governance, all of which are preconditions for Ukraine to achieve its European aspirations. We've invested over $5 billion to assist Ukraine in these and other goals that will ensure a secure and prosperous and democratic Ukraine.

This was said by V. Nuland (as Assistant Secretary, Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs) on December 13, 2013. Later, in April 2014, in an interview with CNN, Victoria Nuland confirmed this figure, clarifying that the funds were not allocated to organize protests, but for the development of democratic institutions, the fight against corruption, and other government programs throughout Ukraine's 22 years of independence. However, the Russian media cut out the words "since Ukraine's independence in 1991", in order to give to the mass reader an impression that the US had thrown this five billion dollars in a one-time payment in 2013, for example, to organize the anti-government protests 2013-2014 (also known as the 'Revolution of Dignity').

Here we have discussed only a part of the propaganda techniques and manipulation methods, but in fact there are many more. And their arsenal is constantly being enriched. AI instruments, the emergence of emotionally pre-trained neural networks, rapid development of machine learning will probably exacerbate the situation when it will become increasingly difficult to distinguish propaganda from unbiased reporting.

Conclusion

In many cases, our thoughts, beliefs, and values are not our own. They are concepts without a clear source of origin, but ones that have been

instilled in our minds and have taken root in our consciousness (both at the individual and collective levels). And such a state of affairs is the result of successful propaganda, which is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon that still lacks a clear-cut set of criteria for determining. The main difficulty in conceptualizing it lies in the need to draw a distinction between propaganda and other forms of public communication, which may resort to similar methods of influencing the audience.

An analysis of the historical development of this phenomenon has shown that propaganda has existed since ancient times, and was originally used by ruling elites to legitimize their power and shape public attitudes. At the same time, its content and forms have been evolving depending on the level of technological development and the specifics of the cultural context. In the 20th century, there was a significant shift in the perception of propaganda: from a relatively neutral term, it became a concept with a distinctly negative connotation, which was due to its active use by totalitarian regimes.

Propaganda is closely linked to fields such as advertising and public relations, as they employ similar psychological and communicative techniques to influence people. Propaganda can also camouflage itself as journalism. However, unlike objective classical journalism, propaganda is characterized by the selective presentation of information aimed at shaping a predetermined perception.

A study of the mechanisms underlying propaganda reveals that its effectiveness is largely driven by the use of various manipulative techniques based on logical fallacies and the peculiarities of human perception. Among the most common methods are appeals to authority, appeals to fear, ad hominem attacks, the majority effect, the use of stereotypes and labels, and contextomies, i.e. the de-contextualization of information. These methods primarily target the emotional sphere, reducing the level of critical perception of information.

Thus, propaganda serves as a powerful tool for shaping public opinion. In some cases, propaganda can fulfil constructive functions (mainly, in social campaigns promoting healthy lifestyles or ecological protection). But for the most part, it is used for destructive purposes, including the manipulation of consciousness to encourage overconsumption, promoting harmful products, disinformation to change people's minds, populism, the incitement of hatred, xenophobia, intolerance, and ideological pressure on the opponents.

The need for further comprehensive study of this phenomenon and the development of more effective mechanisms for its critical assessment is driven by the factors of digitalization. In today's technological environment, propaganda is taking on new forms and gaining new capabilities, amplified by the use of automated systems, algorithms, and neural networks, which significantly increases the scale of its impact on individual and mass consciousness.

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Aesthetics and gastronomy: The reflections of Kant's and Hegel's aesthetic theories on modern food presentation

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Abstract: This study aims to examine the aesthetic dimensions of food presentation in modern gastronomy within a philosophical framework, based on the aesthetic theories of Immanuel Kant and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. Although aesthetics has historically been associated with art, it has become an important part of everyday life practices today; gastronomy, on the other hand, has moved beyond being merely an activity that satisfies nutritional needs and has positioned itself as a multi-sensory, experience-oriented, and artistic field. In this context, the study discusses Kant's concepts of "disinterested pleasure," "judgments of taste," and "subjective universality," as well as Hegel's approach to aesthetics as a historical and dialectical process, through the lens of contemporary food presentations. The Kantian aesthetic framework focuses on the potential of elements such as visual composition, plate arrangement, color, and texture in gastronomy to produce aesthetic pleasure independently of functional utility. This approach shows that food presentation offers an aesthetic evaluation space separate from, but interacting with, the taste experience. The Hegelian perspective, on the other hand, considers gastronomy not merely as individual pleasure, but as an expression of cultural identity, historical memory, and social meanings; modern plate presentations are interpreted as a product of the dialectical relationship between tradition and innovation. In particular, experimental culinary practices, narrative-based presentations, and technological advancements (e.g., digital gastronomy and 3D food printing) make visible the historical transformation of aesthetic experience.

Keywords: gastronomy, Kantian aesthetics, Hegelian aesthetics, food presentation

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AGATHOS, Volume 17, Issue 2 (33-34): 193-203, DOI 10.5281/zenodo.23367882
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Introduction

Throughout history, aesthetics has been a field that, beyond art, shapes the organization of sensory experience and the expression of the concept of beauty within a socio-cultural context. Kant and Hegel stand out as two key figures who addressed aesthetic problems at a philosophical level, attempting to determine the place of art and beauty in human life. Kant grounds aesthetics in "disinterested pleasure" and "judgments of taste," arguing that these judgments possess disinterested qualities and claim universality; furthermore, in the *Critique of Judgment*, he indirectly addresses gastronomic experience by separating the experience of eating and drinking from purely aesthetic experience (Danaher 2013; Dobrowolski 2018; Ercoşkun 2017; Kuswantoro & Karkono 2022). Hegel interprets aesthetics as the expression of absolute spirit and considers art a field that unfolds the historical and dialectical development of spirit, thereby demonstrating how aesthetic experience evolves within cultural and historical contexts (Klosse & Van der Sonderen 2020; Kuswantoro & Karkono 2022). The question of how this theoretical framework can be applied to contemporary gastronomic practice opens up a discussion on the multifaceted meanings that aesthetic experience brings to everyday life. Gastronomy is no longer considered merely a practice that satisfies nutritional needs, but rather an art form that appeals to the senses through visual composition, color, texture variety, plate arrangement, and experience-oriented presentations; in this context, Kant's and Hegel's aesthetic theories allow for a rethinking of the meaning and value of food presentation (Sree & S. N. 2024; Sukmawan 2020).

This study examines the reflections of Kant's and Hegel's aesthetic theories on modern food presentation, drawing on conceptual discussions in the literature and current practices. It focuses on the relationship between the theoretical and practical dimensions of aesthetic experience, concentrating on the aesthetic and cultural value of gastronomy. Analyzing Kant's concepts of "subjective universality" and "disinterested pleasure," and the separation of the eating and drinking experience from purely aesthetic judgment helps in understanding how aesthetics have developed in social and historical contexts within a Hegelian reading. The study offers an internalized framework for how visual presentations, color and texture plays, plate arrangements, and digital-techno-gastronomic applications (e.g., 3D printing) enrich the aesthetic experience in modern gastronomy, and

relates the theoretical duality of Kant and Hegel to this practical field (Dhar 2022; Hafu 2021; Sree & S. N. 2024; Sutami & Kabul 2024; Türkoğlu & Kozak 2015). The findings highlight the multifaceted nature of aesthetic experience as reflected in daily life and cultural identity, and offer implications for how the aesthetic and cultural value of gastronomy can be established on a philosophical basis (Bulut 2019; Deroy et al. 2014; Dhar 2022; Hafu 2021; Klosse & Van der Sonderen 2020; Sukmawan 2020).

Theoretical framework: A brief reflection on Kant and Hegel

Kantian aesthetics addresses both the subjectivity and universal validity of aesthetic judgment. The concept of "the beautiful" is associated with a disinterested aspect of experience; this aspect implies necessary universal validity while also being dependent on individual sensory exceptionality. Kant's aesthetic judgment carries a "claim to universality" for the judgment itself; this is a mechanism that enables the formation of a shared aesthetic standard beyond subjective liking. This fundamental assumption is frequently addressed in modern aesthetic discussions, and contemporary critical literature examines how Kant's aesthetic judgment carries a claim to subjective universality and how it can change contextually (Danaher 2013; Dobrowolski 2018; Ercoşkun 2017). Furthermore, the tension between the objective consequences of "taste judgment" and "subjective universality" is seen as central to Kantian aesthetics in the literature. This framework offers a useful conceptual basis for evaluating the audiovisual and sensory components of modern food presentation (Dobrowolski 2018; Ercoşkun 2017). Particularly in the context of food-aesthetics, the Kantian distinction is emphasized in various discussions, showing that pure aesthetic judgment and the eating-drinking experience can be considered as separate categories; this facilitates the understanding of gastronomy as an aesthetic field, transcending traditional eating-drinking experience and treating visual-sensory presentation and pleasure as an independent aesthetic field (Dhar 2022; Sree & S. N. 2024; Sutami & Kabul 2024). Furthermore, Kant's conceptual framework of "subjective universality" is linked in contemporary gastronomic literature to discussions emphasizing that presentation should be seen as a universally shared aesthetic value; in this context, visual communication, textural diversity, and the overall aesthetic impact of presentation are considered together with the

journalistic and cultural dimensions of "life experience" (Bulut 2019; Hafu, 2021; Özdemir, 2021).

Hegel's theory of aesthetics views aesthetics not merely as an expression of beauty and pleasure, but also as a process by which the absolute spirit produces itself in the historical process and contributes to the formation of social, moral, and aesthetic values (Klosse & Van der Sonderen 2020). This perspective positions aesthetics as intertwined with social practices and historical transformations, and places are not merely as individual pleasure, but as a cultural-historical construct. Contemporary gastronomic literature reflects this dialectical approach in studies discussing how food presentation gains dynamism in the tension between modernity and tradition; issues such as visuality, plate arrangement, and the reinterpretation of presentation according to cultural context make it possible to read food practice as an expression of socio-cultural life (Dhar 2022; Hafu 2021; Klosse & Van der Sonderen 2020; Sukmawan 2020). In particular, the transformation of plate presentation from merely "an object to be eaten" to an object carrying aesthetic and cultural meaning can be considered one of the extensions of Hegel's aesthetic approach in modern gastronomy (Hafu 2021; Sukmawan 2020).

Kant and gastronomy: Subjective universality, disinterested pleasure, and pure aesthetic judgment

Contemporary gastronomic literature utilizes the Kantian aesthetic framework to understand how food presentation structures visual-sensory integrity and the pleasure of the experience. The concept of "disinterested pleasure" allows the eating experience to be perceived solely as aesthetic pleasure, independent of functional utility; this perspective is based on the idea that all visual elements of plate arrangement, color, texture, and presentation create a harmonious aesthetic experience (Dobrowolski 2018; Kuswantoro & Karkono 2022). The contribution of visual composition and presentation in gastronomy to the experience of food as a "good" independent of its taste points to the applicability of Kantian aesthetics to everyday life (Hafu 2021; Özdemir 2021; Sree & S. N. 2024). Furthermore, the concept of "subjective universality" emphasizes the power of food presentation to guide individual experiences toward a shared aesthetic standard. This situation provides a basis for discussion on how food presentation can create a shared aesthetic experience even in different social and cultural contexts (Dhar 2022; Dobrowolski 2018; Ercoşkun

2017; Kuswantoro & Karkono 2022). In this context, it is seen that the aesthetic value of menu design and presentation is based not only on individual tastes but also on social and cultural sharing; Desjardins' work demonstrates this point with a concrete example (Dhar 2022). The Kantian perspective, in modern gastronomy, strengthens the aesthetic value of presentation through the "dialectical link between visuality and taste," while also enriching the cultural meanings of presentation (Bulut 2019; Dhar 2022; Özdemir 2021).

In the context of gastronomy, discussions regarding how Kantian aesthetics, with its purely aesthetic judgment, treats the eating and drinking experience as a distinct parameter are of significant importance. Within this framework, the production of "pleasure" through audiovisual presentation is established as an aesthetic evaluation beyond mere eating habits; this approach is clearly evident in plating manifestos and literature emphasizing the aesthetic value of visual presentation. Deroy and colleagues' manifesto on plating argues that plate arrangement cannot be considered merely a functional organization, but rather an aesthetic experience in which audiovisual senses are integrated; this provides an important example of how Kantian aesthetics can be functionalized in everyday and concrete gastronomic practices (Hafu 2021). Furthermore, Bulut's aesthetic evaluations address how the aesthetic dimension of gastronomy is constructed through visual images and photography, emphasizing the central role of visual presentation in the production of aesthetic value (Özdemir 2021). Finally, Desjardins' work, which examines the role of menu design in the production of aesthetics and identity, serves as a key example in demonstrating how Kant's concept of "subjective universality" functions within social and cultural contexts (Dhar 2022).

The Hegelian school and the historical-dialectical dimension of aesthetics: A reading through gastronomy

Hegel's aesthetic approach is based on the view of art as an expression of absolute spirit and aesthetics as a process that develops within historicity: art expresses itself within the social and cultural contexts from which spirit inherits its own consciousness, and this expression becomes meaningful as part of the dialectical progress in history (Klosse & Van der Sonderen 2020). Considering modern gastronomic practices within this framework allows food presentation to be seen not merely as an art form, but as an expression of social, cultural, and historical processes: elements such as visuality, color, texture, and

plate arrangement are not only tools of aesthetic pleasure, they are also expressions of cultural identity, historical memory, and social change. In contemporary literature, studies demonstrating the adoption of this perspective highlight analyses that restructure food presentation within the dialectical tension between tradition and innovation. For example, the fact that plating is rooted in a multisensory art form and produces an aesthetic expression through the interaction of form, content, and technical knowledge offers a framework suitable for a Hegelian reading (Hafu 2021). Examining menus as a tool representing cultural identities can be read as an aesthetic dialectic where traditional and contemporary elements come together; this is concretized in Desjardins' work, where the menu functions as a representation of identity (Dhar 2022). Furthermore, the presentations of modern gastronomy, reshaped by technological advancements such as digitalization and 3D printing, reflect a dialectical combination of traditional and innovative elements; this can be considered an example that concretely reveals the dynamics of the historical development process of aesthetics within a Hegelian framework (Sree & S. N. 2024; Sutami & Kabul 2024). In this context, it can be concluded that visual presentations and taste-smell-integrated experiences are not limited solely to the production of individual pleasure but are also an aesthetic activity that enables the production and reproduction of cultural memory and social practices (Klosse & Van der Sonderen 2020; Shetty et al. 2024; Sukmawan 2020).

Examples of modern gastronomy in light of Kant's and Hegel's aesthetic theories

The aesthetic theories of Kant and Hegel offer different approaches to the modern art of gastronomy, both in terms of form and content. While Kant emphasizes that beauty is associated with "disinterested pleasure" and the simplicity of nature, Hegel interprets aesthetics as the outward expression of meaning and the spiritual world. The aesthetic understandings of these two thinkers are two fundamental sources that nourish different approaches in contemporary gastronomy. Examples of gastronomy that conform to Kant's aesthetic theory generally embody simplicity, naturalness, and a minimalist understanding of beauty. For instance, René Redzepi's nature-inspired presentations at his Noma Restaurant embody Kant's concept of the pleasure derived from nature's aesthetic order. The use of natural elements such as twigs, moss, or stones on the plate presents the

viewer with the inherent beauty of nature's simplicity and forms. Similarly, Grant Achatz's Alinea, with its dishes created using liquid nitrogen or smoke effects, alludes to Kant's concept of the "sublime"; the grandeur and boundlessness of nature are represented on the plate with a dramatic effect. Massimo Bottura's "Broken Glass" dessert or Daniel Humm's minimalist presentations offer a selfless sense of pleasure in line with Kant's principles of order and simplicity. These examples, reflecting the aesthetic superiority of simplicity of form and naturalness, bring the viewer not only visual but also mental comfort and contentment.

On the other hand, Hegelian aesthetics manifest themselves in gastronomy in examples where form and content form an inseparable whole, and aesthetics merge with meaning and narrative. Massimo Bottura's "Oops! I Dropped the Lemon Tart" presentation transforms the chef's personal narrative into an artistic expression of a dessert that appears to be broken. This directly aligns with Hegel's understanding that in a work of art, form and meaning, individual story and aesthetics are intertwined.

Alinea's "Soy Sauce Painting" presentations, where ingredients are sprinkled on the table like paint, transform art and gastronomy into a stage performance.

The collaborations of Dom Pérignon and Ferran Adrià reinforce the transformation of gastronomy into an art form, while Gaggan Anand's Emoji Menu brings individual humor and the chef's character to the aesthetic in its presentation. According to Hegel, art is a realm where individual spirit and universal meaning meet; therefore, in these examples, gastronomy refers both to the chef's narrative and to universal artistic values.

Rasmus Kofoed's (Geranium) "Narrative of Dreams and Nature" dish, Andoni Luis Aduriz's (Mugaritz) experimental presentations, and Central's (Virgilio Martínez) dishes representing different geographical regions of Peru, bring Hegel's idea that art has meaning within a historical and cultural context to gastronomy. These dishes are not merely about flavor and form, but also about expressing nature, culture, and individual narratives. El Celler de Can Roca's "Family Stories" dish embodies Hegel's dialogue between the individual and the universal in art, transforming the chefs' personal memories and childhood stories into an aesthetic form.

A dual reading of aesthetic experience in contemporary gastronomy: An integrated analysis of Kant and Hegel

The prominent dynamics in the current literature demonstrate how Kant's and Hegel's aesthetic conceptual frameworks can be applied to modern food presentation. Firstly, visual presentations and plating praxis (visuals, color, texture, and plate arrangement) enrich the aesthetic experience; works such as the plating manifesto argue that aesthetic experience is not limited to taste alone, but transforms into a multisensory art through the combination of visual and tactile senses (Hafu 2021). In this context, Kant's concepts of "disinterested pleasure" and "subjective universality" show that presentation not only fulfills a functional need but also transforms fundamental aesthetic value into a shared Standard, and this standard facilitates the construction of universality as an aesthetic criterion in modern plate design (Dhar 2022; Dobrowolski 2018; Ercoşkun 2017).

Another approach to considering gastronomy within a Hegelian framework requires taking into account the historical-dialectical development of aesthetics; this perspective reveals that food presentation is intertwined with cultural memory and social practices. This can be read as an aesthetic dialectic where traditional and contemporary elements coexist, and in this process, gastronomy can be understood as an expression of the spirit's self-expression (Dhar 2022; Klosse & Van der Sonderen 2020; Shetty et al. 2024). Furthermore, the transformation created in aesthetic experience by technological developments such as 3D printing and digital gastronomy can be considered as an example that updates the aesthetic-reality relationship between Kant and Hegel; the tension between digital production and traditional presentation can be read as part of the historical development of aesthetic experience (Bulut 2019; Shetty et al. 2024; Sree & S. N. 2024; Sutami & Kabul 2024).

Discussion: The multilayered nature of aesthetic experience and its practical contributions

In the context of audiovisual presentation and aesthetic experience, high-quality visual presentations and harmony of color and texture strengthen both the conceptual and practical dimensions of aesthetic experience. The intersection of plating manifestos and aesthetic approaches reveals that presentation is not merely about food; rather, aesthetic experience presents a multi-layered structure integrated into the social context (Bulut 2019; Deroy et al. 2014; Hafu 2021).

Treating the menu as a tool representing cultural identity demonstrates how gastronomic practice acquires meaning within social and cultural contexts, through a combination of Kant's concept of "subjective universality" and the Hegelian historical-dialectical aesthetic narrative. In this approach, the menu is read not only as a functional informational element but also as an aesthetic representational tool that constructs identity; Desjardins' work illustrates this point with a concrete example (Dhar 2022).

In the context of digital and technological transformation, 3D printing, digital gastronomy, and new technological applications are expanding the traditional boundaries of aesthetic experience. These developments demonstrate how aesthetics evolve within the dialectical interaction of tradition and innovation, allowing for the creation of a new bridge between the Kantian approach of disinterestedness and the Hegelian historical-dialectical perspective. The combined use of audiovisual elements and technical innovations makes both the universal and cultural dimensions of aesthetics more visible (Dobrowolski 2018; Hafu 2021; Klosse & Van der Sonderen 2020; Shetty et al. 2024; Sree & S. N. 2024; Sutami & Kabul 2024).

From an ethical and cultural perspective, gastronomy can be considered not only as the production of what is "beautiful" and "delicious," but also as a field where cultural narratives and identities are constructed. Within this framework, the socio-cultural meaning of aesthetic experience makes it possible to read gastronomy as a "cultural performance"; the expansion of aesthetic perception, particularly through media (e.g., television programs and digital content), makes this process even more visible (Sukmawan 2020).

Conclusion

This study provides a framework for understanding how Kantian and Hegelian aesthetic theories are reflected in modern food presentation designs. Kant's concepts of "subjective universality" and "aimless pleasure" enable the aesthetic value of food presentation to be transformed into a shared standard, and the resulting visual-sensory experience to be related to pure aesthetic judgment; it also shows that the eating and drinking experience is not limited to taste and function, but that visual-auditory and cultural dimensions are also decisive (Bulut 2019; Danaher 2013; Dhar 2022; Dobrowolski 2018; Ercoşkun 2017; Kuswantoro & Karkono 2022). The Hegelian framework, on the other hand, emphasizes that aesthetics is an expression shaped by

social practices within a historical and dialectical development; in modern gastronomy, the dialectical fusion of tradition and innovation establishes the historical context of aesthetic experience and makes it possible to consider plate presentations as a reproduction of cultural memory (Hafu 2021; Klosse & Van der Sonderen 2020; Shetty et al. 2024). This dual framework allows for a rethinking of the aesthetic and cultural value of contemporary gastronomic practice and offers enriching contributions at both theoretical and practical levels.

Thus, Kant's concepts of "aesthetic universality" and "disinterested pleasure", along with Hegel's aesthetic-dialectical interpretation, reveal the multifaceted nature of aesthetic experience in everyday life and cultural identity, while grasping the meaning and value of modern food presentation. Since aesthetic practices in contemporary gastronomy encompass not only taste but also visual appeal, presentation, and technological innovations, Kant's and Hegel's aesthetic theories offer a complementary perspective; this theoretical framework allows for a clearer understanding of the driving force behind the aesthetic and cultural value of gastronomy.

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Food, food habits, and cultural identity: A reading of select African and Northeast Indian texts

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Abstract: This paper explores how food and food habits serve as vital expressions of cultural identity in select African and Northeast Indian texts. Drawing on works such as Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, *A Man of the People* and Kire's *A Naga Village Remembered*, *A Terrible Matriarchy*, the study examines how food practices function not merely as background detail but as central symbolic elements that reflect tradition, social structures, gender roles, and responses to colonial and postcolonial transformations.The study delves into the intricate relationships between food, food habits, culture, and identity in the select texts. It also examines how culinary traditions encode cultural values, mythologies, and histories, shaping individual and collective identities. Further, it offers valuable insights into the intricate dynamics of cultural identity within African and Northeast Indian contexts. The findings underscore the pivotal role of food in shaping cultural narratives, strengthening social connections, and safeguarding cultural heritage. This study has implications for future researchers in relation to food studies, cultural studies, and literary analysis, offering new insights into how food reflects and shapes cultural identity.

Keywords: food, culture, identity, African literature, Northeast Indian literature

Introduction

Food and dietary practices have permanently been deeply embedded in the cultural identity of societies, intertwining traditions, values, and historical narratives that shape communal experiences across the globe. In the diverse cultural landscapes of both Africa and Northeast India, cuisine serves as a means of sustenance and a powerful symbol of heritage, community and belonging. Through the exploration of select African and Northeast Indian texts, this study explores the complex

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AGATHOS, Volume 17, Issue 2 (33-34): 205-217, DOI 10.5281/zenodo.23368209
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interconnections between food, culture, and identity, shedding light on their profound influence on societal traditions and personal belonging. By analysing the role of food in shaping and reflecting cultural narratives, this study aims to illuminate how culinary traditions encode cultural values, mythologies and histories, ultimately revealing the complex dynamics of cultural identity in these regions.

The study will emphasise the significance of food as a fundamental element in expressing and preserving cultural identity. Despite the availability of modern food items in every corner of the world, certain people are still attracted more towards traditional or ethnic foods that are rich in antioxidants for better health benefits. It will also try to comprehend how prevalent societal discourses influence food's symbolic meanings or significance. The study will also examine how food imagery is used and relates to culture as portrayed in Achebe's texts and Northeast Indian texts. These works have been chosen for study to draw attention to how Achebe's writings changed Igbo eating customs and, in turn, their culture. Similarly, in the Northeast, we shall see how culture is shaped by the different food items and food habits they have been consuming for ages.

Argument

Through a critical examination of a few select texts from Africa and Northeast India, this paper argues that food and food habits are not merely elements of daily life but function as vital semiotic tools that assert cultural identity, resist colonial and postcolonial erasure, and mediate the tensions between tradition and modernity. By foregrounding the indigenous food habits and rituals surrounding food, these texts construct a counter-narrative to the homogenising cultural forces, offering a sensory archive of memory, belonging and resistance.

Methodology and theoretical frame of reference

The methodology followed involves a critical analysis of the relevant primary texts by Chinua Achebe and Easterine Kire. Chinua Achebe's two novels *Things Fall Apart* and *A Man of the People*; and Easterine Kire's *Sky Is My Father: A Naga Village Remembered* and *A Terrible Matriarchy* have been taken for the purpose of analysis. The secondary sources comprise criticisms of the primary texts, such as reviews, journals, articles, essays and other non-fictional works. The principal theoretical frameworks employed are cultural studies, identity theory,

gastronomy and Rawlsian Theory of Food Culture, encompassing psychological and cultural aspects, such as customary cuisines and personal preferences influenced by early life events, local food availability, and financial factors.

Discussion & analysis

For the convenience of our discussion the paper is divided into four sections:

(a) Food habits as seen in African novels

The festival of the celebration of the New Yam in *Things Fall Apart* (*TFA*) is a recurring event that highlights the deep cultural significance of food in the Igbo society of Umuofia. The festival serves as an expression of gratitude to the earth goddess-Ani, who is considered a source of fertility, as well as tribute to the clan's ancestral spirits. This celebration underscores the role of food not just as sustenance but as a powerful cultural symbol, reinforcing communal bonds, spiritual beliefs, and traditions passed down through generations. As rightly said, “He who brings kola brings life” (*TFA*, 5), where food (here food as a beverage) plays an important role in keeping them happy. In the Igbo society, the worth of an individual is measured based on the number of yams they possess. More number of yams means higher respect for them. Title-taking is also highly regarded in their culture. A person who cannot take a title is considered worthless, just as Unoka (father of Okonkwo) is. Okonkwo, the protagonist of *Things Fall Apart*, resented his father, Unoka, for his poverty and lack of ambition, which left their family struggling to have enough to eat. Okonkwo thus worked tirelessly from a young age, earning two titles and demonstrating exceptional valour in inter-tribal wars. His rise to prominence embodies the Igbo proverb, “If a child washed his hands he could eat with kings” (*TFA*, 6), signifying that hard work and personal achievement, rather than birth right, determine one’s status and place in society. He could feed all his three wives and eight children for the whole year. The act of worship through “sacrifices of kola nut, food and palm-wine” (*TFA*, 11), along with prayers for oneself and one’s family, reflects the deep spiritual and cultural traditions of the Igbo people. In this case, food is used as a sacrificial object which is predominant in the Igbo society. Thus, we can agree to what the two critics Raj Kumar Baral and Swarnim Raj Lamsal (2021) have to say regarding history and religion. According to them, these

two aspects mentioned above, whether we accept it or not, have greatly shaped the way we select our food items. The cultural identity of a particular group of people can be known through their dietary choices. During childbirth, it was customary for them to celebrate by killing animals as meat to usher in the advent of a new member into their family. In the novel, Okonkwo kills a goat when his first wife gives birth to a baby boy. These are pieces of evidence to prove that the Igbo society maintains its tradition of making merry and living a life of contentment through feasting.

The custom of giving bride-price in the Igbo society is also strictly followed. In their language, it is called Uri-a ceremony in which a suitor who has already paid most of the bride-price brings jars of palm wine to the bride's Umunna, her "wide and extensive group of kinsmen." The number of jars of wine brought is a sign of respect that the boy's family shows towards the girl's family. However, if the wife leaves her husband due to dissatisfaction, the husband's family is obligated to return the bride prize. However, these customs and traditions are slowly eroding from their society due to conversion to Christianity. Religion thus plays an important role in bringing about changes in the socio-cultural life of the Igbos. In this context, we can refer to cultural theorist Stuart Hall (1990), who argues that cultural identity is dynamic and constantly evolving. Based on Hall's perspective, it can be inferred that the Igbo's eating customs deeply embedded in their cultural identity would inevitably change over time and across different contexts. Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, the setting of which takes place before the coming of the Britishers when the Igbos first encountered British colonial influence, whereas his later novel, *A Man of the People*, takes place in post-independence Nigeria, reflecting the continued transformation of cultural practices in response to historical and political shifts. As a result, the food that was very popular among the Igbos-yam has now taken the form of 'cake' which is a testimony to the entire transformation process.

In addition, the Igbos celebrate important events with feasts, such as marriage, obtaining a title, etc. These feasts provide a forum for community members to connect and share their emotions. In a feast given to his mother's people, Okonkwo says, "A child cannot pay for its mother's milk. I have only called you together because it is good for kinsmen to meet" (*TFA*, 121-122). Thus, the food here serves as a platform to bring all the community people together especially the relatives irrespective of their social positions and age.

Being a polygamous society the Igbos could marry many wives and have lots of children. When Ojiugo, Okonkwo's youngest wife, visits a friend to have her hair plaited and fails to return in time to prepare the mid day meal. As a result, her children eat with those of Okonkwo's first wife. They felt that sharing food strengthened the bonds between the family's children. Furthermore, the children considered all their father's wives to be their mothers in addition to their mother. In the essay "Feminism with a Small 'f!'", Buchi Emecheta brings to light a compelling account of a particular relationship between children and their mothers. A young boy in London once narrated about the role of two mothers to his class teacher. "My Mummy number one is working. Mummy number two will come and collect me" (Emecheta 2007, 555). At first the teacher failed to understand but soon realized that the boy's father had married two wives.

The Igbo culture exhibited a distinct gendered division of crops. The narrator states, "Yam, the king of crops, was a very exacting king. For three or four moons it demanded hard work and constant attention from cock crow till the chickens went back to roost" (*TFA*, 25). In his paper, "Re-Imagining Gender in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart"*, Christopher Anyokwu (2011) underscores this gendered division of agriculture in Umuofia, reinforcing the notion that yam symbolised masculinity, hard work, and social status.

The arrival of the locusts was not seen as a destructive force but rather as an abundance of nourishment, eagerly anticipated and harvested. To the people of Umuofia, locusts were not merely a spectacle but also a valued source of food prized for their delicious taste. Thus, locusts, symbolic of the colonisers, are now preyed upon by the colonised and consumed as an item of food. The image of the locusts, described as full of power and beauty, is now reduced to a mere food item to be consumed by even ordinary citizens of the country.

According to Harry Olufunwa's (2000) paper, "Eating with Kings: Food and Ambition in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*", Okonkwo's skills were primarily physical in character, including farming, fighting, and wrestling. He claimed that there was an inherent connection between the three activities and eating. Farming and food are thus interrelated. In their society breaking of kola nut was regarded as auspicious. They utter these words before breaking the kola nuts: "Life to all of us, and let there be friendship between your family and ours" (*TFA*, 86).Thus, food plays an important role in social gatherings

like marriage, which is an inseparable and unavoidable aspect of human life.

However, the term "national cake" is used in place of food in his other book, *A Man of the People* (*AMOP*), in a very caustic manner to allude to the avarice and selfishness of the native leaders of post-independence Nigeria. In the novel the wealth of the whole country takes the form of a "national cake" (a symbolic cake where everybody gets a share of the nation's wealth) which the leaders wanted to exploit for individual gain. It was a kind of "eat-and-let-eat regime" (*AMOP*, 137). The very aim of independence of their country from the colonisers was disillusioned by the grip of corruption which the leaders exhibited. As a result, the nation's overall development remained stagnant, jeopardised by unchecked greed and systemic corruption. The novel thus stands as a scathing critique of political corruption in contemporary societies, exposing how the relentless pursuit of personal gain at both the leadership and grassroots levels thwarts national progress and deepens socio-economic disparities.

Analyses of the two novels reveal how eating habits and their cultural significance have evolved over time, particularly within Igbo society. The transition from yam to cake serves as a powerful metaphor for the societal transformations that occurred from the pre-colonial to the post-colonial era. This shift highlights how traditional values were gradually abandoned, as the native elite distanced themselves from their cultural heritage, eagerly embracing Western norms and customs that were often incompatible with their indigenous identity.

As Frantz Fanon (2008) asserts, the leaders of newly independent Nigeria, particularly among the Igbo elite, exhibit a tendency to mask their true identities, metaphorically covering their ebony skins with "white masks" in an effort to assimilate into the Western world (Kagyung 2021, 256). This phenomenon underscores the loss of cultural authenticity and the profound impact of colonial influence on post-colonial Nigerian society.

(b) Food habits as seen in the novels from Northeast India

Even in Northeast India, like other parts of the world, food occupies a very prominent place during celebrations. This is evident in Kire's *A Naga Village Remembered* (*ANVR*) when the relatives of Levi went to the house of Peno to ask for her hand in marriage with young Levi. Celebrations soon follow after the harvest season as it symbolises

fulfilment where an abundance of food grains are stored in each household. The success of a marriage depends purely on the availability of food for the occasion. This is followed even during entry into a new house where the priest sacrifices the rooster by carefully sprinkling its blood on the middle beam ensuring that it is not too high, as this is believed to suppress the household's prosperity and hinder its progress. The practice of giving bride-price is also something which has been inherent for quite a long time in the Naga society. The groom's family would give to the household of the bride, usually a "big fowl" as bride price and are blessed with long life and wish them to live to be ancestors and grandparents. "Fowl" here can also be equated with the nutritional value of food items. Important worth mentioning in this context is the 'title taking' ceremony observed by the Nagas. This is carried out only when they have abundance in their granaries and cattle, for it costs them a lot. Such ceremonies act as a ground to bring the community people together and instil in them the brotherhood feeling of their relatives. The Naga's observation of rupi-the custom of killing cattle for funeral meat is also associated with food. It is their custom of eating celebratory meat after a victory in war. It is purely based on the economic condition of the household. Probably, its primary purpose was to mourn the death by having a good meal, eating and drinking and making merry when they are still alive. The very act of mourning has been transformed into a day of celebration by having their share of the funeral meat.

In Kire's other novel *A Terrible Matriarchy* (*ATM*), the little protagonist, Dielieno, who lives with her disciplinarian grandmother has many things to tell regarding food and how she is treated in a biased manner by her own paternal grandmother. She says how she is devoid of the 'leg piece' of the chicken broth, served only to her brothers. This highlights the underlying cultural estrangement embedded in two fundamental questions: Who nurtures? And who gets the nourishment? As Lévi-Strauss (1978, 495) observes, in all societies, food practices communicate meaning just as a language, "… through which that society unconsciously reveals its structure". In this way, the novel portrays how food culture of the Nagas particularly helps them to give shape to their unique Naga identity and their sense of belonging to a particular tribe.

Food serves as a primary marker of Naga identity in the novel, offering tangible expressions of social hierarchy and collective membership. The act of eating itself becomes a site for defining the

self and the other, shaping gendered and social roles. As Luce Giard (1998, 198) notes, "Eating is always much more than just eating"; food is "cultured" to the core. Thus, in the novel Kire constructs gendered identity through gastronomic discourse, using food as a powerful symbol of cultural experience and social stratification.

(c) Similarities in the food habits and culture of the two geographically located areas

The narrator in *Things Fall Apart* mentions the festival of great importance: the New Yam Festival in the whole of Umuofia and its adjoining nine villages. The whole village seemed to be filled with happiness. According to the custom they would dispose of the yams which have been from the previous year. Only the fresh and the fibrous ones would be kept for the celebration. There were always plenty of eatables on those days, and relatives from faraway places would be invited for the occasion. Similarly, in certain Northeastern states, there are celebrations which are particularly associated with cultivation and agriculture. The festival of Thekranyi, observed by the Naga community, which is a feast of the age-groups, is one such festival. The different age-groups accumulate their earnings by doing field labour for hire. And they have a feast at the Sekrenyi festival with these earnings. It may be stated that Sekrenyi is the festival of sanctification observed by the Nagas.

Among the beverages that are very popular among them is that of palm-wine and kolanut in Africa, and locally prepared rice-brew in the Northeastern states. Whenever any auspicious occasion takes place there is always the presence of these beverages in both the areas. Before any negotiation relating to matters of marriage or any important discussions, palm-wine or rice-brew would precede. The whole village would drink, and only then matters of importance would be discussed. It has become one of the major prerequisites for social gathering.

Title-taking is one of the important occasions in a person's life. This is exhibited by Okonkwo when he invites all his relatives and even his wives' relatives and gives them a grand feast. He truly exhibits his prowess by garnering two barns full of yams to feed his entire family for the whole year. Besides, he has also thrown the most muscular wrestler Amalinze-the Cat in the wrestling competition in Umuofia. Additionally, he has even brought three human heads from the war which he fought for his village. Such exhibition of might for his countrymen truly inspires the whole village and accordingly, titles are

given to them. Similarly, such title-taking also takes place in the Naga community of our present context.

In *Things Fall Apart* Achebe brings to us different kinds of sacrifices. There are both animal and human sacrifices mentioned in the story of the novel. To usher in the birth of a male child by his first wife, Okonkwo slaughtered a goat as a gesture of joy, and celebration, providing a feast for his relatives. But there is also human sacrifice when Okonkwo killed Ikemefuna whom they had received as compensation for killing a woman of their village by the neighbouring village called Mbanta. Similarly, such sacrifices can also be seen in Kire's *A Naga Village Remembered* where there is the mention of chicken sacrifice. During such rituals, it was necessary to strictly follow the instructions given by the priest who performed the ceremony. The main reason behind such sacrifices was the well-being of the entire household. Such beliefs still predominate in certain parts of the Northeastern Indian villages even today.

Similarly in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* the ancestor worshipping is very evident as the protagonist Okonkwo honoured the gods with different varieties of food items. The Northeastern part of India too abounds with such practices where they believe that the dead are their relatives and need to propitiate their souls through different rituals. They believe that if the spirits of the dead are not appropriately appeased, they will hunt you; on the other hand, if you honour them they will bless you. Thus, fear of the dead spirits looming around the living compels them to observe such rituals.

The custom of giving bride-price is evident in both areas. The Igbos called it Uri-a ceremony in which a suitor who has already paid most of the bride price brings jars of palm wine to the bride's Umunna, her "wide and extensive group of kinsmen." However, if a wife leaves her husband, the husband's family is required to return the bride price. But these customs are slowly eroding from their society as they have converted to Christianity. Similarly, in the Naga society, the groom's family would give a big fowl as bride-price to the household of the bride. In their view, Jesus on the Cross is similar to a chicken sacrifice which the native Angamis do. They also believed that Jesus (Isu, as they called Him) was akin to the sacrificial chicken, offered to free them from diseases and other ailments brought upon them by spirits. Thus, there are lots of similarities between the two areas when it comes to religion.

The punishment for killing somebody was exile, as observed in both regions. Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart* was exiled for killing the messenger; while Penu in *A Naga Village Remembered* was exiled for accidentally killing his friend-Levi in the hunting episode. During the exile as in *Things Fall Apart*, in *A Naga Village Remembered* too, Penyu lived in his relative's house (for it had been Penyu's mother's clan who settled there some 20 years earlier), thereby they settled in a plot of land given to build a house and a field to till. Similarly, he (Penyu) died as Okonkwo (who died by committing suicide), in the end, bitten by a poisonous adder.

In Africa, the Week of Peace was strictly observed, during which no one was allowed to work in the fields or speak harshly to their neighbours. Similarly, there is the observance of Genna days in certain Northeastern states such as Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh. However, Okonkwo violated the sanctity of this sacred tradition by committing the sin of physically abusing his youngest wife during the sacred Week of Peace. During such days no work was to be done and the sole purpose was to prevent the field's failure to bear grain and failure to ripen. A single mistake by an individual could bring disaster to the entire clan.

(d) Differences in their food habits and culture

Yam is the staple food of the Nigerians and various items made out of yam are eaten by them. While in the Northeastern part of India, the different ethnic groups and communities have different food habits and though they consume the same food their way of preparing the food is slightly different from the other. Such references are abundantly found in Kire's *A Terrible Matriarchy*. But with the impact of globalization, we observe that the love for food also changes among these people. There is always the tendency to preserve one's culture and customs but in order to adjust and adapt to the prevailing situation one has to consume the foods available even though they may not be palatable to their taste buds.

In this context, we can bring in the Igbo community's belief in the Oracle of the Hills and the Caves with relation to their age old culture. According to them when any misfortune happens in the community they refer back to the Oracles. This has reference in the context of the little boy 'Ikemefuna' who has been gifted by the neighbouring village Mbaino as compensation for killing the wife of Ogbuefi Udo. As per the Oracle, the boy was to be killed by Umuofia and the virgin to be

handed to Ogbuefi Udo as wife. This also shows the rigid nature of customs and culture that the people exhibited. While in the Northeast the people believe in Shamans who have a strong link to the spirit world and can heal the sick, talk to spirits, and can guide the dead to the after world. Such practices and beliefs are prevalent in the cultural and spiritual traditions of the two regions under our present study.

The practice of chicken sacrifice is also very popular among the Nagas of our present study. Whenever somebody falls sick it is customary for them to call the priest and perform the ritual of chicken sacrifice. Once the ritual is over they abandon the chicken of sacrifice at an appointed place and gradually the sick person feels better. However, such practices are rarely seen in Africa. Through the observance of this practice, we are led to believe that in ancient times when medical facilities were not available in those remote areas the priest in question was the only hope of succour to those inflicted by either diseases or spirits.

The Igbo people consider oratory or the art of conversation as a special skill which only few have possessed. In the novel *Things Fall Apart*, Okoye has that ability or art to speak for a very long time and then concluding with a final blow to make them understand by saying very concisely. Besides, proverbs also play a major role in the social life of the community. The Igbos particularly make use of these proverbs to convey messages to make them understand about a particular matter. Examples abound in the novel, few of them could be, like, “A toad does not run in the daytime for nothing”; “You can tell a ripe corn by its look”; “When mother-cow is chewing grass its young ones watch its mouth”, etc. These proverbs encapsulate the wisdom, traditions, and values deeply ingrained in the Igbo society.

Conclusion and findings

This study highlights the profound relationship between food, culture, and identity demonstrating how culinary practices are deeply embedded in the social, religious, and traditional frameworks of different communities. From rituals surrounding bride-price and funeral meat to the symbolism of food in religious sacrifices and ancestor worship, food serves as both a marker of identity and a medium of cultural continuity. Despite geographical and cultural differences, similarities exist in food traditions, ceremonial practices, and belief systems across the studied regions. The findings emphasise that dietary habits are shaped by cultural heritage, and while modern

influences may alter some aspects, core traditions persist, ensuring the preservation of indigenous knowledge and practices.

Further, the study underscores the importance of food in social organisation, where its role extends beyond sustenance to symbolise status, spirituality, and communal bonding. While globalisation and religious transitions have led to the decline of certain traditional food practices, efforts must be made to document and preserve these cultural expressions, as they offer invaluable insights into the historical and anthropological evolution of societies. Future researchers could explore the impact of modernisation on traditional dietary patterns, how food serves to promote acculturation across regions and geographies and how these indigenous food habits promote sustainable practices in the long run for the community people. Understanding these dynamics will not only enrich ethnographic studies but also contribute to the broader discourse on food security, cultural heritage, and identity formation in a rapidly globalizing world.

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Recovering the 'Daughters of Decadence': Gender politics and modernist aesthetics in *The Yellow Book*

Satorupa Ghosh Das and Arindam Modak*

Abstract: *The Yellow Book* (1894–1897) occupies a pivotal place in the culture of *fin-de-siècle* literature, positioned between decadence, aestheticism, and early modernist experimentation. Critical scholarship has traditionally privileged its male contributors over its women writers. However, the short fiction of *Yellow women* like, Ella D'Arcy, Netta Syrett, and Charlotte Mew exemplifies sustained experimentation with narrative indirection, psychological interiority, and tonal restraint, challenging conventional representations of feminine desire, marital confinement, and emotional dependence through fragmented plots, unresolved endings, and weakened narrative authority. These strategies do not represent aesthetic retreat but rather a mode of feminist resistance determined by the cultural limitations of the 1890s, when overt challenges to gender roles invited moral censure or critical dismissal. The title, 'Daughters of Decadence', foregrounds this paradoxical positioning where women authors were simultaneously associated with cultural decline and aesthetic excess yet compelled to articulate their critique through reticence and ambiguity. Thus, D'Arcy, Syrett, and Mew transform decadence and aestheticism into tools for probing the emotional and psychic costs of gendered social discipline. This paper situates their work within the intersecting frameworks of female authorship, periodical culture, and *fin-de-siècle* debates surrounding decadence and modernity and reconsiders ambiguity as a productive feminist intervention that challenges conventional evaluative criteria in literary criticism. The methodology adopted here is three-fold: first, it contextualises *The Yellow Book* within broader historical and literary discourses of gender, authorship, and aesthetic experimentation; second, it offers close readings of selected short fiction by D'Arcy, Syrett, and Mew, paying particular attention to narrative structure, affective economy, and ethical ambiguity; and lastly, informed by feminist criticism, theories of decadence, and early modernist narrative studies, it shows how, these three, along with the other women

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AGATHOS, Volume 17, Issue 2 (33-34): 219-232, DOI 10.5281/zenodo.23368556
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writers of the periodical, were central in shaping a gender-conscious and ethically complex modernist prose tradition.

Keywords: *Yellow Book*, *New Woman*, aesthetics, decadence, feminist, feminine

Literary and historical background

The 1890s was fraught with issues of gender, women's education, sexuality, and authorship. Debates on social order and morality became more intense. At the heart of such debates emerged the figure of the *New Woman*, both in reality and fiction, representing ambitions for economic freedom, professional success, and sexual self-will (Heilmann and Beetham 2004, 22-25; Ardis 1990, 45-48). However, she existed more as a cultural space where progressive and conservative impulses were locked in mutual tension. *New Woman* writers inhabited a contradictory site where heightened possibility and immense limitations co-existed; where their experiments with literature were closely examined for their ethical and cultural adequacy.

The boom in periodical culture provided women writers with unparalleled exposure even as these periodicals established multiple editorial, commercial, and ideological lines. It was within this framework, that the short stories emerged as a very appropriate genre, one which called for the condensation of narratives as well as a certain rhetorical openness and reserve so far as the treatment of marriage, desire, or interiority was concerned (Beetham 1990, 348–51; Kooistra and Brake 1990, 12–15). *The Yellow Book* occupied a pivotal place in this literary milieu. As an avant-garde magazine aligned with decadence and early modernism, it rejected Victorian moral didacticism in favour of stylistic refinement, psychological complexity, and emotional restraint. Although early commentators such as Max Nordau condemned decadence as a symptom of cultural decline, aesthetic experimentation provided women writers with what Gilbert and Gubar describe as an elastic and oblique language through which they could explore desire, alienation, and the psychological costs of social regulation without resorting to overt political declaration (Nordau 1993; Showalter 1990, 201–03; Gilbert and Gubar 1979, 245–47; Heilmann and Beetham 2004, 35–37; Schaffer 2000, 112–15; Ledger and Luckhurst 2000). Aesthetic distancing thus functioned not as disengagement but as a mode of strategic involvement, enabling them to expose the pressures of marriage and gender roles without inviting accusations of moral impropriety.

The editorial structure of *The Yellow Book* and significant contributions to it by its New Woman writers, are central to understanding the journal's aesthetic and cultural ambitions (Kooistra 1995, 25–28; Ardis 2002, 150–53). George Egerton, Vernon Lee, and Rosamond Marriott Watson foregrounded female desire, agency, and moral complexity in their fiction (Ardis 2002, 155–58; Ledger 1997, 918–21). Ella D'Arcy, Netta Syrett, and Charlotte Mew stood at the forefront of periodical experimentation and developed distinctive narrative practices which, together, demonstrated an impulse of proto-modernist concern for interiority, fragmentation, and narrative incompleteness. Rather than occupying marginal positions, they shaped the aesthetic identity of *The Yellow Book*, redefining decadence and early modernism through ethically attentive and formally innovative literary practice (Kooistra and Brake 1990, 18–20; Ardis 2002, 155–58).

Theoretical framework

This paper will engage with feminist critical readings of literature, theories of decadence and aestheticism, and critical interpretations of narrative in early modernist fiction to assess the writings of women implicated in *The Yellow Book*. These critical approaches allow a reading of how methods of formal control, narrative obliquity, and emotional subtlety might be considered gendered aesthetic techniques in the constricted social climate of the *fin de siècle* era. Based on this interpretive lens, this study positions D'Arcy, Syrett and Mew at the centre of late nineteenth-century literary experimentation. Pioneering critics such as Elaine Showalter and Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar have demonstrated that women's writing emerges in dialogue with, and often in resistance to, patriarchal literary traditions that marginalised female authorship and constrained acceptable representations of female subjectivity. Showalter's concept of women's literature as a 'double-voiced discourse' is particularly relevant, as it foregrounds the ways women writers negotiated dominant masculine traditions while simultaneously articulating gendered experiences often excluded from canonical narratives (Showalter 1990, 201–04). Gilbert and Gubar's analysis of the ideological structures governing women's literary production further illuminates how female authors were compelled to encode dissent obliquely, frequently adopting strategies of indirection, fragmentation,

and tonal ambiguity in order to evade moral censure (Gilbert and Gubar 1979, 245–48).

Within the *fin de siècle* context, these pressures were intensified by widespread cultural anxieties surrounding the figure of the *New Woman*. Showalter's analysis of *New Woman* discourse highlights the paradoxical expansion of women's authorship alongside increased scrutiny and regulation of female behaviour, sexuality, and intellectual autonomy (Showalter 1990, 212–15). Women writers publishing in periodicals such as *The Yellow Book* operated within a contradictory space: they were afforded unprecedented opportunities for literary visibility while remaining subject to rigid moral expectations. However, feminist critique has tended to recognize that such a contradiction not only influenced the thematic preoccupations of women's literature but also influenced its formal aspects. Thus, instead of overt polemic, women writers took recourse to articulating the critique indirectly through silence, absence, and emotional reticence, thus shifting the focus to formal and stylistic manoeuvres as locations of critique (Heilmann 2000, 38-41, 918-20; Thain 2007, 172-75, 12-15; Kooistra and Brake 1990).

The periodical context of *The Yellow Book* reinforces the necessity of such a strategy. Periodical culture enforced commercial, editorial, and ideological constraints that shaped the form and content of published fiction. Critics have stressed that magazine-published short stories required forms of narrative compression, suggestive understatement, and formal economy, conditions that facilitated women's necessity to encode critique indirectly (Kooistra and Brake 1990, 12–15). Feminist periodical studies thus offer some productive methodological groundwork for demonstrating how women writers reformed aestheticism and decadence to the serial demands of publication, transmuting limitation into stylistic innovation. The intellectual climate of *The Yellow Book* provides the theoretical grounding of this study, further informed by theories of aestheticism and decadence. Underwritten by writers as Walter Pater and Arthur Symons, aesthetic experience was a mode of expanded perception that valorised interiority, sensibility, and ethical undecidability above moral dogma (Pater 1980, 55–58; Symons 1958, 101–04). If its deviance from the cultural status quo moved Max Nordau to famously brand decadence as the symptom of cultural degeneration, later critics have disputed this reductive reading by revealing how decadent aesthetics lent a versatile expressive vocabulary to voices articulating alienation,

desire, and psychological disintegration (Beaumont 2010, 98–102; Denisoff 2007, 567–71).

Specifically for female writers, aestheticism became a strategy of dealing with contentious matters without having to depend on explicit social commentary. Such distancing served not as an act of withdrawal but rather as an engagement with social matters, as suggested by critics, Schaffer and Rose, where female writers could respond to female norms through irony, ambivalence, and stylistic obliqueness rather than explicit confrontation (Schaffer 2000, 112–15; Rose 1978, 7–10). In more contemporary studies, it is emphasised that there was complex engagement with power, responsibility, and subjectivity in aestheticism, in contrast to the possibility of its association with political detachment (Moran 2007, 392–95; Schaffer 2000, 118–20). This study also draws on theories of early modernist narrative to situate the fiction of D'Arcy, Syrett, and Mew within a proto-modernist trajectory. Modernist critics have identified fragmentation, interiority, narrative ambiguity, and open-ended form as defining features of early twentieth-century literary experimentation. However, feminist scholars have increasingly argued that these techniques were already being developed by women writers in the late nineteenth century, particularly within the context of periodicals that encouraged formal innovation (Marcus 2007, 45–47; Thacker 2003, 237–40). By examining these women's fiction in *The Yellow Book*, this study challenges linear, male-centred accounts of modernist emergence.

Ella D'Arcy's works of fiction are examples of an early modernist style that captures the held-up emotions of an individual and bears an abstruse plot line. In "Irremediable", D'Arcy creates a story line without any redemption of the characters; nor does the conclusion effect a specific change (1894, 87-108). In "The Pleasure-Pilgrim" again, the travel-freak female character remains just as emotionally restricted as she was prior to her travel (1895, 34-67).

Netta Syrett's works of fiction further the idea of ethical limitations and moral ambiguities. In "Thy Heart's Desire", she presents a desire dictated by social ethics; therefore, the female character in the story has to deal with her own morals, creating an overall feeling of hesitation (1894, 230-45). "Far Above Rubies" further interrogates moral virtue through irony and tonal ambiguity, challenging cultural ideals of feminine self-sacrifice without offering corrective resolution (1897, 250-72). Feminist critics have noted that Syrett's stylistic restraint mirrors the psychological containment experienced by her

characters, transforming narrative form into an implicit critique of gendered moral discipline (Ledger 1997, 920–23).

Charlotte Mew's "Passed" represents the most radical articulation of narrative indirection within *The Yellow Book* (1894, 121-41). The story portrays grief as an ongoing psychic condition resistant to narrative closure, denying readers the consolation traditionally associated with mourning narratives. Critics have interpreted Mew's refusal of resolution as a feminist intervention that challenges cultural expectations that women's suffering should be morally redemptive or narratively productive (Heilmann and Beetham 2004, 36–38). The compression, ellipsis, and silence that structure "Passed" anticipate modernist explorations of trauma, memory, and affective disruption.

Collectively, the fiction of D'Arcy, Syrett, and Mew exemplifies what critics have described as a 'politics of indirection,' in which ethical meaning is conveyed through narrative hesitation, ambiguity, and silence rather than explicit statement (Ledger 1997, 920–23). This study situates these authors within feminist, aesthetic, and modernist theoretical frameworks to locate them at the centre of the literary project of *The Yellow Book*, arguing for women's writing as crucial to the emergence of a gender-conscious, morally complex modern literary narrative.

Narrative indirection and feminist ethics

Ella D'Arcy's short stories in *The Yellow Book* repeatedly examine the thematics of emotional entrapment, misplaced intimacy, and the deceptive notion of female mobility under late Victorian social arrangements. They are an important part of contemporary discussion regarding the ways in which women express and seek liberation. In contrast to writers like Kate Chopin, D'Arcy does not use the *New Woman* protagonist to represent the liberated woman; instead, she illustrates the social reality of how women continue to experience emotional dependence, social vigilance and psychological obstacles unabatedly. As a result, feminist evaluations have identified D'Arcy as one of the most astute psychological analysts of the time for her ability to show the complex interrelationship between the legal and social and the constraints thereof. In addition, D'Arcy's tales are not only about man-woman relationships, but also about how women internalise the concept of 'gender deafness' in their everyday lives through an ethical obligation to comply with the 'feminine standard' defined by patriarchy, suppressing their desires.

D'Arcy's "Irremediable" is a powerful sketch of her obsession with the emotional imbalance within heterosexual intimacy. Unlike most literature related to abandonment which has some level of moral judgement or 'white robe-redemption' about those abandoned individuals and instead of offering a sense of spiritual understanding or emotional reward, "Irremediable" explores the concept of abandonment without creating any form of closure at the end of the narrative. There's no reconciliation in "Irremediable" between the woman, Esther, and her husband, Willoughby.

The lack of an emotional ending leaves the reader confused about his/her plausible reaction. D'Arcy provides no solutions, and therefore provides no self-affirmation or romance to resolve a woman's conflicting emotions at the end of the story. In the light of this, it has been suggested in recent narratology that the open-endedness of the story disrupts the traditional view of justice in Victorian narratives, where a sufferer's suffering (whether physical, mental, or moral), should create a spiritual connection, and thus create a connection to moral clarity and promote spiritual development (Marcus 2007, 45-47; Thacker 2003, 237-40). D'Arcy's lack of formal closure does not suggest her failure as an artist but indicates that it was her conscious choice to establish a different philosophical framework than that of traditional Victorian narrative justice.

D'Arcy's artistic development connects her to the late nineteenth-century theories of affect and gender which often reworked the conception of stasis from one of passivity to one originating from active contemplation or intense interiority. By doing so, she undermined the cultural ideas that defined female suffering as a means of moral elevation or redemption. The ways in which suffering is presented in these writings, however, presents it as recurring and structural (Taylor 1988, 615-18; Kooistra 1995, 12-15). The critique of women's mobility (both socially and emotionally) is further advanced in "The Pleasure-Pilgrim". This story, although beginning within a context similar to the *New Woman* narratives of travel and sexual exploration, undermines these ideas of movement and travel, and, instead, represents outward movement and travel without any accompanying inner transformation or liberation. Present-day literary critics contend that the notions in question disrupt the liberal feminist presumption that mobile women possess increasing autonomy; instead, it demonstrates that movement is sometimes accompanied by further emotional restriction (Felski 1995, 72-74; Rose 1978, 7-10). In

D'Arcy's work, travelling does not equal freedom for the female protagonist. Instead, it serves as a means to illustrate her emotional separation from other people. Research conducted on the mobility of women during late-Victorian England indicates a discrepancy between what is generally portrayed as the freedom and mobility opportunities available to women versus their lived experiences as captured in celebratory travel accounts. D'Arcy takes another route than most in her depiction of women's journeys. D'Arcy utilises the sexualised notion of excitement found in most travel narratives and instead presents a counter-point of emotional emptiness which creates a disjuncture between them. D'Arcy's critiques of both gender ideologies and the nature of modern society are accomplished through her use of emotional dependence presented in an ideological framework as an instrument of liberation for women. The title of D'Arcy's 1895 short story, "The Web of Maya" provides a frame for the discussion of women's emotional dependence and illustrates her concerns about the underlying ideologies that frame the manner in which women experience their relationships (1895, 109-135). The title is an allusion to the concept of misperception, misidentification, and mistaken self-awareness, and also hints that women's emotional dependence is a result of a far deeper, insidious veil of social programming, a web-like entrapment of societal constructs and internalised beliefs about their roles rather than direct or explicit oppression. The desire for intimacy expressed in D'Arcy's short stories is less an expression of one's innermost desires than a construct of cultural expectations acquired over generations of exposure to dominant cultural norms. In combining feminist analytic perspectives with aesthetic dimensions, critics note that D'Arcy's aesthetic choices support her critiques of gender inequality in travel narrative forms.

Unlike traditional realist representations of the process of moral and theatrical judgment, "The Web of Maya" shows the readers that there is a distance between the world of 'maya' and the concrete and objective world. Through its depiction of the continuity of suffering, the reader sees that suffering is not limited to a moment in time, but is instead a continual and systemic condition of reality. By not arriving at a point of resolution, the readers are denied a sense of consolation; thus, their experience is primarily ethical, not comforting. This same idea of unresolved tension is also present in D'Arcy's other open-ended stories. As a result of D'Arcy's continual use of this technique, readers view the discourse of the *New Woman* in a fundamentally

different way than via the traditional representations of idealised female characters in Victorian narratives where women usually attain accomplishment or moral improvement at the end of the stories.

Scholarship on periodicals suggests that this indeterminacy was particularly resonant within *The Yellow Book*, where aesthetic experimentation enabled women writers to encode critique and embed dissent (Beaumont 2010, 100–03; Mussell 2012, 70–72). Increasingly, D'Arcy's narrative strategies have been identified as proto-modernist, anticipating later explorations of interiority, affective stasis, and anti-teleological form (Witemeyer 1979, 81–84; Hammill 2007, 512–15). In her work, decadence does not signify aesthetic withdrawal or moral disengagement. Instead, it operates as a mode of feminist resistance, exposing the psychological cost of social conformity and the ethical consequences of unresolved gender constraint. While Ella D'Arcy exposes the affective paralysis produced by unequal emotional economies, Netta Syrett turns to a quieter but no less constraining terrain: the internalisation of ethical discipline and the regulation of desire within the norms of respectability.

The aesthetic of intentional understatement that characterizes Netta Syrett in her *Yellow Book* stories is one in which symbolism, narrative withholding, and moral ambivalence are laid in the foreground over overt feminist polemic. Instead of openly confronting patriarchal authority, she focuses on how internalised norms and expectations influence women's behaviour through imposed ideas of ethical/self-surveillance and emotional restraint. Modern feminist critics recognise this approach as one that works within the aesthetic framework while hiding the mechanisms by which women are coerced (Ledger 1997, 915–18; Heilmann & Beetham 2004, 45–48). The main character in "Thy Heart's Desire" does not clearly demonstrate approval or disapproval toward desire; instead, she is situated within her community and must navigate a social context that promotes respectability. The hesitation the character feels about achieving desire without recreating the limitations placed upon her is the central theme of the work. Contemporary scholars argue that these depictions of desire further illustrate the repressed limits on women's desires generated by late Victorian gender normativity when respectability represented a form of internal restriction rather than one placed on women by society (Moran 2007, 395-98; Marcus 2007, 48-51).

Syrett's work demonstrates through several methods (letters being the most well-known) that closeness develops on paper. It has become

popular for recently published works of literature to express women's insecurities regarding their truthfulness and emotional openness through epistolary methods (i.e., letters). During the end of the 19th century, women expressed themselves according to an artificial definition of feminine propriety.

In the narrative text and through the story form of the literature of early modernists, letters create a virtual buffer between the reader and the subject; by using letters as a means to communicate feelings indirectly, the author has an opportunity to express the emotional content of the narrative without being directly attached to the character. A number of early modernist writers have used this method. Syrett has also used an ethically paternalistic approach to critique the morality of women's honor, while making a penetrating critique of the moral hierarchy placed upon women's honor in her final short story for *The Yellow Book*, "Far Above Rubies".

In it, Syrett examines the ideal notion of self-sacrifice and moral righteousness as an ambiguous and problematic moral ideal for women. Feminist readings underline that irony functions here as a means of deconstructing moral absolutes without sacrificing aesthetic integrity; as a means of critiquing societal pressures that require women to be self-sacrificing, framing these in part, to be tools of patriarchal control rather than pure moral superiority (Schaffer 2000, 120–23; Rose 1978, 9–12).

Where Syrett's fiction foregrounds ethical self-control as a socially sanctioned form of constraint, Charlotte Mew's contribution pushes this logic to an extreme, representing emotional restraint not as discipline but as psychic fracture and unresolved trauma. "Passed" is among the most emotionally severe and formally restrained works published in *The Yellow Book*, offering a stark representation of loss, repression, and psychological alienation. Mew's lone contribution to the periodical closely aligns her with D'Arcy and Syrett's feminist and aesthetic interventions because of her similar thematic density and aesthetic discipline.

Scholarship on Mew has shown a shift in her writing from the rigid emotional structures of Victorian affective discipline towards the more subjective, intuitive, and modernist writing style of modern writers (Bristow 1991, 430–35; Ledger & Luckhurst 2000, 490–95). She has rejected the use of narrative consolation as well as transparency of emotion in her writing to benefit modern readers. Rather than providing a narrative resolution or moral interpretation of loss and

mourning, Mew has instead established the experience of loss as a stable psychic state that does not lend itself to objective interpretation or understanding.

Mew's work, "Passéd," is representative of the feminist aesthetics in late 19th-century feminism, which promotes restraint and silence as ethical choices, rather than indicators of a retreat from feminism. Many authors in this period demonstrated that female authors used understated forms of expression to challenge the societal perceptions of sentimentalism and realism without resorting to polemics (Ardis 2002, 150–53; Flint 1993, 140–45). Mew's use of focalisation and temporality reflect the ways in which women experienced and responded to their losses during this time, and ultimately influenced the Modernists' approach to the study of memory, time, and trauma (Hammill 2007, 520–25; Thain 2007, 175–80). Mew's depiction of silence as a fluid, dynamic narrative force can only be understood by witnessing it through the eyes of someone who possesses a sensibility about ethics and moral choices—therefore it cannot be reduced to a mere description (Bourke 2014, 220-25; Parker 1984, 294-99).

Through their research, D'Arcy, Syrett & Mew demonstrate how various feminist artistic practices have developed over time as modes of expression for many-a-women-writer within the social limitations of the *fin de siècle*.

Decadence as feminist strategy

This paper argues that *Yellow Book* women authors, including D'Arcy, Syrett, and Mew, predominantly transformed decadence and early modernist experimentation into a consciously combative literary style, a subtle but effective feminist tactic, particularly for those marginalised by male oppressive gender norms. Within the feminist literary canon, examples such as interruptions, gaps, open endings are examples of the lack of formal structure that illustrates the degree to which the patriarchal norms and institutions associated with marriage and desire create instability in women's experiences thus impacting their ability to assert their agency. Ledger sees it as an ideological critique of the ideology of hesitancy and uncertainty with regards to the narrative.

By using the language of aestheticism, women writers were able to discuss their experiences about desire, agency and authoritativeness without inviting contention. Thus, formality, a form of protest, enabled women to critique established social norms within the culturally

acceptable limits (Bristow 1991, 430-35; Plain 1996, 120-25).). Scholarship on periodical literature confirms that *The Yellow Book* was shaped not only by male contributors such as Aubrey Beardsley and Arthur Symons but also as much by women writers, who used experimental forms to interrogate marriage, emotional manipulation, and hypocrisy (Brake 2001, 110–15; Liggins 2011, 218–22).

This paper draws on Rita Felski and Sharon Marcus, who place these authors in a proto-modernist lineage. *Fin de siècle* feminist writers anticipated modernist interiority through affectively acute, psychologically discontinuous, and formally fractured narratives, often achieved through subtle stylistic disruption (Felski 1995, 45–50; Marcus 2007, 212–18). Their fiction demonstrates that late nineteenth-century feminist writing became a critical intersection where feminism and formal experimentation met, transforming decadence into a space for negotiating desire, subjectivity, and resistance.

Conclusions

The paper has shown the paramount role played by Ella D'Arcy, Netta Syrett, and Charlotte Mew in *The Yellow Book* and in the *fin de siècle* literary culture. Rather than occupying peripheral positions within the periodical, these authors emerge as central figures in its sustained engagement with gender politics, psychological intensity, and formal experimentation. Their fiction demonstrates how women's writing was not only shaped by, but actively contributed to the moral seriousness and aesthetic innovation through which *The Yellow Book* established its cultural identity. Each writer exhibits a finely calibrated sensitivity to the gendered constraints their fiction interrogates (Heilmann 2000, 175–80; Marcus 2007, 210–15; Moran 2007, 392–97).

Their work anticipates key features of early modernist narrative practice through fragmentation, interiority, narrative ambiguity, and emotional restraint. Silence, hesitation, and indirection function in their fiction not as evasive gestures but as deliberate aesthetic strategies through which critique could be articulated within restrictive cultural conditions (Ledger 1997, 918–22; Thain 2007, 172–76). Recovering their significance, therefore, requires a reassessment of male-centred histories of *The Yellow Book* and of early modernism more broadly (Kooistra and Brake 1990, 14–18; Rose 1978, 7–12). Such a re-evaluation reveals that women writers were not merely participants in fin de siècle aesthetic movements, but pioneers of new literary forms that transformed aesthetic experimentation into a mode of gender-

conscious moral inquiry. Recognising D'Arcy, Syrett, and Mew as key contributors to this process deepens our understanding of the transition from late Victorian aestheticism to early modernism and supports a more inclusive literary history in which women's experimental writing is acknowledged as central rather than marginal.

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Mapping borderscapes: Reimagining cartography and refugee mobility in *The Map of Salt and Stars*

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Abstract: Migration, specifically in the context of forced displacement, operates through shifting, unpredictable spatial controls that render mobility precarious. This paper examines how the novel *The Map of Salt and Stars* (2018), which presents the displacement of Syrian refugees from the perspective of a twelve-year-old child, Nour, reimagines refugee displacement by presenting cartography as a processual spatial practice rather than an authoritative representational tool. Despite growing critical attention to the novel, the dimension of spatial and cartographic experience of the border remains underexplored, a gap this paper seeks to address. Firstly, the paper deliberates on the nature of mobility in the context of forced displacement, which navigates dynamic borderscapes alongside fixed geopolitical borders. Secondly, drawing on insights from critical and post-representational cartography, the paper argues that the narrative employs maps as tools for displaced subjects to interpret and negotiate the uncertainty of borderscapes.

Keywords: Syrian refugee, borderscapes, forced displacement, post-representational cartography

Introduction

The Syrian refugee crisis remains one of the most significant among the humanitarian disasters of the twenty-first century. The causes of the Syrian civil war that began in 2011 can be traced to being rooted in the complex social, political and religious history of the country. Syrians, trapped between airstrikes, sieges and sectarian purges, fled to Turkey, Lebanon and Europe. Leaving more than half of Syria's pre-war population displaced from the country, the Syrian civil war resulted in a mass exodus, creating one of the largest refugee

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AGATHOS, Volume 17, Issue 2 (33-34): 233-245, DOI 10.5281/zenodo.23534703
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movements in modern history. With the ongoing conflict in the Middle East further hindering the recovery of displaced Syrians and the rebuilding of Syria's fragile economy, the experiences of displaced Syrians have become increasingly central to critical inquiry (UN News 2026).

The contemporary globalised world is described as an age of fluid movement, yet the interplay of mobility and immobility continues to be structured by newer, more complex factors. In the attempt to study how the refugee population is created in the modern age, Peter Gatrell (2013) reiterates that there is a self-evident link between population displacement and war. In the context of geopolitical events like the Syrian civil war that resulted in massive population displacement, mobility exists in a paradox. Violent conflicts produce new forms of mobilities and immobilities. "Checkpoints, fences, walls and the technologies of exclusion become instruments of forced immobility" (Bromley 2021, 7). The celebrated freedom of movement transforms into a threat to be governed.

It is within this landscape of forced displacement that the novel *The Map of Salt and Stars* (2018), written by Zeyn Joukhadar, situates its protagonist, Nour, a twelve-year-old Syrian girl who flees Syria along with her family and travels across seven countries of the Middle East and North Africa in search of a refuge. Joukhadar is a Syrian American author living in New York who embraces his Syrian heritage. His novels particularly focus on presenting the experiences of Syrian refugees. *The Map of Salt and Stars* has two coming-of-age narratives. First, Nour's, set in the context of contemporary Syrian refugee displacement, and the second, the story of Rawiya, set in the twelfth century. Rawiya is a sixteen-year-old girl who travels as an apprentice to the renowned map-maker al-Idrisi. She assists him in the process of making the most accurate map of the world. Throughout her arduous journey, Nour keeps recalling the legend of Rawiya that her father had told her as a bedtime story. What unites the two narratives is that both Nour and Rawiya traverse the same geographic path, even though one is set 800 years ago.

This paper argues that *The Map of Salt and Stars* articulates refugee movement through borderscapes that expose the fluid, contested spatial realities of displacement. By revealing the instability of territorial borders, the novel challenges conventional cartographic representations of fixed space. It reimagines mapping as a processual

and affective practice through which displaced subjects negotiate movement and cultivate resilience.

Existing scholarship on the novel has examined it through the lens of trauma, memory and narrative resilience. Contextualising the novel as a narrative of war-induced displacement, studies have foregrounded the analysis of intergenerational trauma and the psychological afterlife of violence (Hussain and Imtiaz 2024). Analyses of aspects of resistance and resilience in the novel have predominantly scrutinised the role of storytelling and imagination as narrative strategies for representing refugee experiences and for resisting hegemonic narrativisation of the Syrian civil war (Abraham and Sucheth 2025; Bogdonoff 2020). Complementing these readings, studies have also examined the role of nostalgia in helping subjects overcome the trauma of displacement (Mohrem and Zuraikat 2023). Spatially oriented analyses have examined the textuality of maps and the decolonial aspects of border regimes in the novel (Üstündağ Güvenç 2025; Slopek-Hauff 2025).

Although *The Map of Salt and Stars* has been widely read through themes of migration and memory, its engagement with cartography has received limited sustained attention. Addressing this gap, this paper draws on post-representational cartography to examine how the novel reconfigures mapping beyond its conventional role as a technology of territorialisation and surveillance, presenting it instead as a processual and affective practice through which displaced subjects negotiate space amid the precarity of forced migration.

Borderscapes: Borders as contested terrains

The development of 'borderscape' as a concept is an offshoot of the broader "bordering turn" in border studies (Cooper 2020, 17). This came in the wake of a recognition that "border studies will be unable to address the ongoing complexification of bordering processes in global politics" without a critical shift in the conceptualisation of the border (Brambilla 2015). The perception of borders as straight "lines in the sand" is thus questioned in the context of borderscapes (Parker and Vaughan-Williams 2009).

As Nour travels across different geopolitical spaces, regarding borders as a singular line gives way to viewing them as a set of encounters, emotions, uncertainties, and restrictions. The concept of the borderscape, which understands the border as "mobile, perspectival, and relational" (Rajaram and Grundy-Warr 2007, x),

provides a useful framework for interpreting Nour's journey by drawing attention to the spatial and lived processes through which borders are experienced.

The novel presents a child's perception of the process of border crossing and displacement. In the context of refugee displacement, borders function as mechanisms of control through their rigidity and as regulators of mobility through their flexibility. Beyond functioning as demarcations of national sovereignty, they "also occupy the symbolic (and legal) space between categories of belonging, of those 'in place' and those 'out of place', the displaced" (Bromley 2021, 15, brackets in the original). Borders cease to be neutral lines of separation between nations and territories as Nour, her mother, and sisters traverse the journey from Syria to Jordan, Egypt, Libya, Algeria, and Morocco, finally reaching Ceuta, a city in Spain.

The Map of Salt and Stars begins with Nour's father's death in America, after which the family, including Nour and her two sisters, decides to return to Syria in the hope of building a new, peaceful life. But contrary to their expectation, not long after they reach Syria, their house gets destroyed in a bombing due to the civil war. The family is forced to leave their house with just enough documents to prove their identities and a colour map that Nour's mother made for her. The novel further traces Nour's journey across different countries and cities, from Homs, Jordan, and Libya to Morocco and Ceuta. The story of Rawiya, a twelfth-century map-maker's apprentice, is presented as an embedded narrative in the novel. Both Nour and Rawiya traverse the same geographical paths, but at different times and motivated by different reasons. Rawiya decides to assist the map-maker al-Idrisi because she wants to help her mother and is also interested in travelling around the world.

Nour's journey is marked by uncertainty, fear, and negotiations for survival. The refugee movement itself becomes a process of bordering, as borders are felt in different ways throughout the journey. The movement, viewed from the perspective of a child who does not fully comprehend the idea of political borders or the movement's complexity, offers scope for a vivid description of its various dimensions. Rather than unfolding as a single moment of territorial crossing, it moves through a series of spaces demarcated by waiting, clandestine mobility and constant precariousness.

One important feature of the journey is the reliance on smugglers to cross different borders. The absence of formal systems or legal

pathways limits mobility for refugees; they are forced to resort to illegal measures outside state infrastructure to secure movement. Borderscapes encompass experiences of the border through practices that define and characterise everyday life and of movement during displacement (Brambilla 2020). In transit spaces like the smuggler's house, where Nour and her sister are forced to wait until the smuggler gathers enough people who want to cross the border into Algeria, the former describes the experience of waiting as unpredictable and uncertain. The narrative indicates how time is experienced differently in transit spaces when Nour says, "Before we know it, we've been staying in the smugglers' house for a week" (Joukhadar 2018, 281). And when they are moved, they are tightly packed into a truck, with only a few bottles of water for the whole journey, where they have to sit "shoulder to shoulder" (Ibid, 283). The effect of the border here is felt through individual experiences of time and space.

Even when not actually at the checkpoints or borders, the fear of being captured remains a constant feeling during forced displacement. When describing their preparations to cross the border to Algeria, Nour recalls a smuggler's warning, "*Border guards shoot first, he says, and ask questions later*" (Ibid, 285, italics in the original). Nour's observation that "the veins in Zahra's bloodshot eyes are a roadmap of fear" underscores how fear becomes an enduring emotional state throughout the journey (Ibid, 331). Unable to completely comprehend, express and accept the experiences of pain and emotional turmoil during multiple border crossings, Nour says, "unsaid words are like iron gravity spots. I am weighed down by the sticky residue of feeling them, crushed by the heaviness of hope" (Ibid, 288). The border is experienced as a pervasive emotional state of fear, uncertainty, and at times, as hope that dictates the whole movement.

The extension of the border and border control onto the displaced bodies continues to be demonstrated in the narrative. In a study about hunger strike as a means of protest by asylum seekers, Pellander and Horsti (2018, 168) notice how the bodily suffering of refugees is "interpreted as not genuine and therefore not visible". The pain, illness, hunger, exhaustion and much more that the refugee body is put through during displacement become an embodiment of border violence. While being smuggled in the truck, the refugees are not given water to avoid stops for urinating, and Nour recalls, "the driver threatens to make us take pills to stop us from peeing. *No water from now on*, he shouts" (Joukhadar 2018, 285, italics in the original). The

refugee bodies are considered "bodies out of place" or "space invaders" in the process of becoming subjects to bordering (Puwar 2004, 8). There are desperate attempts to restore the legibility of refugee bodies. Nour notices a fellow refugee child writing details about him and his grandfather on the tag of his shirt. When Nour enquires about what he is writing, the boy says, "My name and my grandfather's name and who I am. In case they can't tell who we are from our bodies" (Joukhadar 2018, 273). Refugee bodies experience the border as a struggle to remain identifiable outside official systems of documentation.

Displacement, in *The Map of Salt and Stars*, unfolds over fluid, dispersed and unstable experiences of the borderscape. When borders are articulated through these extended forms, they cease to present the fixity in time and space that is traditionally ascribed to them. The narrative, therefore, represents a "hegemonic borderscape" that renders traversing it complex and multilayered (Brambilla 2015, 20). At the same time, it opens up the possibilities for "counter-hegemonic borderscapes" that consist of "multiple strategies of resistance against hegemonic discourses and control practices through which they are exercised" (Ibid, 20). Here, post-representational cartography explores cartographic bordering practices that result from resistance and subversion, presented in the novel, by examining how the narrative highlights the processual nature of maps and map-making.

Mapping the search for orientation

When the borderscape renders borders and belonging unstable and complex, displaced subjects have to negotiate new ways to orient themselves. Nour has to cross four borders. She travels from Syria to Jordan, then to Libya. And during the second crossing, she says, "I ask myself if we've crossed the border yet, never sure what border I mean" (Joukhadar 2018, 207). Robert T. Tally (2013, 2) argues that a map "is one of the most powerful and effective means humans have to make sense of their place in the world". In *The Map of Salt and Stars*, mapping serves as a major narrative strategy that attempts to make sense of displacement and, in the process, becomes a means of reclaiming agency and cultivating resilience.

Cartography has conventionally provided "definitions of sovereignty—thereby providing the legal basis for territorial claims" (Mitchell 2008, 55). The tenets of critical cartography questioned the hitherto unquestioned authority of maps. JB Harley (2011), in his

seminal essay 'Deconstructing the Map', calls out maps as instruments of authority that shape our perception of the world. He rejects the view of maps as a "mirror of nature" and instead suggests considering them as "a cultural text" to open up "different interpretative possibilities" (59). He reconsiders the notion of maps as objective forms of knowledge, establishing the influence of relations of power, cultural preferences and other social realities in cartography. He critically explores a variety of contexts within the profession of mapping and map-making.

John Pickles (2004) adopts a similar approach to mapping, situating the process within broader political and cultural contexts. He exposes how "cartographic institutions and practices have coded, decoded and recoded planetary, national and social spaces" (5). Denis Wood (2010) also traces and critically assesses the sources of authority of maps. This understanding is necessary because, according to him, "maps bring into being the territory *as we know it*" (52, italics in the original). Critical cartography introduces a new perspective on maps, revealing them as instruments of social domination or as potential tools of resistance, thereby opening the possibility of alternative conceptions of maps.

As John Pickles (2004) explains, instead of considering maps as objective representations of territories, the possibilities of the relationship between maps and territories has to be broadened. He proposes an understanding of maps "as producing it; in important ways 'maps precede territory', they inscribe boundaries and construct objects that in turn become our realities" (145). This understanding is important when the concept of borderscapes urges to move beyond the "representation of borders as divisive lines on modern maps" towards accepting the "complexity of border processes as constructed, lived and experienced by human beings" (Brambilla 2015, 28).

The Map of Salt and Stars stages different ways in which maps and the process of mapmaking produce territorial and spatial realities. Nour and her family traverse multiple territories, using both legal and illegal means, and encounter new and complex spatial experiences. There is an instance in the novel in which Nour finds a scribble on the wall by refugees that reads "We aren't on any map" (Joukhadar 2018, 274). As Robert T Tally (2013, 13) emphasises, "displacement, perhaps more than a homely rootedness in place, underscores the critical importance of spatial relations in our attempts to interpret, and change, the world." The complexity of exposure to and simultaneous creation of new

spaces during forced displacement "call for new cartographic approaches, new forms of representation, and new ways of imagining our place in the universe" (Ibid, 42-43).

Maps are thematically and structurally integral to the novel, and the narrative incorporates three different maps. First, the map created by al-Idrisi in 1154 under the commission of King Roger of Sicily, known as the Tabula Rogerina. It is described as "a map grander and more accurate than any the world has ever seen" (Joukhadar 2018, 40). Second, the colour map that Nour's mother makes for her. Her mother calls it "a special map" (Ibid, 34). Third, concrete poems at the beginning of each section of the novel. Each poem is written in the shape of maps of the places Nour traverses during her journey from Syria to Ceuta. Maps in the novel reveal the dynamic, subjective experiences of displacement. They are presented not merely as representations of space but as contested sites where precarious mobility and resilience intersect.

Stories and maps: Mapping displacement

The maps in the novel serve various purposes for the protagonist in making sense of displacement. The practices of mapping, rather than representational accuracy, are of key importance. Post-representational cartography offers a framework to understand this shift in emphasis from the map as a finished, final product to mapping as a process embedded in lived experiences of spatial negotiation, and how this, in turn, allows an examination of the various ways in which mapping is used as a strategy of resistance during forced displacement in the novel.

Recent scholarship on cartography, prominently by Martin Dodge, Chris Perkins and Rob Kitchin has challenged the understanding of maps as finished products and representations of spatial reality. Post-representational cartography moves beyond the idea of maps as social constructs that critical cartographers have earlier put forward. It aims to destabilise the presumption of ontological security of maps. In the post-representational point of view, maps "emerge in contexts and through a mix of creative, reflexive, playful, tactile and habitual practices; affected by the knowledge, experience and skill of the individual to perform mappings and apply them in the world" (Dodge, Kitchin and Perkins 2009, 21). Read through this framework, the processual and affective portrayal of cartography in the novel, represents a "shift from seeking to understand the nature of maps to

examining the practices of mapping" (Ibid, 20). It becomes a narrative act through which the characters, especially Nour, survive the experiences of forced displacement.

The processual understanding of maps is evident in the story of Rawiya and al-Idrisi. The story is included in the novel as an embedded narrative. When Nour reaches Syria from the US after the death of her father, this story is one of the ways she uses to stay connected to the memories of her father. She begins narrating the story to the roots of a fig tree, believing it will reach her father through the earth. Nour recalls, "Mama used to say stories were how Baba made sense of things," and she tries to use the same means of a story to make sense of her experiences (Joukhadar 2018, 5). The author introduces and foregrounds the role of maps as a means of making sense of the world early on in the narrative when Nour articulates her fear of not being brave enough to face life's challenges because "my words are wild country, and I don't have a map" (Ibid, 5).

The story of the medieval cartographer al-Idrisi has Rawiya, a twelve-year-old girl, as the protagonist. It is with Rawiya that Nour identifies during different phases of her difficult journey. In times of uncertainty, Nour asks herself, "Did Rawiya ever doubt herself so much?" (Ibid, 291) The mapmaking in the story is not described as the production of a fixed cartographic object, but rather unfolds through travel and varied experiences. The group, consisting of al-Idrisi and his team, travels through varied landscapes facing numerous challenges, with elements of realism and magical realism in the incidents. Local narratives, everyday experiences and spatial encounters contribute to the creation of the map. Hence, the novel brings out "multiple, diffuse, and unpredictable ways that mapping practices and products are engaged" (Harris and Hazen 2009, 53). The map in the story doesn't already exist; it emerges from the journey, thereby drawing attention to the process of mapmaking. The narrative also situates the impulse to mapmaking within an imperial context, as the map is commissioned by a king. The story, therefore, also foregrounds the political influences that may affect the mapmaking process. It highlights the social, experiential, political, and cultural dimensions of mapmaking. Mapping, therefore, is presented as a dynamic activity that continually produces spatial knowledge.

The affective and sensory dimensions of maps are explored in the novel through a colour map that Nour's mother makes for her to use during the latter's journey. Nour is synesthetic; she can see colours for

sounds. Her mother uses this unique trait to encode the map she made. Nour's mother carries the colour map around in a burlap bag right from the beginning of the journey. Nour observes her adding colours to the map throughout the journey as well. She says, "She must have saved some old tubes of paint from the house, because she takes them out of her burlap bag and brushes new colors onto the map, yellow and turquoise and salmon pink" (Joukhadar 2018, 154).

At the point in the journey when Nour and her sister Zahra have to part from their mother and their other sister, Huda, their mother assures Nour that the map will help her reach their uncles' house in Ceuta. It is only later in the narrative that Nour discovers the names of the places encoded on the map in a way only she could read, rendering it illegible to others and to systems of control. The map was made specifically for Nour's journey. This indicates how "*maps are practices* – they are always *mappings*; spatial practices enacted to solve relational problems (e.g., how best to create a spatial representation, how to understand a spatial distribution, how to get between A and B, and so on)" (Kitchin and Dodge 2007, 335, italics and brackets in the original). When she scratches the paint off different parts of the map, she discovers that poems lie beneath each part, describing their journey through those places. She is reminded of what her mother has told her about the process of mapping: "When you make a map, you don't just paint the world the way it is. You paint your own" (Joukhadar 2018, 315). The colour map in the novel defines space by how it is lived and remembered.

Further, the novel incorporates poems at the beginning of each section to show how its maps prioritise the subject's experience over an objective representation. Each poem is typographically rendered in the shape of the map of the particular place, through which Rawiya and Nour journey in the corresponding section—Syria, Jordan/Egypt, Libya, Algeria/Morocco, and Ceuta. Each poem is a monologue that mourns the loss of the homeland and describes the difficulties of traversing unfamiliar territories. The borders of the maps are traced with words that together describe the experience of forced displacement. The shape of the maps emerges from the words, making it processual and contingent.

The poem in the first section, 'Syria', addresses the homeland as 'beloved'. It establishes an emotional attachment to the land and an inability to let go of its memories. The poem in the second section, 'Jordan/Egypt', describes the journey of displacement, in which the

subject is now tired and unable to see clearly from fatigue, longing for the air and water of the homeland. The space is experienced not as an objective, measurable entity but as feelings of strain, thirst, memory, and longing. The third poem at the beginning of the section 'Libya' fantasises the return of the displaced to a secure homeland. Yet in the fourth poem, in the section 'Algeria/Morocco', language itself falters; the speaker confesses an inability to articulate a homeland for future generations. Both cartographic and linguistic systems reveal their inadequacy. The silhouette of the maps of corresponding places remains visible in the poem's shape, but the representational authority and ability to describe the experience of border crossing during forced displacement fail from within.

The last poem, beginning the section 'Ceuta', represents how "territories are produced by the overlaying of inscriptions we call mappings" and how the lines and borders that form the map "can be read as descriptions of forms of lived experience" (Pickles 2011, 5). The map is internalised, and the poem's refugee subject says, "I carry the memory of borders in my skin" (Joukhadar 2018, 319). Unlike the distinct landscapes of the map, Nour's experience of traversing them is not partitioned and clearly distinct from each other. The maps become a negotiation with power, memory, and displacement, as the poems retain the visual outline of a nation-state inscribed with the precarious experiences of displacement.

Conclusion

The Map of Salt and Stars explores the potential of mapping as a means of resilience and survival during forced displacement. The paper has analysed how novel reconfigures the experience of forced displacement by presenting movement through unstable conditions of borderscapes. Border is not only experienced through spatial encounters, but also through subjective bodily experiences and emotional effects of everyday movement. This drift from fixed, territorial understandings of borders exposes the limitations of cartographic practices that presume stable, mappable territories. The research has examined the novel's reimagination of cartography through its narrative. *The Map of Salt and Stars* transforms maps from an instrument of restriction into an open-ended process of spatial negotiation, where lived experiences, movement, memories, storytelling, and language play pivotal roles. The novel, therefore, drifts away from the popular notion of refugees as helpless victims and

uses its narrative to represent their agency and sustained resilience. By bringing together critical cartography and refugee studies, this paper contributes to a growing body of scholarship that seeks to rethink the representation of refugee displacement.

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LITERATURE AND ART STUDIES

Art, poetry and the pen: On the ontology of artistic creation

Christine McNeill-Matteson[*]

Abstract: My paper by poetics creatrix will express what we do not know about artistic expression, in verse and in prose, and will call attention to the phenomenology of the arts. How the 'arts' create a footprint of the consciousness of humanities experiences. Applying charted comparisons of selective events and the response of the poets, painters, song writers. The life experiences of an artist and the world's influence is "Tuning Forks of the Soul"[1].

Keywords: poets, artist, musicians, painters, phenomenology of creative thought, universal consciousness, sentience

"Writing is the painting of the voice"
Voltaire, *Questions sur l'Encyclopédie* (1770-1772)

"In You [Zeus] we live and move and have our being"
Epimenides of Crete, *Cretica* (700-600 BC)

"For we are also His offspring"
Aratus, Phaenomena (c. 270 BC)

Preface

When the dust settles from war, the babies' cries are no longer heard. There is left throughout the universe's existence an energy that wakes the sentience and conscience of humanity, and it will quote the poet for as long as their verses endure. It will play out by the thespians on the stage of humanity to express the consciousness of time.

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AGATHOS, Volume 17, Issue 2 (33-34): 249-254, DOI 10.5281/zenodo.23369137
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[1] See Christine McNeill-Matteson. 2011. "Tuning Forks of the Soul". In Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka (Ed.), *Sharing Poetic Expressions. Islamic Philosophy and Occidental Phenomenology in Dialogue*, Volume 6, pp. 217-228. Dordrecht: Springer; Idem. 2017. A walk among the brushes: A personal reflection of Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka. The poet. *Agathos*, Vol. 8, Iss. 2 (15): 103-109.

Poems will be found in tattered notes on fields of war, and marked walls in prisons of humanity and the generations afterwards will study and try to understand the phenomenology of the dire attempt of the souls to survive and be heard long after they have passed.

History books are written with times and dates, and attempted facts (whether correct or not) of the past to archive humanity in effort to improve what and who is left. It is written for the attempt to give lessons of the past and present, to build societies back from the societies that were ruined by war, greed, and the lack of sustainability as an attempt to preserve for the future.

What inspires the poets to create, to want to leave a note of passion that no one else is willing to talk about? The artist to sculpture into existence the story of what was left from dead civilizations and painters to leave a field or painted sky to sooth the souls of a tired generation or hope for a generation to come; to pull from an energy of the universe evoking the reader, to be brought into the artistic expression and somehow change the course that otherwise leaves humanity in an emotional demise from war, human suffering or our inability for sustainable environment.

The ontology of poetic expression

We know from Socrates that "there is one good, knowledge, and only one evil, ignorance." (see Diogenes Laertius, II. 5.31)
ërtius' ancient text Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers (Book II, Chapter 5, Section 31).

Poets and artists have an inward compulsion to express and create. Often artist is asked when and how do they create, write, or perform. In the words of Bob Dylan (2004) - the 2016 Noble Prize Winner for Literature and Folk writer and singer -, in an interview was asked how does he write or compose the songs and lyrics. His response was: "it is almost as though they were magically written."

In my poem, written in 2024, "The Encore of the Wind: A Poetic Composition,"

I have sat next to all the beginnings,
I have the rushing of wisdom
coming from the sea.

The wind calls out the encore
against the rocks
and it is me…

The ‘encore’ are the poets, expressing the calls of the universal phenomenology of time and existence. It is not deaf or blind by humanities’ limitations. When it is written and becomes verse and song, others are drawn to understand and relate, and it either sooths the soul or explains the turmoil it creates. In the movie *Dead Poet’s Society*, played by Robin Williams, he explains to his students about poetry, in his powerful dialogue, “The powerful play goes on and you can contribute a verse” (see *Dead Poet Society*, 1989).

The phenomenology that spreads from our beginnings to the moment we are taken up with words written in a poem or song that lingers, once heard, and begins to hold its own space, by the poem, the song, or the mystery of a paint brush. It lingers in the play, long after we, as humans, contribute; the play is humanity, the universe, time.

My poem “Women Before” expresses the ontology of poetic expression and the reflection over time:

> If I could pick up the pieces
> and build a bridge from me to you,
> we’d brush our hair with scents of yesterday’s living,
> color our lips with stains of mauve secrets.
>
> There would be miles of many years,
> across miles of tears and sacred truths.
>
> We’d hang the railings with aprons tied together,
> and our bras that covered our bosoms of nurturing souls.
>
> Bridging over rivers from birthing beds wet with sweat and fluids from the womb,
> we would cry the storms with tears of sorrow, spring rains with tears of joy.
>
> If I could pick the pieces of all our pain and build the hopes with the strength remain
> we would hear the chorus of all before us and harmony welcome those to come.

President John F. Kennedy (1962), in one of his speeches a year before he was assassinated, spoke of the poet and their influence in time. He states, “Artists struggle to express beauty in form and color and sound. The writer’s concern is with man. Through history, and today, Shakespeare speaks to us as he spoke to his own age. Sophocles speaks to us across more than two thousand years. In our own time, even when political communication has often been strained, the Russian people have bought more than twenty million copies of Jack London's

works, more than ten million books of Mark Twain, and hundreds of thousands of copies of Hemingway, Steinbeck, Whitman, and Poe."

Poems written and read, for generations have been continuous in many ways, politics, arts, psychological effects on the young and the old. They inspire and heal, yes, they are provoking and unsettling. They express what few are willing to talk about and can cause loss of freedom from the voice of the poet.

Time and poetry are uncaptured. It is a freedom that is allowed by the phenomenology of the universe, the thread through time, and humanity either embraces or feels threatened.

However, they read and listen to the artist, the poets, they find refuge and hope:

A tradition of women
who have long since passed.
Has given belonging
to those who are last.
We stand in the clovers,
we pour tea at its best.
As the sweet bread is served
among all the rest.
May the Celtic women
long survive
into the histories
and the archives

Christine McNeill-Matteson, "Tea and Sweet Bread" (2025)

Every scholarly paper, book, or argument is introduced or reiterated or affirmed by a poet from the past.

The wisdom of verse, not intended to argue but to spread universal wisdom that comes from places only the universe (as in physics) can only be understood by seekers of wisdom.

What is the science of creative writing?

Plenty of speculation comes from psychologists and neurologists as to the spatial location of the mind.

The humanities are quickly being lost into the technical age and people start questioning if wisdom is something the culmination of collective information through systems of AI.

But what divides the moral artistic expression by human soul and the creative mind?

If you do not recognize this, then one would ask if you denied if there is a soul or a mind, and say, we are merely robotic duplications of things we are exposed to and culminated into an artist of replication.

Robert Lax, in his book, *The Dream Catcher*, as it is "narrated by S. T. Georgiou, talks about being a poet. He says,

> Well, I think that peace has to do with resolving problems in a non-violent way. As Gandhi would say, weapons rebound. I believe that a poet, no matter what his or her theme is, tries to work in an ultimately harmonious integrative manner. Inclusiveness appeals to me. Why else do so many stars shine in the sky? I think the astute poet can give a foretaste of what real peace might be like. Poets demonstrate that communion between people does not have to be an exchange of growls, as history has conditioned us to think. Instead, poets can show how we can sing, laugh together. All the arts can encourage unity.
>
> *The Way of the Dream Catcher. Spirit Lessons with Robert Lax*, 2002

Instead of conclusion: A haiku

Salty swells arrive,
tide splashing, rocky shoreline
lone poet stays watch…

Christine McNeill-Matteson, 2002



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Piers the Plowman: Langland's dream vision of social and spiritual reform

Parul Bhateja and Swati Chauhan*

Abstract: *Piers the Plowman*, the famous dream allegory of William Langland, is a big blow to the prevalent hypocrisy of Medieval England society. Medieval England came across many upheavals which included the arrival of Anglo-Saxons, the Norman Conquest, the Feudal system, the Black Death, the Hundred Years' War, the Peasants' Revolt, and the War of the Roses. A society that was divided into a pyramid of sorts. A pyramid that was comprised of clergy and nobles at the top, in the middle there were scientists, craftsmen, and other artisans while the bottom was occupied by the peasants chiefly. This study aims to investigate the journey of the protagonist 'Will' and how the poem serves as a form of spiritual and social reform would also be evaluated. This allegorical narrative of Langland is supposed to have been written in the 14th century. The poem is a true manifestation of social satire and examines the themes of morality, social justice, and spirituality.William Langland beautifully teaches the aim of human birth through a series of dream visions along with that of appropriate social reform.The poem is mainly divided into three texts i.e., texts A, B, and C. It revolves around the central character 'Will', and exemplifies his spiritual journey along with the materialistic hurdles that come his way. The poem is a true embodiment of Christian values, where we find Langland suggesting ways to reform the corrupt Medieval society of England. Each vision comprises certain symbols, depicting and relating to some or the other form of materialism and propounding ways to stay aloof and unaffected by the same. Peasants or the common men find a special mention in the poem. Their struggle for life and their plight are portrayed by the author in the backdrop of symbolism.

Keywords: Medieval England, materialism, dream vision, spiritual journey, peasants

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AGATHOS, Volume 17, Issue 2 (33-34): 255-264, DOI 10.5281/zenodo.23369442
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Introduction

Literature has always been significant in introducing reformation and portraying the true picture of a society in the cultural and social context. Art, architecture, dialects, cuisines, and literature of an era tell the tale of the cultural heritage of a nation. The history of Medieval England consists of such works of art that brilliantly represent England's major historical and cultural events. The infamous Norman Conquest marks the beginning of the series of invasions on the land of England in the year 1066 by the Norman conquerors. They belonged to a province that was formerly known as Normandy located in Northwestern France. It was Duke William II whose leadership played a key role along with that of William the Conqueror. Several attacks were staged on the natives of England by the Normans. Despite endless efforts, the people of England could not resist those invasions. It was the English people and English culture that were affected most by the said invasions. Normans introduced a new government in society which brought certain changes in society's layout and functioning i.e., the exclusion of the elite class from society, the immigration of the natives, increase in the practice of endogamy. The native language of the country was affected by the prevalent circumstances. The conquest developed two English language categories: Old English and Middle English (Thomas 2008). Before the Norman's conquest Old English was the medium of communication. It was Middle English which the people adopted after the conquest. During this period, the English language was transformed concerning vocabulary, accent, sound, and word structure. The main difference between the two categories is the grammatical elements and the collection of words (Butcher 2013).

Another devastating event that shook the province of England was the 'Black Death'. It caused mass mortality in England, thus, affecting society drastically. The 'Black Death', a disguised plague, was spread between 1347 and 1352. The socio-economic feudal system was upset due to the severe depopulation. Each aspect of the life of natives was deeply affected by the pandemic. In England specifically, it opened with the invasion of Scotland in 1303 which sparked fighting between the two countries for several decades. Then there were climatic changes, ushering in what is known as the "Little Ice Age" and causing the Great Famine of 1315-1317. A bovine plague in 1319 exacerbated the impacts of the famine on the population (Sharp 2016). In 1337, the conflict between the kingdom of France and England arose due to

feudal disputes and to make matters worse, it lasted for a hundred long years running across the reigns of five dominant kings. It was just eleven years of this terrible war that the country met the deadly 'Black Death', which crushed one-third of Europe's population to death.

The Feudal system was one of the popular social practices of Medieval England. The clergy and the nobles, positioned at the top of the social hierarchy, enjoyed almost all the fundamental rights. It was the peasant class that remained at the bottom of the hierarchy. Carpenters, butchers, painters, food sellers, and weavers formed a large part of the society. Peasants used to live a life full of hardships i.e., working on the land and residing in rough huts. The nobility reconstructed the land ownership rules which peasants had to live by. Most of the population living in rural areas consisted of wealthy and powerful nobles such as kings and lords, known as the ruling class. The land owned by them was known as fief. The knights and other working-class people were provided pieces of land to work on and in return, they were supposed to provide military assistance and other services to the nobles. In the social hierarchy, the position of peasants was the most pitiful because they had to give a large portion of the grown crops to the nobility. Though the Middle Ages "features great examples of extreme religiosity, mystics, saints, the flagellants, mass pilgrimage, and the like but it would be wrong to assume that people were always very focused on God and religion" (Arnold 2005).

Literature played a vital role in the Medieval Ages in painting and depicting the layers of social hierarchy and helped bring reformation. Geoffrey Chaucer through his notable works contributed brilliantly to the era. At the same time, the Age also owes to William Langland for his masterpiece 'Piers the Plowman', "the most popular, if the least artistic, poem of the fourteenth century" (Legouis 2006, 113). Written in the form of a series of dream visions, 'Piers Plowman', also known as 'William's Vision of Piers Plowman' is a true manifestation of sarcasm and allegory on the prevalent social, ethical, religious, and economic issues of the time. This impressive allegory was composed in old alliterative meter in the later part of the fourteenth century, comprising three major texts i.e., texts A, B, and C. Text 'A' is the shortest one and relatively least formless. Text 'B' is chiefly the expansion of the third vision which the protagonist 'Will' sees. Text 'C' is the revised version of Text 'B'. *Piers Plowman*'s first audience regarded it "as a compendiously didactic work, whose literary mode is narrative or historical" (Middleton 1982, 109). The poem is a perfect

amalgamation of the portrayal of social realism and the spiritual thirst of a being. It appears that the author was born in "about 1330 that is ten years before Chaucer and lived for some time in Malvern Hills" (Skeat 1869, 1).

Significance of prologue

The protagonist 'Will' himself is an embodiment of the author himself. The poem's prologue manifests the role of the shepherd played by the author, who fell asleep on the May morning in Malvern Hills. The prologue begins in the following way:

> In a somer seson, whan softe was the sonne,
> I shoop me into shroudes as I a sheep were,

Medieval society including its natives from various backgrounds gets a special mention in the poem by William Langland. The author catches a glimpse and then outlines the differences between the lifestyles and rights of the rich, poor, greedy clerks, jesters, ploughman, clergy, idlers, and beggars. The prologue of the poem records the dual picture of Medieval society. One shows the wealthy class who indulges in showing off their riches and taking benefits of the rights provided to them. On the other hand, the peasant class or the poor have been shown as a victim of society, struggling throughout their lives for a single penny.

The same has been portrayed in the opening scene of the poem, which is as follows:

> A faire felde ful of folke fonde I there bytwene,
> Of alle maner of men, the mene and the riche,
> Worchyng and wandryng as the worlde asketh.
> Some put them to the plow, played ful selde,
> In settynge and in sowynges wonken ful harde,
> Wonnen that wast ours with glotony edestruyeth.

The prologue sketches the impartial role of the plowman who imposes heavy charges against men of various orders and ranks. He also keeps himself engaged with the fact that he has to convey to humanity to be on the path of truth. He strives to teach the ranks such as the knights, laborers, and clergy their duties towards mankind. Langland paints the picture of an ideal society where the king aims to make peace, getting assistance from knights, the peasants to work with honesty, and the clergy indulging in studying scriptures. A major section of the society engrossed in prayers finds special mention by Langland. The prologue

ends with a rather crowded picture of 14th-century people living prayerful lives. An example of the same is listed below:

> And summe putten hem to pruide, apparayled hem ther-after,
> In cuntenaunce of clothynge comen disgised
> In prayers and in penance putten hem manye,
> Al for love of oure lorde lyveden ful streyte,
> In hope for to hevenerichе blisse.

Construction of the visions: Big blow to the immorality

In the course of its twenty-two books the poem "employs a wide range of genres, styles, and tonal registers, complicating and qualifying its relationship to each" (Pearsall 1994). Langland has the index of holy characters to begin his poem. In the first *passus*, a glamorous lady named 'Holy Church' is introduced to the protagonist 'Will'. Langland creates these holy characters to give a big blow to worldly pleasures which provide a bitter betrayal to mankind. 'Will' who is wandering meets Lady Holy Church who further warns him about society's dominant hypocrisy and flattery. Later, the lady shows him the path to salvation. Langland is evenly focused on the characters playing a negative role in the poem. In the second *passus* of the poem, the reader comes across a shrewd character named 'Lady Meed'. She is dressed up well with lots of jewelry and a crown, showing off her riches. Lady Meed shows a willingness to get married to falsehood. Here, Theology intervenes and takes the matter to the king's court. Upon hearing the issue, the king threatens punishment for flattery and her companion falsehood. They plan to take refuge from wealthy merchants and minstrels. Langland suggests ways to deal with the prevalent delusion by creating characters like 'Theology' and 'Lady Holy Church'.

The third *passus* manifests how Lady Meed who embodies falsehood tries her tricks on justice by providing a bribe. Later, Meed proposes marriage to Conscience but her efforts are in vain. It happened because of the strict opposition given by the Conscience. A befitting reply came from Conscience depicting his unwillingness to marry Lady Meed. A lively quotation is as follows:

> Shal na more Mede be maistre, as she is nouthe,
> Ac love and lowenesse and lewte to gederes,
> Thise shal be maistres on moldetreuthe to save.

The third *passus* is a compatible portrayal of the practice of the clergy, king, and other bodies of the royal court. Conscience's reply at the end

of the *passus* shows how bribery has ruined the priesthood. Once again Reason and Conscience convince the king not to let Lady Meed marry Falsehood. This was the first vision that 'Will' sees, including the first four *passūs*.

After portraying the loopholes of the society i.e., bribery, falsehood, etc., Langland frames the fourth *passus* which was envisioned to bring to the limelight the destructive 'Seven Deadly Sins'.

The 'Seven Deadly Sins' are delineated as Pride, Envy, Luxury, Wrath, Avarice, Gluttony and Sloth. It is "the homely realism of his descriptions of the Seven Deadly Sins which is personal to Langland, for these seven are everywhere in medieval literature" (Legouis 116). The significance of repentance is shown through the penance that these 'Seven Deadly Sins' perform. They confess their sins and show a willingness to go on a pilgrimage. The only character who restricts himself from going to the Church is Gluttony. A man whose soul is loaded with greed and lust repents only then when he is drunk and unfortunately awakes after a couple of days. Idleness is one of a human's prominent enemies, which acts as an obstacle to spiritual and moral growth. Langland has highlighted in the second vision the effect of idleness on a human's life. He personifies Idleness in the second vision where the reader finds that the penitents and Piers himself plan to plough his half acre. Those who refuse to work on the land due to idleness are punished by 'Hunger'. Once they satiate their hunger, it was found that they became idle again. Later, Piers received a pardon from the 'Truth' for the penitents' sins. The validity of the pardon was challenged by the priest and thus Piers tears the pardon into two. This was when 'Will' woke up and sought to meet Dowel. Sloth was yet another personified character which is the epitome of a lazy priest who is indulged in reading 'Rymes of Robin Hood' to perform his priestly duties. Here one finds Sins being capable of deep regret and thus repentance urges God to pardon the sinners.

> And have reuthe on thise ribaudes that repente hem here sore,
> That evere thei wratthed the in this world, in worde, thougte, or dedes.

In Langland's dream allegory, one finds that most of his personified characters wander in search of Truth or for the sake of holy travels i.e., pilgrimages, etc. This was the very culture of Medieval England where people used to travel for the sake of trade, religion, etc. Langland uses the physical movements of his personified characters for a deeper

understanding of Theological concepts and to make the search for truth accessible.

Portrayal of spiritual figures at regular intervals

The holy figures that appear in the poem wake humanity up from the sleep of ignorance and lack of enlightenment. These personified figures include 'Lady Holy Church', 'Piers', 'Conscience', 'Truth', 'Reason', 'Thought', 'Patience', 'Tree of Charity', and 'Grace'. Each time a social vice is reflected in the poem, the solution of the same has also been suggested by the poet. In the course of its twenty-two books the poem "employs a wide range of genres, styles, and tonal registers, complicating and qualifying its relationship to each" (Pearsall 1994). The most dominating spiritual character is the 'Holy Church' who guides the protagonist to walk on the path of sanctity and search for the truth. This portrayal signifies that in whatever circumstances a human may be, it is God who plans to disguise Himself and then appears to help mankind in whatever possible way He can.

After the emergence of the 'Lady Holy Church', the appearance of 'Reason' takes place. As we can see that the famous 'Fair Field Full of Folk' is a place crowded with people having diverse professions and human traits. They had various vices in them i.e., falsehood, envy, anger, etc. 'Reason' appears in front of them and delivers his holy sermon to them for the purification of their soul. The importance of holy sermons and their impact on the human mind has been portrayed by the poet. It was the 'Reason's sermon' that encouraged the folk for further repentance for their sins. Later, the most eminent character appears named 'Piers' who is a plowman by profession, after whose name the poem has been given its title. He makes his first appearance in Vision 2. In Piers, the author creates "a symbol who eventually united the ideal of the common man with the ideal of God-made-man" (Daiches 2004, 127).He puts a condition in front of the folks that whosoever helps Piers in plowing his field will be getting spiritual guidance in return. It is because of Piers's urge that 'Seven Deadly Sins' agree to confess. In penance, they all attempt to go on a pilgrimage of Truth. This is how Piers introduced purification to the said sins. Later, in this vision, Langland attempts to bring to limelight hunger and idleness and thus teach people the significance of hard-work and the purity of heart.

Further, the appearance of 'Dowell, Dobetter, and Dobest' spreads the light of optimism on the path of spirituality. To find a life full of

contentment and free from vices, the poet emphasizes and tells the value of doing good, doing better, and doing best. Here, the fake religion and the corrupt church are on the target. A character named 'Wit' appears to provide in-depth knowledge of Dobest to 'Will'. Will is further encouraged to follow the path of truthfulness and give preference to doing the good with all. These divine characters suggest ways to stay aloof from the corruption of the church, and they prove to be a victory of light over darkness, truth over falsehood, and life over death.

Conclusion

Langland through his masterpiece breaks many stereotypes and introduces reformation. People of Medieval England believed in many superstitions. One instance of the same is that some folks believed that a human soul was merely a combination of flesh and blood which dispersed to Heaven after the death of a being. People even did not favor thinking that it was God who created this universe. Langland's characters are hereby formed to reciprocate the said thought. The visions that 'Will' sees are framed as a social and moral satire that promotes the search for the divine truth. This is Langland's knowledge of his contemporary society. The chaos and the ignorance portrayed by him along with the suitable solution for the same are commendable. The significance of the last dream that 'Will' sees is of great importance. In the said dream, he visualizes the coming of Jesus into Hell and cherishes His victory over Satan. Jesus, who is Piers in the poem, goes through the sufferings and pain of the entire humanity, "if he be not Christ Himself, he is at least one of the lowly mankind, in whom Christ became incarnate and of whom He made His apostles" (Legouis 2006, 118). The conclusive part of the dream sketches the episode where Conscience turns to be a pilgrim and seeks the Piers' companionship. Thus, the protagonist awakes in tears from the dream.

The conclusive scene of the poem is quite climatic in tone and manner. It sets new standards of spirituality containing appropriate religious reforms. Love, sympathy, cooperation, and patriotism are the virtues that find special mention in the poem. Falsehood, bribery, anger, and lust are the vices that were the target of Langland. He skillfully brought to the limelight the flaws of the church. The poet sets new standards for the working of these places of devotion. The cunning and greedy attitudes of the clergy and the friars are depicted by him in his visions. He circulates the message that by remaining kind

and humanistic one can easily gain God's grace and that's the sole purpose of a human's life.

To paint the picture of contemporary society, Langland uses his imagery, poetic language, and a wide range of literary genres. He makes us familiar with the harsh realities of medieval times. He is not in favor of a fanciful and poetic piece of literature. Rather, he chooses to be harsh at times. His phenomenal work acts as an eye-opener and thus brings forth the hidden vices of medieval society and humans as well. He dreamt of introducing social and spiritual reform in society and he could beautifully do so.

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Las maternidades en la poética de Rosario Castellanos (Motherhood in the Poetic of Rosario Castellanos)

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Abstract: This article explores various representations of the maternal figure in the poetic works of Rosario Castellanos, allowing us to engage in a dialogue with her philosophical and essayistic vision. Within this spectrum of maternal roles, we will examine feelings and attitudes of and toward the mother, recognizing the multifaceted nature of motherhood. We begin our study with an introduction to motherhood, then delve, through literary analysis, into the diverse metaphorical pronouncements about the mother figure that the poet from Chiapas makes in *Poesía no eres tú*. These pronouncements are refracted as a complex reality on the edge of interpretation when we engage in dialogue with her philosophical thesis *Cultura femenina* and her essays on women published in *Mujer que sabe latín*, *Juicios sumarios* and those compiled in *Mujer de palabras*.

Keywords: motherhood, Mexican culture, Rosario Castellanos

Introducción

La maternidad se construye a partir de diversos aspectos tanto individuales como colectivos que surgen de las múltiples relaciones en las que se configura la mujer como madre. Por su complejidad en cuanto rol identitario, es necesario abordar el concepto de manera multidisciplinaria, como sugieren los estudios postfeministas, pues "la experiencia o práctica de la maternidad no es única ni inmutable, sino que es performativa y potencialmente transformadora" (Borham-Puyal & Martín, 2024, 53). Por ello, hablar de la imagen de la madre hoy, implica romper estereotipos y contemplar un abanico de posibilidades, coloraciones y maneras de asumirse como tal. Si pensamos en un constructo general de la madre, debemos incluir en esta visión polifocal: actitudes, sentimientos, saberes y múltiples aspectos específicos de la maternidad, pues como lo señalaba Rosario

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AGATHOS, Volume 17, Issue 2 (33-34): 265-281, DOI 10.5281/zenodo.23369740
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Castellanos (2024, 481), los sentimientos son también parte de la formación, "no son algo dado por la naturaleza, sino creados por la cultura. Porque los sentimientos, como todo el resto de las aptitudes humanas, se educan".

Hay quienes distinguen entre la maternidad vista como parte de la estructura patriarcal que somete a las mujeres y, por otro lado, como la experiencia de ser madre que da empoderamiento en términos feministas, como lo reconoció Adrienne Rich, quien aborda estos matices en *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experienceand Institution* (1976). La poeta y teórica estadounidense asegura que es necesario echar abajo la idea de que la maternidad es algo "natural", que la madre no tiene identidad y que puede encontrar su realización cuidando niños todo el día (de la Paz 2022). En este sentido, ya no podemos quedarnos con la idea fija de un estereotipo idealizado de la madre; tampoco es conveniente polarizar las visiones entre la madre perfecta y la mala madre, pues entre una perspectiva y otra, hay cambios sustanciales que no podemos dejar de lado.

Estos cambios aún no se hacen tan evidentes en un contexto general; sin embargo, ya en los últimos años del siglo XX, con el impacto de las avanzadas feministas, el concepto tomó un giro político al hablar de "maternalismo" y los estudios sobre la maternidad abrieron nuevas brechas de discusión. A partir es esto, el "ser madre" se ve ya no solo como un estereotipo, sino como un rol social y cívico (Borham-Puyal & Martín, 2024). Andrea O'Reilly destaca la necesidad de un feminismo "matricéntrico" que se enfoque en las problemáticas intrínsecas de las mujeres madres, a su identidad y trabajo, pues estas son oprimidas por el sistema patriarcal como mujeres y como madres (Ibid.).

Sin duda algo ha cambiado en el concepto de maternidad, desde la segunda mitad del siglo XX hasta nuestros días; sobre todo, se han multiplicado los roles fuera de casa en el ser madre trabajadora, por ejemplo. Pero, como afirma Emilce Dio Bleichamar, independientemente del trabajo que ejerza fuera del hogar, ante los ojos de la sociedad todavía se cree que la madre debe permanecer "disponible, comprensiva, cuidadora y cariñosa" (Marchisio y Campo 2016, 475). Ser madre es un "deber ser" en nuestra cultura, como dice Marcela Lagarde (2012). Y por ese "deber ser", las mujeres somos consideradas "administradoras del amor, ya sea pasional (amante) o familiar (esposa, madre). El sentimiento amoroso parece ser para

nosotras un estado, el estado. La sociedad nos lo asigna. La cultura entera nos lo recuerda" (Bleichmar 2014, 13).

Frente a ese constructo complejo que supone la maternidad, Rosario Castellanos hacía notar, desde los años setenta del siglo pasado, la necesidad de que la mujer sea respetada y valorada tanto en el hogar como en el trabajo. "Que tenga voz y voto. Autoridad y prestigio" (Castellanos 2024, 680). Es necesario romper esa estrecha galería en la que queda atrapada la mujer mexicana, la madre. La visión de Rosario coincide con la de Rich, pues ambas reconocen que la historia de las mujeres debe ser reescrita desde una nueva conciencia crítica y reflexiva.

A partir de lo expuesto hasta aquí, nos proponemos revisar de manera puntual cómo Rosario Castellanos habla del tema y representa distintas aristas de la maternidad en su obra poética, construyendo un diálogo con su postura filosófica y ensayística.

La madre y sus maternidades en Rosario Castellanos

En *Sobre cultura femenina*, la escritora chiapaneca afirma que la mujer está confinada al hogar y a la maternidad por dos motivos: la supuesta inferioridad frente al varón y su exclusión de la cultura, vista como el "hogar" masculino. Así "la mujer, en vez de escribir libros, de investigar verdades, de hacer estatuas, tiene hijos" (Castellanos 2005, 181). Solo unas cuantas se atreven a romper este cerco impuesto por la visión masculina de pensadores como Arthur Schopenhauer, Otto Weininger y Georg Simmel, quienes hablaban de las mujeres como seres imbéciles, ignorantes, incompetentes, sin raciocinio.

Históricamente, además de que ha sido considerada un poco menos que bestia, si la mujer tiene hijos fuera del matrimonio, convierte su maternidad en "el pecado más monstruoso y [a] la madre [en] un ser que está fuera de lo estrictamente humano, un lastre de animalidad que es necesario destruir" (Ibid, 190).

Pero Rosario contraviene estos presupuestos. En su obra poética describe, cuestiona y critica el ejercicio de la maternidad en la mujer mexicana, formada para el hogar y el matrimonio. Vista así, el ideal heredado de la cultura occidental judeocristiana le premia "por la pureza prenupcial, por su fidelidad al marido, por su devoción a los hijos, por su laboriosidad en la casa, por su cuidado y prudencia para administrar un patrimonio que ella no estaba capacitada para heredar y para poseer" (Castellanos 1998c, 877). Rosario destaca en *Mujer que sabe latín*, que a la mujer se le pide ser virtuosa. Y una madre

mexicana debe cumplir con este virtuosismo que engloba: "la constancia, la lealtad, la paciencia, la castidad, la sumisión, la humildad, el recato, la abnegación, el espíritu de sacrificio" (Ibidem).

En *Poesía no eres tú*, identificamos este mismo predicamento sobre lo que se le inculca y exige a la mujer. En el poema dramático *Salomé*, la hija representada dice: "fui educada para obedecer/ y sufrir en silencio./ Mi madre en vez de leche/ me dio el sometimiento" (Castellanos 1995, 126). Con esto Rosario nos planta ante el estereotipo de la madre abnegada que se asegura de perpetuar su destino.

En "Acción de gracias" deja ver a la madre que predica la paciencia como el máximo valor al que puede aspirar: "Mi madre repetía:/ la paciencia es metal que resplandece" (Ibid, 217). Allí mismo, describe el trabajo del hogar, el orden que como madre pone en las cosas cotidianas y el predicamento: "Yo no quiero apartarme de su ejemplo" (Ibid, 218). Porque la madre como mujer es educada para ordenar la casa y atender a los otros.

"Metamorfosis de la hechicera" nos hace pensar en las miradas controversiales de la madre abnegada y pura frente a la mala madre. Aquí la mujer engaña, pero en soledad sufre: "Mujer, tuvo sus máscaras y jugaba a engañarse/ y a engañar a los otros/ mas cuando contemplaba su rostro verdadero/ era una flor de pétalos/ pálidos y marchitos: amor, ausencia y muerte./ Y en la corola había/ alguna cicatriz casi borrada" (Ibid, 205). Desde esta perspectiva de la madre que sufre, Rosario evidencia el ultraje de la madre violada. En "Última crónica" enuncia: "El himen desgarrado fue la hazaña/ del rudo semental y de ella hemos nacido/ tú, yo, nosotros, los que atestiguamos/ y los que permanecen en la orilla" (Ibid, 214). Luego dibuja el destino histórico: "Después llegaron los mutiladores,/ los chalanes que fueron a venderla/ al mercader de esclavas." (Ibidem) Como la tierra o la patria "fue saqueada mil veces: fue aherrojada/ en calabozos húmedos" (Ibidem).

En esta revelación de la sujeto lírica que habla en una especie de marasmo, brota la verdad que cuesta nombrar, ante la que muchas veces huimos como lo hace la mujer en el poema. Porque se huye de la verdad como se quiere huir de los violentadores (el usurpador, el padrastro, el dominante, el macho). En "Malinche", dice: "Desde el sillón de mando mi madre dijo: "Ha muerto"./ Y se dejó caer abatida/ en los brazos del otro, usurpador, padrastro" (Ibid, 285-286). Enseguida describe la violación de la niña, el padre asesinado y el

desprecio de la madre hacia la hija que la suplantará: "Arrojada, expulsada/ del reino, del palacio y de la entraña tibia/ de la que me dio a luz en tálamo legítimo/ y que me aborreció porque yo era su igual/ en figura y en rango/ y se contempló en mí y odió su imagen/ y destrozó el espejo contra el suelo" (Ibid, 287).

De aquí se desprende un cuestionamiento sobre las actitudes y sentimientos de la madre violada ante la hija también violada, de la madre que sufre la humillación del cuerpo y la humillación de ser suplantada por la hija. En una automirada, la sujeto lírica de este poema enuncia cómo es declarada muerta y enterrada: "Yo avanzo hacia el destino entre cadenas/ y dejo atrás lo que todavía escucho: los fúnebres rumores con los que se me entierra." (Ibid, 287) La condena entonces es física y moral. La mujer se ve en el espejo roto no por la libertad, sino por la violencia, escucha la voz de la madre: "Y la voz de mi madre con lágrimas ¡con lágrimas!/ que decreta mi muerte" (Ibidem).

Pero más allá de la Malinche como el arquetipo de la madre que se conflictúa con la heredad de la violencia, hay una gama de representaciones en la poesía de Rosario Castellanos que da cuenta de otras prácticas de la maternidad en la cultura mexicana. Veamos esta galería materna.

La madre abnegada

Ser fiel obediente, paciente, sufrida, abnegada son cualidades de la madre tradicional que representa Castellanos y que ubicamos como una de las maneras más arraigadas de ejercer la maternidad en nuestra cultura. Uniendo la visión del arquetipo de Hécuba, la poeta muestra a la madre en su incansable caminar: "En su día fui casta/ y después fiel al único, al esposo" (Castellanos 1995, 196). Luego añade: "Nunca la aurora me encontró dormida/ ni me alcanzó la noche/ antes de que se apagara mi rumor de colmena" (Ibidem).

Pero ser la que sufre, verse como víctima, es una postura cómoda en el imaginario crítico de Rosario. Y es que entre los perfiles ocultos de la madre, está ese que describe tanto en sus versos como en algunos ensayos y entrevistas que refieren a lo biográfico. Uno de los recuentos más duros que la poeta hace de su madre está relacionado con esta visión:

> Mi mamá murió de cáncer. Un cáncer dolorosísimo con una agonía horrenda, y la teníamos a base de morfina. Entonces, mi papá, cuando mi mamá estaba agonizando —con la morfina, que nada más salía de un estado de sopor, para

> inmediatamente recibir la otra dosis—, mi papá tenía gripe. Entonces mi mamá se levantaba, completamente mareada, completamente mal, descalza, agarrándose de las paredes, porque no podía ni mantenerse, para llegar hasta el cuarto de mi papá y preguntarle a él cómo había amanecido, porque era el "Señor". Entonces mi papá se daba el lujo de darle la espalda y mirar hacia la pared y no contestarle. Cuando yo veía esto, yo a quien quería matar era a mi mamá, porque me parecía una abyección a tal punto, tan gratuita y tan innecesaria. Pero la cara de beatitud que ella ponía cuando comprobaba que él era ese monstruo… Regresaba a la cama… sonriendo. Era una cosa totalmente repugnante. Era el orgasmo, ir y ver que el otro era capaz de llegar hasta eso… y perdonar. La que no pudo perdonar fui yo. Perdonarla a ella. Pero cuando uno va viendo toda la elaboración, la víctima era él. Lo habían obligado a convertirse en eso. (Megged 1994, 128).

La madre abnegada se enfrenta en múltiples circunstancias a la imagen del esposo como el castigador, malo, pero indispensable para la sobrevivencia de la mujer madre. En *Cuadernos de Jerusalén* Rosario hablade la salvación que representa el matrimonio ante la idea del pecado original y la maternidad en el imaginario social. La voz de la madre resuena como campana ante la hija: "¡ Un hombre es un monstruo!, pero tú alguna vez te vas a tener que casar con un hombre, porque si te quedas sola, eres la nada pura". (Megged 1994, 124).

La madre abnegada ejerce la maternidad como sinónimo de sufrimiento, de sumisión, porque aunque no lo digan las mujeres, Rosario lo expresa: "Tener un hijo es el dolor más espantoso del planeta. ¡Es horrible!, no sabes, no te puedes imaginar!" (Ibid, 124) Sin embargo, decirlo está vedado en el discurso eufemístico y camuflado, así como en las actitudes manifiestas antes los demás. Un ejemplo claro de ello está en *El eterno femenino* cuando la mamá de Lupita dice: "No hay felicidad comparable a la de ser madre, Lupita. Aunque te cueste, como en muchos, casos la vida. Y siempre, la juventud y la belleza. Ah, pero ser madre… ser madre…" (Castellanos 1998a, 375).

La madre protectora

La que cuida de los otros, la que se desprende de sí para dar todo por los hijos, es la madre protectora que aparece en el poema 10 de "Misterios gozosos" de Rosario Castellanos. Es la "Madre que abre las puertas como abriera los brazos,/ que ha levantado el techo igual que se levanta/ la mano en bendición por sobre mi cabeza,/ y que ofrece el arrimo de sus paredes sólidas/ como quien da a un polluelo el hueco de sus alas" (Castellanos 1995, 84). Es la misma que Rosario ve en *Mujer que sabe latín* "con su capacidad inagotable de sacrificio" (Castellanos 1998c, 967). Solo que aquí hacemos la diferencia de la madre

abnegada porque su relación está circunscrita únicamente a los hijos y en un sentido positivo. Su aura virginal la eleva por encima de cualquier posibilidad de víctima. Podemos decir que esta representación es la más cercana al ideal puro de la madre virgen.

De la virginidad al matrimonio

Una cosa es la imagen virginal de la madre que veíamos arriba y otra la condición de llegar virgen al matrimonio, pues aun cuando no se cumpla o se guarden las apariencias, la virginidad es una condición exigida para tener un "matrimonio decente" y ser considerada una madre digna. Esto es visible tanto en las representaciones del mundo metafórico de Rosario como en la mayoría de los círculos sociales de nuestra cultura, aun considerando las diferencias y atenuaciones distintas del mundo citadino al mundo rural, o los microespacios, marcados por las religiones y prácticas comunitarias o familiares específicas.

La idea de llegar virgen al matrimonio sigue presente, aunque esto se contrapone a la imagen de la soltera "quedada" o la que llega tarde al matrimonio, como lo expresa el poema "Pequeña crónica", que muestra el peso negativo y las huellas de la virginidad: "Entre nosotros hubo/ lo que hay entre dos cuando se aman:/ sangre de himen roto. (¿Te das cuenta?/ Virgen a los treinta años ¡y poetisa! Lagarto.)" (Castellanos 1995, 283). Por ello Rosario critica la hipocresía a la que se ven arrastradas las mujeres. Dice:

> Tengamos el valor de decir que somos vírgenes porque se nos da la real gana, porque así nos conviene para fines ulteriores o porque no hemos encontrado la manera de dejar de serlo... Pero, por favor, no sigamos enmascarando nuestra responsabilidad en abstracciones que nos son absolutamente ajenas como lo que llamamos virtud, castidad o pureza y de lo que no tenemos ninguna vivencia auténtica. (Castellanos 1998c, 889)

Pero más allá de los aspectos positivos o negativos y sus implicaciones con el matrimonio y la soltería, la virginidad está relacionada con la esperanza de ser madre. Como si se tratara de uno de los pasos místicos de la maternidad, la condición de ser virgen alberga la esperanza de alcanzar el ideal materno, de llegar a ser la madre perfecta, la madre virgen. Y esto tiene una explicación fundada en el simbolismo de la trascendencia. La maternidad como un don lo espera la señorita, la soltera que "aguarda, aguarda, aguarda./ Y no puede nacer en su hijo, en sus entrañas,/ y no puede morir/ en su cuerpo remoto, inexplorado." (Castellanos 1995, 175) Incluso en la lesbiana

de “Kinsey report”, que rompe con el halo de la trascendencia y se planta en los avances tecnológicos, la esperanza de la maternidad emerge: “Cuando nos aburramos de estar solas/ alguna de las dos irá a agenciarse un hijo.// ¡No, no de esa manera! En el laboratorio/ de la inseminación artificial.”(Ibid, 320).

La madre prolifica

El rol de la madre prolífica emana del mandato de sumisión y obediencia: tener los hijos que Dios mande. En “Kinsey report” la señorita que piensa en el futuro esposo, habla de ser: “tan prolífica madre”, como una de las cualidades de buena esposa. Aunque en el poema “Acto de humildad”, la voz poética llega al extremo de la crítica cuando enuncia a través de la animalización: “En otro tiempo me maravilló/ lo fácil que era ser solamente una vaca./ Bastaba con echarse a rumiar y con parir/ cada año un becerro. Con mirar con asombro/ la estructura del mundo y sus apariciones./ Con dejarse engordar y, mansamente,/ ir con los otros hacia el matadero” (Castellanos 1995, 320-321).

En “Testimonio de Hécuba” la poeta representa la maternidad como un don al servicio del esposo, pues aunque se dice que la maternidad le da trascendencia a la mujer, más bien se habla de la trascendencia del padre a través de los hijos que llevarán su apellido. Entonces la madre prolífica en realidad asegura esta continuidad de su “dueño”, como lo nombra en este poema: “Y para que su nombre no acabara/ al acabar su cuerpo,/ tuvo hijos en mí valientes, laboriosos,/ tuvo hijas de virtud,/ desposadas con yernos aceptables” (Ibid, 196).

Con esto vemos a la madre prolífica como un patrón al que hay que seguir, según el dictado de la dominación masculina, ante lo que la madre anula su identidad entre la cosificación y la animalización que expresa la visión crítica de Rosario.

El aborto y la no maternidad

Hay por lo menos tres representaciones de la figura materna relacionadas con el aborto en la obra poética de Castellanos. La primera está ubicada en la posibilidad interrumpida del embarazo con la presencia de la menstruación. En “Pequeña crónica”, el yo lírico señala la aparición de “la hemorragia mensual o sea en la que un niño/ dice que sí, dice que no a la vida” (Castellanos 1995, 283). Para la mujer que aspira a ser madre, la hemorragia mensual representa una tragedia en el contexto de la tradición, pues la esterilidad es también un

estigma que cobra su cuota social, ya sea en el rechazo abierto o los rumores que envuelven a la pareja a causa de su "intrascendencia".

La segunda representación es el aborto involuntario, que acentúa todavía más lo trágico de la relación de la mujer en su matrimonio, pues si el don de la maternidad se le niega, el sentimiento negativo relacionado con lo estéril aflora como culpa. En el poema I, "De la vigilia estéril", la voz lírica establece un puente con la realidad si pensamos que Rosario pasó por varios abortos antes de tener a su hijo Gabriel. "Todos los muertos yacen en mi vientre./ Montones de cadáveres ahogan el indefenso/ embrión que mis entrañas niegan y desamparan". (Ibid, 35). En entrevista con Elena Poniatowska, Rosario dice: "tuve tres hijos, de los cuales murieron los dos primeros" (Megged 1994, 250). Estos tintes que enfocan algunas cuestiones biográficas se entrelazan con la realidad metafórica que nos desvela una plataforma complicada para la mujer madre o que aspira a ser madre.

Pero en este estudio no nos detendremos en esa relación entre la escritura del yo y la voz lírica, pues más allá de las referencias personales que podemos encontrar, por ejemplo, en las dedicatorias a su hija, en *Lívida luz* (1960), nos importan los sentimientos de la mujer ante la negación de la maternidad. Lo estéril se refracta en el no querer porque no se puede; es decir, el doblegarse ante la negativa de Dios. Esto lo podemos percibir cuando la sujeto lírica enuncia: "No quiero dar la vida./ No quiero que los labios nutridos en mi seno/ inventen maldiciones y blasfemias./ No quiero a Dios quebrado entre las manos/ inocentes y cárdenas de un niño" (Castellanos 1995, 35).

Aquí aparece la invocación del hijo que no está, del que no se tuvo o no se tiene, del que se perdió. Entonces, ante el dolor y en el espacio simbólico y sagrado, la voz lírica enuncia: "A ratos, fugitiva del sollozo/ que paulatinamente me estrangula,/ vuelvo hacia las praderas fértiles y lo invoco/ con las voces más tiernas y el nombre más secreto./ ¡Hijo mío, tangible en el delirio,/ encarnado en el sueño!"(Castellanos 1995, 35).

En el poema "Origen", la mujer no madre emerge metafóricamente del niño no nacido: "Del féretro de un niño no nacido/ de su vientre tronchado antes de la cosecha/ me levanto tenaz, definitiva,/ brutal como una lápida y en ocasiones triste/ con la tristeza pétrea del ángel funerario/ que oculta entre sus manos una cara sin lágrimas" (Ibid, 37). Los sentimientos se mezclan, entrechocan, van y vienen entre la determinación y la tristeza. Así, la cuestión del aborto involuntario, de

la pérdida, convierte a la maternidad en algo amargo, como se ve en "Muro de lamentaciones": "porque los niños surgen de vientres como ataúdes/ y en el pecho materno se nutren de venenos" (Ibid, 45).

La tercera manifestación del aborto es la interrupción del embarazo no deseado, es decir, el aborto como una práctica de la no maternidad. Aunque por un lado en el imaginario rosarino aparece la madre abnegada, dispuesta a tener los hijos que Dios le mande, y la que en automático tiene partos cada año, Rosario enfatiza que "en la mujer la maternidad es un sentimiento no sólo consciente, sino también libre al que se puede dar curso o evitar" (Castellanos 2005, 182). En este sentido, la poeta dibuja el escenario de la mujer ante el dilema y las posibilidades que aparecen en su entorno para ser madre o evitar ese rol que la estructura patriarcal de sumisión le impone. Aunque no hay representación evidente de la práctica del aborto por el embarazo no deseado como tal, Rosario menciona varias veces los anticonceptivos que usa la soltera quien deja ver que tuvo relaciones, pero no desea el embarazo: "Me asusté mucho. Fui con un doctor/ que me dio algo y no hubo consecuencias" (Castellanos 1995, 317-318). O el miedo de la mujer casada sometida sexualmente por el marido. En "Kinsey report" dice: "me preocupa otro embarazo" (Ibid, 317).

Así, las tres manifestaciones del aborto y la maternidad nos dejan ver que por lo menos en las dos primeras pesa mucho más el estigma de lo estéril. Es decir, no poder ser madre implica no cumplir con el mandato sociocultural y eso conduce a la culpa y la amargura en la mujer desamparada, huérfana de los hijos que Dios no le dio.

La maternidad y el sexo

La mujer tiene el don de la maternidad, pero su sexualidad es aceptada únicamente como medida reproductiva en el mundo representado por Castellanos. En *El eterno femenino*, publicado de manera póstuma, y que parece una síntesis de las ideas críticas acerca del imaginario de la mujer mexicana, la madre le reclama a su hija la supuesta felicidad en su matrimonio: "Una señora decente no tiene ningún motivo para ser feliz… y si lo tiene, lo disimula. Hay que tener en cuenta que su inocencia ha sido mancillada, su pudor violado. Ave de sacrificio, ella acaba de inmolarse para satisfacer los brutales apetitos de la bestia" (Castellanos 1998a, 371).

Rosario enfrenta aquí a dos generaciones. La madre de Lupita que oculta y niega el placer y la hija que la interroga: "¿Cuál bestia?", dejando ver que ya no cree en esa carga maligna hacia el matrimonio y

el hombre como engendro del mal que la poseerá. Entonces la madre reclama sus esfuerzos para formarla en su ideología y tradición: "Y no me vayas a salir con que te gustó porque voy a pensar que todos los esfuerzos que hice para educarte fueron vanos. ¡Yo cosiendo ajeno para pagar las escuelas más caras, los internados más exclusivos!" (Castellanos 1998a, 371). En esta cosmovisión confinadora, la mujer no debe disfrutar del sexo ni mucho menos hablar de ello. Hacerlo, equivale a ser estigmatizada como puta, como loca. La mujer que disfruta su vida sexual es vista como seductora y está del lado del mal, es un engendro del demonio.

Con lo anterior se explica que en la realidad representada de "Kinsey report", la casada no puede aceptar que le gusta el sexo, pues "es decente"; en cambio, se queja de que los niños se pueden despertar en la madrugada con los chirridos y el escándalo de las relaciones sexuales: "Además, me preocupa otro embarazo./ Y esos jadeos fuertes y el chirrido/ de los resortes de la cama pueden/ despertar a los niños que no duermen después/ hasta la madrugada" (Castellanos 1995, 317). Es decir, una vez más triunfa el eufemismo para encubrir el placer y el deseo, para aparentar que no se es feliz porque lo único aceptable es el fruto sagrado que se tuvo exclusivamente con fines reproductivos.

En lo mundano que representa la mujer divorciada, tampoco se acepta una libre sexualidad; hay que dar el buen ejemplo a las hijas, es un deber materno, aunque en aras de su cumplimiento se viva una doble moral. En "Kinsey report", la divorciada dice: "De cuando en cuando echo una cana al aire/ para no convertirme en histérica./ Pero tengo que dar el buen ejemplo/ a mis hijas. No quiero que su suerte/ se parezca a la mía" (Ibid, 318).

En el entorno poético de las conductas sexuales aparece también la soltera que tiene relaciones sin que su madre se entere: "Ahora soy mecanógrafa y algunas veces salgo/ a pasear con amigos./ Al cine y a cenar. Y terminamos/ la noche en un motel. Mi mamá no se entera" (Castellanos 1995, 317). Así, una sexualidad escondida provoca sentimientos negativos como la culpa, la vergüenza, etc. En ninguna situación fuera del matrimonio la sexualidad ni la maternidad son aceptadas en este mundo poliédrico que pinta Rosario.

Gestación y maternidad

Una de las etapas de la maternidad que marcan la identidad femenina con mayor fuerza, pero que poco se habla o se representa en el discurso poético de 1950 a 1974, donde ubicamos nuestro estudio

sobre Rosario Castellanos, es el embarazo. ¿Qué emociones, sentimientos, actitudes, miedos y pasiones se despiertan en la mujer que gesta? Porque llevar un feto en el útero, cargarlo y sentirlo crecer dentro, genera sin duda cambios radicales, transformaciones no solo físicas, sino psicológicas en la mujer.

Rosario nombra y describe esta etapa en su obra poética. Aunque en sus poemas no se definen tanto como en sus ensayos los sentimientos negativos de la mujer durante la gestación, en "La anunciación" se puede ver el embarazo como una causa del dolor físico en el yo lírico que expresa: "Porque habías de venir a quebrantar mis huesos" (Castellanos 1995, 33). Con esto hace visible el impacto, la irrupción que desde dentro implica la presencia del hijo en el vientre materno. No es una hipérbole esta imagen, porque la voz poética no exagera lo que ocurre, más bien presenta un panorama realista que rara vez podría verse en el espacio poético de los años en que Rosario escribía *De la vigilia estéril*.

En este reclamo lúdico, la mujer materna añade una serie de imágenes que denotan la dependencia del cuerpo respecto del embrión que se impone en el vientre: "Dócil a tu ademán redondo mi cintura/ y a tus orejas vírgenes mi voz, disciplinada/ en intangibles sílabas de espuma" (Castellanos 1995, 33). La docilidad y la disciplina marcan el rumbo de la relación dulce y protectora, pero también la mujer se muestra dolorida y distinta. Es definida físicamente por el otro que la transforma: "Multiplicó el latido de mis sienes,/ organizó las redes de mis venas/ y ensanchó las planicies de mi espalda" (Ibidem).

En el poema "Se habla de Gabriel" la madre habitada por el otro proyecta un sentimiento de irrupción, de desplazada en su propio espacio. Y la invasión del cuerpo se sostiene en la estrofa que añade el impacto de la apariencia física: "Fea, enferma, aburrida/ lo sentía crecer a mis expensas,/ robarle su color a mi sangre, añadir/ un peso y un volumen clandestino/ a mi modo de estar sobre la tierra" (Castellanos 1995, 291). No es la mala madre la que se asoma, es la madre que se siente invadida por el huésped. Esto irrumpe la norma de la madre en el contexto cultural, pues nadie espera que una madre exprese esos sentimientos.

Pero el yo lírico que tenemos ante el hijo que "pidió nacer", la madre, es solo un medio; está siendo usada para continuar la historia de la humanidad: "Su cuerpo me pidió nacer, cederle el paso,/ darle un sitio en el mundo,/ la provisión de tiempo necesaria a su historia" (Castellanos 1995, 291). Y a partir de este "ceder" es que la

maternidad se puede ver como algo vulnerable, pues como expresa la voz poética, la mujer queda expuesta, sin un espacio propio aunque este sea la soledad y con una herida abierta para siempre: "Consentí. Y por la herida en que partió, por esa/ hemorragia de su desprendimiento/ se fue también lo último que tuve/ de soledad, de yo mirando tras de un vidrio" (Ibid, 291). Ser madre es quedar "abierta, ofrecida/ a las visitaciones, al viento y a la presencia" (Ibidem).

En ese camino de sentimientos encontrados en la maternidad y frente al otro que modifica el cuerpo femenino desde dentro, hay también un sentimiento de protección que embona con el rol de la madre virgen y que se dibuja en "La anunciación": "Y yo medí mis pasos por la tierra/ para no hacerte daño" (Castellanos 1995, 33). Incluso en este momento de identificación con la criatura que se protege, hay un asomo a lo sagrado. Esta postura frente al espejo no está libre, sin embargo, de la carga cultural que le dicta ser "como un arca y como un templo:/ ungida y fervorosa,/ elevada en incienso y en campanas" (Ibidem). El título del poema "La anunciación" tiene ya una carga sagrada, pues alude al texto bíblico sobre el nacimiento de Jesús y a la más alta representación de la madre como virgen.

Así, la gestación proyecta a la madre protectora, pero también a la que sufre, sometida al cuidado de los hijos desde su concepción. La maternidad entonces se revela como una lucha simbólica identitaria que nos muestra cómo la mujer llega a ser madre.

La madre en el mundo cotidiano

La imagen de la madre en el mundo cotidiano se representa en "Válium 10" a través del caos, el extravío y la angustia. Las preocupaciones femeninas aquí son maternales no solo por la vigilancia de los hijos, sino por la vigilia de que todo vaya bien en la oficina, el salón de clases, la imprenta. En el trabajo del hogar hay que "repasar las cuentas", "el costo de la vida". Ser madre es pensar en el destino de los otros, estar en vigilia por ellos: "el hijo mayor que ya viste de etiqueta/ para ir de chambelán a un baile de quince años" (Castellanos 1995, 296).

Pero las preocupaciones no surgen solamente por el que se va de fiesta, sino por su futuro y sus ideologías: "el menor quiere ser futbolista y el de en medio tiene un póster del Che junto a su tocadiscos" (Ibid, 297). Lo que pareciera una simple descripción rutinaria sirve a la poeta para tomar una postura reflexiva, pues luego del repaso, hay un intermedio que ante la aparente atmósfera superflua,

abre el espacio para la revelación del yo femenino. Se trata del tiempo en que "todavía se tiene voluntad para desmaquillarse, ponerse la crema de noche y leer… antes de consumir la lámpara" (Ibidem), como si lo propio fuera lo ajeno, lo que está de más en la escena de las obligaciones maternales. Las preocupaciones de madre se entreveran con las de la mujer que no tiene tiempo para ella. En "Kinsey report" la casada dice: "He subido de peso con los hijos, / con las preocupaciones. Ya usted ve, no faltan" (Ibid, 317).

Es aquí donde surgen las preguntas, donde aparece la Esfinge. En este punto del poema, Rosario es finamente aguda, pues coloca a la mujer ante su misterio y no encuentra solución, sino Caos, así escrito con mayúscula como la Esfinge, para intencionar aún más la carga reflexiva que siempre le ha sido negada a la mujer: como si no pensara, como si no pudiera cuestionarse qué es ser mujer, qué es ser madre, qué significa habitar el mundo. ¿Cuál es la pregunta en la inmensidad de la vigilia con la Esfinge? No está dicha; no está el diálogo, pero sí el sentimiento de lo no resuelto: "Y tienes la penosa sensación/ de que en el crucigrama se deslizó una errata/ que lo hace irresoluble" (Castellanos 1995, 297).

Entonces la situación límite se catectiza, se somatiza en el cuerpo a través de la angustia y encuentra el recoveco de una solución pasajera en la pastilla, "en la que se condensa,/ químicamente pura, la ordenación del mundo" (Ibid, 297). Es decir, tomar la pastilla que ordena el Caos implica también conciliar el engranaje de las distintas funciones para que no se desnivele el mundo, incluyendo el cuidado personal. Pero este orden inmediato es el simbolismo de una postura existencial que se ensaya cada noche en alguna madre-mujer-trabajadora que cuestiona la vida, regida por las preocupaciones impuestas.

En el poema "Recordatorio" el rol poliédrico de la maternidad entra en el espectro del destino: "Ay, destino, destino./ He pagado el tributo de mi especie/ pues di a la tierra, al mundo, esa critatura/ en que se glorifica y se sustenta" (Castellanos 1995, 219). Y es que el precio de la maternidad radica también en ser juzgada por los hijos. En "Autorretrato" dice: "Soy madre de Gabriel: ya usted sabe, ese niño/ que un día se erigirá en juez inapelable/ y que acaso, además, ejerza de verdugo./ Mientras tanto lo amo" (Ibid, 289). La voz lírica se sincera, rompiendo la imagen la madre amorosa. No es la mala madre, simplemente deja ver que el de la madre no es un tiempo estático, que tiene fracturas visibles, como el enfado, el cansancio o el aburrimiento:

"Como todos los huéspedes mi hijo me estorbaba/ ocupando un lugar que era mi lugar,/ existiendo a deshora,/ haciéndome partir en dos cada bocado" (Ibid, 291).

También aparece la madre en el poema "Telenovela", donde la pantalla reproduce las aberraciones cotidianas frente a la hija. "La viuda que cose hasta perder la vista/ para costear el baile de su hija quinceañera/ que se avergüenza de ella y de su sacrificio/ y la hace figurar como una criada" (Castellanos 1995, 313). A pesar de los enfados y las contrariedades, en "Tan-tan, ¿quién es?", la madre implora a la muerte otro plazo, pues no termina con sus tareas pendientes: "una sopa a medio cocinar, un suéter/… un asunto pendiente de sentencia en el juzgado" (Ibid, 314), además de los hijos "que no quieren ser huérfanos/ y el otro que no sabe enviudar" (Ibid, 315). Esto nos muestra cómo afloran los distintos sentimientos en las prácticas cotidianas de la maternidad.

Palabras finales

Rosario Castellanos nos deja ver que la maternidad no se queda fija en un estereotipo. En todo caso es un crisol de estereotipos que se funden en la imagen de la madre: la madre virginal (inmaculada), la madre protectora, la madre cotidiana que sufre la vida, la madre viuda, la madre huérfana de su prole, la madre violada, la madre prostituta, la madre verdugo, la que sueña ser madre (esposa estéril, soltera, señorita, lesbiana), la que abortó o interrumpió su destino de ser madre (soltera, prostituta, la esposa que tiene control de natalidad), la madre juzgada por sus hijos.

Coexisten visiones encontradas tanto en el mundo representado por Rosario como en nuestro contexto cultural. Aparecen las mujeres madres que sientan las bases de su maternidad como la única posibilidad de trascendencia, viven para los otros y el tiempo propio se desdibuja en el trabajo cotidiano del hogar que se convierte en vacío, en una interrogante existencial ante al espejo. Frente a esta visión, se ven las madres que luchan por romper las ataduras a una tradición que las confina y buscan la armonía entre los múltiples roles que desempeñan: el trabajo fuera de casa, el trabajo en el hogar, el cuidado de los hijos, del marido, de las dinámicas familiares.

La maternidad múltiple tiene tentáculos de pulpo y sin embargo se rige todavía, como en la poética de Rosario, por prejuicios de la dominación masculina que yacen en el fondo de la cultura y que se activan ante cualquier circunstancia. Así, la imagen materna tiene un

rostro virginal en tanto que es protectora, formadora, pero también asoma la madre castigadora, la que señala el camino victimizado de las apariencias y la doble moral. Entonces sus tentáculos alcanzan los estigmas y la madre puede ser vista, incluso por sus hijas, como bruja y demonio; puede ser odiada, despreciada y vista como criada; es juzgada con vara dura por sus hijos.

El mundo metafórico de Castellanos proyecta múltiples maternidades o prácticas de la maternidad en las que sobresalen aspectos relacionados con el cuerpo, como la menstruación, la gestación, el aborto, el parto y el deseo sexual. A esto se aúnan sentimientos de la madre como la culpa, la vergüenza y los sentimientos de invasión y de que ha sido desplazada. Con esto, podemos concluir que la maternidad no se puede ver como algo abstracto, mítico y virginal o como algo que debe seguir confinado al hogar y en relación siempre con el padre-hijo al que atiende, cuida y protege. Debemos hablar más bien de maternidades, distintas, coloridas, con tonalidades que rebasan lo claro y lo oscuro para fundirse en un arcoíris multicolor que opalesce en las individualidades representadas por Rosario Castellanos.

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From suffering to serenity: Draupadi's victory over familial deceit, loss, and enslavement through ethical integrity and Krishna's moral guidance

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Abstract: The research paper examines Draupadi's resilience in the middle of profound suffering in the *Mahabharata*, highlighting her ability to transcend pain inflicted by those closest to her. The paper aims to bring Draupadi's ability to overcome the pain and suffering she encounters throughout her life. Despite the gender bias from her own father, conspiracy from her own brother, ill-treatment from her own mother-in-law, and lack of moral support from her own husband, she managed to continue her life. She found happiness through morality, forgiveness and having a moral anchor in life. This character sets an example for every other woman to lead their life more positively. Her way of leading life remains a lesson for every other woman who undergoes a similar kind of problems in their life.

Keywords: resilience, forgiveness, morality, anchor, pain

Introduction

The story is told from the perspective of Draupadi, the protagonist in the novel, and the Palace of Illusion is a retelling of the Indian epic *Mahabharata*. Chitra Bannerjee Divakaruni tried to bring attention to the suffering of women, and how they were able to come out of all pain. Draupadi, a strong woman, has experienced a great deal of suffering. Despite being born into a royal hierarchy, she was denied access to all the advantages. She did not receive the same treatment as her brother Dhri. She had to speak up straight away and defend her rights. Because she is a woman, she was disregarded.

Draupadi had dealt with every problem, including identity crises, battles, and masculine dominance. It is stated at the opening of the

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AGATHOS, Volume 17, Issue 2 (33-34): 283-291, DOI 10.5281/zenodo.23370082
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book that when she was born, everyone heard a voice telling them that she was so strong that she would rule the entire country. She also expressed her desire to produce a child who could rule the entire country on her behalf. The family doesn't want to show any interest in her, even if they have some indications that she will be courageous and capable of overcoming any obstacle. She is a girl, which is a very straightforward and comprehensible explanation.

Father's gendered neglect

In India, men are typically valued more. One cannot see any mention of Draupadi's brother Dhri's valor or any military prowess throughout the entire narrative. However, there exists proof of Draupadi's abilities. Conversely, Drupada, Draupadi's father, expressed interest in Dhri due to his gender. He was permitted to acquire military and related skills. No one has questioned him about whether he is genuinely interested in becoming king or in going to war. He never even voiced his thoughts on the issues. Her brother has been given lessons, which Draupadi is not allowed to listen to. This had hurt her a lot, and she expressed her feelings about not being able to listen to lessons through the following lines. He begins to take "other lessons, though these I couldn't share" (line 26, *The Mahabharata* 2005).

Draupadi has stated that she wants to go to school and learn how to fight, but her father has not shown any interest. Since the novel mentions that they are both from fire, it follows that they are comparable.

This is the pinnacle of male dominance. Drupada performed yagna before the birth of both Draupadi and Dhir because he secretly wished to have a boy first. This specific action makes it quite evident how much Drupada wishes he had a boy child. Unfortunately, Draupadi was born, and it is clear that he is unhappy. She expresses the feeling in the following lines. "A gaunt, glittering man walked towards my brother and me as we stood hand in hand. He held out his arms — but for my brother alone. It was only my brother he wanted" (Ibid, 7).

Brother's deadly conspiracy

Draupadi marriage is yet another difficult step for her. Her feelings were not respected. It truly shouldn't have occurred to any girl in that manner. Her father set up Swayamvara. Many took part, and the young warrior Karna prevailed by demonstrating his archery prowess. Draupadi is now somewhat relieved that, despite her failure to become

monarch, she will at least have a courageous man. She might be able to fulfil all of her desires through him. However, she was not happy for very long. When she realized Karna was a lower caste, she hesitated.

Draupadi was not hesitant by nature; rather, her brother set her off. Her brother wanted her to wed Arjuna. Her own brother is responsible for the plot. He even went so far as to introduce Arjuna as a qualified brahmin, even though he is not. He twisted Draupadi's psyche by taking advantage of her confused state of mind. He has bad intentions. It is unacceptable to employ deceit to own a sister for a self-serving reason. Ultimately, though, she had to endure pain. Later, she was forced to select Arjuna, who met Draupadi's expectations by posing as a poor brahmin. She was now forced to pick Arjuna.

Draupadi had no choice but to move in with Arjuna after their marriage. In India, it is customary for women to visit the groom's home after marriage. She won't be asked for her interest, willingness, or desire. In actuality, she has no authority to decide where to go. She must now relocate to Arjuna's home. Thus far in the narrative, she has suffered at the hands of her own father and brother.

Ill-treatment by the matriarch (Kunti)

Draupadi would never have imagined that she would have to endure suffering due to another woman. Kunti now desires that Draupadi wed her surviving sons. She decided that if all of her sons married Draupadi, they would all live in the same home because she wanted them to stay together until the very end. Kunti addressed Draupadi about this with a wicked and self-centered mentality. She was unaware as a woman of the impact it would have on the next woman. Draupadi's attitude did not concern her. The unity of her own son was more important to her than the desires of other ladies.

This is just one more unwritten Indian cultural tradition. We talk a lot about women's sorrow, suffering, and male dominance. However, there are frequently women who are responsible for the misery of other women. Mother-in-law and daughter-in-law relationships are rarely harmonious. Women who suffer as a result of this connection must be taken into account.

Kunti kept hurting Draupadi. She was accompanied by Dhai ma, a loyal nurse. When the conflict between Draupadi and her mother-in-law was at its height, Kunti took her away from Dhai ma. Draupadi sought comfort in her friendship with the nurse, with whom she had a very strong bond. However, she separated Draupadi from the nurse,

which caused her to become mentally disturbed. Isolating someone hurts our mental health, and Kunti did that to her own daughter-in-law.

Draupadi made her feel uncomfortable and demanded that she plead for her identity in the palace. She ensured that she and her daughter-in-law always had a frosty, war-like relationship. That was done with the goal of demonstrating power. Another unspoken Indian family tradition is that Kunti does not want Draupadi to be more powerful than her. The mother-in-law needs to always be the leader of the household.

Husband's moral abandonment

One of Draupadi's husbands, Yudhishthira, lost all of his riches, kingdom, and authority during the dice game at the Hastinapura assembly. Sakuni's plot caused him to lose everything. It's not that he lacks the necessary skills to perform properly. The dice were so difficult that he lost everything. He lost everything in the first round. He had nothing left to wager in the second round. He had the option to stop there. He could have gotten out of there. He was jealous and wanted to play more, but he had nothing to wager.

In the second round, he foolishly wagered on his own wife. If he lost, he promised to make Draupadi a slave. There are a lot of things that come to mind. Who is he to wager on Draupadi? How did he make that decision without her concern? Will she consent? Draupadi was unaware of what was going on around her and had no idea about this. Men can make their own decisions, according to the typical Indian traditional mindset. Women's suggestions and ideas are typically ignored. It is thought that men are capable of making decisions and will do so correctly, while women lack this capacity.

This mentality is evident throughout the scene, and we can see how things went wrong. He's made up his mind to wager on his own wife. Ultimately, as Sakuni had predicted, Yudhishthira lost the dice game once more, leaving him with little choice but to turn over his own wife as a slave. If one watches the entire scene, one could see that Draupadi had no part, not even a minor one. But in the end, she must suffer because of his ignorance.

Sufferings as a slave

She was brought into the assembly after being sold into slavery. She was actually in her menstrual cycle at the time. That didn't bother them. In public, she was referred to as a whore. Despite being a queen,

she was forced to perform all the tasks performed by slaves. Dushasana even attempted to take off her clothes. Even there, she questioned them and demanded an explanation for what was happening to her. However, she is powerless. Even her husband and other members did nothing when she passed away, and they are now without any rights. Draupadi might benefit from the so-called male power. At last, she went into exile for 13 years, which included one complete year where she spent without knowing where she was and what was happening around. Her lamentation can be understood through the following lines, "I cried until my eyes were swollen shut and my throat was raw. I cried for all that I had lost: my freedom, my pride, my husband's honor" (195).

Draupadi questions her husband's ability to put her in such a situation through the following lines. "Had they no shame, that they allowed themselves to be enslaved by Duryodhan? Had they no pride, that they would bring me, too, to this humiliation?" (182)

It is impossible to compare the level of mental struggle she endured throughout her years as a slave. How would she think inside? From the start, everything that happens to her goes against her wishes or is unrelated to her. However, in the end, he must endure suffering just like anything else. She had lost her boys in battle in the interim. It is impossible to imagine how much suffering she endured after Ashwatthama killed her five boys. The narrative depicts the suffering she endured as a mother. But in the end, she didn't want to continue her life in suffering. She wanted to bounce back as she always does. Every time she comes back with the moral support of Krishna. Even during the exile, she remembered the quotes of Krishna, which helped her bounce back to life. The lines are "Already I was storing these lessons inside me. I would use them over the long years of exile to gain what I wanted, no matter what its prices" (212).

Draupadi just broke like anything. The explanation is that she aspired to accomplish something from the start of her existence. However, nothing worked in her favor. There was no support for her. Her husband didn't ethically support her, and she was denied education and the opportunity to develop battle skills. She had her own interests and abilities. She was unable to carry it out anywhere. She was not allowed to demonstrate her abilities. So, as life goes on, she consoled herself by saying that through her sons, she would conquer everything. Her sons should fulfil all their dreams and passions.

Losing sons in war

Hearing that her kids were slain in battle should be devastating for a mother who has placed all of her trust in them and is waiting for them to fulfil her desires. She may have believed that there was no use or hope in carrying on. She had ripped her clothes and hair, and she had shown her sorrow in every way possible. At that time, she was opposed to ending the conflict. Ashwatthama killed all of her sons, so she begged one of her husbands to carry on the conflict and kill him. She questions her husband for not saving her sons through the following lines. “You call yourselves warriors, yet you let my innocent boys be slaughtered? Their blood cries out from the earth — how will you wash it from your souls?” (344).

The height of her grief can be understood in the following lines, “I had birthed them in hope, raised them in exile's hardship, only to see them cut down before manhood. What mother’s heart survives such a wound?” (346).

Forgiveness: A way to happiness

Surprisingly, though, she ultimately wished to return her call out of respect for Ashwatthama’s father, Guru Drona. She exhibits this trait throughout the entire book. Whatever happened to her, she always accepted it. Claiming that it was dharma, even she had pardoned Ashwatthama. Draupadi’s habit is evident from the outset. Draupadi somehow managed to show some empathy or compassion to all of them, starting with her father, who prevented her from acquiring knowledge and skills, her brother, who had a plot in her marriage, Kunti, her mother-in-law, who could thwart her development, and Ashwatthama, who murdered all of her sons. Despite suffering at the hands of each of them, she offered something unique and surprising in return. She left her loss and suffering behind, preventing others from experiencing her suffering.

Draupadi ought to have felt fulfilled by being sympathetic to the person who had caused her such pain. Therefore, she ought to have applied that forgiveness to her life, which would have allowed her to focus on other things. For example, we might not have seen this aspect of Draupadi if she had been struck all over and felt broken right away. She repeatedly got to her feet. The majority of her life went against her desires and expectations. Despite everything, she was able to return and carry on with her life.

This is how Indian women have traditionally thought. Despite suffering in some way, they were able to return to their normal lives. While some people accept sacrifice, others do not. Indian women's primary concern is the happiness and comfort of their families. Even if they are initially in agony, they eventually forget about it as they tend to their family and environment. Draupadi somehow overcomes all of her hardships, even in the Palace of Illusion.

Krishna's moral anchor

The one external, invisible force that helped her in overcoming all her trauma is the image of Krishna. Here, Krisha should be considered as a hope.

Every individual has that one hope in their life. Whatever is going against you, however, the situation may change against you; despite everything, there will be one driving force that makes you come out of all the circumstances.

For Draupadi, it is Krishna. Krishna acted like a mentor, a savior in all her hardships. Krishna plays a vital role in accepting all her situations. Not only accepting but surviving in all kinds of broken situations. When she was surrendered as a slave to the Pandavas, she faced the disrobing of the saree. But surprisingly, they could not disrobe the entire saree. As they kept on disrupting it, the length of the saree kept on increasing, and it couldn't be finished completely. She realises that Krishna is saving her and says like this, "Krishna held the other end. I could feel his presence, strong and invisible." (164)

Draupadi believes that Krishna is the one who saved her dignity in front of others. Even before this, in the very beginning of the story, she believes Krishna is the one who has given her wisdom and is leading her. In the thirteen years of exile, the image of Krishna gave her solace. Likewise, Krishna played a major role as mentor and savior throughout her life. He acted merely like a guide for her. He taught her many things. In a place, he taught her the importance of time and consequences in a way that can be understood from the following quotes: "Time is like a flower... An inner petal would never know the older one, even though it was shaped by them" (82). She never wanted to dwell on things that had happened. She desperately wanted to bounce back. That is visible in the following lines. "I would no longer waste time on regret. I would turn my face to the future and carve it into the shape I wanted" (360).

Conclusion

Draupadi was able to recover and demonstrate her resilience despite her pain, grief, worry, and trauma. She serves as a model for what a woman ought to be. What has happened to her is intolerable for any woman. Nothing stood in her path. No one has given her moral support. Like anything, all of her dreams were dashed. However, she was able to carry on with her life. She had the capacity to forgive those who opposed her. The slayer who killed all of her sons had been pardoned by her. Throughout her life, she was able to maintain morality. She serves as an example of what an ordinary Indian woman ought to be like. Through morality, forgiveness and having Krishna as a moral anchor, she was able to get rid of all pain and survive.

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Arabic prose and the intellectual development of Islamic culture

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Abstract: The article examines the formation and historical development of Arabic prose within a broad scholarly and theoretical context. It considers the examples of the oral prose from the pre-Islamic period (Jahiliyyah) period, the renewal of prose in terms of ideas and content following the advent of Islam, as well as the stages of genre, stylistic, and functional development of prose during the Umayyad and the Abbasid periods. The scholarly article is devoted to a systematic and historical-theoretical investigation of the stages of formation and evolution of Arabic prose. The role of Arabic prose in the formation of not only artistic, but also scientific, philosophical and historical thought is given special attention.The study refers to the scientific views of both Western orientalists and classical and modern Arab literary critics. The presented article is distinguished by its study of the formation and evolution of Arabic prose based on a staged, discursive and functional development model, in contrast to the classical approaches of literary criticism. In particular, the role played by Arabic prose in the formation of religious, scientific, philosophical and historical discourse is substantiated. The study systematically analyzes Arabic prose not only in chronological order, but also as a product of socio-cultural, religious and intellectual transformations, which is a rare approach in the existing scientific literature.

Keywords: Arabic prose, Jahiliyyah period, Islamic culture, Abbasids, classical Arabic literature

Introduction

Arabic prose, as one of the principal forms of Arabic literature, represents a crucial dimension of Islamic cultural and intellectual history. Rooted in oral traditions of the pre-Islamic Jahiliyyah period, Arabic prose evolved over centuries into a sophisticated written form encompassing a wide range of genres, styles, and functions. Its

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AGATHOS, Volume 17, Issue 2 (33-34): 293-302, DOI 10.5281/zenodo.23370568
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development reflects not only the artistic and literary maturation of Arab culture but also the broader intellectual, social, and religious transformations that shaped the Islamic world.

The primary aim of this study is to examine the formation and historical evolution of Arabic prose, focusing on its stages of development from the oral expressions of the Jahiliyyah period to the ideological and stylistic innovations of early Islamic literature, and further to the high literary and scholarly achievements under the Umayyad and Abbasid periods. In particular, the study emphasizes the role of Arabic prose in the formation of religious, scientific, philosophical, and historical discourse, highlighting how prose served both artistic and functional purposes within diverse socio-cultural and political contexts.

This article investigates key literary and historical texts, including early sermons, proverbs, maqāmas, historical chronicles, and ʻadab works such as "Nişvar al-muhadara va axbar al-muzakara," as well as classical studies by Al-Jāḥiẓ, Ibn Qutayba, Al-Ṭabari, and Ibn Khaldun. The methodology combines philological analysis with a historical-cultural approach, examining Arabic prose both chronologically and functionally, while considering its broader influence on Islamic thought and literature. By integrating classical Arab literary criticism with insights from Western orientalists, this study provides a systematic and discursive model of Arabic prose development, highlighting its multi-stage and multi-level evolution. The study is structured in three main sections. The first section explores the oral-collective discourse of the Jahiliyyah period, highlighting the emergence of the sajʻ style, the use of proverbs, and early narrative forms that reflected tribal values, social norms, and life experiences. The second section addresses the religious-normative discourse of the early Islamic period, analyzing the influence of the *Holy Quran*, prophetic sermons, and the formation of ideological, ethical, and legal prose. The final section examines the scientific-rational discourse of the Abbasid period, focusing on the expansion of literary, philosophical, historical, and scientific prose, the translation movement, and the stylistic innovations introduced by major prose writers such as Al-Jāḥiẓ, Ibn al-Muqaffaʻ, and Ibn Qutayba.

By providing a comprehensive account of the stages of formation, thematic diversity, and functional development of Arabic prose, this study aims to demonstrate how this literary tradition both mirrors and shapes the intellectual, social, and cultural fabric of the Arab and

Islamic world. In doing so, it contributes to a deeper understanding of Arabic literary history and offers a methodological framework for analyzing prose not only as a literary form but also as a vehicle for transmitting ideology, ethics, and knowledge.

Methodology

This study employs a historical-philological and socio-cultural approach to examine the formation and development of Arabic prose across three major periods: Jahiliyyah, Early Islamic, and Abbasid. The research relies on a combination of primary sources, including classical literary texts, Qur'anic prose, sermons (khuṭab), and historical chronicles, as well as secondary sources encompassing both classical Arab literary criticism and modern scholarly studies by Western and Arab orientalists. Analytical methods include chronological and comparative analysis of prose genres, styles, and functions, alongside discourse analysis to identify the ideological, religious, and cultural dimensions reflected in the texts. By integrating textual analysis with historical and cultural contextualization, the study aims to reveal not only the evolution of literary forms but also the broader intellectual, aesthetic, and social transformations that shaped Arabic prose. Particular attention is given to the interplay between oral traditions and written expression, the influence of religious texts on stylistic and semantic development, and the impact of socio-political institutions, translation movements, and scholarly activities on the standardization and diversification of prose language. This methodological framework enables a systematic and comprehensive understanding of Arabic prose as both a literary and cultural phenomenon.

Stages of Arabic prose: Jahiliyyah, Early Islamic, and Abbasid Periods

Arabic literature represents one of the most enduring and sophisticated literary systems, playing a central role in the intellectual and cultural formation of Islamic civilization. Among its various forms, prose occupies a particularly significant position, having emerged from a primarily oral tradition and gradually evolved into a fully developed written medium. Considering Arabic literature through the prism of its prose, which matured under complex historical conditions and yet has preserved remarkable artistic richness, structural intricacy, and literary refinement, highlights the fundamental questions regarding its origins, evolution, and historical significance.

During the long and intricate development process, Arabic prose has acquired a great variety of forms and kinds. Its development process has reflected the intellectual and aesthetic level of Arab culture development. However, prior to dealing with the particular periods when these literary pieces were written, it is crucial to consider the stages that led to the development of Arabic prose. In fact, it is clear that the Arabic language developed from a tribal setup, which was the initial formation of Arabic society. As indicated by scholars, "the formation of Arabic prose was closely connected with the social structure, religious beliefs, and political relations of society" (Zeydan 1911, 74; Brockelmann 1943, 40).

The first phase in the development of Arabic prose literature was that of Jahiliyyah. Although poetry was more widespread during this era, some pieces of Arabic prose literature existed. The founders of Arabic Jahiliyyah literature, who were renowned for their sayings and sermons, were Ad, Aktham ibn Sayfi, Quss ibn Saʿida, and ʿAmr ibn Kulthum al-Taghlibi. The first pieces of Arabic prose literature were found in the work of these writers. The sajʿ style emerged during this era. The sajʿ style was a style of Arabic rhyming prose that emerged during this era.

During this period, prose was meant to serve a purpose rather than an artistic one. The prose texts that existed were largely of sermons (Khuṭab), admonitions, wills (waṣaya), proverbs (Amthal), and wise sayings. Proverbs, riddles, fairy tales, folk poems, anecdotes, and epics were some of the prominent forms of Arabic oral folk literature. "The Days of the Arabs" is the most precious collection of Jahiliyyah Arabic literature, serving for centuries as a source of folklore material. Arabic folk epics like 'Antara, 'Ali Zaybak, Sayf ibn Dhi Yazan, the famous 'One Thousand and One Nights,' and anecdotes like 'Bahlul Dananda' and 'Juhah' find their roots exactly in this period of Jahiliyyah.

The major themes dealt with in Jāhiliyyah prose include issues of tribal prestige, bravery, loyalty, and life experience. Wise sayings, as expressed in the form of proverbs, reflected Arab social values. Because of the limited use of writing, Arabic prose was preserved through rhythmic and artistic expressive techniques. This stage of Arabic prose was social, as opposed to being an art form (Brockelmann 1943, 41).

Through stories, legends, and tales, the first traces of Arabic prose emerged orally. The art of telling stories had found its way into the lives of Arabs from very remote times, even before Islam. After

exhausting journeys, raids, hunting, and days spent at pasture, Bedouins rested in the evenings near the campfire, listening with pleasure to stories told through accounts of major battles between tribes, as well as accounts of famous heroes, who gained fame through their bravery, generosity, loyalty to their word, intelligence, and military prowess (Karimova 2015, 62-62).

Ibn Qutayba (1969, 22) believes that pre-Islamic (Jahiliyyah) prose is an expression of life experience and views of the Arab people. In Arabic literary history, Jahiliyyah prose is characteristic of the first stage of its development. In this stage, the thematic and ideological system of Arabic prose was complex. The main thematic issues of Arabic prose of the Jahiliyyah period were associated with issues of tribal honor, bravery, loyalty, hospitality, and life experience. In particular, al-Jaḥiẓ (1968, 17) notes that Arabic prose of this period was distinguished by its simplicity but at the same time was extremely efficient. The wise sayings and proverbs of Arabic society played an important role in Arabic culture and represented its moral values. In other words, Arabic prose of the Jahiliyyah period was formed on the basis of its oral memory, kept at the level of language, and transmitted from generation to generation. The German orientalist Karl Brockelmann (1943, 40), analyzing Arabic prose of its early periods from the point of view of its relation to Arabic oral society, notes: “In its initial stage, Arabic prose was formed, not for aesthetic purposes, but as a means of expression for social and practical needs”. This point of view of Brockelmann is considered an important scholarly opinion on Arabic prose of the Jahiliyyah period.

As we know, the emergence of Islam led to fundamental changes in ideas and styles in Arabic prose. The emergence of Islam and its rapid spread in neighboring countries created broad conditions for the development of Arabic literature. The emergence of the *Holy Quran* led to the rise of this literature, especially its prose branch. The emergence of this holy book in the form of prose with saj-rhyme also had its impact on the spread of a similar prose style. Stories about the life, sayings and behavior of the Prophet were created. The *Holy Quran* raised the artistic possibilities of the prose language to a new level. The well-known Arab scholar Al-Suyuti (1998, 63) evaluates the *Holy Quran* as the most perfect example of Arabic prose and especially notes its influence on the language.

In this era, genres of religious, legal, and ethical prose emerged. In this period, prose carried content of an ideological and spiritual nature

(Zeydan 1911, 81). The genres of historical writing and biography emerged as directions in Arabic prose. The works of scholars such as al-Ṭabari and Ibn Khaldun provided the scientific foundations for historical prose.

It can be said that almost every nation has prose works that promote its national identity and set of values throughout the world. The creative heritage that adequately glorifies the culture and history of the people is the unique ancient literary monuments of every nation. There are many epic works that have entered the treasury of world culture and are considered literary monuments that diversify the deep roots of history in their text: "The Iliad" and "The Odyssey" of the Greeks, "Gilgamesh/Bilgamesh" of the Sumerians, Assyrians and Babylonians, "Ramayana" and "Mahabharata" of the Indians, "Shahnameh" of the Iranians, "Shinto" of the Japanese, "The Song of Roland" of the French, "The Song of the Nibelungs" of the Germans, "Kalevala" of the Finns, "Narti" of the Ossetians, Abkhazians, Adyghe and the peoples of the South Caucasus, "Amiraniani" of the Georgians, "Maaday Kara" of the Altaians, "Kablandi Batyr" of the Kazakhs, as well as "Days of the Arabs", "Thousand and One Nights", "Antara", "Hamza al-Pahlevan", "Ali Zibek", "Seif ibn Zi Yazan", the prose works such as "Az Zahir Beybars", "Banu Hilal", and "Zat al-Himma" are also examples of Arab epic creativity (Bayramova 2019, 3).

The first manifestations of the national thinking of the Arab people are found in the examples of Arab folk prose, whose names we have listed above. Sermons attributed to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) are considered the epitome of early Islamic literature. Sermons delivered by the Prophet enriched Arabic literature with their ideological content and the way they express the ideology. Sermons can be defined by their "clear yet profound form of expression." Sermons have a simple grammatical form and profound content. Sermons can be regarded as a distinguishing feature. According to Al-Jaḥiẓ (1968, 21), they are "the most influential form of prose". Early Islamic literature mainly aimed to convey moral values.

During the Umayyad period, the renewal of prose was based on political content. During this period, the establishment and development of the state's administration increased the functional role of prose considerably. Letters written for official purposes (treatises, الرسائل) and political addresses constituted the main forms of prose. During this period, the language used in prose acquired formal and normative characteristics (Brockelman 1943, 112).

The Russian orientalist scholar I. M. Filştinski (1985, 88) wrote that "in the second half of the eighth century, the Iranian stream that carried new themes into medieval Arabic poetry penetrated more deeply into the development of prose. It was precisely in this period that new genres appeared; in the strict sense of the word, the first examples of artistic prose date back to that time."

Arabic literature's golden age, which was under the Abbasids, marked the emergence of Arabic literature in a scholarly sense. The artistic quality that literature had reached was very high during the Abbasid era.

In the 8th and 10th centuries, there was a certain degree of success achieved in the field of Arabic prose writing, which provided a basis for the recording of ancient epics, the study of the *Quran*, and the translation of different scientific and literary works from Syriac, Middle Persian, and Greek into the Arabic language. The encyclopedic scholar and the representative of the Mu'tazilah School, al-Cahiz, founded the writing of Arabic prose. He was a renowned philologist who wrote over a hundred literary and artistic works, risalat, and compilations. He, along with others like him, expanded the stylistic potentialities of prose writing and developed the genre of philosophical and satirical prose writing.

Literary prose style achieved a high level of artistic quality. Al Cahiz, for example, contributed to the widening of the stylistic range of literary prose, which included satirical and philosophical forms. This period is considered to be the climax of the intellectual maturation of Arabic literary prose. As a result of the translation movement, there was a translation of Greek, Persian, and Indian scientific heritage into Arabic, which led to the widespread use of scientific and philosophical prose. This was contributed to by writers such as Al Farabi and Ibn Sina, which added to the terminological wealth of scientific prose (Badawi 1981, 6).

The development of formal prose was at a very high level of artistry in Arabic literature under the Abbasid period. Moreover, in the Abbasid period, prose made progress in the fields of philosophy, medicine, mathematics, and history. At the same time, literary prose reached a high level of artistry. Al-Cahiz, Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, and Ibn Qutaybah extended the possibilities for the artistry of prose and composed satirical and philosophical prose pieces themselves (Ibn Qutaybah 1969, 45). In the domain of historical prose, Al-Tabari (1987, 223) and Ibn Khaldun (2004, 430) created the foundation for

scientific methodology It was in the 8th century that the concept of the Siraʿ began to take form and evolve as a specific literary style in the annals of Arabic literature, with the emergence and development of writing skills. Oral folk literature formed the basis for the emergence and development of the Siraʿ literary style. The literary works that were developed during the Cahiliyyah period, which was considered the earliest period in the annals of Arabic literary history, formed the basis for the Siraʿ literary style. The earliest literary monument developed during the Cahiliyyah period, titled "Ayamu-l-ʿArab" or "The Days of the Arabs," formed the basis for the literary works developed under the Siraʿ style. The study and analysis of the Siraʿ literary style are very important for understanding the literary and developmental phases of the Cahiliyyah period (Bayramova 2020, 3).

The Russian orientalist Krimsky (1911, 253) points out that these works were named "simple folk Arabic literature" in the sixteenth-eighteenth centuries. In this book, Krimsky presents vivid and insightful information about many well-known folk siraʾs such as "Antar," "Banu Hilal," "Zuṭ al-ḥimmah," "Sıf ibn Zi Yaʿzan," "One Thousand and One Nights" ("Arabian Nights"), "Ali-Ṭibaq," and many others. Among the greatest accomplishments of Arabic prose literature is the maqama genre. The maqāma genre, which came about under the impact of sociopolitical factors, played a central role in the emergence and growth of Arabic literature (Gabrieli 1967).

As an adjunct of the development of Arabic prose literature, it is also necessary to consider what is meant by the literary form of ʻadab, which emerged as a syncretic form. As is well known, from its root connotations of custom and practice, in medieval times ʻadab signified an all-encompassing complex of notions, including both the secular, worldly, and courtly ethic of noble-born individuals, their innate and chosen manner of being, and knowledge and practice of what was expected of individuals of learning according to their professional calling.

It follows that the concept of "ədəb," by definition, encompasses moral, social, and intellectual components. In the anthologies of "Ədəb," spiritually enriching prose texts consisting of various kinds of admonitions, tales of instruction, anecdotes, jokes, and historical and scientific information and reports were meant for the elite of the social hierarchy, such as the rulers, dignitaries, and nobility, and creative people, above all the "People of the pen". One of the first writers of this "ədəb" literary form is Amir bin al-Cahiz. His approximate

description of the role of this literary form is as follows: “To enlighten the reader, it is essential to modestly use multiple sources and, without exhausting the reader, to instruct while entertaining” (Al-Jahiz 1965). In the context of the works included in the category known as “adab,” the work written by At-Tanuxi, entitled “Nişvar al-muxadara va axbar al-muzakara”.

On analyzing the formation and development of Arabic prose literature, it becomes clear that the Arabic oral prose literature of the Cahiliyyah period was supplemented in content and ideas with the advent of Islam, and that it achieved a mature scientific-literary form in the Abbasid period. Arabic prose literature, therefore, may be considered a leading literary field, which marked the progress of Islamic culture.

Conclusion

The historical development of Arabic prose was a complex, multi-staged process, through which it acquired numerous genres and styles and reflected the intellectual and aesthetic maturity of Arab culture. The oral prose traditions of the Jahiliyyah period were enriched in terms of ideas and content with the advent of Islam, and reached a perfect form in terms of scientific and literary terms during the Abbasid period. Arabic prose can be considered one of the main literary fields reflecting the level of intellectual development of Islamic culture.

This article, in conclusion, attempts an interpretation of the emergence and development of Arabic prose through modern philological and cultural studies approaches. For the first time, the study conceptually classifies the development of Arabic prose across three main discourse levels: oral-collective discourse (Jahiliyyah period), religious-normative discourse (early Islamic period), and scientific-rational discourse (Abbasid period). This classification allows for understanding Arabic prose not only in terms of genre, but also as a form of expression of the history of thought and ideology. Another important innovation of the article is the analysis of the influence of the *Holy Quran* on the structural and semantic development of prose language not only from the artistic-aesthetic aspect, but also from the point of view of the formation of terminological and scientific prose. This approach reveals the role played by the Quranic language in the formation of scientific prose in a more clear and systematic way. In addition, the study explains the

development of prose during the Umayyad and Abbasid periods based on a comprehensive approach. The interaction of prose style with state administration, translation movement and the activities of scientific centers are examined for the first time within a single methodological model.

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Pécher les yeux fermés: Une lecture sémiotique de *La Symphonie pastorale* d'André Gide (Sinning with closed eyes: A semiotic reading of André Gide's *The Pastoral Symphony*)

Piriyadit Manit[*]

Abstract: The present work aims to offer a semiotic reading of *La Symphonie pastorale* / *The Pastoral Symphony* by André Gide. This reading shows that the deep structure of the text rests on four semantic units: to see (S1), to touch (S2), not to see (–S1), not to touch (–S2). The structural correlation of these four elements can be visualized through the semiotic square, which reveals their relations of contrariety, contradiction, and implication. The dynamic progression of the narrative unfolds in four stages. First, one character desires another, but is content merely to see them (S1) without touching them (–S2), so as to preserve the purity of the object of desire. In the second stage, the desiring subject begins to touch (S2) the object: the fault has come into being. Yet by closing his eyes (–S1), the subject manages to blind himself, to lie to himself, to confuse good and evil, beauty and ugliness. Third, the subject's eyes are opened; he sees (S1). In other words, he recognizes his sin of touching (S2). Finally, only the double negation—no longer seeing (–S1) and no longer touching (–S2), in a word, death—allows the sinner to achieve redemption.

Keywords: *La Symphonie pastorale*, André Gide, novels, French literature, 20th century, semiotics

Introduction

Le présent travail se veut une lecture sémiotique de *La Symphonie pastorale*[1] d'André Gide. À notre connaissance, seule l'analyse faite par Henri Mailler dans la collection *Lire aujourd'hui* relève du domaine. La lecture sémiotique du roman élaborée par Mailler (1975, 48-56) s'appuie essentiellement sur le modèle actantiel. À l'en croire,

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AGATHOS, Volume 17, Issue 2 (33-34): 303-319, DOI 10.5281/zenodo.23370875
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[1] Nous nous référons à André Gide. 2009. *Romans et récits, Œuvres lyriques et dramatiques II*. Paris: Gallimard.

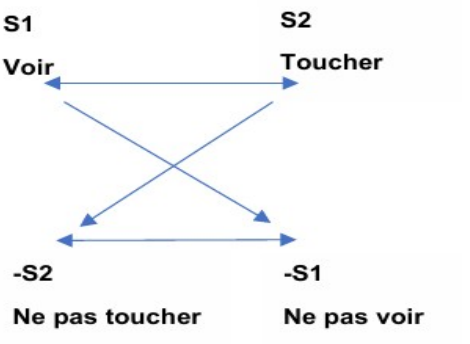
le récit de *La Symphonie pastorale* représente une quête de l'amour, dans laquelle le Pasteur et Gertrude assument respectivement les rôles de *Sujet* et *Objet*. C'est Dieu qui est à l'origine de la quête, autrement dit constitue le *Destinateur*, auquel correspond le *Destinataire*, actant pris, d'après Mailler, par la Vie. Dans cette quête, la femme du Pasteur, Amélie, occupe sans aucun doute la place de l'*Opposant*. Cette structure fonctionnelle est loin de demeurer statique. Au déroulement du récit, les personnages changent de rôles actantiels. Ainsi, après que le Pasteur a vaincu la résistance d'Amélie, celle-ci passe de l'*Opposant* à l'*Adjuvant*, auquel il faut ajouter les soins du docteur Martins comme la collaboration de Jacques. Mais le fils du Pasteur devient vite rival d'amour de son père, passant en voie de conséquence pour l'*Opposant*. En même temps, l'aide du médecin s'atténue ainsi que celle d'Amélie s'annule. Pour favoriser sa quête érotique, le Pasteur, privé de contributions fournies par ses entourages, se tourne vers le Christ, qu'il prend désormais pour son nouvel *Adjuvant*. Abusant de l'enseignement du Christ pour légitimer son désir inavouable, le Pasteur préfère la cécité de Gertrude et trouve cependant pour ses obstacles les Épitres de saint Paul aussi bien que la vue de la jeune fille. À ce stade du récit, où le Pasteur tient à la cécité de sa protégée afin de faire perdurer son Éros, l'ultime *Adjuvant* se dévoile: le Malin, face auquel le Christ, considéré jusqu'ici comme le soutien du Pasteur, passe d'ores et déjà pour l'*Opposant*, se joignant ainsi à saint Paul, Martins, Jacques, et Amélie. Dans le dernier ressort du dynamisme narratif, Dieu se révèle actant plus crucial qu'on ne le pensait: *Destinateur*, il est lui-même le *Destinataire* de sa manipulation, laquelle place en fait Jacques en tant que son Sujet, ce qui force par conséquent le Pasteur à assumer le rôle de l'*Opposant* et Amélie celui de l'*Adjuvant*. À la fin du récit, Gertrude est décédée, laissant ainsi vide la place de l'*Objet*. Et Mailler de conclure: « Le drame que se proposait de traiter *La Symphonie pastorale* est maintenant terminé: il est désormais sans *Objet*. Il ne reste plus sur scène qu'une manière de pantin tragique dont le Dieu jaloux ne daigne plus tirer les ficelles et qu'on peut être tenté de comparer aux grands vaincus des mythes antiques » (Ibid, 56).

À la différence de l'analyse de Mailler, notre lecture aboutira au carré sémiotique permettant d'explorer une structure profonde du récit. Une telle structure met en jeu d'une part l'opposition entre *voir* (qu'on nomme S1) et *toucher* (S2), et d'autre part la négation de l'opposition de départ, à savoir *ne-pas-voir* (-S1) et *ne-pas-toucher* (-S2). Notre

propos est de montrer que la signification de *La Symphonie pastorale* repose fondamentalement sur l'interaction, aussi bien complémentaire que conflictuelle, de ces quatre unités sémantiques.

Une pureté intacte: voir sans toucher

Voir/Toucher, *Ne pas voir/Ne pas toucher*: telles sont, dans notre perspective, les deux oppositions élémentaires qui régissent le progrès dynamique du roman ici étudié. La corrélation de ces quatre elements est visualisée par le carré sémiotique suivant:



Dans un texte narratif où figure l'aveugle héroïne, la vision, ou voir, se présente indéniablement comme un sème essentiel. Et pour ceux à qui la vue fait défaut, il est naturel qu'un autre sens soit privilégié, en l'occurrence le toucher. Le cas de Laura Bridgeman affirme que la faille de la faculté visuelle peut être compensée par le tact, qui permet également de connaître le monde:

> [Le docteur] s'obstina à lui faire toucher et palper alternativement deux petits objets, une épingle, puis une plume, puis toucher sur une feuille imprimée à l'usage des aveugles le relief des deux mots anglais: pin et pen. […] Et un jour enfin, il vit cet impassible visage de Laura s'éclairer d'une sorte de sourire. (Gide 2009, 12)

Ainsi, *voir* (S1) et *toucher* (S2) forment un couple qui entretient une relation de contrariété, et c'est à partir de cette opposition de départ qu'on peut explorer le monde de passions complexes qui unit le Pasteur et Gertrude. Car, au départ, le Pasteur, bien conscient du caractère tabou de l'objet de son désir, se garde de toucher la jeune fille. En terme sémiotique, le personnage, en ne touchant pas, nie le sème S2, négation qui place celui-là dans le sème -S2: *ne pas toucher*. Or, théoriquement, -S2 entretient avec S1 une relation d'implication (Courtès 1976, 56). Autrement dit, nier S2 implique l'adhésion à son

contraire, S1. Donc, dans le cas du Pasteur, en se dispensant de toucher l'innocente, il se contente de la voir. Et ce plaisir visuel est lourd de conséquence: tant que le Pasteur ne cherche à plaire à son désir que visuellement, la pureté (qu'on entende par là innocence et virginité) de Gertrude restera intacte.

Dans l'état initial du récit, Gertrude se présente comme une jolie fille: « les traits de son visage étaient réguliers, assez beaux » (Gide 2009, 5). Elle est surtout vierge, puisque le texte la nomme « l'innocente » (Ibid, 8), dotée de « l'âme pure » (Ibid, 27). Face à une telle pureté, le Pasteur traite sa pupille comme s'il s'agissait d'un objet sacré défendu à ses mains profanes. L'homme quitte la chapelle de crainte de se trouver seul avec la jeune fille dans ce lieu inviolable: « je la quittais d'autant plus volontiers que la chapelle ne me paraissait guère un lieu décent pour m'y enfermer seul avec elle » (Ibid, 24). Dans une autre séquence, le Pasteur se promène avec Gertrude et, à en croire le Pasteur, « sa main chercha la mienne » (Ibid, 34). Quand celle-ci lui déclare son amour, la réaction instinctive de l'homme est de retirer sa main (Ibid, 34).

Non seulement le Pasteur renonce volontairement à poser ses mains sur le corps de Gertrude, mais surtout il défend qui que ce soit de souiller la chasteté de sa propriété. Il déclare à Jacques, le fils devenu rival d'amour:

> je préférerais ne plus te revoir. Je n'ai pas besoin de tes aveux! Abuser de l'infirmité, de l'innocence, de la candeur, c'est une abominable lâcheté dont je ne t'aurais cru capable; et de m'en parler avec ce détestable sang-froid!... Écoute-moi bien J'ai charge de Gertrude et je ne supporterai pas un jour de plus que tu lui parles, que tu la touches, que tu la voies. (Ibid, 27)

Il est à remarquer qu'en interdisant à son fils tout tact de Gertrude, le père insiste sur « l'innocence » et « la candeur » de celle-ci. Le Pasteur tient tant à ce que Gertrude reste intouchable que même Charlotte, la fille cadette du dernier, qui voulait innocemment embrasser la jeune aveugle pour lui dire bonne nuit, se voit refuser par son père: la petite demande « Pourquoi est-ce que je ne l'ai pas embrassée? », à quoi le Pasteur répond « Tu l'embrasses demain. À présent laissons-la. Elle dort » (Ibid, 9).

La libido du Pasteur, qui ne se limite à ce stade qu'à la pulsion scopique, tend à l'assimiler à un voyeur. Dans l'épisode de l'église, ce dernier assiste en cachette à une scène intime entre Jacques et Gertrude:

> Il n'est point dans mon naturel d'épier, mais tout ce qui touche à Gertrude me tient à cœur: amortissant donc le bruit de mes pas, je gravis furtivement les quelques marches de l'escalier qui mène à la tribune; excellent poste d'observation. […] il était contre elle et, à plusieurs reprises, je le vis qui prenait sa main pour guider ses doigts sur les touches. […] Je le vis alors porter à ses lèvres la main qu'elle lui abandonna; puis il partit. (Ibid, 25)

Le Pasteur observe de très près un développement intellectuel de sa pupille. Cette observation apparemment innocente relève en vérité d'un voyeurisme sublimé. Le Pasteur a adopté Gertrude le 10 février 189., où celle-ci n'était qu'une brute ignorante sans cœur ni âme. À force de l'éduquer, le Pasteur voit le 5 mars, c'est-à-dire au bout de 24 jours, se transformer la fille. Or la façon dont le Pasteur exprime son enthousiasme envers une métamorphose merveilleuse de Gertrude n'est pas seulement celle d'un pédagogue réussi, mais encore celle d'un voyeur enfin dévoilé: « Le 5 mars. J'ai noté cette date comme celle d'une naissance. C'était moins un sourire qu'une transfiguration. Tout à coup ses traits *s'animen*t; ce fut comme un éclairement subit, pareil à cette lueur purpurine dans les hautes Alpes qui précèdent l'aurore, fait vibrer le sommet neigeux qu'elle désigne et sort de la nuit. […] C'est tout de même ainsi […] que la tiédeur de l'air et l'insistance du printemps triomphant peu à peu de l'hiver. Que de fois n'ai-je pas admiré la manière dont fond la neige: on dirait que le manteau s'use par en dessous, et son aspect reste le même » (Ibid, 15). Langage imagé rempli de métaphores et comparaison mettant en jeu nature, saison, éléments cosmiques, l'expression du Pasteur n'en est pourtant pas moins érotique. Car, aux yeux du Pasteur, une transfiguration progressive de Gertrude s'apparente à une lente fonte de la neige et surtout au « manteau » qui « s'use par en dessous ». Cette dernière image, poétique certes, connote aussi bien le déshabillage que la nudité. De surcroît, le Pasteur rapproche la date du premier signe du changement chez Gertrude de « celle d'une naissance » de cette dernière. Est-on bien vêtu le jour de son accouchement ?

Fortunatos nimium

En raison du progrès dynamique du récit, le statut S1 + -S2 (voir sans toucher) cèdera sa place à son contraire, c'est-à-dire à celui de S2 + -S1 (toucher sans voir). Or, pour le Pasteur comme pour Gertrude, tout rapport physique constitue une faute, un péché: il est question au moins d'un adultère, puisque le Pasteur est marié. Ainsi, pour

déculpabiliser leur acte, la solution des deux protagonistes consiste à toucher (S2) en ne voyant pas (-S1) le mal qu'on commet. Bref, il s'agit de pécher les yeux fermés.

Dans cet univers, on croit neutraliser le péché par la cécité: tant que le mal n'est pas vu, il n'existe pas. Autrement dit, le Pasteur suit à la lettre les enseignements de Virgile et du Christ. C'est le docteur Martins qui fait un exposé sur le précepte de *Fortunatos nimium*, professé par le poète grec:

> l'âme de l'homme imagine plus facilement et plus volontiers la beauté, l'aisance et l'harmonie que le désordre et le péché qui partout ternissent, avilissent, tachent et déchirent ce monde et sur quoi nous renseignent et tout à la fois nous aident à contribuer nos cinq sens. De sorte que, plus volontiers, je ferais suivre le « *Fortunatos niminum* » de Virgile, de *« si sua mala nescient*», que du « *si sua bona norint* » qu'on nous enseigne: Combien heureux les hommes, s'ils pouvaient ignorer le mal ! (Ibid, 13).

Traduction: les hommes seraient heureux s'ils pouvaient ne pas voir. Pour le Pasteur, une telle conviction est consolidée par une parole du Christ: « Et cette parole du Christ s'est dressée lumineusement devant moi. « Si vous étiez aveugle, vous n'auriez point de péché. » (Ibid, 39).

Dans la relation charnelle entre le Pasteur et Gertrude, ce sont deux aveugles qui copulent. L'aveuglement de la jeune fille est biologique et involontaire. En revanche, chez le Pasteur, sa cécité paraît volontaire et symbolique. D'après Roger Bastide (2006, 42), le Pasteur est un faux aveugle en ce sens qu'il « confond la pitié et l'amour, la charité et le désir. » Le même auteur prétend que dans l'œuvre de Gide existe un aveugle volontaire, c'est-à-dire « celui qui se détourne du mal, de la laideur, du vice en pensant que l'absence de regard suffit pour les supprimer » (Ibid, 41). Ainsi, s'aveugler, c'est s'illusionner. Souiller la pureté, profaner le sacré en portant un masque de saint, toucher sensuellement à une vierge en prenant l'acte comme une caresse de pitié, sublimer un désir voluptueux par le sentiment de charité chrétienne: telle est la cécité volontaire du Pasteur, lequel pèche en détournant les yeux du péché. Et étant donné que le fait de fermer les yeux permet au Pasteur de jouir sans se sentir coupable, ce dernier souhaite que les autres se plongent dans l'obscurité et soient privés de la vision. S'aveuglant volontairement, il crève les yeux d'autrui. En père méchant, le Pasteur parle de sa fille cadette en ces termes: « Tout de même, comme elle m'écoutait mieux, si seulement elle n'y voyait pas ! » (Gide 2009, 24). C'est par rapport à Gertrude que, chez le Pasteur, le rôle d'arracheur d'yeux se manifeste le plus nettement. Il

affirme à la jeune aveugle que la vue n'est pas une perception à envier: « Je te l'ai dit. Gertrude: ceux qui ont des yeux sont ceux qui ne savent pas regarder » (Ibid, 33). Pour lui, l'aveuglement de l'innocente est une chose voulue: « je me félicitai que Gertrude ne pût y voir » (Ibid, 37). Dans un autre endroit, le Pasteur dit « Je me refuse à lui donner les Épîtres de Paul, car si, aveugle, elle ne connaît point le péché, que sert de l'inquiéter en la laissant lire: « Le péché a pris de nouvelles forces par le commandement » (Paul, l'Épître aux Romains 7:13) et toute la dialectique qui suit, si admirable soit-elle ? » (Ibid, 39). En bref, le Pasteur tient à ce que les yeux de Gertrude se ferment pour toujours et que l'aveuglement de celle-ci ne soit jamais guéri. Quand le docteur Martins lui annonce que la jeune aveugle est opérable, notre creveur d'yeux réagit: « Que servirait d'éveiller en Gertrude un espoir qu'on risque de devoir éteindre aussitôt? – Au surplus, n'est-elle pas heureuse ainsi?... » (Ibid, 39-40). Attitude hors du commun qui rappelle curieusement les propos de Jacques, laissant entendre qu'on pourrait troubler Gertrude, « abuser de son innocence et de sa cécité » (Ibid, 27).

Amélie, la femme du docteur, paraît la première à reconnaître l'aveuglement de son mari. La cécité du Pasteur s'oppose systématiquement à la clairvoyance de sa femme. Celle-ci dit à son époux: « Que veux-tu, mon ami, […] il ne m'a pas été donné d'être aveugle » (Ibid, 41)[2] . Par ailleurs, sur le plan structural, on pourrait dire qu'Amélie occupe la même fonction que le docteur Martins: elle aussi, elle soigne l'aveuglement. C'est elle qui, à plusieurs reprises, fait entendre au Pasteur sa cécité. En discutant sur l'amour que Jacques éprouve pour Gertrude, Amélie affirme que les hommes ne sont pas toujours conscients de leur désir. Tout en parlant de son fils, elle vise en fait son mari: « c'est un genre de choses que les hommes ne savent pas remarquer » (Ibid, 30). Lorsque le Pasteur exprime son avis, que Jacque est peut-être trop jeune pour une connaissance de soi: « À son âge, est-ce qu'on connaît seulement ses désirs ? », la clairvoyante répond « Oh ! même plus tard on ne les connaît pas toujours » (Ibid, 31). Et à son mari qui demande: « Dans ce cas, tu aurais bien pu

[2] En ce qui concerne les oppositions fonctionnelles, il est aussi intéressant de noter la contrariété entre Amélie et Gertrude. Aveugle, celle-ci privilégie les autres perceptions, en particulier l'ouïe, et c'est ainsi que notre malvoyante aime la musique. À l'opposé, chez Amélie, dont la vue fonctionne normalement, « jamais il ne lui viendrait à l'idée d'aller au concert, lors même que celui-ci se donnerait à notre porte » (Ibid, 22).

m'avertir », elle rétorque en insinuant: « S'il fallait que je t'avertisse de tout ce que tu ne sais pas remarquer » (Ibid, 30). Ici, le verbe *remarquer* tient sans aucun doute lieu du verbe *voir*. De nouveau, la femme dont les yeux voient clair sous-entend: « Rien, mon ami, […]. Je songeais seulement que tantôt tu souhaitais qu'on t'avertisse de ce que tu ne remarquais pas. – Et alors ? – Et alors je me disais qu'il n'est pas aisé d'avertir » (Ibid, 31).

Quoi qu'il en soit, le Pasteur reconnaît sa cécité. Il s'adresse à Dieu: « Seigneur, je ne sais plus… Je ne sais plus que Vous. Guidez-moi. Parfois il me paraît que je m'enfonce dans les ténèbres et que la vue qu'on va lui [à Gertrude] rendre m'est enlevée » (Ibid, 48). Et c'est dans son aveuglement volontaire que le Pasteur finit par s'engager dans un contact physique avec sa pupille: « Nous marchions à pas précipités, comme pour fuir, et je tenais son bras étroitement serré contre moi. Mon âme avait à ce point quitté mon corps » (Ibid, 47). Selon un proverbe antique, les yeux sont les fenêtres de l'âme. Donc, dans l'énoncé « mon âme avait quitté mon corps », on pourrait pertinemment substituer « yeux » à « âme ». Plus tard, le Pasteur profane complètement le pucelage de Gertrude, défloration qui s'exécute dans l'ambiance où, comme dans le contact précédent, les yeux ont quitté les corps des deux partenaires: « À *La Grange*, ce soir, comme personne n'était dans le salon, je suis monté jusqu'à sa chambre. Nous étions seuls. Je l'ai longuement pressé contre moi. Elle ne faisait pas un mouvement pour se défendre, et comme elle levait le front vers moi, nos lèvres se sont rencontrées… » (Ibid, 47). Notons que l'acte d'amour se fait « ce soir », et il est précisé que cela date « *Nuit du 19 mai* » (Ibid, 47): la nuit évoque l'obscurité, substitut de l'aveuglement[3].

Il est d'ailleurs à remarquer que dans l'union sexuelle entre le Pasteur et Gertrude se distingue la pulsion orale. Outre « nos lèvres » qui « se sont rencontrées », on assiste encore à la scène où, au dire du Pasteur, « Je portai sa main à mes lèvres » (Ibid, 20). En effet, le Pasteur tend à assimiler la fille à l'objet comestible. À deux reprises, il la compare à une « brebis » (Ibid, 7 et 14). Dans une joute verbale qui oppose le Pasteur à son fils et où Gertrude constitue l'objet de duel, les

[3] Il semble que le corps de Gertrude, quand il est tout nu, échappe toujours au regard du Pasteur, qui raconte: « Je l'avais [Amélie] aidée de mon mieux à couper les cheveux de la petite, ce que je voyais bien qu'elle ne faisait déjà qu'avec dégoût. Mais quand il s'agit de la laver et de la nettoyer je dus laisser faire ma femme; et je compris que les plus lourds et les plus désagréables soins m'échappent. » (Ibid, 10)

deux adversaires citent chacun un passage tiré de la Bible. Tout opposés qu'ils soient, les deux hommes traitent communément Gertrude de nourriture. Car le Pasteur évoque ce passage à l'intention de Jacques: « Que celui qui ne mange pas ne juge pas celui qui mange, car Dieu a accueilli ce dernier (Paul, l'Épître aux Romains, XIV, 2) » (Ibid, 40). Ce à quoi le jeune homme répond par cet axiome: « Ne cause point par ton aliment la perte de celui pour lequel le Christ est mort. (Romains, XIV, 15) » (Ibid, 41).

La cécité empêche de voir les choses telles qu'elles sont. C'est ce qui affecte chacun des deux protagonistes du roman. À propos du Pasteur, son aveuglement volontaire lui fait prendre le mal pour le bien, le péché pour la charité, la luxure pour l'amour. Quant à Gertrude, son trouble visuel inné perturbe son sens esthétique en sorte qu'elle confond le laid et le beau, le ternissement de la vieillesse et l'éclat de la jeunesse.

La beauté du monde dépend en partie de ses couleurs, ce qui échappe malheureusement à la jeune aveugle. Le Pasteur a beau expliquer ce qu'est chaque couleur, il n'y parvient guère:

> je crois inutile de noter ici tous les échelons premiers de cette instruction qui, sans doute, se retrouvent dans l'instruction de tous les aveugles. C'est ainsi que, pour chacun d'eux, je pense, la question des couleurs a plongé chaque maître dans un même d'embarras. (Ibid, 18)

La méthode du maître consiste à faire comprendre une couleur à son élève en comparant cette couleur à une sonorité. Par exemple, le Pasteur invite Gertrude à se représenter les jaunes et les verts analogues aux sonorités des violons, des violoncelles et des basses (Ibid, 7). Pourtant, on arrive tant bien que mal à faire voir les couleurs à Gertrude: « Ainsi j'expérimentais sans cesse à travers elle combien le monde visuel diffère du monde des sons et à quel point toute comparaison que l'on cherche à tirer de l'un pour l'autre est boiteuse » (Ibid, 8).

De même que la beauté des couleurs constitue un univers inaccessible pour l'aveugle Gertrude, de même il lui est impossible, tant que la vision lui fait défaut, de distinguer un beau corps viril. Une fois opérée, la jeune fille, dotée d'yeux signes de la clairvoyance, avoue avoir pensé à tort que le Pasteur était jeune homme: « Quand j'ai vu Jacques, j'ai compris soudain que ce n'était pas vous que j'aimais; c'était lui. Il avait exactement votre visage; je veux dire celui que j'imaginais que vous aviez… » (Ibid, 53). C'est sans doute pour cette

raison que, quand elle reste aveugle, Gertrude se laisse toucher par le vieil homme qu'elle prend faussement pour un garçon de son âge. En effet, il est à constater que chaque contact physique qui s'établit entre Gertrude et le Pasteur est constamment accompagné d'une fausseté sensorielle, d'un entendement fautif. Une fois, en sortant ensemble, Gertrude, au dire du Pasteur, « ne consentait à se promener qu'à mon bras » (Ibid, 6), et dans la même promenade elle entend les oiseaux chanter, sonorité qu'elle attribue pourtant à une origine erronée: « entendant le chant des oiseaux elle l'imaginait alors un pur effet de la lumière » (Ibid, 16). La récurrence du verbe *imaginer* n'est pas anodine: faute de vue, Gertrude *imagine* que la lumière causait le chant des oiseaux exactement comme elle *imagine* que le Pasteur était aussi jeune et beau que Jacques. Lors d'une autre promenade, le couple discute sur la question de la beauté:

> Est-ce que vraiment ce que vous voyez est aussi beau que cela? dit-elle enfin.
> - Aussi beau que quoi? ma chérie.
> - Que cette "*scène au bord du ruisseau*."
> Je ne lui répondis pas aussitôt, car je réfléchissais que ces harmonies ineffables peignaient, non point le monde tel qu'il était, mais bien tel qu'il aurait pu être, qu'il pourrait être sans le mal et sans le péché. Et jamais encore je n'avais osé parler à Gertrude, du mal, du péché, de la mort.
> Ceux qui ont des yeux, dis-je enfin, ne connaissent pas leur bonheur.
> - Mais moi qui n'en ai point, s'écria-t-elle aussitôt, je connais le bonheur d'entendre. (Ibid, 20)

En un mot, l'enseignement du Pasteur enferme son élève dans le monde tel « qu'il pourrait être » où règne une beauté trompeuse. Et c'est dans ce monde fallacieux, où il n'existe ni le mal ni le péché, que la jeune malvoyante touche un senior qu'elle imagine autrement, car, tout de suite après le dialogue mentionné ci-dessus, le Pasteur rapporte: « Elle se serrait contre moi tout en marchant et elle pesait à mon bras comme font les petits enfants » (Ibid, 20). Le même scénario se répète lorsque, plus tard, Gertrude, en se promenant avec son maître sur le repli du Jura, essaie de décrire les lys, qui, en réalité, ne croissent pas sur les hauteurs de la montagne. Et les deux s'enivrent de se trouver dans un monde fictif créé par la jeune aveugle:

> Pourquoi me dites-vous qu'il n'y en a pas, là devant nous? Je le sens! J'en vois la prairie toute remplie [de lys].
> - Ils ne sont pas plus beaux que tu les vois, ma Gertrude.
> - Dites qu'ils ne sont pas moins beaux.
> - Ils sont aussi beaux que tu les vois. (Ibid, 33)

C'est évidemment dans cet univers où la vérité optique demeure inconnaissable et qui ne présente qu'une vision irréelle, que Gertrude désire caresser le Pasteur: « Sa main chercha la mienne », dit ce dernier (Ibid, 34).

Nous avons vu que Gertrude est souvent assimilée à de la nourriture, et aussi à une brebis. En effet, dans le texte, des comparaisons qui font de ce personnage un animal ne sont pas rares. Le Pasteur dit: « Ses cris n'avaient rien d'humain; on eût dit les jappements plaintifs d'un petit chien » (Ibid, 6-7), et aussi: « elle commençait à geindre, à grogner comme un animal » (Ibid, 11). Un tel être mange comme une bête: « Ma protégée […] dévora goulûment l'assiette de soupe que je lui tendis » (Ibid, 9), mais encore celle-ci « se jetait [sur le repas] avec une avidité bestiale » (Ibid, 11). Dans notre perspective, la bestialité chez Gertrude est en rapport étroit avec sa vie sexuelle: la jeune aveugle se laisse posséder sans aucune clairvoyance de même qu'elle mange d'un instinct animal.

Pourtant, les yeux ne peuvent se fermer pour toujours. Et le retour de la vue est lourd de conséquences.

Le péché reprit la vie – et moi je mourus

Qu'il s'agisse de la cécité du Pasteur ou de l'aveuglement de Gertrude, le fait de ne pas voir (-S1) permet d'innocenter le péché de toucher (S2): en souillant sa pupille, le Pasteur, en s'aveuglant, se dit avoir commis un acte méritoire; de même, le trouble visuel de Gertrude l'empêche de découvrir une disgracieuse vieillesse de son maître, l'invitant ainsi à caresser un corps inesthétique qu'elle prend aveuglément pour un corps canonique.

Tout bascule quand les yeux s'ouvrent et qu'on reconnaît (*voi*r: S1) l'effet néfaste du fait de toucher (S2). Dans le statut de S1 + S2, les protagonistes se rendent enfin compte du Mal, c'est-à-dire péché et laid, qu'ils refusaient auparavant de regarder en face et qu'ils prenaient faussement pour le bien et le beau.

Un tel dynamisme se déclenche dès que Gertrude manifeste le désir de se faire soigner: *elle veut voir*. Et la jeune aveugle reconnaît parfaitement qu'avoir un œil, cela permet de voir non seulement le beau, mais aussi le laid. En tout cas, quelque désagréable que soit le monde offert par la vue, Gertrude persiste dans sa volonté de s'approprier la perception visuelle. Elle déclare à son maître:

> Je ne veux pas d'un pareil bonheur. Comprenez que je ne… Je ne tiens pas à être heureuse. Je préfère savoir. Il y a beaucoup de choses, de tristes choses

> assurément, que je ne puis pas voir, mais que vous n'avez pas le droit de me laisser ignorer. J'ai longtemps réfléchi durant ces mois d'hiver; je crains, voyez-vous, que le monde entier ne soit pas si beau que vous me l'avez fait croire, pasteur, et même qu'il ne s'en faille de beaucoup. (Ibid, 45)

Il est d'ailleurs à remarquer que ce désir de voir est intimement associé à celui de la clairvoyance (« je préfère savoir » / « vous n'avez pas le droit de me laisser ignorer »).

L'opération ayant réussi, Gertrude peut désormais voir, et voilà le rideau de la tragédie qui s'élève. Les yeux guéris offrent à la jeune fille d'abord un spectacle de laideur: l'homme qu'elle laissait autrefois la posséder n'est actuellement pas aussi beau *à ses yeux* qu'elle ne l'imaginait:

> Mon ami, je vais vous faire beaucoup de peine; mais il ne faut pas qu'il reste aucun mensonge entre nous. Quand j'ai vu Jacques, j'ai compris soudain que ce n'était pas vous que j'aimais; c'était lui. Il avait exactement votre visage; je veux dire celui que j'imaginais que vous aviez… (Ibid, 53)

Il est en outre à noter que la perception visuelle, signe de la clairvoyance, implique la vérité (« il ne faut pas qu'il reste aucun mensonge entre nous »), contrairement à l'aveuglement qui ne provoque que des mensonges.

Les yeux permettent de découvrir que le monde comprend aussi bien le beau que son contraire. Mais encore la vision force à reconnaître le péché qu'on a fait. Ainsi, Gertrude déplore devant le Pasteur, avec qui elle a commis l'adultère:

> Quand vous m'avez donné la vue, mes yeux se sont ouverts sur un monde plus beau que je n'avais rêvé qu'il pût être; oui vraiment, je n'imaginais pas le jour si clair, l'air si brillant, le ciel si vaste. Mais non plus je n'imaginais pas si soucieux le front des hommes; et quand je suis entrée chez vous, savez-vous ce qui m'est apparu tout d'abord… Ah! il faut pourtant bien que je vous le dise: ce que j'ai vu d'abord, c'est notre faute, notre péché. (Ibid, 52)

Si la faute du toucher (S2) est restituée par la vue du péché (S1), la rédemption ne consiste qu'en une double négation: il ne faut *ni voir* (-S1) *ni toucher* (-S2). Le statut -S1 + -S2 (péché lavé) s'oppose systématiquement à celui de S1 + S2 (péché commis). La main de Gertrude, qui cherche celle du Pasteur, est à l'origine de sa propre corruption. Par conséquent, quand la jeune fille se repent, sa toute première réaction est d'éloigner sa main du corps de son maître: « La main cessa de caresser mon front; je la saisis et la couvris de baisers et de larmes. Mais elle la dégagea impatiemment » (Ibid, 52). Gertrude

ne touche plus le corps source de la faute. Et, tel Œdipe qui se crève les yeux aussitôt qu'il reconnaît ses crimes, la jeune pécheresse ne veut plus voir, tient à redevenir aveugle, à refermer ses yeux pour toujours. Pendant sa dernière rencontre avec le Pasteur, Gertrude, tout en causant avec son maître, ferme souvent les yeux. À titre d'exemple, elle « referma les yeux et répéta, comme pour elle-même, ces derniers mots dans un murmure » (Ibid, 52). Un tel geste, qui n'échappe pas d'ailleurs au Pasteur, est révélateur: « elle baissa les paupières et garda les yeux fermés quelques temps, comme pour concentrer sa pensée, ou retrouver son état de cécité première » (Ibidem). L'ultime mot prononcé par Gertrude avant son dernier souffle, c'est précisément le verbe voir, à la forme négative, dans l'aspect terminatif: « Quittez-moi. Quittons-nous. Je ne supporte plus de vous voir » (Ibid, 53). Bref, pour s'éloigner du mal, elle ne veut plus ni toucher ni voir la source de ce mal. Désormais, on ne trouve qu'une Gertrude aux yeux fermés: « Hélas! Je ne devais plus la revoir qu'endormie » (Ibidem).

Et pour fermer ses yeux éternellement, Gertrude ne trouve son salut que dans la mort. En effet, la reconnaissance de la faute implique la cessation de la vie, puisque, selon un enseignement du Christ, « le péché reprit la vie, et moi je mourus » (Ibid, 52). C'est ainsi que Gertrude, écrasée par sa culpabilité, a tenté de se suicider en se jetant dans une rivière.Voici son état dans l'agonie:

> Sa respiration reste très oppressée et Martins craint une congestion pulmonaire; il a posé des sinapismes et des ventouses et promis de revenir demain. L'erreur a été de la laisser trop longtemps dans ses vêtements trempés tandis qu'on s'occupait d'abord à la ranimer; l'eau de la rivière est glacée. (Ibid, 50)

D'ailleurs, que Gertrude se fasse tuer par le froid, cela n'est point le fruit du hasard. Force est en effet de constater que l'existence de la fille semble indissociable du feu. La première fois que le Pasteur rencontre Gertrude, il voit « accroupi dans l'âtre, un être incertain, qui paraissait endormi » (Ibid, 4). Plus tard, ayant logé Gertrude chez lui, le Pasteur remarque une fois qu'« elle restait tout le long du jour, auprès du feu, sur la défensive » (Ibid, 11). Loin du feu, l'aveugle ne trouve une chaleur substitutive qu'auprès du corps de son maître:

> lorsque j'avançais vers elle une chaise, elle se laissa crouler à terre, comme quelqu'un qui ne saurait pas s'asseoir ; alors je la menai jusqu'auprès du foyer, et elle reprit un peu de calme lorsqu'elle put s'accroupir, dans la position où je l'avais vue d'abord auprès du foyer de la vieille, accotée au

> manteau de la cheminée. En voiture déjà elle s'était laissée glisser au bas du siège et avait fait tout le trajet blottie à mes pieds. (Ibid, 7)

Le corps du Pasteur constitue un réchauffement dont Gertrude ne peut se passer: « Craignant que Gertrude ne s'étiolât à demeurer auprès du feu sans cesse, comme une vieille, j'avais commencé de la faire sortir. Mais elle ne consentait à se promener qu'à mon bras » (Ibid, 16). Inséparable d'avec le feu, la vie de l'aveugle dépend en quelque sorte du corps du Pasteur qu'elle prend pour une vitalité chaleureuse. Or il arrive que le corps imaginé par les yeux fermés ne corresponde pas du tout au corps réel vu par les yeux ouverts: tout ce qu'elle imaginait du Pasteur, jeune, beau, bien, paraît faux; la réalité qu'elle voit est tout le contraire de son imagination, c'est-à-dire vieux, laid, mal. Et si la jeunesse, la beauté, la bonté du Pasteur relèvent d'une pure illusion, la chaleur de la même personne, logiquement, doit l'être aussi. Ainsi, quand le corps chaleureux auquel tient vitalement l'existence de Gertrude se révèle fautif, trompeur, mensonger, néant, cette existence ne peut plus perdurer. Notre aveugle passait sa vie à imaginer un jeune et bel homme qui la réchauffe, alors que la vision ne lui en offre que le contraire: suivant cette logique, cette vie, complètement choquée par le réel contraire à son imagination, ne peut trouver sa fin que dans le contraire du chaud: le froid, et c'est pour cette raison qu'elle se jette dans une rivière « glacée » de manière à se donner une mort réelle qui s'oppose à la vie fondée sur la fausseté.

Le passage dynamique du statut S1 + S2 à celui de -S1 + -S2 concerne également Jacques et surtout le Pasteur. La distance physique qui sépare Jacques et Gertrude n'est pas absolue: dans la chapelle, rappelons-nous, le jeune homme porte « à ses lèvres qu'elle lui abandonna » (Ibid, 25). Jacques croyait à tort que la caresse se faisait sans témoins. Quand son père lui laisse entendre que son geste sensuel (S2 : toucher) est vu (S1), Jacques se sent « rougir » (Ibid, 26). Dès que le voir (S1) se combine avec le toucher (S2), la faute s'accomplit, et c'est ainsi que Jacques rougit, la rougeur connotant le sentiment de culpabilité. Dans la situation finale, Jacques se convertit au catholicisme et « entre dans les ordres » (Ibid, 53). Sur le plan symbolique, cette conversion peut être considérée comme la mort et la renaissance du jeune homme. Or, comme dans le cas de Gertrude, la mort permet de ne plus voir (-S1) et de ne plus toucher (-S2), c'est-à-dire de se racheter. Donc, c'est grâce à la conversion, cette mort symbolique, que Jacques se rédime.

C'est aussi le cas du Pasteur. Dans une séquence, celui-ci parle de la saleté de la jeune aveugle qu'il vient d'adopter. À en croire Amélie, qui nettoie la fille et s'avise de « son état de saleté indicible », c'est « une infection » et « il n'y a rien au monde que je redoute autant que la vermine » (Ibid, 8). À cet avis, le Pasteur réagit: « Indéniablement la pauvre petite en était peuplée: et je ne pus me défendre d'un mouvement de dégoût en songeant que je l'avais si longuement pressée contre moi dans la voiture » (Ibidem). Une telle réaction nous intéresse particulièrement parce qu'elle contribue à confirmer notre hypothèse, selon laquelle tout attouchement reste innocent tant qu'on ne voit pas le corps touché, mais à peine le voit-on que le même toucher devient une faute. L'obscurité dans la voiture empêche le Pasteur de voir le corps qu'il presse longuement contre lui, ce qui permet à l'homme de continuer son geste sensuel en toute conscience. Au contraire, la lumière dans la maison fait voir au Pasteur le corps qu'il profane, le poussant ainsi à se rendre compte de ce qu'il vient de faire. Le sentiment de culpabilité se manifeste sous forme de « mouvement de dégoût ». Quant à la « saleté », on pourrait dire qu'il s'agit là, en psychanalyse, d'une projection: le Pasteur expulse sa propre saleté (la culpabilité) vers le corps qu'il a lui-même souillé, et son « mouvement de dégoût » est pour ainsi dire une sorte de répulsion de soi qui se déguise en répulsion de l'autre.

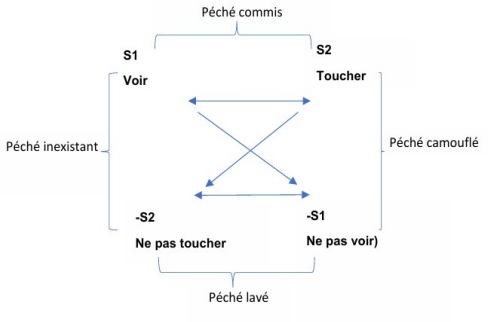
Dans la situation finale, la mort de Gertrude ouvre les yeux du Pasteur. Celui-ci crie à Dieu: « Seigneur, je vous implore: permettez-moi de lui parler. J'ai besoin de savoir, ou sinon comment continuerais-je à vivre? ... Et pourtant, si tant est qu'elle a voulu cesser de vivre, est-ce précisément pour avoir *su*? Su quoi? Mon amie, qu'avez-vous donc appris d'horrible? Que vous avais-je donc caché de mortel, que soudain vous aurez pu voir? » (Ibid, 50). D'après Henri Mailler (1975, 60), une telle expression signifie que « le Pasteur ne peut, une fois le malheur arrivé, que reconnaître son erreur ». De notre côté, dire que le Pasteur reconnaît son erreur équivaut au fait que l'homme *voit* sa faute. En effet, son désir de clarté (« j'ai besoin de savoir ») traduit une volonté de voir. Cette volonté s'exprime en outre quand le Pasteur *veut voir ce que Gertrude a vu* (« Que vous avais-je donc caché de mortel, que soudain vous aurez pu voir ? »).

Ainsi le Pasteur a reconnu, c'est-à-dire vu (S1) sa faute de toucher (S2). Voici son dernier geste constituant les toutes dernières lignes du roman, qu'on considère comme l'expression de sa rédemption (-S1 + -S2): « j'aurais voulu prier, mais je sentais mon cœur plus aride que le

désert » (Gide 2009, 54). Chez le Pasteur, on l'a vu, la bouche relève d'une zone érogène privilégiée. Ne pas pouvoir prier, c'est donc la bouche qui ne fonctionne plus. Cette négation du toucher (-S2) par la voie buccale est étroitement liée à la stérilité, connotée par l'épithète « aride ». D'ailleurs, l'image d'une bouche qui se ferme rappelle la mort de la vieille tante de Gertrude, que le Pasteur a trouvée dans la situation initiale: « Je demeurai quelques instants encore à contempler le visage endormi de la vieille, dont la bouche plissée et rentrée semblait tirée comme par les cordons d'une bourse d'avare, instruite à ne rien laisser échapper » (Ibid, 5). La mort réunit en une seule image celle d'une bouche close et des yeux fermés (« le visage endormi »). La fin du Pasteur n'en est pas différente. Incapable d'ouvrir la bouche pour prier, il a désormais un cœur « plus aride que le désert ». Or le désert évoque l'espace de la mort, sans parler de l'état de non-vie associé à l'épithète « aride ». Selon Marc Dambre (1991, 71), il s'agit là d'une mort symbolique du Pasteur: « Gertrude ne *voit* le jour que pour choisir la nuit définitive de la mort, qui renvoie le Pasteur à son aveuglement profond, à la nuit peut-être définitive d'une mort dans la vie. Son journal s'arrête sur le mot *désert* ». Autrement dit, après Gertrude, le pécheur a à son tour fermé sa bouche (-S2), organe de péché, et aussi ses yeux (-S1), sensibles à la faute, pour nier tout avilissement qu'il a commis.

Conclusion

Notre lecture sémiotique de *La Symphonie pastorale* permet de découvrir que dans la structure profonde du texte, la signification se base essentiellement sur quatre sémènes: *voir, toucher, ne pas voir, ne pas toucher*. La corrélation de ces quatre éléments fondamentaux se manifeste nettement à l'aide du carré sémiotique suivant:



Le dynamisme du récit se distingue en quatre étapes:

1. *S1* + -*S2*: les actants voient mais ne touchent pas l'objet de leur désir. Ce mode de contact permet de maintenir la pureté, l'innocence, la virginité de l'objet. L'important est que, tant qu'on ne porte pas sa main (ou sa bouche) sur le corps du partenaire, la faute n'ait pas été commise; le péché n'existe pas (encore).
2. *S2* + -*S1*: les actants s'engagent dans un rapport charnel, on se caresse, en se fermant les yeux. L'aveuglement permet aux pécheurs de camoufler leur faute et de se donner l'illusion. La cécité, en effet, aide à prendre le laid pour le beau, le mal pour le bien, la chair pour le spirituel, l'accouplement pour l'amour de l'humanité.
3. *S1* + *S2*: les actants regagnent leur vision, reconnaissant ainsi leur faute. À ce stade, commettre un péché est pleinement accompli.
4. -*S1* + -*S2*: pour leur rédemption, les actants retirent leur main pécheresse de leur partenaire; ils cessent de toucher. En plus, à l'image d'un coupable nommé Œdipe qui se crève les yeux, les actants ferment leurs yeux pour ne plus voir le corps qui leur éveille le désir de toucher. La double négation de la vue et du toucher rapproche les actants de la mort, la seule voie pour laver leur péché.

Là-dessus, ne peut-on pas parler d'un minimalisme gidien? La valeur littéraire de *La Symphonie pastorale* s'explique à nos yeux par le fait qu'à partir de la structure profonde qui ne repose que sur quatre unités sémantiques, la structure de surface du texte nous offre un univers riche de sens, dans lequel les personnages désirent jouir, mais se mentent, s'aveuglent sur leur propre pulsion avant de se reconnaître après avoir commis le péché les yeux fermés.

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Between history and memory: Mnemonic reconstruction of a disintegrating subcontinent in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*

Yuying Liang[*]

Abstract: This paper argues that the interplay of history and memory in the realm of fiction is a useful dimension to examine some of the complex and multilayered problems related to the culturality and identification in the pre- and post-partition Indian subcontinent. To this end, this paper looks at how Rushdie represents history through the art of mnemonics to showcase the complex historical processes of the subcontinent in the colonial and postcolonial context in *Midnight's Children*. Firstly, it contextualizes Rushdie's representations of cultural dynamics on the subcontinent through the powerful trope of chutney, and maintains that the art of chutneyfying history provides Rushdie with a means of depicting the heterogeneous fabrics intrinsic to the Indian ethos, exemplified as diversity, plurality and intermingling by its very nature. Secondly, it studies the theme of partition to see how Rushdie treats the traumatic experiences of the dispersed ethnicities amidst the political riots in the wake of partition, and by accentuating the prevailing ethnic and religious hatred which causes social conflicts and ethnic divisions and thus afflicting the consumed multitudes, Rushdie deplores the ulterior motives of separatist movements which lead to the consequence of a disintegrating subcontinent. The paper also explores the possibilities of reconstructing cultural and national identity as the displaced ethnicities struggle to survive in the mist of estrangement and alienation as the result of ethnic fissures and religious intolerance. Hence, the intricate relationship between history and memory in Rushdie's historiographical accounts provides new perspectives on a broader question of how the new cartographies of land and culture pose a direct challenge to the new generations on both sides of the border as to how they should reconcile with the partition trauma, recreate their cultural and national identity and sustaining their subjectivity in the aftermath of the partition.

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AGATHOS, Volume 17, Issue 2 (33-34): 321-334, DOI 10.5281/zenodo.23371184
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Keywords: *Midnight's Children*, chutnification of history, cultural dynamics, partition trauma, cultural and national identity, mnemonic reconstruction

Introduction

Midnight's Children (1981) is the second novel by the Indian-born British and American novelist Salman Rushdie. Since its first publication in 1981, the novel has been commercially successful and critically acclaimed. It won numerous prizes including the prestigious Booker Prize in 1981, and was celebrated as the Booker of the Bookers and the best amongst all winners on two important occasions, marking the 25th and 40th anniversaries of the Prize. The novel is about India's transition from British colonial rule to independence and partition. As a representative of postcolonial literature *par excellence*, *Midnight's Children* is a postcolonial, postmodern and magic-realist story. It takes the form of an autobiographical *bildungsroman*, as Saleem recounts his story to his lover Padma in a pickle factory owned by his erstwhile ayah Mary Pereira in Bombay (now Mumbai). With the art of autobiographical narration, Saleem invokes memory as a useful dimension through which he engages history from a very personal perspective and thus creates a unique version of history which is quite distinct from other versions of his time. Out of his multidimensional and multidirectional recollections comes an epic saga of the Indian subcontinent, featured by the new social, political, and cultural realities in the post-partition subcontinent. Admittedly, the story is about history and memory in which Rushdie tactfully uses such expressions as "the chutnification of history" and "the pickling of time" (Rushdie 1981, 442) to illustrate how he deploys memory as an effective strategy to trace, document and preserve histories for the younger generations in his self-reflexive style. In his acts of chutneyfying memory and pickling chapters, Saleem invites the reader to taste history, as he is dedicated to pickling private and public histories by invoking the art of mnemonics. In his nostalgic longing for the lost past, Saleem attempts to include events that happen thirty years before his birth and thirty years after, stretching a time over sixty years and spanning three generations of his family. Born at the stroke of midnight on 15th August 1947 – the precise moment of India's gaining independence from the British colonial rule, Saleem is mysteriously handcuffed to history, his destiny chained to that of India as a new nation-state. As his life trajectory mirrors the ups and downs of his country, the interaction of private and public forces as well as the

intertwining of individual and national histories are taken as two prominent features of the novel, which constitutes the basic structure of the storyline. Some critics have shown interest in the intersection of actual and imagined histories in Saleem's self-reflexive narration, and some highlight the changing cultural trajectories of the subcontinent in the wake of partition. Based on these observations, this paper intends to look at the interplay of history and memory in Rushdie's magic-realist narration as also at the paradigms of cultural encounter, clash, and integration which have kept evolving on the subcontinent. In so doing, the study is aimed at highlighting importance of Rushdie's historical consciousness embedded in his literary imagination, for his tactful way of preserving histories with fictional accounts contributes to the understanding of the social and political truths of the subcontinent in the aftermath of partition as also to the knowledge of heterogeneous cultural landscapes thereof. It argues that it is his great talent for historiography that provides valuable insights into the history of the Indian subcontinent.

"Chutney" as a powerful metaphor for the representation of cultural dynamics on the subcontinent

In chutneyfying the private and public histories through his acts of remembering, Saleem Sinai showcases to us that history is something that can be chutneyfied, and thus being endowed with a peculiar taste. As he claims, "One day, perhaps, the world may taste the pickles of history. They may be too strong for some palates, their smell may be overpowering, […]; I hope nevertheless that it will be possible to say of them that they possess the authentic taste of truth […]" (Rushdie 1981, 444). 'Chutney' as a commemorative trope finds its liberal expressions throughout Saleem's reminiscence, which provides a unique perspective on the cultural encounters that have been transpired in the historical course of the subcontinent. While investigating into the theme of history and memory in the novel, it is noted that Rushdie portrays the Indian subcontinent as a land of persistent cultural transaction and constant cultural transformation. Hence, it is significant to keep in view that the metaphorical role of "chutney" conveys a sense of intermingling in terms of culture, communities, religions, languages, and classes inherent in the Indian tradition. Indeed, Rushdie tries to connect the culinary image "chutney" to the complex historical process of the subcontinent, and so chutney in a sense serves to define the Indian subcontinent as a crucible in which

the commingling of myriad socio-cultural and political dynamics is a prominent feature of the society.

In particular, 'chutney' can be taken as a sign of cultural diversity and plurality, pointing to the reality of making chutney as a traditionally culinary practice on the subcontinent. In this sense, it is necessary to contextualize the traditional practice of chutney-making stretching over centuries. As a traditional cookery originating from the Indian subcontinent, chutney is a diverse, savory-sweet or spicy condiment, made of fruits, vegetables, or herbs blended with vinegar, sugar, and spices. Etymologically, the term derives from the Hindi word 'chutni' and has been used in its anglicized form as 'chutney'. Practically, Rushdie makes use of the denotative value of the term and contextualizes it against the backdrop of cultural encounter, interaction, overlapping, and intermingling in the Indian tradition. In *Midnight's Children*, Rushdie deploys the term to reveal the mishmash of a multiplicity of cultures which has long been a tradition on the subcontinent, thus highlighting the dynamics of cultural exchange and syncretism therein. In fact, many critics have explored the metaphorical references of the image of chutney in Rushdie's fictional narrative, which is open to varied interpretations from different perspectives. Nadia Butt (2015, 62) argues that "The author's intention is not to represent the 'history of the world', but 'India' as a hodgepodge of several cultures and languages […]". Indeed, in Rushdie's literary imagination, 'chutney' can be understood both at literal and metaphorical level. While literally representing the blending of a variety of raw materials, it metaphorically points to the diverse traditions intrinsic to the Indian society. Rushdie confirms to us this view in an interview, as he reveals that the Indian tradition has been a tradition with heterogeneous fabrics, featured as multiplicity, plurality and commingling. Mita Banerjee (2002) analyses how postcolonial writers blend history, memory, and hybrid cultural identities in their fictional narratives. Her work explores the reinterpretation of history by reference with Rushdie's metaphorical use of 'chutnification' to describe mixing diverse narratives into a new, blended, postcolonial perspective. Indeed, in his efforts to preserve the historical trajectory of a disintegrating homeland, Rushdie tends to highlight the heterogeneous traditions of the subcontinent, which is replete with myriad cultures, communities, religions, languages, and classes.

Admittedly, in Rushdie's fictional realm, the subcontinent has been imagined as a world which is radically heterogeneous. And the trope of

'chutney' serves to represent the trajectories of cultural transformations on the subcontinent, highlighting the traditional cultural patterns therein as something of a melange. As such, the art of chutneyfying history provides alternative ways of perceiving the changing cultural trajectories in the pre- and post-partition subcontinent. Meanwhile, the art of autobiographical narration enables Saleem to connect his crumbling being to his life-long sufferings, which seems to provide him with a sense of continuous identity that helps to reposition himself in a fast-changing world. In his struggling against cracking, Saleem reminisces of his days spent with the blessings of chutney made by his erstwhile ayah, "And while chutney – the same chutney which, back in 1957, my ayah Mary Pereira had made so perfectly; the grasshopper-green chutney which is forever associated with those days – carried them back into the world of my past […]" (Rushdie 1981, 206). His nostalgic longing for his lost past seems to bring him a sense of orientation in the present, on the one hand, and on the other, chutney as the epitome of hybridity echoes the notion of cultural fusion.

As such, the illustration of the metaphor of chutney points to Rushdie's celebration of the multiplicity and plurality of Indian cultures, an underlined theme in the novel which is specified in Rushdie's self-reflexive claims. At the heart of his diasporic narrative lies Rushdie's fully awareness of the nature of Indian tradition, which is vividly echoed in the notion of multiplicity and plurality. As he maintains, "'My' India has always been based on ideas of multiplicity, plurality, hybridity […]. To my mind, the defining image of India is the crowd, and a crowd is by its very nature superabundant, heterogeneous, many things at once" (Rushdie 1991, 32). Here Rushdie declares hybridity as the most prominent dimension in his act of portraying India, which allows him to encompass a bizarre and motley Indian subcontinent in his narration. In his efforts to highlight the rich cultural heritage of the subcontinent, Rushdie succeeds in representing the histories of the subcontinent as 'many-cultured', to echo with Dirk Hoerder's claim as he says that "To understand issues of cultural belonging of young people today, it is necessary to read histories as many-cultured" (Hoerder et al. 2005, 11). In this way, Rushdie succeeds in representing the history of India as a melange of manifold cultures, highlighting 'chutney' as a compelling device for the illustration of cultural dynamics which is deeply rooted in the Indian ethos of the subcontinent.

Mnemonic mapping of the intertwined histories of the dispersed ethnicities in a disintegrating subcontinent

Rushdie uses the forceful metaphor of 'the chutnification of history' to illustrate how he treats histories in his literary imagination. His style of preserving histories with fictional accounts is distinctive. In fact, Rushdie creates a unique mode of narrative which is aimed at representing histories via an unreliable memory as the protagonist Saleem Sinai reveals that the process of preserving the historical transformations both at private and public level in his recollections necessarily involves a certain degree of changing these transformations. Saleem admits that "'I told you the truth' […] 'Memory's truth, because memory has its own special kind. It selects, eliminate, alters, exaggerates, minimizes, glorifies, and vilifies also; but in the end it creates its own reality, its heterogeneous but usually coherent version of events […]" (Rushdie 1981, 207). The narrator Saleem acts as an unreliable actor, frequently misrepresenting dates and timelines to reflect how personal memory shapes collective memory. He acknowledges the inevitable distortions involved in his work of pickling histories just as in the process of pickling raw materials, and attempts to give a justification for his claims by underscoring 'memory's truth' in his narration. In his efforts to justify the intertwining of the factual histories and magical realism in his autobiographical narration, Saleem creates a history of his own version which is distinct from other historical versions in his times. Saleem's version of history "has been reconstructed to suggest a more orderly view of the past which, ultimately, helps to legitimate the present", as echoed in James W. Pennebaker's (1997, x) claim. In fact, Pennebaker's view of reconstructing history is justified in Rushdie's self-reflexive affirmation, as the latter claims that "When I begin the novel […] my purpose was somewhat Proustian. Time and migration placed a double filter between me and my subject, and I hoped that if I could only imagine vividly enough it might be possible to see beyond those filters […]. But as I worked I found that what interested me was the process of filtration itself. So my subject changed, was no longer a search for lost time, had become the way in which we remake the past to suit our present purposes, using memory as a tool" (Rushdie 1991, 23-24). The statement reveals Rushdie's original intention of writing the novel, that is, the book not only represents a story of India's past,

but more importantly it is an attempt to reconstruct the nation's history to shape the present.

The observations show that there is an intrinsic connection between history and memory, which has become a prominent theme of the novel. So, it is significant to look at how memory is utilized in Rushdie's narrative as an important dimension in the representation of the intertwined histories of the dispersed ethnicities in the post-partition subcontinent. Many critics pay attention to the relations of history and memory which serves to facilitate the development of plot of the story. Peter Burke views history as social memory with reference to the French sociologist Maurice Halwachs's work which is the first serious exploration of the social framework of memory. Burke (1989, 98) points out that "Halwachs argued that memories are constructed by social groups. Individuals remember, in the literal, physical sense. However, it is the social groups which determine what is 'memorable' and also how it will be remembered". Likewise, David Lipscomb (1991) argues that Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* strategically uses the insertion of actual passages from Stanley Wolpert's western historical textbook, *A New History of India* (2003) to challenge the authority of Western historiography. Lipscomb contends that by placing these fragments of objective historical discourse within Saleem Sinai's subjective, fantastical, and memory-driven narrative, Rushdie creates a 'strange middle ground' for the reader. Patrick H. Hutton (1993, xvii) explores the proposition as 'history as an art of memory' and by reference with Frances Yates's theoretical postulations he writes that "As Yates had shown, the art of memory was not just a technique. It was also a resource for recovering the lost worlds". Also, David W. Price's (1994, 92) work is an attempt to investigate into Rushdie's philosophical examination of history in his major novels, and he re-examines *Midnight's Children* by drawing on Nietzsche's theoretical assumption as an interpretive framework and says that "[…] it not only provides us with an explanation of how Rushdie constructed his novel but also offers us a means to understand Rushdie's own philosophy of history". Further, Ronny Noor (1996) argues that the novel's reliance on magical realism often distorts historical facts, cautioning readers to look beyond Saleem Sinai's subjective narrative to understand the real history of 20th-century India and Pakistan. Noor suggests that the "chutnification" of history merges personal memory with political events, sometimes leading to inaccurate representations of key historical moments, including the

partition. As Joanna Klama Teske (2016, 284) points out, "some readers, (e.g. Ronny Noor) took the book as a historical novel and listed Rushdie's mistakes". Meanwhile, Teske makes a comprehensive analysis of the contradictions inherent in the book by directing the reader's attention to the historical context, the unreliability of the narration, and erroneous view of Indian history included in Rushdie's historiographic accounts, which, according to Teske, are ascribed to the deployment of the technique of magical realism. Teske (2016, 283) claims that "Saleem Sinai, the novel's narrator, aims to tell the history of India, but quite unperturbed by the mistakes he commits. He misinforms his narratees about the date of Gandhi's death, reports his own mistake and defiantly announces that he will not correct it". In this sense, Teske seems to highlight the unreliability of Saleem's imaginary power in taking the vital task of reviving the nation.

A number of writers have written on the partition of the British India in 1947 which leads to the division of the subcontinent into two independent dominion states, i.e., the Hindu-majority India and the Muslim-majority Pakistan (comprising East and West wings). Led by the 1947 Indian Independence Act, the chaotic separation precipitates the largest mass migration in history uprooting nearly 20 million populations and causes massive communal violence, resulting in up to 1 million deaths. Under such circumstances, the violent episodes induced by the partition riots have become the collective memory of the displaced population of the subcontinent, and have been taken as the centrality of many South-Asian writers' literary imagination. In *Midnight's Children*, Rushdie has unique perception of the traumatic experiences of the dispersed ethnicities during the division of the subcontinent. Rushdie highlights the violent scenes induced by partition riots that have afflicted the people of the subcontinent by writing that "I shall not describe the mass blood-letting in progress on the frontiers of the divided Punjab (where the partitioned nations are washing themselves in one another's blood […]) I shall avert my eyes from the violence in Bengal […]" (Rushdie 1981, 111). Further, what distinguishes Rushdie's novel is the representation of the partition through Saleem's retrospective narrative, on the one hand, and a diasporic writer's perspective on the ethnic fissures on the other. He features the transformation of a simple man amidst political crises, and by highlighting stories of ordinary individuals in a *bildungsroman*, Rushdie interrogates the ideologies of nationalism and national identity in his fictional realm. The story traces Saleem's memory to represent

the Muslim communities in Indian society. The episodes showing the distortion of human nature in the face of religious and ethnic hatred is depicted as "What is known about the Ravana gang? That it posed as a fanatical anti-Muslim […] That it sent men out, at dead of night, to paint slogans on the walls of both old and new cities: […] muslims are the jews of asia! […] And that it burned down Muslim-owned factories, shops, godowns" (Ibid., 72). Rushdie captures the conflicts between Hindus and Muslims as a result of the racial hatred prevalent in the Indian society, and he articulates the afflictions of the Muslim people when confronted with violence and intimidation unleashed by the Ravana mob against the Muslim communities by writing that "Anonymous phone calls, letters written with words cut out of newspapers were issued to Muslim businessmen" (Ibid.), to accentuate the sufferings of the Muslim communities in the mist of social upheaval.

Rushdie presents the tragedy of Saleem's family targeted by the subversive elements in Delhi, leading to the destruction of the reccine-and-leather cloth business of Saleem's father Ahmed Sinai. Ahmed Sinai is overwhelmed by the conjuncture, and thus rushed clatter footed out of his house, attempting to prevent the outrageous perpetrators from burning down his warehouse by paying off the cash sum set by the gang. In order to stay in business, Ahmed Sinai carries a grey bag full of pay-off money to meet the demands of the Ravana gang, and the episode is featured by Rushdie to reveal the panic and distress that engulfs Ahmed Sinai and his companions. Rushdie depicts the scene as "'Don't show panic,' Mr. Kemal said, 'Look calm.' But their feet kept getting out of control and rushing on. Jerkily, in little rushes of speed followed by a few badly-disciplined steps at walking pace" (Ibid.). In this way, Rushdie highlights the sufferings of the Muslim communities amidst social crisis, as embodied in the character of Ahmed Sinai, through whom the rapscallions find an outlet to vent their frustration and dissatisfaction. The antagonism between Hindus and Muslims remains fundamental to Rushdie's narrative when he pinpoints the conflicts between two Muslim households comprising the Sindhis and the Bengalis and one Hindu household by writing that "They dropped garbage on his house from their rooftops. They hurled multilingual abuse at him from their windows. They flung scraps of meat at his door … while he, in turn, paid urchins to throw stones at their windows" (Ibid., 7). Caught in the dilemma of religious and ethnic division, abuse and fighting become the normality of the day

amongst Hindu and Muslim people. To further dramatize this very hostile environment, Rushdie presents the episodes of Lifafa Das, a peepshow street man whose presence in a Muslim community triggers a massive riot as he is sieged by a Muslim mob. He is abused by the rioters as mother raper, violator, rapist, and other charges as such, and the tension mounts to such an extent that it incites more bitter confrontations, as Rushdie depicts, "[…] but now he is surrounded by voices filled with blood, and the street loafers are moving towards him […] a pot flies through the air and shatters on a wall beside him; he has his back against a doorway as a fellow with a quiff of oily hair grins sweetly at him and says, 'So, mister, it is you? […] who sleeps with his sister?'" (Ibid., 76). Ahmed Sinai is directly involved in such movements which constantly reduce him to extremely miserable circumstances, especially the incident led by the Ravana gang which comes to destroy his world when he fails to pay up the cash sum ordered by the gang, thrusting him into a totally crumbling world. It is through Saleem's recollections that the episode is presented, "[…] when my father came home late that night, with a ditchy smell on him which overpowered his customary reek of future failure, his eyes and cheeks were streaked with ashy tears; there was sulphur in his nostrils and the grey dust of smoked leather cloth on his head … because of course they had burned the go down" (Ibid., 89). The depiction reveals an irretrievable loss that dooms Ahmed Sinai to failure.

To demonstrate racial divisions as prevalent phenomena in the society, Rushdie embraces stories of people from difference social strata in his narrative, in particular the lower strata of society including the marginalized and excluded Muslim population in India, to expand the stretch of partition discourse in literature on the one hand, and to intensify the implications of depriving of one's homeland and means of survival both as a result of religious intolerance and ethnic hatred on the other; or to put it differently, the wretched lives of the Muslims to face perennial ostracism and persecution, and experience extreme estrangement and alienation.

In this way, Rushdie questions the ideologies of nationalism against the backdrop of social fissures which, in attempting to glorify and celebrate national identity, is at the cost of millions of displaced families and communities.

Partition trauma and the reconstruction of national identity amidst estrangement and alienation

With the partition contributing to the creation of Pakistan as a new nation-state for millions of Muslims, it leads to a consequence of attributing a singular national identity to wondrously discrete and varied ethnic groups in Pakistan. In *Midnight's Children*, Saleem's family believe in the ideology of purity, as they see Pakistan as the land of submission and the home of purity, and in their struggling towards achieving purity, they tend to deem purity as a fundamental cultural ideal. They are so obsessed with purity that they proclaim that, "'We must all become new people'; in the land of the pure, purity became our ideal" (Ibid., 301). Notably, Saleem's grandmother, known by the curious title of Reverend Mother, makes a resolute determination to emigrate to Pakistan after her husband's death, as in the pure land she can embrace purity in every inch of her life and becomes new people. Immersing herself in the myth of Pakistan as a pure land only for Indian Muslims, Reverend Mother leads a life of incredible vitality. Saleem recalls that "Setting her face against the past, Reverend mother concentrated on gasoline and oil. […] while Reverend Mother, who had been transformed by bereavement into a woman who was more interested in other people's lives than her own, took to inviting the pump's customers into her glass booth for cups of pink Kashmiri tea" (Ibid., 318). For Reverend Mother, the years in Pakistan are full of hope and possibility, and her aspiration to become new people seems to be within her reach. Her overt preference for the pure attributes a unique cultural identity to her. However, his entering into his exile in the Land of Pure makes Saleem feel awkward all the time. On the contrary, Saleem does not believe in purity, and is in no mood to become new people. When his parents embrace the ideal of become pure in Pakistan, Saleem appears to be "[…] forever tainted with Bombayness, his head was full of all sorts of religions apart from Allah's […]; and his body was to show a marked preference for the impure" (Ibid., 301). Admittedly, beset by an ambiguous identity – be it to the citizen of India or to a refugee in Pakistan, Saleem rises in revolt against the claustrophobic throng of being trapped in such a liminal state, and he is doomed to be a misfit in the home of purity. Consequently, when his family embrace purity in its entirety in the Land of the Pure, Saleem's life in Pakistan turns out to be infertile and good for nothing, featured as emptiness and nothingness.

In rejecting the ideal of being pure as a distinctive cultural attribution, Saleem, in effect, questions the ideology of Pakistan as an exclusive nation only for the Indian Muslims. In fact, the etymological meaning of "Pakistan" is "Land of the Pure" in Persian and Urdu. Literally, "Pak" means "pure" or "holy" in Urdu and Persian, while "-stan" is a suffix meaning "land" or "place of". Originally, it was coined in 1933 by Choudhry Rahmat Ali, a Muslim nationalist activist, to represent a proposed Muslim homeland in British India. In reality, Muhammed Ali Jinnah, the leader of the All-India Muslim League, led a separatist movement with the purpose of making a separate state for the Indian Muslims. However, Pakistan's experiments with the ideologies of purity go against the realities that the Indian subcontinent is traditionally diversified in terms of culture, ethnicity, language, religion, and many other aspects. Partition leads to new cartographies of land and nation, and yet by drawing lines as new borders of a divided home/land cannot deny the fact that people on both sides of the border share common histories and tradition. In the novel, Saleem rejects the ideal of cultural purity in Pakistan by illustrating the persistent existence of dualities mainly exemplified as the stereotypes of the sacred and the profane, and in bringing into full play his extraordinary nasal passages, Saleem sniffs out the smells of sacred and profane in his scooter-trips rambling through the streets and alleyways of Karachi, exemplified as: the sacred – purdah-veils, halal-meat, muezzin's towers, prayer-mats; the profane – western records, pig-meat, alcohol. The dualities deemed by Nadia Butt (2015, 69) as "often nothing more than pseudo-religious and cultural cliches" and confronted by Saleem favourably refute the idea of cultural purity in Pakistan, and the persistent ethnic conflicts in Karachi and other cities of Pakistan are the inevitable consequences of partition which forcibly attributes a single national identity to a radically heterogeneous society which consists of a multiplicity of ethnicities. As such, Saleem is unwilling to reconcile with the ideology as "Pakistan as purity" as he believes in multiculturality as the foremost reality of the Indian subcontinent.

Conclusion

To sum up, the novel is about history and memory in which the protagonist Saleem Sinai takes on the task of reconstructing histories through his retrospective narrative. He deems himself as the "swallower" of historical occurrences, and thus proclaims that "And

there are so many stories to tell, too many, such an excess of intertwined lives events miracles places rumours, so dense a commingling of the improbable and the mundane! I have been a swallower of lives; and to know me, just the one of me, you'll have to swallow the lot as well" (Rushdie 1981, 11). Obviously, Saleem accesses the past from an infinite number of perspectives to include an excess of intertwined histories in his retrospection. His unique ways of reclaiming past experiences help him to justify the intermingling of actual and imagined histories in his narration. As David Koester (1996, 142) points out, "For any scene, image, individual feeling, or group sentiment that one recalls, it can be recollected from an infinite number of perspectives in an infinitely divisible number of ways". As Saleem seeks to reconstruct histories through the filter of his intertwined memory, he is dedicated to creating "memory's truth. He evades the chronological account of personal histories by placing the episodes of political turmoil at the centre of his commemorative narrative, highlighting the implications of religious and ethnic fissures for the making of a disintegrating subcontinent. The leitmotif of partition as a historical predicament in Rushdie's fictional autobiography draws our attention not only to the intricate relationship between history and memory, but more importantly to the complex and ambivalent process of India's struggling to reconcile with the legacies of the partition. Rushdie accentuates the interplay of history and memory in his historiographical accounts, and the significance of which lies in its potential to contribute to the understanding of the consequences of dividing the subcontinent in which the new cartographies of land and culture precipitate the new generations on both sides of the border into a particular state of identity crisis, and thus make a direct challenge to them as to how to articulate their dilemma in an interstitial state, reconfigure their cultural and national identity, and sustain their subjectivity in a divided home/land in the aftermath of partition.

Acknowledgment: This article is part of the Project No. 2025BSQD09, sponsored by the Scientific Research Fund for Doctor of Hezhou University, China

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Literary resistance in the Near East: A comparative analysis of national identity in Arab and Turkish traditions

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Abstract: Resistance literature (Arabic: *al-adab al-muqawim*) serves as a profound manifestation of a nation's struggle against occupation, cultural assimilation, and socio-political hegemony. This article provides a comparative analysis of resistance narratives within the Arab and Turkish literary traditions, examining how both cultures utilized the written word to preserve national identity and cultural sovereignty. While Arabic resistance literature, particularly in the Palestinian context, emphasizes themes of land loss and the Nakba, Turkish literary movements—from the Tanzimat era to the National Literature period—reflect similar patterns of defiance against imperial decline and external pressures. Drawing on postcolonial theory and the frameworks of Edward Said and Frantz Fanon, this study explores the ideological, cultural, and psychological dimensions of resistance. By bridging the Arab Nahda and the Turkish Milli Edebiyat movements, the research highlights the shared aesthetic strategies used to reclaim cultural narratives and advocate for universal values of freedom, justice, and human dignity.

Keywords: Arab resistance literature, Turkish literary traditions, national identity, Near East, cultural preservation, postcolonialism

Introduction

Literary resistance in the Near East has historically developed as a synchronized response to foreign occupation, colonial domination, and the threat of cultural erasure. In both Arab and Turkish contexts, literature has served not only as a record of historical events but also as a powerful tool for cultural defiance. The genesis of this resistance can be traced back to the late 19th and early 20th centuries—a pivotal era marked by the decline of the Ottoman Empire and the rise of nationalist awakenings. This period witnessed the emergence of the

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AGATHOS, Volume 17, Issue 2 (33-34): 335-347, DOI 10.5281/zenodo.23371407
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Arab *nahda* (revival) and the Turkish *tanzimat* and *milli edebiyat* (national literature) movements. While Arab enlighteners focused on protecting their linguistic and spiritual heritage from European influence, their Turkish counterparts, such as Namık Kemal and Mehmet Akif Ersoy, were formulating a literary discourse centered on *vatan* (homeland) and *hürriyet* (liberty).

This study aims to provide a comparative analysis of resistance narratives within these two interconnected traditions, examining how writers utilized the written word to preserve national identity. Drawing on postcolonial theory and the frameworks of Edward Said and Frantz Fanon, the research explores the ideological, cultural, and psychological dimensions of resistance. The methodology employed is a comparative literary analysis, focusing on selected prose and poetry that exemplify the aesthetics of preservation. By bridging the Arab and Turkish experiences, this article highlights the shared strategies used to reclaim cultural narratives in the face of external and internal hegemonies.

Methodology

The research employs a multidisciplinary approach, utilizing a comparative literary framework and postcolonial theory to examine Arab and Turkish resistance narratives. In the first stage, fundamental data on the development of the Arab Nahda and the Turkish Tanzimat and Milli Edebiyat movements are collected through a method of historical excursion. In the second step, the data are summarized using a systematic method to classify the transition from intellectual enlightenment to active literary mobilization. In the third stage, the final results are analyzed using a comparative research method, focusing on shared aesthetic strategies and the "uncompromising stay" motif in the works of key authors. The aim of the work is to systematically explain how literature serves as an intellectual fortress for national identity against cultural erasure and socio-political hegemony. By employing a phenomenological approach to texts, the study determines the role of writers in forging a national consciousness and preserving human dignity within the Near Eastern context.

Foundations of resistance: Enlightenment and the intellectual awakening in the Near East

Arab resistance literature has historically developed in close connection with struggles against occupation, colonial domination, and

cultural hegemony. Colonialism and socio-political challenges in Arab countries have significantly influenced both the content and form of literary expression. Resistance (*al-muqawama*) in this context means steadfastness and the defense of cultural life. Resistance poets and writers seek to raise awareness of forgotten rights and motivate the oppressed to reclaim their dignity. During the period of European influence in the Arab East, these concepts were reflected through poetry and prose, utilizing a language drawn from the nation's collective suffering.

The history of this literary defiance dates back to the end of Ottoman rule, flourishing particularly in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This era, known as the *nahda* (revival), was shaped by the spread of education, the development of the press, and pivotal events such as the Urabi Revolution and the Egyptian Revolution of 1919. Cultural awakening made the masses ready for intellectual and physical resistance (Said 1993, 246).

Parallel to the Arab *nahda*, the Turkish literary landscape was undergoing a similar transformation through the Tanzimat (Reorganization) and later the Milli Edebiyat (National Literature) movements. While Arab enlighteners focused on protecting their culture from Western colonial encroachment, Turkish intellectuals like Namık Kemal were pioneering the concepts of *vatan* (homeland) and *hürriyet* (liberty). For both traditions, the press became a primary forum for discussion on secular education, philosophy, and political sovereignty.

The intellectual contributions of figures such as Khalil Beydas (1875-1948), facilitated through his prominent journal *An-Nafais al-asriyya*, represent the pinnacle of this period in Palestine. Alongside Beydas, multifaceted enlighteners like Abdullah Mukhlis, Iskander al-Khuri al-Beytjali, Issaf al-Nashashibi, and Khalil al-Sakakini played a decisive role in establishing secular schools and progressive press organs. These platforms became forums for intense polemics on domestic policy, secular education, and philosophy, effectively reviving journalism as a scientific and educational tool. Beydas, in particular, utilized this platform to advocate for social justice, viewing its attainment as rooted in the perfection of human nature. This perspective directly resonates with the Turkish enlightenment tradition, where writers such as Namık Kemal asserted that literature must function as a vehicle for moral education and socio-political reform (Mardin 1962, 134). As Prof. Dr. İnci Enginün emphasizes, in the late

Ottoman and early Republican periods, journals and newspapers functioned as "intellectual schools" where authors not only mastered new literary techniques but also forged a national consciousness (Enginün 2007, 42).

Furthermore, as Şerif Mardin (1962, 10-80) elucidates in his analysis of the 'Young Ottomans,' the emergence of private journalism provided a fertile ground for the birth of 'public opinion' (*halk efkârı*). Figures like İbrahim Şinasi and Namık Kemal transformed the written word into what Mardin calls 'operative ideals'—concepts that sustain a political and social entity. This transition from abstract poetry to socially engaged prose and journalism mirrored the Palestinian experience, where literature ceased to be a mere aesthetic endeavor and evolved into a systematic entry of modern thought aimed at national preservation. This era also witnessed a unique expansion of translation work. Rather than strictly adhering to the original texts, Palestinian translators adapted Western works by localizing character names, geographical settings, and cultural realities to resonate with the local population. This method, which Enginün (2007, 35) also identifies in early Turkish Tanzimat adaptations, served as a vital "creative school" for mastering modern literary forms (Harlow 1987, 4). Consequently, by reshaping foreign narratives to fit indigenous cultural frameworks, both Arab and Turkish intellectuals transformed translation and journalism into potent instruments of cultural self-defense, laying the socio-political foundations for the more direct resistance literature of the following decades.

The colonial crisis and the literature of mobilization

In the aftermath of World War I, the geopolitical landscape of the Near East underwent a radical transformation as Arab territories fell under the mandates of Britain and France. This period marked a transition from intellectual enlightenment to a more urgent, liberationist literary production. As scholars have noted, Arab writers began to utilize literature as a primary tool for social mobilization, emphasizing themes of sovereignty and national dignity in the face of colonial fragmentation (Suleiman 2003, 41).

The resulting social upheaval created the necessary conditions for the development of a robust patriotic press. Newspapers such as *Palestine* (1911), *Al-Akhbar* (1911), and *Ad-Dustur* (1913), alongside journals like *Al-Asma'a* and *Az-Zuhur*, became the primary forums for national identity. While prose was dominated by journalistic polemics,

artistic expression found its strongest outlet in poetry. Poets like Muhammad Ala al-Salih, Abd al-Karim al-Karmi, and Ibrahim Tuqan sought to address modern national themes while maintaining the formal canons of classical Arabic verse. This shift towards a literature of commitment (*iltizam*) was not unique to the Arab world. Simultaneously, the Turkish literary scene was dominated by the Milli Mücadele (National Struggle) spirit. While Palestinian and Syrian intellectuals were reacting to the Sykes-Picot realities and the British Mandate, Turkish authors like Halide Edip Adıvar and Mehmet Akif Ersoy were galvanizing the Anatolian resistance through prose and poetry. In both geographies, the writer's role evolved from a "teacher of the enlightenment" to a "voice of the revolution." Literature ceased to be a reflection of Western models and became a defensive mechanism designed to protect the collective memory of the masses.

Even early fiction, such as the collection *Songs of the Night* (1922), reflected this transitional phase. Although the characters often remained rooted in romanticism and sentimentalism, they represented the first steps toward a literature of direct engagement. Just as Palestinian writers utilized translation—exemplified by Jamil al-Bukhari and Anwar Arafat—to master new creative methods, Turkish intellectuals of the same era were adapting similar Western genres to voice their national grievances (Enginün 2007, 342). Consequently, by transforming the written word into a functional tool of resistance, both Arab and Turkish literary traditions moved beyond mere aestheticism, establishing the socio-political foundations for the uncompromising resistance aesthetics that would define the mid-20th century.

Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, Palestine remained a predominantly agrarian society grappling with the economic constraints of British colonial interests. However, the rising national consciousness manifested in significant protest movements in 1929, 1933, and the Great Arab Revolt of 1936-1939. During these decades, the press functioned as the nervous system of the resistance. New influential outlets such as *Ad-Difa* (*Defense*, 1934) and *Al-Liva* (*The Flag*, 1936) emerged, while figures like Emil al-Guri and Mahmoud Seif al-Din al-Irani utilized journals like *Al-Fajr* (*Dawn*) to warn against the escalating British threat. Even when local authorities closed these organs, forcing founders like al-Guri into temporary exile, the Palestinian intellectual diaspora continued their advocacy from Damascus, Cairo, and Beirut. This sustained journalistic pressure provided the ideological scaffolding for a generation of poets—most

notably Ibrahim Tuqan and later Mahmud Darwish—to transform local grievances into a universal literature of resistance.

From individual psychologism to collective resistance: The impact of the Nakba on poetry and prose

In the early 1940s, Palestinian prose was characterized by an intensive search for form, yet it remained caught between didacticism and emerging psychological exploration. Writers such as Ishaq al-Husseini and Najati Sidqi emphasized the necessity of modern short stories, but their works often functioned as journalistic social essays. As seen in Al-Husseini's *Memories of a Chicken* and Shukri Shaasha's *Memories*, the primary objective was still to provide moral and political lessons rather than pure aesthetic innovation. On the eve of 1948, a shift toward subjective-psychological genres appeared in the works of Muhammad al-Adna and Aref al-Aref. These authors focused on internal experiences—such as the psychological state of a sick person or the inner world of a blind child—often isolating their narratives from the urgent socio-political crises of the era. This detachment from the "people's life" marked the final, contemplative phase of a literary period that was soon to be shattered by historical tragedy.

The historical events of 1948, known as the Nakba (Catastrophe), created a deep socio-cultural crisis that changed the direction of Palestinian literature. This period of displacement and shared trauma led to a new movement called Resistance Poetry. In this phase, the personal and private themes of earlier writers were replaced by a collective effort for cultural survival. Key poets like Mahmoud Darwish, Samih al-Qasim, and Taha Muhammad Ali used their works to protect and preserve national identity. Darwish famously argued that poetry must "carry the lamp from house to house," meaning that literature should serve a humanitarian and cultural purpose. During this time, poetry was no longer just about beauty; it became a vital tool for keeping national memory alive. Similar to the Turkish poets of the National Struggle who gave voice to their nation's spirit, Palestinian literature became a global symbol of human dignity. This ensured that the idea of the homeland remained a permanent and powerful theme in modern literature.

However, the impact of these events was not limited to poetry. In the 1950s and 1960s, Palestinian prose also underwent a major transformation, following two main paths: the psychological struggle of the displaced intellectual and the direct resistance of the peasantry.

A central figure in this era was Jabra Ibrahim Jabra (1919–1994), who combined Western modernism with the experience of exile. His novel *The Cry in the Long Night* (1955) focuses on Amin, a journalist whose internal monologues reveal deep feelings of loneliness and lack of purpose. Through Amin's life in the cafes of Baghdad, Jabra explores complex themes like the role of civilization and the changing status of women. While the writer aimed to create an interesting image of the intellectual, his stories remained deeply focused on the inner conflicts caused by his reality (Nassar 2006, 150).

Simultaneously, a more grounded, realistic "school" of storytelling emerged, often influenced by the social realism of Maxim Gorky. This is evident in Jabra's *Sweat and Other Stories* (1956), where characters like master Hanna and the teenager Jacob are depicted through a lens of objective "routine." This realistic trend was further sharpened into a direct critique of regional authoritarianism and colonial encroachment. For instance, Sonallah Ibrahim's *That Smell* (1966) and Abdelrahman Munif's *Cities of Salt* series exposed the absurdity of life under censorship and the socio-cultural upheavals brought by the oil boom.

A foundational motif in this period is the visceral attachment to the land, most poignantly captured in the works of Muhammed Naffan and Taufik Zayyad. Naffan's stories, such as "Skull No. 14" and "Because We Love the Land," transform the events of 1948 into a timeless struggle for territorial presence. By depicting young men who choose to die in a well rather than abandon their village, Naffan underscores the "uncompromising stay" on the land. Similarly, Taufik Zayyad, in his prose collection *World Affairs* (1970), particularly in the story "The Eye of a Dead Cow," utilizes folklore and humor to depict the struggle of the common *fellah* (peasant). In Zayyad's world, the common man's wisdom—often pitted against the greed of rich sheikhs—becomes the ultimate shield. His depiction of villagers lying down in front of tractors and bulldozers to save their homes serves as a powerful symbol of non-violent, yet absolute, resistance. Through these diverse prose narratives, from Jabra's intellectual salons to Zayyad's rural landscapes, the Palestinian pen continued to document the multi-layered reality of a nation refusing to be erased.

Social realism, land attachment, and the aesthetics of sacrifice

Beyond the immediate struggle for sovereignty, resistance literature evolved into a potent platform for scrutinizing internal authoritarianism and the socio-economic transformations of the Middle

East. This transition is exemplified by Sonallah Ibrahim's *That Smell* (1966) and his later work *Zaat* (1992), alongside Abdelrahman Munif's *Cities of Salt*, which analyzed the seismic cultural shifts triggered by the petroleum industry. This vein of social critique closely parallels the "Political Novel" in Turkish literature. As noted by Bernat Moran (2004), the Turkish novel of the 1970s, represented by authors like Adalet Ağaoğlu, became a primary site for interrogating the intersection of state power and individual liberty, mirroring the internal dissent found in Arab modernist prose.

In the Palestinian context, this socio-political engagement found its most visceral expression in the "School of Land," represented by Muhammed Naffan and Taufik Zayyad. Naffan's stories, such as "Skull No. 14", reinforce the "uncompromising stay"—the refusal to abandon the ancestral soil. This thematic preoccupation with the sanctity of the village reflects a shared aesthetic with the Turkish "Village Literature" (*Köy Edebiyatı*). According to Fethi Naci (2007), Turkish village novels, particularly the works of Yaşar Kemal, transformed the Anatolian peasant from a passive subject into a revolutionary figure fighting against oppression, echoing the agrarian resistance found in Zayyad's "The Eye of a Dead Cow" (1970).

As this prose matured, it began to depict the struggle as a total existential commitment involving sacrifice and symbolic endurance. In Taufik Zayyad's *Mahmud Does Not Retreat*, the blacksmith's son becomes an archetype of the indomitable national spirit. His ability to hammer iron with "extraordinary ease" functions as a metaphor for the ideological forging of the people, resonating with the Turkish socialist realism of Orhan Kemal, where the dignity of labor is the cornerstone of national awakening (Bezirci 1984).

The transition to collective sacrifice is further explored in Ali Hussein Khalaf's collection, *Take Me to Bisana* (1977). Through narratives such as *A Seed of an Orange* and *A Fish and a Handful of Soil*, Khalaf illustrates the visceral attachment to the soil. The tragic irony of a boy killed for taking oranges from his father's garden highlights the dispossession of Palestinian space. The image of the fisherman clutching a "handful of soil" wrapped in a scarf serves as the ultimate symbol of the portable homeland—a motif that echoes the Turkish folk tradition of carrying a piece of one's native earth (*vatantoprağı*) into exile.

Furthermore, Toufic Fayyad's *Yellow Street* collection elevates these themes to a metaphysical level. The character Amin Assad, who

remains unbroken by torture, embodies the principle of Sumud (steadfastness). As noted by Albert Memmi (1965), the colonizer often attempts to fracture the identity of the oppressed, yet Fayyad's heroes find strength in their absolute refusal to leave. This commitment is rendered in the symbolic story *Umm al-Khair*, where the protagonist's sacrifice gives life to her surroundings, functioning as an allegory for national rebirth. The recurring image of the "snake" that destroys everything in its path serves as a potent symbol of colonial encroachment, much like the predatory figures in Turkish village prose. By blending psychological depth with landscape sketches that contrast the "beauty of the dawn" with the "dark deeds" of the ruler, these writers transform Palestinian literature into an eternal testament of dignity and resistance.

While these symbols highlight the physical struggle, the narrative strategies of resistance also found expression through the integration of folklore and biting satire, most notably in the works of Emil Habibi. In his collection *Six Times Six Days*, Habibi transforms traditional processions and local legends into acts of political protest. The depiction of the Jerusalem residents' march, which erupts into a collective cry of "my son!" as mothers claim the arrested youth, illustrates the communal bonds of the struggle. Habibi's use of folklore —as seen in the fairy-tale structures of *The Happy Meeting of Massoud* —is not an escape from reality, but a tool for preserving national identity against cultural erasure (Aliyeva 2024, 55; Nassar 2006, 150). This strategic use of the "folkloric subtext" to deliver social critique mirrors the Turkish literary tradition of satire, exemplified by Haldun Taner, where traditional motifs are repurposed to satirize contemporary political absurdities through a technique often described as "epic detachment" (Moran 1994, 112).

The psychological and symbolic depth of this resistance is further expanded by the voices of women writers who, since the 1970s and 1980s, have reshaped the literary framework to include critiques of patriarchy and socio-cultural constraints alongside nationalist themes. As Miriam Cooke argues, the intersection of nationalism and feminism became a new frontier for Arab literature (Cooke 1996, 269). Nawal El Saadawi's *Woman at Point Zero* (1975) and Sahar Khalifeh's *Wild Thorns* portray prison and domestic life as dual sites of captivity and resistance. This gendered perspective finds a strong parallel in Turkish literature of the same era, where writers like Leyla Erbil and Adalet Ağaoğlu challenged both state authoritarianism and patriarchal

structures, often utilizing internal monologues to reflect the fragmented consciousness of the modern woman (Moran 1994, 235). Whether through the satirical legends of Habibi or the emancipatory prose of Khalifeh and Saadawi, these narratives demonstrate that the Palestinian and Turkish pens are not only fighting against external occupation but also for internal liberation and the right to "live as a nation".

Digital transformation and contemporary narratives of resistance

The 21st century has brought a paradigm shift to resistance literature through technological advancements. Digital platforms have allowed writers to bypass traditional censorship, giving rise to social media poetry and microfiction. During the Arab Spring (2010–2012), this digital evolution was led by figures like Egyptian poet Tamim al-Barghouti and Tunisian blogger Lina Ben Mhenni, who bridged the gap between literary art and political activism. This era introduced new emotional dimensions to the literary discourse—ranging from revolutionary romanticism to political realism—where literature did not merely celebrate uprisings but critically examined their complexities. Modern Arab resistance literature has thus evolved into a multidimensional platform, addressing political, ideological, and gender-based struggles while utilizing globalization and social media to amplify its reach beyond the Arab world.

In this contemporary landscape, writers do not only preserve tradition but also reinterpret it to reflect changing social and political realities (Aliyeva 2024, 305). This is evident in the works of Khaled Khalifa, who depicts societal devastation in Syria, and Ahmed Saadawi, whose *Frankenstein in Baghdad* uses gothic symbolism to portray the fragmentation of the modern city. Saadawi's creation of a "creature" made from the body parts of explosion victims serves as a powerful metaphor for the collective trauma of war—a narrative technique that mirrors the "dark realism" found in contemporary Turkish literature, where authors deal with the ghosts of past political upheavals. These narratives integrate the ideals of social justice and truth as essential components of national identity, presenting literature as a manifestation of collective will and moral resistance (Musawi 2006, 74).

Whether through the psychological study of refugees in Omar El Akkad's *What Strange Paradise*—which highlights the personal struggle to maintain identity amidst dehumanizing conditions (El Akkad 2021, 12)—or the moral turmoil of political violence in

Yasmina Khadra's *The Attack*, contemporary prose continues to document the human cost of displacement. This focus on the "displaced subject" finds a strong parallel in the works of modern Turkish writers who explore the themes of internal migration and the loss of cultural roots in the face of rapid urbanization.

The pinnacle of this modern epic tradition remains Elias Khoury's *Bab al-Shams* (*Gate of the Sun*). Spanning history from the 1936 revolt to the 1990s, Khoury constructs a "mosaic of memory" that captures the harsh reality of refugee camps and the resilience of the Palestinian spirit. By utilizing the stream of consciousness and a vast archive of oral testimonies, Khoury transforms personal stories into a permanent historical record. The novel's structure, which refuses a linear timeline, reflects the fragmented nature of the Palestinian experience itself. Ultimately, the evolution of this literature suggests that resistance is no longer just a reaction to external occupation; it is a profound intellectual and aesthetic commitment to justice. By weaving together folklore, digital activism, and existential exploration, contemporary Arab and Turkish writers ensure that the narrative of their people is not merely a chronicle of suffering, but an enduring testament to the dignity of the human spirit in an ever-changing global context.

Conclusion

Resistance literature, as demonstrated throughout this study, is not merely a documentation of conflict but a vital aesthetic and intellectual fortress for national identity in the Near East. By comparing Arab and Turkish traditions, it becomes clear that resistance through the word functions as a shared cultural mechanism. In both contexts, literature has evolved from a tool for "reporting" struggle to a sophisticated medium for "reconstructing" the nation. Whether through the Turkish poets of the Milli Mücadele or the Palestinian voices of the Nakba, the literary pen has consistently transformed individual suffering into a collective strategy for survival. The findings of this research highlight that Palestinian resistance literature, in particular, has moved beyond simple pessimism or mourning. It has brought the "ordinary person"—with their daily worries and quiet resilience—to the forefront of the narrative. The love for the land is not depicted as an abstract sentiment, but as a lived reality of protest against arbitrariness and violence. This transformation is mirrored in the Turkish "Village Literature" (*Köy Edebiyatı*) and social realism, where the peasant and the laborer are elevated from passive subjects to conscious agents of change. The

"national hero" in both traditions is no longer an idealized figure from the past, but a contemporary individual who understands that daily existence on their ancestral soil is, in itself, an act of resistance. Furthermore, the transition from exile-based narratives to prose produced within occupied or contested territories marks a new phase in Middle Eastern modernism. While exile literature often focuses on the psychological awakening of the individual, the literature produced on the ground—from the "School of Land" to the digital activism of the Arab Spring—emphasizes the necessity of an "uncompromising stay." Contemporary writers like Elias Khoury and Ahmed Saadawi, much like their Turkish counterparts, have shown that the modern epic is built on the preservation of historical memory against cultural erasure.

In conclusion, this comparative analysis reveals that resistance literature in the Near East is a multidimensional platform. It addresses external territorial challenges while simultaneously fighting for internal liberation and social justice. By bridging folklore, modernism, and digital innovation, Arab and Turkish writers have ensured that the spirit of the people remains unbroken. Their works serve as an eternal testament to human dignity, proving that, even under the most dehumanizing conditions, the literary word remains the ultimate shield for the sanctity of the homeland and the right to live as a nation.

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Anticipating Death on the Domestic Stage: Grief, Family, and Kübler-Ross in Laura Wade's *Colder Than Here*

Belgin Bağırlar*

Abstract: The period before bereavement is difficult to describe because the expected loss is already shaping everyday life while the person who will be mourned remains present. Laura Wade's theatre places this tension inside and ordinary family home, where practical arrangements and avoidance occur together. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross's five-stage model gives the discussion an initial vocabulary for denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. It is treated here as a heuristic rather than a fixed sequence, since the characters respond unevenly and often contradict themselves. In her play *Colder Than Here* (2005), she explores how mortality is perceived by family members and the individual who is facing it, as well as their emotional and psychological struggle to cope with it. In the play, Myra prepares herself physically and emotionally for death. Her husband and two daughters must fulfill her final wishes while also confronting emotions and memories they have long suppressed. Through their journey, the play delves into the multifaceted nature of grief. The aim of this article is to examine how grief is represented and negotiated through the lens of Elizabeth Kübler-Ross's "Five-Stage Grief Model". The article also reveals how Wade represents the perception and experience of death in contemporary society.

Keywords: Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, Five-Stage Grief Model, death, contemporary British theatre, Laura Wade

Introduction

Death is an inevitable reality of human life. Although we are aware of it, we often unconsciously avoid thinking about this reality. However, in the 21st century, frequent experiences of pandemics and natural disasters such as earthquakes and floods have brought death into our daily lives more visibly. This constant exposure, together with the uncertainty of death, has increased negative psychological effects and

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AGATHOS, Volume 17, Issue 2 (33-34): 349-360, DOI 10.5281/zenodo.23371791
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contributed to a rise in mental health problems. Theatre, as a mirror of society, has addressed the inevitable themes of death and mourning from various perspectives throughout different historical periods, particularly within the contexts of individual trauma and psychological disintegration. This makes the mourning process, which varies by society and culture, more meaningful.

In *Mourning and Melancholia*, Freud states that the mourning process experienced after the death of a loved person—the lost object—is not "pathological" (Freud 1957, 238), because it is a natural and necessary phase that must be lived through. Although grief initially dominates a large part of our lives, it gradually diminishes over time. It also allows individuals to continue their lives with reduced pain (Tonkin 1996, 10). Bowlby (1980, 27) claims that "Grief is the price we pay for attachment and love. Without attachment, there would be no grief". Explaining mourning through emotional intensity and attachment theory, Bowlby emphasizes the lasting impact of grief on individuals' lives. Parkes, influenced by Bowlby, contends that bereavement is not merely a psychological degeneration but also "a part of life as the joy of love" (Parkes 1972, 5). He highlights both the necessity and naturalness of the process. According to Kübler-Ross, who made significant contributions to psychology through her work on death and mourning, it is impossible for individuals confronting death and loss to respond in the same way.

Based on interviews with terminally ill patients, Elisabeth Kübler-Ross identified the stages of the mourning process and named her theory the "Five Stages of Grief." This model has been widely applied beyond death, including losses such as divorce or unemployment. According to Kübler-Ross's theory, the stages—Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression, and Acceptance—allow us to approach the mourning/death process within a specific framework. In her book, *On Death and Dying* (1969), Kübler-Ross emphasizes that death is a reality we must all learn to accept as part of life. Kübler-Ross did not, however, describe these responses as a compulsory route with a single order. They may overlap or recur a qualification that matters when the model is transferred from dying patients to relatives anticipating a loss. Babarinde accordingly treats the stages as a provisional language through which people may recognise parts of their experience, rather than a complete account of grief (Babarinde 2025, 128). Kübler-Ross also links the fear of death to unconscious associations with emotions such as fear and punishment, and when we confront death, we also

confront these unconscious fears. For this cultural disposition, she uses the phrase "death-denying society" (Kübler-Ross 1972, 174). While in the past people primarily died due to wars and epidemics, technological advances and medical treatments have rendered the time and manner of death increasingly unpredictable. Although humankind has achieved remarkable success in many fields, death remains inevitable. The transformation of the unknown into the unpredictable contributes to the formation of a death-denying society. Despite our society's advancements in medical fields, cryonics, anti-aging pharmaceuticals, and organ transplantation to challenge death, Ross insists that we must accept the inevitability of death. For this reason, she asserts: "Those who learned to know death, rather than to fear and fight it, become our teachers about life" (Kübler-Ross 1969, 138). Moreover, those who lose loved ones are not always adults; children under the age of nine also experience these stages. Nonetheless, children experience these stages with less depth than adults, because "they have no real concept of death yet" (Kübler-Ross 1972, 18).

Despite its widespread use, Kübler-Ross's theory has been criticized by many scholars in terms of both its contemporaneity and sufficiency. According to Hall, while transitions between the stages in Kübler-Ross's model are flexible, the theory remains "incapable of capturing the complexity, diversity and idiosyncratic quality of the grieving experience" (Hall 2014, 8). Friedman and James press the objection further. They assert that variation is not a minor exception to the model but a challenge to the assumption that grief unfolds in recognisable stages. As they state, "The fact is, no study has ever established that stages of grief actually exist, and what are defined as such can't be called stages" (2008, 42). Avis et al., writing about public accounts of grief, reach a related caution. The model remains "extremely popular and frequently accepted," but familiarity should not be mistaken for confirmation (2021, 1). Recent crises have also made the social conditions of mourning harder to ignore, since interrupted rituals and anticipatory grief shape how loss is lived and narrated.

The attraction of a stage model lies in the order it appears to give to an experience that resists order. Friedman and James therefore question not merely the number or sequence of the stages, but the evidential basis for assuming that such stages exist at all (2008, 38). Theatre approaches the problem differently. It can place incompatible responses, bodily presences, and mourning practices within the same

dramatic time. Death has consequently remained a persistent concern from ancient tragedy to contemporary performance. Theatre presents mourning and death by revealing individuals' diverse grieving practices, rituals, and complex emotional responses following profound loss, thereby fostering emotional sharing. In this sense, "death has been the lifeblood of theatre" (Robson 2019, viii). In *Performing Grief in Pandemic Theatres*, Walsh (2024, 7) argues that theatre stages death and mourning in order "to forge meaningful relationships between what's gone and what remains". Consequently, rendering grief and death visible enables individuals to express emotions more openly and facilitates confrontation with the feared and unknown. Similarly, Twitchin (2016, 57) also asserts that theatre, death, and mourning are deeply intertwined in revealing the tragic and historical realities of life.

Lehmann (2016, 411) states that "mourning has found different forms of expression at different times. However, modulated, tragic experience returns again and again". In ancient Greek tragedy, audiences witness the downfalls and tragic deaths of heroes such as Oedipus and Ajax. These heroes, tested by death because of excessive *hybris* or fatal error, ultimately generate scenes of sorrow and mourning among others. Themes of grief and death recur persistently in Shakespeare's plays as well. Shakespeare explores the fragility of human bonds and the collapse of political and moral order. For instance, in *King Lear*, following Cordelia's death, the audience witnesses Lear's elegy, as well as Edgar's lament after Lear's death.

War, secularisation, and changes in theatrical form have also altered the language through which loss is staged. Absurdist drama deprives its characters of a reliable metaphysical or linguistic structure within which death might be understood. In Ionesco's play, uncertainty about whether a person is living or dead belongs to a wider breakdown of reference. Mortality becomes disturbing because its speakers cannot secure a common account of reality.

Contemporary plays often extend grief beyond private sorrow by tracing its cultural and political conditions. In Sarah Kane's plays "death is … the only escape from the nightmare of living" (Soncini 2010, 116). Caryl Churchill employs death as a means of critiquing patriarchal authority and capitalist structures. Similarly, in *Oh, What a Lovely War*, Joan Littlewood satirizes World War I through popular songs that emphasize the immense human cost of conflict. Littlewood uses mourning as a collective experience. He allows the audience to

participate in a shared process of grief by confronting the tragic futility and waste of human life. On the other side, Laura Wade, one of the leading contemporary playwrights, explores grief as an internal and psychological process.

Focusing on death and mourning in her first staged play *Colder Than Here* and later in *Breathing Corpses*, Wade was honoured with the Pearson Prize for the Most Promising Playwright in 2006 for both plays. Vient (2021, 10) states that "for Wade, it is the stories —'learning about truth through fiction'—that constitute the most important aspect of creating theatre". Drawing on experiences, memories, and events with both emotional depth and realism, Wade reflects these elements in her plays with remarkable skill, resulting in a highly innovative theatrical style.

Haugton (2018) examines the theme of grief trauma in *Colder Than Here* through its political and cultural dimensions. Gülter (2021), on the other hand, approaches grief trauma within the framework of family relationships and connects it to the concept of ecological trauma. However, the dramatic impact of the anticipatory grief process on individuals has not yet been sufficiently explored. Through this article, Elisabeth Kübler-Ross's Five Stages of Grief Model is used to examine the emotional rhythms and affective contradictions of grief as they emerge on stage. Kübler-Ross's model has been widely criticised for its linear structure and clinical limitations. Nevertheless, when employed as an interpretive (heuristic) framework, the model continues to retain its value as an effective analytical tool (Stroebe, Schut, and Boerner 2017, 278). In this sense, the representation of grief in *Colder Than Here* moves beyond a strictly clinical paradigm. The aim of this article is to reveal Wade's approach to the theme of death in contemporary society and to demonstrate how she transforms grief into a performative and relational experience embedded within everyday life.

Themes of death and mourning in *Colder Than Here*

First staged at the Soho Theatre in 2005, *Colder Than Here* brought Laura Wade critical attention within contemporary British theatre. While Haughton (2018) describes the play as a "subtly chilling play", Hickling (2012) argues that it "is strongest in the scenes where the family appear fractious with grief; at other times the tone becomes a little maudlin, even mawkish". Focusing on the thematic concerns of Wade's play, Sierz (2012, 7) labels it "a contemporary chronicler of

our attitudes to death". In contrast to critics who emphasize the play's realist and emotional qualities, Stewart (2017) describes it as "a sensitively handled and genuinely touching comedy about death". *Colder Than Here* presents familiar experiences through a realistic style. It situates themes of death and mourning within moments that are at times reflective and at times deeply melancholic. Examining the play from the perspective of contemporary trauma, Gülter draws attention to its political implications. She argues that "the play further tangles up the questions of family relationships, lonesome individuals, and ecological deterioration" (Gülter 2021, 67).

In Wade's play, symbolic language and realism intertwine. In the title, Wade associates life and death with the ironic juxtaposition of symbols. She emphasizes the natural circulation of death and life. Composed of nine scenes, the play centres on Myra, a middle-aged woman diagnosed with cancer and explores her emotional relationships with her husband and two daughters. "The liminal state of dying that Myra embodies further embeds the dramatic space, revealing the hierarchies and, to a certain extent, class relations that the Bradleys' social bond maintains as a middle-class family in contemporary England" (Haughton 2018, 83). Wade thus exposes how the phenomenon of death is normalized within everyday life. The play examines how a family navigates grief, denial, and emotional reconnection in the face of impending loss.

Robson (2019, 11) argues that "the idea of the cemetery as a city of the dead (that is, where the dead live) has frequently been used as a metaphor"; since the cemetery functions as a space shared by both the living and the dead through rituals and acts of remembrance.

From the beginning of the play, Wade brings life and death together within the same setting. She ironically blurs the boundary between them. The play begins with Myra and her twenty-seven-year-old daughter Jenna having a picnic in a graveyard. Through the depiction of the trees—"the trees just a few years old and still spindly" —and a graveyard that "is out of the sun" (Wade 2005, 9-10), Wade creates a grotesque atmosphere in which the living and the dead coexist. The fact that the play both begins and ends in the same graveyard emphasizes the continuity of the cycle of life and death.

According to Kübler-Ross, the first stage individuals experience upon hearing either news of their own impending death or that of a loved one is denial. She argues that "the patients or their loved ones want to believe that a mistake has been made, and they are not actually

dying, but the appearance of denial in the survivor of the deceased is much more symbolic" (Kübler-Ross& Kesler, 2005, 5). In this sense, denial functions as a defence mechanism that allows individuals to cope with loss. By temporarily rejecting reality, individuals protect themselves from shock and attempt to maintain normalcy in their lives.

In the early scenes of the play, Jenna repeatedly mentions her inability to accept her mother's approaching death while picnicking with her. She remarks, "I woke up one morning and realised I'd been living a lie all my life" (Wade, 2005, 12). As Jenna begins to question her life, she expresses her need for her mother's support while describing a problem at work. "Jenna: I miss her. Like the other day, I got from work and it was a shit day—I wanted her there. And I got home and just gripped by it. Desperately wanted her. Lying in bed, crying my eyes out and there's no one else, no-one else is good enough" (Wade, 2005, 38–39).

Through Jenna's character, Wade presents the denial stage of a grieving daughter in a realistic manner. Moreover, when Myra expresses her wish to be buried in a cardboard coffin in the same graveyard where they picnic, Jenna continues eating as if nothing has happened. She psychologically denies the reality of her mother's impending death.

Harriet, the elder daughter, entirely rejects the idea of her mother's death. She confesses, "…And I just thought God, I can't cope with this, I can't do this. I was looking at her and I missed her…" (Wade 2005, 76–77). Struggling to manage her pain, Harriet insists that adapting to her mother's absence is impossible.

Kübler-Ross (2011, 42) argues that men and women often respond differently to death and mourning. She notes that "in our society it is supposed to be unmanly to cry". Alec, Myra's husband, also displays clear signs of denial. He isolates himself, avoids discussing his wife's illness, and becomes emotionally withdrawn. Rather than confronting Myra's impending death, Alec chooses silent denial. He conceals his grief and tears from his family. While others speak of funeral arrangements, Alec distracts himself by solving puzzles or repairing a heater. His silence and emotional distance from his daughters reflect his refusal to accept reality. In this way, Wade exposes gendered differences in responses to death and grief.

According to Kübler-Ross, another stage of mourning is anger. "This stage presents itself in many ways… Anger does not have to be logical or valid" (Kübler- Ross& Kessler, 2005, 8). Harriet's anger

assigns blame where no one can control outcome. Her accusation that Jenna continues to behave as though Myra's illness were "your disaster" redirects helplessness into a dispute over whose suffering is legitimate (Wade 2005, 41). The attack reaches beyond Jenna. It also registers resentment towards Alec's distance, the disruption of familiar family roles, and the expectation that Harriet remain competent while her mother is disappearing. The outburst brings suppressed conflict into speech, although the play does not treat that disclosure as proof that Harriet has completed one stage and moved to another.

Jenna's decision to end her relationship follows a different logic. Her admission that she did not want her boyfriend "at the funeral" imagines Myra's death in advance and reorganises intimacy around that future event (Wade 2005, 78). The action is abrupt, but the line does not identify anger as its cause. Instead, anticipatory grief reaches into a relationship outside the family, where the imagined funeral becomes a test of who may witness Jenna's loss.

Kübler-Ross associates bargaining with conditional promises through which a dying person seeks delay or reprieve. It represents a form of truce in which hope intertwines with reality. "Patients usually promise something, usually in exchange for prolongation of life. It looks like peace, but it is not peace yet" (Kübler-Ross 2011, 38). Wade represents this stage through Harriet. As winter ends, Harriet becomes aware that her mother's death is approaching, she insists that summer is an inappropriate time for death. "Harriet: When she dies. Winter's easier… Summer you're supposed to be happy, aren't you?" (Wade 2005, 75)

Through Harriet's internal negotiations, Wade intertwines bargaining with temporality. She emphasizes the character's need for time to confront a reality she is not yet prepared to face.

Following bargaining, individuals often enter the stage of depression. Wade illustrates Harriet's transition into this stage as she confesses that she "can't get on with her life because she's feeling all the time" (Wade 2005, 77). For Harriet, the reality of death prevents any sense of continuation.

Kübler-Ross and Kessler (2005, 11) define depression as a natural response to profound loss. Like Freud's distinction between mourning and melancholia, Kübler-Ross identifies two forms of depression. First one is reactive depression which is associated with loss already experienced. The second one is preparatory grief, which involves mourning an impending loss and results in deeper alienation (Kübler-

Ross 1972, 177). Kübler-Ross argues that women often navigate this stage more easily than men. In the play, Alec's quiet despair and emotional withdrawal reflect depressive resignation. He internalizes his grief and avoids discussing death with Myra or his daughters. His silence turns into a manifestation of sorrow.

Kübler-Ross compresses the movement from denial to depression into changing forms of assent. "If, in the denial stage, they say 'No, not me,' then in the anger stage they say 'Why me,' and in the bargaining stage 'Yes me, but.' When they drop the 'but,' it is 'Yes me.' Then the patient becomes very depressed" (Kübler-Ross 1972, 177). This sequence is too orderly for Wade's family. Acceptance appears beside irritation and renewed avoidance.

Myra discusses her death with unusual directness, although her composure does not amount to uninterrupted serenity. From the very beginning of the play, she attempts to prepare her funeral speech. She asks her husband and daughters for a coffin made of cardboard and decorated with stars. Wade repeatedly emphasizes Myra's request for a cardboard coffin throughout the play to highlight the ordinariness of death and its place within the natural cycle. Actually her proactive planning of her burial and funeral reflects a desire to render death meaningful. She also encourages emotional connection among family members. She assigns tasks, turns off Jenna's phone to allow intimacy, and urges Alec to "fall in love" (Wade 2005, 84) and "look after the girls" (Ibid, 86). In doing so, Myra supports her family's journey toward acceptance. By the end of the play, Alec agrees to share a room with Myra again, Jenna begins a new relationship, and the sisters grow closer. The final scenes suggest reconciliation—not only with death but also with one another.

Wade reconstructs the relationship between life and death ironically in the play's conclusion. The play ends in the same setting in which it begins. Wade emphasizes its transformation: "the site has increased beauty since we last saw it" (Wade 2005, 85). This spatial continuity and change reflect the non-linear nature of grief. As Kübler-Ross suggests, loss does not disappear; individuals learn to live alongside it, establishing a new equilibrium. Despite the setting remaining the same, its aesthetic enrichment suggests that the loss is not denied; rather, its transformative effect is acknowledged and accepted.

The play does not confirm Myra's death. Instead, Wade holds the scene at the threshold between anticipation and bereavement. "Myra looks around her, smiling quietly. She slowly lies down on her side

and strokes the most with her hand. She tucks her feet up and places her hands under her face, as if she were asleep. After a few moments, Myra changes her mind. She rolls over slowly and lies on her back, looking up at the sky" (Wade 2005, 95).

By emphasizing Myra's foetal position, Wade suggests that death is as natural as birth. Looking toward the sky, Myra meets death peacefully, dissolving fear of the unknown. Metaphorically, even the stars she draws on her coffin ultimately yield to the order of nature. Finally, Wade dismantles the fear of the unknown traditionally associated with death.

Conclusion

Wade presents a compelling dramatic portrayal of how death and mourning—often forgotten in contemporary society—are perceived and experienced. Through everyday domestic settings and symbolic spaces such as the home and the graveyard, she reinforces the naturalness of death. Throughout the play, she reveals how characters react to loss differently. Wade stages that the loss may remain while the mourner's life gradually develops a larger context around it. In this sense, the play foregrounds anticipatory grief as a prolonged psychological and emotional process rather than a singular moment of loss.

In contemporary societies, when confronted with the natural cycle of life and death, the emotional responses of alienated family members can be deeply exhausting. When approached as a dramaturgical and interpretative framework, Kübler- Ross's Five Stages of Grief Model remains analytically productive within contemporary theatre studies. In the play, Kübler-Ross's stages do not appear as rigid or sequential phases but rather as overlapping emotional states embodied by each character. The family members move through denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance in different ways and at different paces. By dramatizing these disordered and uneven transitions, Wade emphasizes that grief in contemporary society is not linear; instead, it is fragmented, relational and often shaped by interpersonal dynamics rather than only individual psychology.

Gender enters this pattern through forms of expression that differ within the family. Harriet and Jenna verbalise distress, while Alec translates much of his loss into withdrawal and silence. Yet Wade does not reduce these responses to an opposition between emotional women and an unfeeling man. Harriet and Jenna also deflect grief through

accusation or changes in their intimate lives. Alec's attention to the broken heater turns practical labour into care. The contrast places masculine restraint under pressure while asking who is permitted to speak and which forms of care the family can recognise..

Using silence and cyclical imagery, *Colder Than Here* transforms grief into a performative experience enacted on stage rather than merely represented. These devices do not turn death into a reassuring emblem of renewal. The burial landscape changes, but warmer weather does not remove the family's knowledge of what is approaching. Grief is performed through recurring tasks, pauses, and spatial associations whose meanings shift from scene to scene. The play makes mortality shareable without claiming that it has become harmless or complete; its final image belongs to anticipation, not to a finished cycle of death and rebirth.

The closing scenes register changes in the Bradleys' relations, but they do not show all four characters completing Kübler-Ross's stages. Jenna begins another relationship, Harriet speaks with greater candour, and Alec moves closer to Myra. None of this cancels the preceding fear or conflict. Myra remains alive when the play ends, so the family's anticipatory grief has not yet become bereavement. The ending holds them in that unresolved interval, allowing attachment, irritation, care, and foreknowledge to coexist rather than converting them into completed acceptance.

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Tragedy of strength: A precarity's study of Yank in *The Hairy Ape*

Rity Choubey, Shuchi Agrawal and Reena*

Abstract: The paper studies the condition of the vulnerable classes represented by Eugene O'Neill in his play *The Hairy Ape*, highlighting the significant psychological insecurities of the characters. The speeches and atmosphere inhabited by the characters are a projection of their inner turmoil and trauma.The current study will identify how Yank's confrontation with reality and his tragic fate are a result of the precarious condition of his livelihood through a close textual analysis. The paper examines the influence of the struggles of destitutes and victimized bodies in *The Hairy Ape* on the felt vulnerabilities of the socially and economically alienated classes. The paper has employed the idea of precarity internalized by the characters of the play, enabling them to associate emotions and trauma with events, time, and objects. O'Neill has been considered the bard of suffering and is known to represent the lives of individuals with a death drive or tendency to kill oneself, as exemplified in the central character, Yank, in American society.

Keywords: precarious, tragedy, uncertainty, vulnerable, socio-economic

Introduction

Eugene O'Neill is a slice-of-life dramatist who foregrounds the insecurities of the dispossessed stratum of his society. He dramatizes the emotional instability of disempowered individuals of his time who adopt adversity and uncertainties as a consequent survival strategy. New studies are being published on the environmental risks associated with precarity (Stokols & Barankevich 2024; Vu & Nguyen 2024), but how vulnerable conditions have traditionally shaped psychological and existential orientation needs more attention. The current study seeks to explore Yank's confrontation with reality and his tragic fate as a result of the precarious condition of his livelihood through a close textual analysis. The paper aims to examine the influence of the physical

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AGATHOS, Volume 17, Issue 2 (33-34): 361-371, DOI 10.5281/zenodo.23372072
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struggles of destitutes and victimized bodies on the felt vulnerabilities of the socially and economically alienated classes, in the play *The Hairy Ape*. The lens of precarity facilitates our understanding of how socio-economic exclusion can lead to emotional vulnerability. The study has reviewed literary and theoretical works that have observed the social and economic implications of precarity. Furthermore, the theoretical framework of precarity is utilized to bring out how precarity helps create a bridge in the social and literary understanding of the play, as it connects emotional instability with the economic inequality of the characters. The play *The Hairy Ape* is chosen for such an investigation due to its unique blend of fragile identities and the spaces that are utilized by the dramatist to represent profound emotions like the fondness and commitment of an individual to his primitive strength.

Precarity is an intense human condition, differentiated from vulnerability (Hogg et al. 2021) that exposes a segment of individuals to uncertainty and marginality. The socially and economically ignored are exposed to suffering and neglect, which ultimately leads to emotional and psychological precarity. (Blustein et al. 2024) Thus, precarity refers to the situation of an individual who is constantly exposed to economic and socio-political fragility. The subject's disposition then indicates loss of agency and empathy as a consequence of a precarious existence. "Precariat" as understood by Guy Standing (2011) refers to an emerging social class that has no stable occupation, identity, or equal rights. Standing has also divided the precariat based on their emotional fragility on the same lines as Yank, Paddy and Long "The precariat can be divided into three further groups – atavists, who look back to a lost past; nostalgics, who look forlornly for a present, a home; and progressives, who look for a lost future." (Standing 2011)

The concept of precarity in literary circles has been popularized through the work of Judith Butler, a significant critic of contemporary times. In *Precarious Lives: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (2004), she has unravelled the intensity of vulnerability that ensues from the occurrence of an event. Her work is a testament to the importance of the relationship between an anonymous individual and a socially motivated phenomenon. It can be concluded from her work that an individual's sovereignty is permanently at risk. The understanding of precarity needs more attention from drama and theatre critics in the present times, as uncertainty has become a reality

when it comes to human relationships and agency. Standing and Butler have highlighted the structural production of precarity that deprives certain sections of society of recognizability and economic equality. While Standing focuses on the insecurity of work and social rights, Butler brings out the implications of vulnerability as a by product of social structure. Thus, their ideas on precarity unify various groups under a panorama of insecurities.

Eugene O'Neill as an adapter of precarity on stage

Eugene O'Neill attempted to represent the poetics of feelings and emotions. He is a notable dramatist who upholds the narrative and aesthetics of survivability and uncertainty in his plays. O'Neill, being ahead of his time, has successfully unravelled the mystery hidden in the drama of life. Furthermore, O'Neill's oeuvre is filled with the uncertainty of the time, represented through painful memories, pipe dreams, and unfulfilled desires. It is suggested that the tragic fate, in his plays, is induced by the traumatic experiences that can lead the protagonist into vulnerability of mind and body. He has displayed a keenness to capture the precarious in his works through various narrative techniques. O'Neill's dialogues are packed with emotional fragility, depicting the restless condition of Yank and the fellow stokers.

Laurin Porter (1993) has suggested that feelings of greed and transcendence are prominent in the Cycle plays of Eugene O'Neill. Porter claims that O'Neill portrays the emotions of socially excluded, poverty-stricken, and downtrodden individuals, who have lost a complete sense of identity as their illusions shatter when faced with reality. Yank, in *The Hairy Ape*, having worked in an unstable working environment, rejoices in the economic displacement "Dis is home, see? What d'yuh want wit home? [Proudly.] I runned away from mine when I was a kid. On'y too glad to beat it, dat was me. Home was lickings for me, dat's all." (O'Neill 2004, Scene I, pp. 5–6) and fragility of his condition at first, only to be struck with the pangs of reality after being yelled at as a "filthy beast" (Ibid, Scene III, p. 10) The blunt exclamation made by the daughter of a steel magnate makes Yank crudely aware of the existing hierarchical divide between him and Mildred. He is immediately seized with overwhelming emotions that shatter his pride in bodily strength and movement.

The stokers in the play *The Hairy Ape* represent the working class; they are depicted as a group of people who have been displaced in their

efforts to earn a livelihood. The physical and emotional fragility of the characters is highlighted in the environment they inhabit—a dark, infernal space reeking of sweat and curses of the drunken stokers. The condition of the stokers is evident through their stooping postures, further symbolizing their psychological and physical alienation (Rundle 2008) from mainstream society. Robinson (1995) has observed that O'Neill understood that "Yank's hyper masculinity does indeed contain an underlying insecurity: as we shall see, it is threatened by one encounter with a woman." Yank is portrayed as a delusional character who becomes increasingly vulnerable as he transitions from darkness to light. The insecurity he feels is socially rooted, manifested in his inability to locate the force against which he has to fight, finally losing his life at the hands of the Ape. Yank's grief of a lack of identity or dignity, and not about the laborious work or inhaling a significant amount of dust in the stokehole, essentially engenders material precarity in the play. The livelihood of the stokers is always at physical or psychological risk. They are prone to accidents due to low safety standards, poor working environment with exposure to coal dust, and extreme heat, leading to frequent injuries and deaths. The threatening condition of their lives is useful in considering the oppressive, brutal, exploitative experiences of life inside the stokehole.

Precarity of emotional fragility

The scenes are arranged according to Yank's emotional state. The first scene is a witness to his excessive pride as he glorifies his physical agility "I'm de heart of it! Sure, I belong!" (O'Neill 2004, Scene I, pp. 8–9) Yank also bonds with other stokers, "We move, don't we? We're the engines!" (Ibid, Scene I, pp. 8-9), relating their shared vulnerability and struggle for self-definition. The oppression that emanates from the furnaces and boilers, filled with coal dust, brings the stokers together as they are seen revelling and cursing after getting drunk. Yank, through his drunken monologues, "He can't breathe and swallow coal dust, but I kin, see? Dat's fresh air for me! Dat's food for me! I'm new, get me? Hell in de stokehole? Sure! It takes a man to work in hell. Hell, sure, dat's my fav'rite climate. I eat it up! I git fat on it! It's me makes it hot! It's me makes it roar!" (Ibid, Scene I, pp. 7-8) brings out the emotional attachment to his work of shovelling coal into a furnace on a ship. Butler (2012) recognizes such vulnerabilities and argues that Yank's disregard for his life is a product of society, as his precarity is due to exploitative labour conditions during industrialization. By

transforming precarious feelings into nostalgia and pride in enduring and isolated existence and emotional fragility, industrial systems gradually dispossess stokers of their identity or any sense of existential security.

Yank is exposed to humiliation after being called "Oh, the filthy beast", which sparks utter rage and hostility towards the authority Mildred symbolizes. The incident leaves him shocked as he cannot accept the demeaning assault on his self-esteem. Yank's sentiment is wounded by being rejected in a space he thought belonged to him. Mildred, the daughter of the President of Steel Trust, by dismantling his spirit, underscores the degrading ease with which the upper classes dare to dispossess the socially and economically weak. The meaninglessness forces Yank to find a place of belonging, but he remains unsuccessful in his endeavours "Christ, where do I fit in? I don't belong." (O'Neill 2004, Scene VIII, p. 38)

Sillars (2020) has pointed out that the primitiveness of the stokers is not just due to their appearance as an Ape but also because of their inability to belong to the spaces inhabited by the industrialists. The stokers are primitive in their insistence on physicality and strength. Yank's further identification with the Ape "So, I'm a busted Ingersoll, dat's what. Steel was me, and I own it. Steel, dat's de stuff, and de men dat's made out of it. But I ain't steel no more. I ain't de stuff."(O'Neill 2004, Scene VIII, p. 39) alienates him from the industrialists, fellow stokers, and his work. The tragedy that unfolds after this incident dramatizes the doomed fate of Yank, who embarks on a self-destructive journey.

Precarity embodied through inhabited spaces

Brugnoli (2012) has called attention to the imagery of "prison" recurring in the play and goes on to highlight a series of opposing forces involved in the spaces inhabited by individuals from different classes. The symbol of prison brings out the idea of socio-economic confinement of the workers in a society. Mildred's exclamatory disgust after looking at Yank, "filthy beast," echoes the precarious condition of Yank in the dark boiler room, who is covered in sweat and dirt. Brugnoli has also emphasized the importance of psychological violence that is caused by viewing oneself through someone else's eyes. Yank finds himself trapped in Mildred's gaze, witnessing the horror that she feels upon seeing him. Mildred's need to "see" how the "other halves" live establishes the exposed and defenceless condition

of the lower classes. The issue of class politics is raised by Long when he redirects her retort to their economic slavery, "It ain't her fault, it's her class. You've got to 'it the Capitalist class. That's where the trouble's at. The bloody first cabin swells don't think o' you as men. They think you're dirt—wage a slave, that's what you are." (O'Neill 2004, Scene VI, pp. 33–34) Long brings out Butler's idea of vulnerability and misrecognition.

The play *The Hairy Ape* also revolves around the fear of being excluded, as it represents their inability to belong, highlighting an existential issue that haunts the working classes. Binda Sah (2019) and Roy (1968) have noted that characters in *The Hairy Ape* are mostly seen to be struck by excessive rage, frenzy, and dilemma as they perpetually confront the loss of meaning in their lives. Yank's unwavering believes in his strength, "I'm de end! I'm de start! I start somep'n and de would moves! It—dat's me!--de new dat's moiderin' de old! I'm de ting in coal dat makes it boin; I'm steam and oil for de engines; I'm de ting in noise dat makes yuh hear it" (O'Neill 2004), crumbles after the ghastly encounter with Mildred. The insult not only exposes Yank's vulnerability but, as understood by Butler (2009), also renders his life unliveable. Long and Paddy, the socialist and nostalgic stokers, cannot provide Yank with the support or insight he requires to regain his lost sense of identity. Yank rejects their vague extremities of romantic idealization and ideological orientation, as it doesn't free him from his invasive thoughts. Left without revenge or a solution, his frenzied mind articulates "I ain't on oith and I ain't in heaven, get me? I'm in de middle, tryin' to separate me self but I can't." (O'Neill 2004, Scene VIII, p. 40)

Pessimistic strength of Yank

The play *The Hairy Ape* has been notably studied as a drama that represents the strength of a man who is unafraid of toiling in the scheme of things. The emotional volatility, anger, and awareness of their disadvantage fuel them into becoming a destructive force in society. Such a transition can also be seen in Yank, who is forced to associate with a real Ape in a cage (Rajeshwar 2022), representing brutal strength and a grotesque space. Even though Yank's strength can transcend him, the collective identity as a stoker and a past filled with emotional baggage hold him back, exemplifying Standing's (2011) notion that different groups within the precariat respond distinctly. While Paddy is found reminiscing over the past, Long finds

a way to blame it on society, none of which includes quitting a position and embarking on a doomed search in the middle of nowhere. Yank, unlike others, has an uncanny pride in Yank. Furthermore, Dutta (1984) says that "Yank doesn't artificially enact the primitive excess but derives it from the concept of Masculine Primitive." The irony of Yank's tragedy lies in his miscalculated understanding of power as the ability to swallow and breathe coal dust. Yank's desperation to belong after his terrifying encounter with Mildred is caused by the fragmentation of the reality that used to empower him with agency and a great ability to command the fellow stokers.

Furthermore, the play brings out the anguish of an individual who was once satisfied with his situation but is found completely devastated after a striking event. The tragedy of Yank resides in his fragile sense of self and his inability to emotionally recover from a situation that obliterates his pride in existence, while burying him deep into an echoing chamber moored on the shore of utter desolation.

The collapsing identity and anxiety exhibited by Yank, studied by Sumitha (2023), strip him of dignity, agency, and self-worth. She goes on to comment on the racial, cultural, and emotional insignificance of the workers in the lives of the wealthy and upper classes. Both Standing and Butler also agree with the fact that the precariat is a socially designated condition in which a group of people are pushed towards social and economic uncertainty, exposing a chasm that is visibly apparent in the play when Long says, "Hinsultin' us! Hinsultin' us, the bloody cow! And then bloody engineers! What right 'as they got to be exhibit in' us's if we was bleedin' monkeys in a menagerie? Did we sign for hinsults to our dignity as 'onest workers? Is that in the ship's articles?" (O'Neill 2004, Scene II, pp. 17–18)

Long is frustrated with the eroded and undervalued life of the stokers as he believes they are exposed to chronic labour, asymmetric obligations, and a suffocating working environment. The stokers are at the disposal of the upper classes to be studied and exploited, which are continually compromising their space and identity with little sympathy for their sentiments. Thus, O'Neill's play, *The Hairy Ape*, is a significant study to understand the traumatic impact of the class divide that exists in a society.

Socio-economic vulnerability of stokers

The American Dream, which promised to fulfil the aspirations of its people and eradicate their anxiety by transcending the vulnerable class

valued for their worth, remains highly compromised even today (Kaur 2023). The author of the article has suggested that Emerson's American land of dreams morphed into a wasteland devoid of hope and equality. The space inhabited by the stokers is antithetical to the ideas of liberty and equality that were upheld by the notion of American exceptionalism. (Fernández-Caparrós Turina, 2021)

The condition of the workers or the "other halves" (O'Neill 2004, Scene II, pp. 15–16), dramatized with realism by O'Neill, is rooted in the nation's deepening class division. The incidents of the play unfold against the backdrop of industrialization, which was responsible for the dehumanization of the working classes at the hands of the economically empowered. The rising inequality and materialism delineated the working classes and exposed them to oppression and discrimination. Alsanafi (2022) has asserted the indifference of the wealthy neighbourhoods like Fifth Avenue in the play towards the underprivileged section of society, highlighting the disconnection between the two classes. The narrator comments on the indifference of the crowd, "But as they seem neither to see nor hear him, he flies into a fury." (O'Neill 2004, Scene V, pp. 28–29)

The quintessential narrative of the estranged feelings between the capitalist (Nickle 1998) and the working class brings out the. Tale (2023) has suggested that O'Neill offers a strong critique of the economic superiority of a class of people based on their social standing. Yank's range of feelings, from pride to rage to alienation and despair, exemplifies systemic dispossession of an individual can be seen "The bloody first cabin swells don't think o' you as men. They think you're dirt—wage a slave, that's what you are." (O'Neill 2004, Scene VI, pp. 33–34) Plunka (1999) has mentioned that the representation of the transatlantic liner in the first scene not only brings out the health issues of industrialization in repetitive evocation of "smoke, coal, steel, heat, noise, and pounding engine of the Bessemer process have reduced humanity to a subrace paying homage to an omnipotent godlike force", but exposes the multifaceted socio-economic vulnerability of the misrecognized classes. Like Nietzsche, O'Neill has been considered a pessimistic playwright for his depiction of extreme psychological conditions that his characters endure. The techniques adopted by the playwright exemplify their isolation, loss of faith, rootlessness, and meaninglessness, to name a few. Yank's utter disappointment and disillusionment with the world create a void in his life that no one can fill. Finally, he accepts his situation and embraces

the fact that the real Beast in the cage is infinitely stronger than him. In the end, Yank dies disheartened at the idea of his ability to belong somewhere.

Conclusion

Eugene O'Neill, in *The Hairy Ape*, has shown that the emotional fragility of Yank emerges after the disruption of illusion. Yank's personal tragedy unfolds not only from the harsh working conditions of the Stokers but also from the emotional instability that exposes him to social and economic exclusion. Like Butler's argument, the play demonstrates that life without agency and dignity wounds the Stokers' psyche, revealing their vulnerability within a strongly divided community. The tragic irony of individuals like Yank lies in their self-destructive passions for the primitive reliance on strength. Being deprived of autonomy, choice, or formal education, which could help evade a doomed life, they remain imprisoned in small vessels and narrow ideologies of their own making. The unfolding trajectory aligns with Standing's notion of precarity as a socio-economic condition, which renders an individual defenceless and insecure. Yank and the fellow stokers are exposed to humiliation and disgrace without the liberty to defy subjugation or retrieve lost honour.

Yank's emotional journey from pride to suffering exemplifies the exploitative conditions of the workers. Yank's false sense of belonging to the ship and the boiler room embodies his dispossession and dehumanized existence as a result of economic hierarchization. The harsh and enduring subsistence, coupled with the feelings of misrecognition and humiliation, are certain tools utilized by the authoritative upper classes to administer the working classes. O'Neill locates his tragedy in the oppression of the working class and their servitude to the mechanized system built for their exploitation. Consistent with Standing and Butler, O'Neill validates that socio-economic structures are responsible for eroding the self-esteem of the working classes. Thus, establishing that industrial modernity has corroded the dignity of the working classes, as it is responsible for the physical and psychological violence prolonged through systemic exploitation.

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The contingency of pain: Maternal detachment, bereavement trauma, and Indigenous women's resilience in Tommy Orange's *There There*

Mamta Mehrania and Dinesh Babu P*

Abstract: Native American literature constitutes a vital archive for examining how inherited grief and social dislocation shape Indigenous lives in the present. In *There There* (2018), Tommy Orange foregrounds the emotional and relational consequences of maternal absence and abandonment within contemporary Native communities. The novel depicts Indigenous women not merely as passive inheritors of historical pain but as figures through whom trauma, memory, and resilience converge. This paper examines the contingency of pain, arguing that suffering in the novel is not an inevitable condition but a historically mediated and socially reproduced experience that persists across generations. Drawing upon Cathy Caruth's theory of trauma as belated and repetitive, the study examines how unresolved loss re-emerges in fragmented kinship structures, emotional withdrawal, and patterns of silence. Sara Ahmed's framework of the cultural politics of emotion further enables an analysis of pain as relational and circulatory, shaping attachment, exclusion, and communal belonging. Through the close analysis of the character Jacquie Red Feather, the paper contends maternal detachment should be understood not as individual failure but as a symptom of enduring structural marginalization and inherited disruption. At the same time, Orange resists a deterministic narrative of damage. Indigenous women articulate resilient presence through caregiving, narrative recalibration, and acts of relational endurance. The study concludes that ongoing negotiation within the affective afterlife of historical trauma and violence, thereby reaffirming indigenous continuity within contemporary precarity.

Keywords: trauma, memory, recovery, resilience, suffering

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AGATHOS, Volume 17, Issue 2 (33-34): 373-383, DOI 10.5281/zenodo.23372429
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Introduction

The relationship between pain and trauma exceeds the boundaries of the individual body and enters the domain of memory, relationality, and social structure. While pain may originate in embodied experiences, trauma transforms that pain into a temporally dislocated force that returns belatedly, shaping identity and interpersonal bonds. Pain is often described as a deeply private and subjective experience, shaped by one's own lived realities. As Kotarba (1983) observes, pain is frequently articulated as something "I have that others cannot have, or as a feeling that others have that I myself cannot feel" (Kotarba 1983, 29). This formulation highlights the intensely personal and seemingly incommunicable dimension of suffering. Yet pain does not remain confined to the individual psyche. It enters the collective domain of discourse, where it becomes mediated through language, culture, and shared historical conditions. In this sense, even the most intimate experiences of pain are structured by communal narratives, social reconstructions, and affective circulations. When pain is not adequately acknowledged, processed, or symbolically integrated, it assumes the form of trauma. Trauma may thus be understood as pain that exceeds the individual's capacity for immediate comprehension and returns in disruptive ways.

In Tommy Orange's *There There* (2018), pain and trauma are embedded within contemporary urban Indigenous life, where fractured kinship structures and unresolved grief shape everyday existence. The novel foregrounds disrupted maternal bonds rather than a stable, enduring motherhood as a source of nurture. Maternal absence in the text is not a matter of individual failure but emerges from compounded vulnerability marked by addiction, social marginalization, and gendered violence. The violation of Indigenous women further instigates this rupture, rendering the maternal body a site of both personal suffering and international fracture. Trauma, in this sense, is neither contained; it reverberates across generations through silence, emotional withdrawal, and identity disorganization. This study argues that *There There* represents pain as contingent upon ongoing structural precarity rather than as an isolated emotional condition. By examining disrupted maternal relationships and embodied vulnerability, the novel reveals how trauma circulates within families while simultaneously illuminating acts of endurance. Indigenous women, marked by bereavement and violation, sustain relational continuity through care, memory, and resilience. Orange

thus reframes trauma not as irreparable damage but as persistent negotiations within the history and survival.

Analysis: Structural violence, relocation, and formation of trauma

Jacquie Red Feather is a Cheyenne girl who lives in East Oakland with her mother and sister, Opal Viola Bear Shield. One day, her mother informed her, "We are moving to Alcatraz" (Orange 2018, 45). From November 1969 to June 1971, Native Americans occupied Alcatraz Island to protest the unjust treatment of indigenous peoples. However, life on the island was harsh and mirrored the material deprivation, replicating the structural conditions of many Indian reservations, as it "resembles most Indian reservations: it lacked running water, sanitation, transportation, minerals, industry, agriculture, and educational facilities" (Kelly 2014, 168). The occupation unfolded within conditions of acute infrastructural deprivation, thereby reproducing the systemic neglect historically imposed upon Indian reservations. As a child, Jacquie did not understand the purpose of moving to Alcatraz. When she questions her mother, she responds, "We are going to be with our relatives. Indians of All Tribes. We are going to where that prison was. Gonna start from the inside of the cell, which is where now, Indian people, there is where they got us" (Orange 2018, 48).The metaphor of "the cell" is symbolically dense: while framed as reclamation, it simultaneously acknowledges Indigenous confinement as a structural condition of colonial modernity. For Jacquie, this metaphor is not abstract but materially lived, transforming Alcatraz into a site of resistance and coexistence with structural precarity.

Once on the island, Jacquie finds herself among loosely supervised clusters of teenagers who drift through the cellblocks and parade grounds as adults direct their energy toward meetings, food lines, and maintenance. The thin social infrastructure exposes her to both the exhilaration of collective action and the risk of neglect, revealing how a space of resistance can also reproduce everyday precarity. There, she meets Harvey, a boy her age. One day, while playing on the rocky cliff, Harvey rapes her. She was too young to comprehend what had happened; she later expressed her anger in a quiet, restrained way. This assault is not read as an isolated event but as an intimate manifestation of structural violence opening within conditions of displacement and inadequate protection. The absence of sustained maternal protection in Jacquie's life further instilled her vulnerability.

Although her mother was physically present during the occupation, the broader instability of relocation and political struggle limited the emotional and protective framework associated with maternal care. Child Sexual Abuse is a "special destroyer of adult mental health" (Seligman 1994, 232), and it is "such a powerfully negative force that (a) is likely to cause harm, (b) most children or adolescents who experienced it will be affected, (c) this harm will be severe or intense" (Rind et al., 1999, 46). This is evident in Jacquie's reaction at the beginning, as she cannot fully process the violation but instinctively registers the harm. When her sister, Opal, asks her what happened, Jacquie initially mutters, "Piece of Shit". Pressed further, she responds, "Nothing, I told him not to. Then he did. I told him to stop" (Orange 2018, 56). She rubs her eyes and says, "It does not matter, C'mon" (Ibidem).Her minimization of the events signals not indifference but psychic disruption. The assault exceeds her capacity for articulation. Her restrained response reveals how trauma unsettles the relationship between experience and language. As Elaine Scarry suggests in her powerful book, *The Body in Pain*, pain is not only a bodily trauma, it also resists or even 'shatters' language and communication (Scarry 1985, 5). In this sense, pain is not merely bodily injury but epistemic fracture. Jacquie's truncated phrase, "It does not matter" (Orange 2018, 56), reflects this linguistic collapse precisely. Her speech contracts around the wound rather than expanding to narrate it.

After that occupation ended, Native Americans were forced to leave Alcatraz, and Jacquie's family returned to Oakland. Shortly after, her mother was diagnosed with cancer and eventually passed away. Left without a parental figure, Jacquie and Opal moved in with their uncle, though the loss of their mother created a deep emotional void. One day, while walking home from school, the weight of her unspoken became unbearable, and Jacquie suddenly burst out in frustration as she said:

> What are we doing? she asked. Going home, I said. What home? Jacquie said. I do not know, I replied. What are we gonna do? I do not know. You usually have some smart-ass answer. Just keep going, I guess. Jacquie was silent for a moment before she said, I'm pregnant. What? Fucking piece of shit, Harvey. Remember? What? It does not matter. I can just get rid of it. (Orange 2018, 59)

Jacquie's detached admission of pregnancy reflects the normalization of sexual violence and the erasure of Indigenous women's pain. Her response, "It does not matter. I can just get rid of it" (Orange 2018, 59) reveals both an attempt at agency and deeper resignation to injustice. The repeated questioning of "What Home?" foregrounds displacement as affective instability rather than mere geographic relocation. Home becomes an emotional void shaped by assault, maternal loss, and structural precarity, as Sara Ahmed (2004, 22) argues, "present in speech, or forms of testimonial address. And yet, as we have seen, 'claims' to pain and suffering on behalf of myself or others are repeated in forms of speech and writing. There is a connection between the over-representation of pain and its unrepresentability". Jacquie's silence exemplifies this paradox: the wound persists even when language fails. Following the assault, Jacquie suffers from insomnia, repeatedly convincing herself that "she was asleep" (Orange 2018, 102). This dissociative impulse reflects trauma's refusal to remain confined to the past, as Cathy Caruth states:

> It is always the story of a wound that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available. This truth, in its delayed appearance and its belated address, cannot be linked only to what is known, but also to what remains unknown in our very actions and our language (Caruth 1996, 8)

Jacquie's experience illustrates the temporal dislocation that structures traumatic memory. The violation does not end with the event itself but resurfaces betatedly through insomnia, dislocation, and emotional rupture of pain as the formation of trauma. Pain, when denied articulation, transforms memory, demonstrating how structurally produced violence continues to inhabit the present long after its initial occurrence.

Addiction, self-anesthetization and maternal detachment

Jacquie has distanced herself for years from her family, her daughter, her grandsons, and her sister Opal, creating a prolonged rupture in kinship ties shaped by addiction and unclaimed trauma. The novel shifts to Jacquie as a young woman working as a Substance abuse counsellor. She is in Albuquerque for a conference related to "Keep Them from Harm" (Orange 2018, 98). While staying in the hotel, she reflects on her past and realizes how distant she is from her grandsons, "The boys. What they might be doing. Over the past few months, after years of silence, they'd been texting. Opal took care of Jacquie's three

grandsons—whom she'd never even met" (Orange 2018, 100). She spent years in addiction, relying on alcohol as a means of numbing unresolved grief and trauma. During the conference session addressing rising rates of substance abuse and suicide among indigenous youth, Jacquie finds herself unable to sustain emotional distance. The speaker's words collapse into proclamations, provoking guilt and suppressed memory. She abruptly leaves the hall and suddenly sees a flashback of traumatic memories, as it states in the novel:

> She saw the big hole first. Then, her daughter's emaciated body. There were little red and pink holes up and down both her arms. Her skin was white, blue, and yellow, with green veins. Jacquie was there to identify the body. The body was her daughter's body, had been the little body she carried for just six months. She'd watched the doctors put needles in her arm, then, there in the incubator, back when all she'd wanted, in a way, she'd never wanted anything before, was for her new baby girl to live. (Orange 2018, 105)

The flashback of her daughter's body, and "big hole," shatters Jacquie's long-sustained anesthetic distance. The visual violence of death confronts her not only with the loss but with the depth of estrangement that had defined their relationship. In Jacquie's case, Jamie's death intensifies rather than resolves her dependence on Self-Anesthetization. Although she maintains sobriety for six months- the longest period since she began drinking, she soon relapses, "six years stomaching a fifth of whiskey" (Orange 2018, 106). Her addiction reasserts itself as a mechanism of affective suspension, numbing the unbearable convergence of guilt and grief.

Her departure from Oakland extends this anesthetic logic into relational space. Physical relocation mirrors emotional withdrawal. Shen she later encounters Harvey, the origin of the earlier violation at the reservation, re-emerges, confirming what Cath Caruth (1996, 11) describes as belatedness experience of trauma "then, as the narrative of a belated experience, far from telling of an escape from reality, the escape from a death, or from its referential force—rather attests to its endless impact on a life". Maternal detachment in Jacquie's life thus appears not as indifferent but as the lingering structure of anesthetized trauma, a continuous cycle of pain rather than solving it.

Trauma, recovery, and resilience

Judith Herman argues in *Trauma and Recovery* that healing unfolds in three stages— "safety, remembrance and mourning, and the gradual reconnection with ordinary life" (Herman 1992, 87). Jacquie's trajectory in *There There* can be read through this framework. For much of her life, she has avoided the cyclical return of childhood trauma through alcohol, sustaining what appears to be stability but is, in fact, a form of self-anesthetization. Soberity becomes her initial attempt at establishing safety. When she stands before the audience at the conference and declares, "My name is Jacquie Red Feather. I do not say that I am an alcoholic. I do not drink anymore. I used to drink, but I do not now. I currently have eleven days of sobriety. I am grateful to be here. Thank you all for listening" (Orange 2018, 109). She performs this fragile stabilization in public and states:

> The problem that became a drinking problem started for me way before the drinking was even related to it, though it was when I first started drinking. Not that I blame my past or do not accept it. We'd been on Alcatraz, with my family and me, back during the occupation in 1970. It all started for me there. This piece-of-shit kid, Jacquie, made sure to look right at Harvey after she said this. He squirmed in his chair a little but otherwise just stared off toward the ground in a listening pose. (Orange 2018,110)

For most survivors of violence, the initial consequences of trauma are the loss of control over the body, thoughts, and emotions. Trauma disrupts the coherence of selfhood, producing fragmentation rather than integration. In Jacquie's case, this loss of control manifests first through silence and later through addiction, as alcohol becomes a means of regulating overwhelming affect. For the first time, Jacquie speaks openly about the pain and sexual violence she endured as a child, transforming a history of silence into an act of testimony. She states:

> Maybe he did not know what he was doing, but then again, maybe he went on to fuck over a whole line of women and used force to stretch a no into a yes, assholes like him, I know now, are a dime a dozen, but I suspect, from what little time I spent with him on that island, that he went on to do it again and again. (Orange 2018, 110)

Jacquie's speech is a moment of reckoning as she confronts her rapist, Harvey, after years of silence. She acknowledges that her drinking problem began long ago, rooted in the trauma of Alcatraz in 1970, when she was just a child. Looking directly at Harvey, she forces him

to hear what he did, exposing the pattern of violence men like him perpetuate, turning a "no" into a "yes" through force. Though he squirms in his chair, he does not react, embodying the cowardice of abusers who escape the consequences. But for Jacquie, this moment is about more than just naming her trauma; it is about reclaiming power. By breaking her silence in front of him, in front of others, she refuses to let her past define her.

Speaking her truth becomes her first decisive step toward resilience. By admitting, "I gave up a daughter to adoption at that time. The girl I birthed came from that island. From what happened there. When I gave her up, I was seventeen. I was stupid. I would not know how to find her now, even if I wanted to. It was a closed adoption" (Orange 2018, 110). Her words reflect that she was guilty of what she did, shaped by the violence she endured and the choices she felt forced to make as she further elaborates on her trauma:

> I would not know how to find her now even if I wanted to. It was a closed adoption. Since then, I have had another daughter. But I fucked that up too in my addiction—fifth a night of anything ten dollars or less. Then it got so bad that they told me I had to quit if I wanted to keep my job. And then, as it goes, to keep being able to drink, I quit my job. My daughter Jamie was out of the house by then, so it was easier for me to fall completely apart. (Orange 2018, 110)

Jacquie's addiction stems from the repeated violence and losses she endured as an Indigenous woman, shaped by sexual assault, forced separation from her child, and systemic neglect. Like many survivors, she turns to alcohol as a means to escape, numbing herself to the pain of her past, including what happened in Alcatraz and the child she forced to give up. As *Motherhood in the Face of Trauma* states, "Women are twice as likely as men to develop PTSD after a traumatic event and to carry this diagnosis across their lifetime" (Muzik et al. 2009, 29). Her dependency deepens after losing her second child, Jamie, to suicide, leading her into a cycle of self-destruction where drinking consumes her life. Her words reveal the fragility of survival as she struggles to reclaim after years of self-destruction and loss.As she narrates it further, "Insert an endless succession of drinking horror stories here. Today, I'm trying to make my way back. My daughter died and left her three sons behind, but I left them, too. I'm trying to make my way back, but as I said, eleven days" (Orange 2018, 110). This pattern continues when Jamie, her second daughter, dies by suicide, leaving behind three grandsons whom Jacquie initially cannot

bring herself to raise. As her addiction deepens, she falls into a cycle of self-destruction, mirroring the findings of Chivers-Wilson (2006, 112), who states that "women with PTSD and a history of sexual trauma are at a significantly higher risk of developing substance use disorders as a means of self-medication". This aligns with Jacquie's descent into alcoholism, where she drinks to suppress the overwhelming guilt and pain tied to her past. PTSD has been widely recognized as a disorder that impacts maternal relationships, with research showing that "postpartum PTSD has been associated with less sensitive parenting, greater worries about intimacy with the baby, and higher rates of infant temperamental and attachment disorders" (Muzik et al. 2009, 31). This applies directly to Jacquie's experience, as her unresolved trauma distances her from her grandsons, making her hesitant to take on a maternal role once again.

Jacquie's recovery does not conclude with confession; it extends into relational action. After confronting her rapist and publicly narrating her trauma, she turns toward reconnection, the third stage in Herman's model of recovery. Her recognition that "Those boys need their grandma. I don't know. And you sure as hell don't know a goddamned thing about my life" (Orange 2018, 60) marks a moment of vulnerability that contrasts sharply with her earlier detachment. She texted her sister Opal, "If I come to Oakland, can I stay?" (Ibid, 61). This request is not merely logistical; it represents an attempt to rebuild fractured kinship ties and reinsert herself into familial continuity. Resilience, in this instance, lies not in heroic triumph but in the willingness to return, to risk intimacy, and to re-enter relationships from which she once withdrew. Recovery thus becomes relational rather than individual, grounded in reconnection and the restoration of maternal presence.

Jacquie's trajectory ultimately reveals that trauma is neither static nor singular, it is a structure that reorganized itself across time, relationships, and identity. The violence at Alcatraz fractures her bodily autonomy, maternal continuity, and sense of belonging, and addiction emerges as a strategy of self-anesthetization that suspends rather than resolves that rupture. Yet her public testimony disrupts the cycle. By narrating the origin of her drinking, confronting Harvey, and acknowledging the daughters she lost, one through adoption and another through suicide, Jacquie integrates fragmented memory into conscious speech. Her decision to return to Oakland and reclaim her role as grandmother reflects motherhood not as failure but as a

renewed commitment. Trauma may have structured her past, but it no longer monopolizes her future.

Conclusion

Pain, happiness, maternal detachment, and resilience in *There There* are not discrete emotional states but interwoven conditions produced within histories of violence and survival. Jacquie's life reveals how trauma unsettles the foundations of intimacy, rendering motherhood fragile and happiness provisional. Her addiction is not excess but anesthetic adaptation, a strategy to suspend pain that simultaneously suspends relational presence. Yet the novel does not allow the trauma as the final word. Recovery emerges not as restoration of innocence or as a return to an unbroken past, but as a conscious inhabiting of fracture. Resilience, therefore, resides in this willingness to re-enter connection despite shame and grief. In tracing her movement from silence to testimony, from withdrawal to relational accountability, *There There* proposes that healing for indigenous women is not escape from history but the reclamation of agency within it, where pain is acknowledged, memory is spoken, and kinship is chosen again.

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The emergence of theatre and the chorus as ideal audience: A study of indirect and direct interaction with the public in Ancient Greece

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Abstract: Direct interaction between the stage and the audience in European theater, from Antiquity to the present day, is a subject as vast as the cultural, geographical, and temporal scope of the phenomenon. Beyond the aesthetic realm, we sense that theater has had the power, over the centuries, to influence history by disseminating ideas, attitudes, and principles among its audience members to the same extent that it was itself influenced, throughout its evolution, on the one hand by the tastes of the audience, and on the other by the political and religious stakes associated with a particular context. This paper proposes an analysis of the two fundamental types of interaction with the audience—direct and indirect—in the early days of theater. By direct interaction, we mean those moments in the performance when the public becomes an overt participant in the artistic act, as well as the actors' interventions that clearly address those watching them. Indirect interaction, however, involves influences brought from outside the performance that do not alter its structure as it unfolds. The first part of this article will therefore examine proto-theater, which foreshadows the dramaturgy of Hellenic culture in terms of the forms of interaction characteristic of religious processions. Dionysian festivals, through their communal and celebratory nature, offer a perfect example of interactivity, engaging—and even making it mandatory—the immersion of spectators in the unfolding of events. In Ancient Greece, we can already speak of the establishment of theater and, consequently, of the emergence of the amphitheater, the first space built specifically to optimize the conditions under which a performance could be viewed. The second part of the article will analyze the role of the ancient chorus in the stage-audience interaction, through the lens of its threefold function: "ideal" spectator, sounding board, and gateway.

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AGATHOS, Volume 17, Issue 2 (33-34): 385-397, DOI 10.5281/zenodo.23407511
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Keywords: theatre, stage-audience interaction, Dionysian festivals, chorus, Ancient Greece

Introduction

To trace the evolution of the relationship between theatre creators and the audience, it is advisable to return to the most plausible origins of the dramatic act. Interaction, in this context, refers to the influence that two seemingly different human bodies exert on one another- a dynamic with a theatrical appeal so compelling that it no longer matters which of them initiated the action. The historical record has been depleted over time of certain elements that might help us piece together a completely coherent narrative, but the beauty of the study lies precisely in investigating—at times even at the risk of speculation—territories with uncertain contours or perhaps information that has been misinterpreted until now.

The origins of theatre can be traced back to the array of rituals and communal gatherings in Antiquity—such as harvests, weddings, religious rites, or battles—in which tribal dances and festivals served as occasions for celebration. Early theatrical performances thus had an intrinsic participatory element, as both performers and spectators were involved in the festivities. According to ancient beliefs, the success of such events foreshadowed the community's material well-being: bountiful harvests, victories in war, or the gods' favor. Thus, theatre initially established itself as a pragmatic endeavor, aimed at collective well-being.

By examining the origins of plays attested historically as far back as Ancient Greece, we can chart their lineage as a theatrical tradition that evolved from the aforementioned events and is, at the same time, closely linked to the Dionysian celebrations of the grape harvest and the gods. Spanning several days, these festivals involved the enthusiastic participation of spectators and have endured over time in the folk history of various regions around the globe. These rich cultural legacies reflect the deep-rooted connection between theatre, ritual, and shared spirituality, reminding us of the enduring significance of performance as a means of celebrating and affirming similar human experiences. In this paper, we aim to pay particular attention to the direct and indirect interactions specific to these ritualistic manifestations that preceded or foreshadowed the emergence of comedies and tragedies. By direct interaction, we mean the performer-spectator contact within the event, while indirect interaction refers to

the social, political, and civic consequences and influences that these nascent manifestations exerted on the public (and vice versa, as a form of interdependence).

In *History of Theatre*, Oscar Brockett (1982, 3) argues that within this cultural Darwinism, viewed as an evolution toward the artistic act, a number of transitional links from ritual to theatre remain unknown. In this regard, a more extensive exploration of the historical and religious context of Hellenic culture would be necessary. These celebrations presuppose, first and foremost, the adoption of a god of Thracian origin. Unlike the classical gods of the Hellenic pantheon, to whom votive offerings and statuettes were dedicated—with access to the ritual being, to some extent, limited to the aristocracy and elites—Dionysus appears as a dual entity of happiness born of suffering. The circumstances of his birth led Dionysus to embody an attitude toward life marked by rebellion, hedonism, ecstatic joy, and a primal communion with nature. We tend to view this god as having emerged primarily as a necessity for the lower classes, as a manifestation of the fascination exerted by the accessibility of contact with a divinity that is earthlier in nature.

Walter Burkert ([1977] 1985) notes that during these processions dedicated to Dionysus, in addition to the consumption of wine, milk, and honey by all participants, leather artefacts representing phalluses were displayed, sacrifices of goats—and later of oxen—took place, and acts during which animals' meat was consumed raw in the midst of the procession. At the same time, the author also invokes a possible presence of cannibalistic fantasy:

> […] the Agrionia festival in the Dorian and Aeolic area, which is a festival of dissolution and inversion, with a women's uprising, madness, and cannibalistic fantasies; the rustic Dionysia with goat sacrifices and a phallos procession (Burkert 1985, 163).

For Nietzsche ([1872] 1978), the satyr manifests the split between the cognitive, rational realm—as a cultural phenomenon—and the primordial realm of ecstasy in the presence of the divine. In the satyr, the ancient Greek, the Dionysian man, found a path to nature, in all its power and wisdom, and, through nature, to the primordial essence of the divine:

> The satyr, like the idyllic shepherd in more recent literature, is the fruit of a yearning for naturalness and spontaneity. […] Nature untouched by knowledge, where the gates of civilization had not yet been opened—this is

> what the Greeks saw in their satyr […] On the contrary, the satyr was the primordial image of man, the expression of his highest and most powerful emotions, as befitted those of an exalted being delighted by the god's approach. He was the companion in whom the god's suffering was reflected, the herald of wisdom from the depths of nature, the symbol of nature's sexual omnipotence, which the Greek was accustomed to regard with awe and veneration. The satyr was a sublime, divine being; this is how he must have appeared, especially to the weary and sorrowful gaze of the Dionysian man. […] He felt a sublime delight in contemplating, unveiled and authentic, the grandiose features of nature; here the illusion of culture had been erased from the primordial image of man, here the true man was revealed, the bearded satyr who called out to his god in a delirious frenzy (Nietzsche 1978, 210).

As a hybrid form of expression that shifted between moments of dramatic tension and comic touches, the processions evoked emotional swings from one extreme to the other. We can engage in an exercise of imagination and visualize the spectacular nature of these events, in which the tragic and the comic coexisted in alternation, lifting and lowering the primal spirit in a carousel of existential essence. Later, with the emergence of amphitheatres specifically designed for the consumption of these events, a chasm appeared between the performers and the audience, intended to re-establish the means of belonging, through which dramatic genres could be distinguished and separated as distinct artistic forms, including in terms of direct and indirect interactions.

These developments occurred during a period when social class distinctions were more pronounced. The ecstatic state, bordering on madness, was achieved through the participation of spectators drawn in by performers portraying satyrs and bacchantes clad in furs, masks, and hoof-like footwear. This atmosphere thus created a spiritual transition from the earthly realm to the divine plane. By participating and accepting entry into this ritual convention as a direct interaction, the spectators gained the satisfaction of belonging to a state of freedom specific to that festival, one not found in any other context.

The same mechanisms of audience attraction and inclusion could later be observed at carnival-style events, where performers paraded through the city offering brief snippets of their shows, showcasing the exotic animals and unusual human beings featured in their program, while also integrating spectators into this mobile spectacle, on which occasion some of them could ride elephants, play with monkeys, parrots, etc. It is important to note the way in which the spectacle contaminates the crowd, conquers it, and makes it an accomplice.

Returning to the Dionysian events, the procession, on its route, would stop at the foot of a hill; the spectators would sit on the slope for a better view and watch a chorus of fifteen boys and girls perform (Zamfirescu 2001, 28). The early improvisations focused on topics related to the god's life and adventures in a laudatory and descriptive manner, but the verse later evolved to gradually include references to events in the life of the city:

> The truth, however, is that it was not only processions of drunken satyrs or merry Silenus who gathered around Dionysus, but also concerns of a deeper nature, regarding the city's circumstances, its relations with other cities, as well as the workings of the human soul (Zamfirescu 2001, 29).

Here, under the banner of reciprocity—as a form of indirect interaction—we observe a progression of the artistic-religious act toward contemporary issues and topics of immediate interest to the participants.

The organizational structure of theatrical performances under the influence of Athenian democracy

With the transition from Dionysian processions—a pre-theatrical form that engaged spectators in collective communication with nature and, through it, with the divine—to the confinement of the theatrical act within the amphitheatre's epicentre, a change in space occurs and, consequently, a change in the fundamental relationship with the spectator, whose participation, in this second form, loses its festive immersiveness and shifts toward the role of an external observer. Through the existence of a stage—that is, a predefined space for the performance of the theatrical act—and of seats reserved for spectators, which in itself nullifies the peripatetic, profoundly mobile dimension of the processions of yesteryear, the distance between actor and spectator becomes palpable, becomes spatialized, yet gives way to other forms of interaction.

A close connection can be observed between democracy (as both a political and spiritual concept) and new forms of spectacle. First of all, amphitheatres were built to accommodate as many spectators as possible. Indirectly, selection was made by offering the best seats to citizens—those considered capable and entitled to express their views in the agora—while women, foreigners, and slaves occupied the seats in the back. *Theatron* originally referred to the wooden benches on which spectators sat, but over time it became synonymous with the

audience. It is interesting how the evolution of the term came to define an art form, once again highlighting the interdependence of actor-space-spectator—an interdependence strongly emphasized by Peter Brook ([1968] 2014, 17).

It is important to note that only men were selected as actors and women were excluded from the cast. At the same time, the responsibility to perform artistically went hand in hand with the status of model citizen. Performers were required to demonstrate perfect physical condition and be capable of peak artistic performance, with strict moral conduct imposed upon them; those caught stealing or involved in scandals were punished as an example. In the spirit of equal opportunity, roles were assigned by lottery. The same selection method applied to the ten members of the jury, which suggests that, in the long term, all citizens were expected to participate in all performances, so that their votes for the winning theatralogy would be well-reasoned.

This commitment to equal opportunity was also reflected in a special fund set aside for those who could not afford to pay for their admission; citizens were encouraged to cover the cost of admission for slaves and women out of their own pockets. This type of civic attitude is an expression of the indirect interaction between the performances' aim to educate the audience and the audience's desire to be educated. Against the backdrop of this reciprocity, the concept of *hybris* aims to at least mimic a balance among community members. In Greek mythology, the goddess Nemesis, who would later become Blind Justice with a sword in one hand and scales in the other, was meant to give to those who have nothing and to take away from the excess of others, as an intrinsic moral; she trained the human spirit not to covet more and not to treat the inferior with arrogance. It is important to note that in those times the Greeks did not know the term "mythology". In their view, Homer's writings were chronicles from other times; the very concept of "history" was not even part of their vocabulary until Herodotus' famous work. We are talking about a rapidly expanding civilization which, under the influence of these factors, would undergo accelerated and coherent cultural development.

The chorus as ideal spectator

In his lectures on dramatic art and literature, Karl Wilhelm Friedrich Schlegel ([1809-1811] 1965) sees the chorus as the ideal representation of the audience. His well-known assertion is initially justified on a

spatial level, as the German poet identifies the very placement of the chorus as an essential epicentre for understanding a form of intersubjectivity between the chorus and the audience. The chorus is thus assigned two spaces: below the stage level, in the orchestra pit, the site of movement and choral singing, and in front of the orchestra, opposite the centre of the stage, on an altar-like platform at the same height as the stage, called the *Thymele*, where the chorus was positioned when not singing, but merely watched the unfolding of the action, like an interested spectator. Schlegel considers the spatial centrality of the chorus, of the *Thymele*, sufficient to regard it as an ideal location, relative to which the measurements of the space were made, and around which the amphitheatre was arranged in its semicircle: „It was, therefore, an excellent contrivance to place the chorus, who were the ideal representatives of the spectators, in the very spot where all the radii converged." (Schlegel 1965, 58)

In terms of representativeness, Schlegel unequivocally views the chorus as the ideal spectator, and at the same time as the personified reflection of the dramatic action, and at certain points as a projection of the poet's feelings, in its capacity as the voice of all humanity. As the ideal spectator, the chorus mediates the emotional plane circumscribed within the narrative, mirroring to the spectator a lyrical and musical expression of their own emotions and thus allowing them to ascend to a contemplative plane. We thus find, under the umbrella of an idealized form of representation, the threads of indirect interaction, as we defined it at the beginning of this paper. Regarding comedy, Schlegel highlights the functionality of direct interaction as a form of chaotic exuberance, in the sense that allusive references, in a comic register, to a proximate reality allow the poet, embodied through the chorus, to engage in dialogue with the audience in a certain way and, moreover, to "point the finger" at individual spectators.

The chorus thus becomes essential to the ecosystem of comedy not only because it represents, to a certain extent, the audience, but also because it embodies a festive joy whose unrestrained expression is comedy—we are referring here to the religious and national festivals of ancient Greece, during which choral singing and dancing took place. Here, the comedy chorus becomes the expression of public joy. The *parabasis*, understood as the chorus addressing the audience directly, in the name of—or, rather, as a representative of—the poet, without having a direct connection to the play's subject (the exaggeration of certain merits, the ridicule of rivals, the assertion of Athenian

citizenship, etc.), is, strictly speaking, incongruous with the essence of dramatic performance; however, in the realm of comedy, intentional interruptions and interludes that disrupt the dramatic atmosphere are welcome.

As mentioned, in his study on the birth of tragedy, Nietzsche sees in the satyr the primordial image of the Dionysian man, in his natural, Bacchic, sexual exaltation as a form of communion with the divine. The chorus of satyrs allows for the same exuberance of people identifying with the spirits of nature, of finding themselves, through metamorphosis, in the ecstatic jubilation of the Dionysian crowd. In an ideational dialogue with Schlegel, the German philosopher describes the tragic chorus as an artistic imitation of the phenomenon of self-representation explained above:

> Yet we must not forget for a moment that the audience of ancient tragedy identified with the chorus; that, in fact, there was no distinction between the audience and the chorus; for the whole was nothing more than a grand chorus of satyrs singing and dancing, or of people allowing themselves to be represented by these satyrs. Schlegel's statement takes on a deeper meaning here. The chorus is the ideal spectator in that it is the sole observer, the one who sees the world of the stage. An audience of spectators like that of today was unknown to the Greeks; in their theatres, thanks to the rows rising in concentric arcs, it was easy for everyone to abstract themselves from the entire world of culture around them and, in the intoxication of contemplation, to feel themselves to be a chorister. (Nietzsche 1978, 211)

The chorus, which Schlegel viewed as the ideal spectator, is perceived by Nietzsche in terms of unintended functionality—as the ecstatic surrender of the ancient Greek audience to otherness.

Building on Schlegel's famous assertion regarding the chorus of Greek tragedy as an idealized spectator, Claude Calame analyzes the performative function of the choral voice, relating it to a form of civic identity for which the chorus serves as an interface. In the article 'Performative aspects of the choral voice in Greek tragedy: Civic identity in performance' (1999), Calame perceives, following Schlegel, a nuanced duality in the chorus: on the one hand, it conveys the tension generated by the dramatic action while simultaneously mitigating its impact; on the other hand, it represents not only humanity as a whole, but specifically the poet and his thoughts, serving as a voice for both the ideal spectator and the author of the tragedy.

It is worth noting here that the same idea of the chorus mitigating dramatic impact is also found in Schiller's remarks on the same

subject. Schiller ([1803] 1993) believes that, while the chorus enlivens the dialogue, it calms the action, acting as a protective shield for the audience, which must retain its freedom of thought even in the face of the most powerful passions. The author thus speaks of a necessary detachment of the audience's emotions, a detachment maintained by the chorus, which, like a protective barrier, establishes itself as a frontline audience capable of bearing the brunt of the tragedy:

> If the blows with which tragedy strikes our heart were to follow one another without interruption, suffering would vanquish activity. We would be immersed in the material, and no longer hover over it. By holding the parts apart, and stepping between the passions with its calming reflection, it restores our freedom to us, which would be lost in the storm of affects. (Schiller 1993, pp. 63-64)

Seeing, therefore, in detachment and, ultimately, in the preservation of a rational attitude, a form of freedom for the audience, Schiller is tempted to find in the accusations levelled against the chorus—that it nullifies the illusion, that it interrupts the force of emotions— precisely what recommends it, since, in the playwright's view, the whirlwind of emotions blinds. Another function of the chorus, in the view of the same philosopher, is, as noted above, that of observation; the choristers are witnesses situated between the artist and the empirical audience, facilitating a sort of sanctuary for the former, who listens to it, who takes on its passion, who motivates its state of mind:

> They stand, to a degree, upon a natural theatre, because they speak and act in front of observers, and they will therefore speak all the more fittingly from the artificial theatre to its audience." (Ibidem)

Returning to Calame's article, we find three complementary dimensions of the choral voice highlighted, all closely linked to the performative act: a ritual dimension, as a form of interaction between the choir members and the action, as well as the actors performing it on stage, through which the former exert a practical influence on the development of the action; a hermeneutic dimension, at the level of which the choir members partially assume a gnomic function while also providing additional information that the theatrical act does not reveal (events preceding the presented action, the delineation of space, comments on the action itself); an affective dimension by virtue of which the chorus members express the emotions evoked by the stage action and, at which level, the chorus is entrusted, according to

Aristotle, with the emotions that the audience should feel (as a form of *catharsis*):

> The emotional aspect of the voice of the community in the chorus members returns us to the spectators: by the way of the dramatic performance the reactions of the ideal spectator, [...] would induce similar reactions in the actual public which has come together in the theatre to honour Dionysus Eleuthereus. (Calame 1999, 129)

In addition to the three functional axes highlighted above, Calame reiterates the forms of representationality articulated through pronouns —specifically the "I," "you," "we," and "you all" of choral speech— thereby positing the hypothesis that the audience is immersed in the dramatic performance. The author sees, beyond a few indirect addresses, an invitation extended to the audience through the chorus to assume the choral "I," by virtue of which the audience, through a process of identification, is called upon to address the actors or the gods through the thoughts and feelings of the chorus—a development all the more likely given that the Athenian spectator had previously received an education in choral activity:

> By the way of the I/we of the choral speaker in tragedy, the spectators who take part in a festivity in honour of Dionysus in the theatre in some way delegate part of their choral competence and authority to the chorus which is at the heart of the dramatic representation. (Calame 1999, 149)

Thus, at the level of the choral ode's performative dimension, interwoven with its emotional dimension, the audience is invited to interact with the dramatic action from the perspective of that choral "I"/"we"—a transubstantiation that results in the projection of reality onto dramatic fiction. The use of the first person (singular/plural) within the choral performance, in its full ritual and collective capacity, allows for the immersion into the dramatic text of the extra-discursive reality represented by the civic community present in the space that has become the sanctuary of the theatre. The polymorphism and polyphony of the tragic chorus, particularly as a masked production, result in a form of referentiality for the audience under the tutelage of "you," to whom the drama is addressed and who are permitted to assume the choral persona of "we," without distinction based on social status or gender. Thus, catharsis is created as a form of reflexive distancing, in the sense that the audience's emotions are assumed by the masked choristers, at the level of an affective collaboration achieved through the audience's participation via the chorus. According to Calame, we

can no longer speak of communication in the true sense of the word, but rather of a form of intersubjectivity. Due to the performative function of the choral voice—at the level where the hermeneutic and affective dimensions of tragic song intersect—the audience is called upon to assume not the passive role of the ideal spectator, but rather an active position alongside the virtual author.

In the moments when the chorus directs its discourse toward the characters on stage, acting as a representative of the ideal audience, we consider that we are dealing with a process of indirect interaction. The chorus thus shifts the focus to the emotional collective of the spectators, sparking a dialogue between the emotion and reason of those witnessing the major events presented in the performance. In contrast, when, under the influence of the aforementioned "self," the chorus addresses the *Theatron* (now in the sense of the auditorium), it becomes a direct interaction, as it manifests as an active recommendation of what one should understand and what one should feel.

The importance of the chorus gradually declined as the Dionysian festivals evolved and, it seems, in tandem with the developments pioneered by Aeschylus—namely, the introduction of a second actor—followed by Sophocles, who developed the concept of scenery, and Euripides, an innovator at least in his use of the *Deus ex machina* technique. One of the chorus' responsibilities was to clarify for the audience the what, where, and when of the events to be presented on stage. In the early days of theatre, this function served as an indirect yet necessary bridge connecting a vast crowd of people of unequal status, whose knowledge of the stories about Greek gods and heroes was also uneven. The chorus, as a physical presence, was marked by neutrality—masks and garments that erased individual identity, so that it could stand in for anyone in the *Theatron*.

Thus, acting as a correspondent within the theatrical space, the chorus—a collective character—behaves like an experienced spectator who possesses the generosity to bring everyone to a common ground, namely to facilitate the understanding of the theatrical context as a stage of empathetic absorption. Being unfamiliar with the subject of a tragedy delays the cathartic effect, and this requires special focus in order to capture the attention of all 14,000 people in the Amphitheatre of Dionysus. As the performance unfolds and the audience gains the ability to grasp the subject and context of the tragedies more quickly, this "program guide" responsibility of the chorus diminishes to make

way for a dynamic conflict between the major characters and the unfolding of the action. The positioning of the chorus in the orchestra, on the same level as the front row of spectators, nevertheless leaves the impression that there is no barrier between the actors and the rest of the audience:

> The unit of place, as we understand it in the Aristotelian conception, is an exemplary spatial concentration. This requirement is justified not so much by aesthetic considerations as by practical reasons: a spectator can engage with a story—both rationally and emotionally—only if its spatial boundaries are confined to a single location. (Saiu 2008, 16)

Thus, all gazes directed toward the stage inevitably pass through the filter of a chorus that acts as a magnifying glass, distorting perception, like an organic bridge between almost unreal events and the "civil" condition of those present at the event. In the early forms of tragic theatre, a chorus of satyrs would have constantly reminded the audience of the chasm between the real and the imaginary; this chorus underwent a transformation toward a shared human identity, in order to heighten empathy and catharsis, thereby "civilizing" the artistic product. Through this representative positioned in front of the stage, the audience feels that the events belong to them to a greater extent, and this transformation occurred as an indirect interaction, for, after all, theatre cannot evolve independently of the spectator's needs.

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Visual metaphors of liminality in Edward Hopper's paintings

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Abstract: This study examines liminality in Edward Hopper's paintings through the analytical lens of visual metaphor, foregrounding how pictorial elements construct threshold experience. Liminality, understood as a state 'betwixt and between,' entails suspended temporality, spatial indeterminacy, and destabilized existential boundaries. While Hopper's work has been widely discussed within art history, the metaphorical structures through which liminality is visually constructed have not been previously theorized. The article demonstrates that Hopper's environments function as metaphorical projections of psychological and ontological states. Solitary houses operate as visual metaphors of the human condition: anthropomorphized facades stand for isolation, sealed or darkened windows for emotional opacity, and architectural stillness for temporal arrest. These structures figure existential in-betweenness, poised between habitation and abandonment, presence and absence. Threshold objects further articulate liminality through metaphorical transformation. Windows become metaphors of perceptual and epistemic boundaries, simultaneously connecting and separating interior and exterior realms. Doors signify denied transition, suggesting passage while withholding it, whereas stairways embody suspended movement without arrival. Spatial configurations generate additional metaphorical mappings. Railroads operate as metaphors of rupture and separation, dividing pictorial worlds into incompatible domains. Coastal edges and lighthouses figure ontological thresholds between stability and flux, safety and exposure. Emptied interiors metaphorize human absence,

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AGATHOS, Volume 17, Issue 2 (33-34): 399-415, DOI 10.5281/zenodo.23407580
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transforming domestic space into an index of psychological desolation. Light and shadow assume a metaphorical role: twilight atmospheres and artificial illumination convey temporal indeterminacy, while chiaroscuro figures cognitive uncertainty and perceptual ambiguity, rendering space unstable. The findings demonstrate that liminality in Hopper is actively constructed through a coherent system of visual metaphors of suspension, isolation, and thresholdness that convert architectural, spatial, and luminous forms into vehicles of existential meaning. The study advances a metaphor-centered framework for interpreting liminality in visual art and opens interdisciplinary pathways for liminality studies in visual culture.

Keywords: Edward Hopper, liminality, visual metaphor, threshold, architectural symbolism

Introduction

Liminality, a condition 'betwixt and between' (Turner 1967), where conventional categories are blurred and boundaries are unsettled, refers to a threshold state characterized by ambiguity, transition, and the suspension of normal structures of time, space, and social order (Fisher 2016, 22; Kravchenko et al. 2025; Thomassen 2016). Initially associated with anthropological and sociological research within the study of rituals and rites of passage (Van Gennep 1909/1961; Turner 1969), the concept has been incorporated into various fields in the humanities (e.g. Kravchenko et al. 2024). Few studies, however, examine the phenomenon of liminality from an art-historical perspective (Maglov 2021; Motoc 2021; Shields 2019), despite the fact that art itself, from Plato onward, has been considered a borderline practice and the profession of the artist as "borderline" (Thomassen 2009, 15; Baldini2022). Against this theoretical background, Edward Hopper's painting offers a particularly productive field for examining liminality in visual art. His works repeatedly stage spaces of transition – between interior and exterior, presence and absence, movement and stasis – through carefully constructed architectural settings, light regimes, and spatial demarcations. Architectural forms, domestic objects, roads, railways, coastlines, and light-shadow configurations operate as metaphorical devices that transform material environments into threshold spaces.

In this sense, Hopper's visual language can be understood as profoundly metaphorical: familiar urban and domestic scenes are reconfigured into symbolic sites of existential suspension, where temporal continuity is arrested and spatial coordinates become

unstable. Despite frequent references to ambiguity, isolation, and in-betweenness in Hopper scholarship, the specific role of visual metaphors as instruments for articulating liminality has, to our knowledge, not been explored to date.

Accordingly, this study seeks to investigate how visual metaphors function as primary semiotic mechanisms through which liminality is constructed in Hopper's paintings, revealing a metaphorically structured poetics of threshold experience embedded in his pictorial world.

Literature review

Liminality in Edward Hopper's work has been addressed directly in only a limited number of studies. One notable example is Motoc's article, which explicitly employs the concept to analyze liminal figures and the construction of spatial and temporal indeterminacy in Hopper's paintings within the framework of magical realism. Motoc (2021, 13) notes that "Hopper's art has strange, often unsettling undertones that are not easily explained", comparable to the blurred narrative coherence, ahistoricity, and atmosphere typical of magical realist aesthetics. The motif of liminality in Hopper's work is also examined in articles by Yudenko (2025; 2026), who, however, does not address the articulation of this motif through the visual metaphors employed by the artist.

In most Hopper scholarship, however, the term *liminality* is not used explicitly, although the analyses frequently operate within a liminal interpretive perspective. Renner (2017, 42), for instance, situates Hopper's work in an "ambivalent, Freudian world" where comforting and disturbing objects share a common origin. Stanton (1994, 24-25) emphasizes the dreamlike quality of Hopper's realism produced by blurred spatial boundaries, while Kardokas (2005, 120, 112) describes his paintings as evoking a "twilight zone of experience," transforming the familiar into the uncanny and rendering the "hidden dimension of existence tangible".

The motif of the threshold is examined in detail by Stanton (1994, 24), who, without employing the concept of liminality, argues that Hopper's scenes are "almost always on the edge," both literally and metaphorically. He highlights the tension between stable focal space and the instability of the world beyond it, with figures positioned between interior and exterior realms. Such spatial indeterminacy aligns with broader conceptualizations of liminal space as non-territorial and

transgressive (Heft 2021, 6), as well as with Foucault's notion of heterotopia – spaces of "otherness" that are "neither here nor there" (Foucault & Miskowiec 1986, 22–27).

Motoc (2021) identifies spatial liminality in *Nighthawks* (1942), where viewers are suspended between participation and exclusion. Spatial disorientation is further linked to framing strategies that enlarge or extend architectural forms beyond the canvas (Gillies 1972; Foster & Troyen 2009) and to the "denial of the horizon," which produces boundless spatial effects (Gillies 1972, 412).

Temporal liminality has likewise been widely noted. Mitchell (1990), Motoc (2021), Bardet (2019), and Gillies (1972) all point to blurred thresholds between past, present, and future. Kardokas (2005, 124) observes that time in Hopper "refuses to move linearly", while Martínez Serrano (2022, 87) describes his images as "frozen moments", a notion echoed by Strand (1994, 63), who metaphorically characterizes Hopper's time as "a secret passage leading from time into the silence…" (Strand 2000, 12) Scholars attribute this temporal suspension to static composition, generalized yet recognizable imagery, and figures positioned between unrealized past and future (Mitchell 1990, 75). Bardet (2019) further links suspended space-time to horizontality, shadow, anonymity of figures, and lack of geographical specificity.

Liminality is also explored indirectly through the theme of emptiness. Burns (2019, 113) argues that Hopper's depopulated Parisian spaces generate uncanny inaccessibility, a view supported by Bardet (2019), who interprets spatial organization as producing existential indeterminacy.

Overall, Hopper scholarship consistently addresses spatial and temporal indeterminacy, thresholds, dreamlike atmospheres, depopulation, and the uncanny, which are key correlates of liminality, through such visual strategies as horizon denial, distorted chronology, boundary positioning, and architectural framing.

However, no studies have examined visual metaphors as instruments for articulating liminality in Hopper's paintings. In the present study, visual metaphor is understood, by analogy with verbal metaphor, as a conceptual adaptation of the source domain – the concept from which characteristics are borrowed, to the target domain – the concept to which these characteristics are transferred for its reconceptualization. The adjustment of encoded information is based on relations of similarity, analogy, part-whole, cause-effect, time,

space, and others (Kravchenko 2025). For example, in the visual semiotics of Hopper's paintings, solitary buildings stand for an anthropomorphized state of psychological isolation; sealed windows evoke closed eyes and emotional inaccessibility; twilight atmospheres and artificial nocturnal lighting metaphorically signify temporal indeterminacy. The novelty of the present study lies in offering the first focused analysis of how metaphoric imagery, through composition, chiaroscuro, object-based codes, and the figurative transformation of architectural forms, constructs liminality as an active semantic principle. Accordingly, the aim of the study is to investigate how visual metaphors operationalize existential "in-betweenness" in Hopper's pictorial world, thereby revealing a previously unexamined dimension of his artistic practice.

Architectural metaphors of threshold and temporal suspension

The motif of liminality in Edward Hopper's paintings is articulated through visual metaphors embedded in the pictorial structure, where individual details function as iconic codes marking states of threshold and in-betweenness. One of the most persistent metaphors in Hopper's oeuvre is the solitary house, often treated as a kind of 'portrait'. With a 'gaze' turned inward, such houses appear simultaneously realistic and subtly surreal, transforming architectural forms into liminal images charged with alienation and marginality. In works such as *Telbot House* (1926), *Adams House* (1928), *House by the Railroad* (1925), *Captain Upton's House* (1927) and others, houses assume quasi-anthropomorphic qualities, metaphorically embodying psychological isolation and suspension.

This metaphor is constructed through a complex visual apparatus including composition, spatial organization, chiaroscuro, chromatic restraint, and contrast, as well as object-based symbolic coding through which material details acquire metaphorical signification.

In *House by the Railroad* (Figure 1), the metaphor of liminality emerges through visual oppositions structuring a borderline space between past and present, presence and absence, permanence and movement. The Victorian house, architecturally robust yet devoid of habitation or social function, operates as a marker of a displaced historical past. As Strand (1994, 16) observes, "It stands in the sun but is inaccessible. Its hiddenness is illuminated but not revealed", rendering it something "beyond us". Childs likewise describes it as

"emblematic of a kind of separateness […] which, because of its arresting surface, is unassailable" (Kardokas 2005, 135).

Liminality is reinforced through compositional contrast: the vertical mass of the house is intersected by the rigid horizontal line of the railroad, establishing both a spatial and metaphorical boundary. The tracks function as a barrier separating viewer and image while evoking a broader opposition between pre-industrial order and industrial modernity. Temporal tension remains immobilized, producing what Martínez Serrano (2022, 87, 89) terms a "suspended moment" and "a profound meditation on that which is simultaneously fleeting and timeless".

Chiaroscuro further intensifies the liminal effect. Bright daylight does not animate the scene but accentuates stillness and emptiness. The contrast of illuminated and shadowed planes metaphorizes presence and absence, while the shadow engulfing the building signals diminished vitality. A muted palette of pale blues and yellows visually dissolves the house into surrounding space, reinforcing its intermediate status. As a result, Hopper constructs an architectural metaphor fixed on the threshold between epochs and meanings – what Strand (1988, 340) describes as a "fascination with passage" that remains structurally suspended.



Figure 1. Edward Hopper, *House by the Railroad* (1925).
Oil on Canvas, Museum of Modern Art, New York City

A comparable effect appears in *Haskell's House* (1924), where shadow modeling and layered blue-gray tones create depth counterbalanced by the building's spectral lightness. Diffuse illumination and softened contours create a metaphor for hovering in air, evoking a dreamlike perceptual logic in which architectural solidity dissolves into a liminal threshold between presence and immateriality.

Anthropomorphic architecture and shadowed thresholds: *Lighthouse Hill*

The solitary House in *Lighthouse Hill* (Figure 2) is permeated by symbolic and metaphorical ambivalence. Although the scene appears outwardly tranquil, the shadows covering the façade of the cottage, with its darkened windows facing the viewer, metaphorizes an inward withdrawal of consciousness, transforming the house into an emblem of emotional enclosure and existential reticence.

The shadows descend ominously down the slope of the hill toward the viewer, assuming a metaphorical agency of their own. Optical effects here create a spatial metaphor of encroaching indeterminacy, as if darkness were emanating from the building itself and spreading across the pictorial field. In this configuration, the house becomes a metaphorical source of liminality: it does not passively receive shadow but appears to generate and project it outward, dissolving the boundary between its inner essence and outer space.

Although Levin (1995, 39) does not explicitly employ the concept of liminality, he nonetheless describes the painting in terms closely aligned with liminal theory, noting that through the interaction of light and shadow the image produces a sense of "transition," in which buildings function not merely as "border markers of civilization," but as entities endowed with their own ambivalent forces. Read metaphorically, this formulation positions architecture as a threshold signifier – structures that stand for the unstable boundary between habitation and estrangement, presence and abandonment.

In this way, the building assumes an anthropomorphic and metaphorical subjectivity. Its darkened windows operate as metaphors of an obscured gaze; its shadowed façade becomes a metaphor of veiled interiority.

The house appears to observe and withhold simultaneously, embodying a consciousness suspended between exposure and concealment. Such personification intensifies the liminal connotations of the scene, transforming architectural form into a metaphorical actor within a threshold space, one capable of conveying tension, absence, and suspended presence rather than mere physical habitation.



Figure 2. Edward Hopper, *Lighthouse Hill* (1927).
Oil on Canvas, Dallas Museum of Art

Boundary metaphors: Nature–civilisation and maritime thresholds

In Hopper's work, houses frequently appear 'on the boundary,' framed by railroads, forests, or the ocean, becoming elements that metaphorically delineate the domains of civilization and nature. Through compositional demarcation, Hopper constructs pictorial spaces in which different zones belong to distinct worlds, producing architectural and landscape metaphors of threshold. In *Solitude* (1944), the house is visually enclosed by forest while a paved road, disconnected from the dwelling, represents civilization. The right and left sections of the composition differ so radically that they appear to belong to two separate realities. This arrangement functions as a metaphor for isolation and inaccessibility, intensifying the sense of liminality.

A similar metaphoric logic governs *Railway Crossing* (1923), where forest and field, functioning metonymically as signs of the natural world, are contrasted with telegraph poles and railroad tracks that separate the house from the forest, creating a visual metaphorical boundary between natural and human-ordered spaces. In *American Landscape* (1920), cattle crossing a railroad line metaphorically move from nature into civilization.

Coast Guard Station, Two Lights, Maine (Figure 3) exemplifies liminal metaphorization of maritime thresholds, visualizing the boundary between land and sea, safety and danger, stability and flux. The rigid architectural geometry of the station and lighthouse contrasts with irregular water and rock forms, functioning as a metaphor for human order confronting elemental forces. The sea operates as a metaphor for the changeable and unpredictable, while the station marks a liminal site mediating between worlds. As Levin (1995, 39)

notes, the buildings are "seized by sharp contrasts of light and shadow", placing them "at the disposal of invisible forces" that reinforce their metaphorical agency.

The painting evokes a sense of atemporality: absence of human figures and motion, planar architecture against textured water and rock, and a restrained palette contrasted with the murky violet sea create a metaphor of suspended time. The station appears suspended between two tonal zones – between the dull gray sky and the violet sea. This color does not exist in nature and therefore generates a sense of 'otherness'. The dimsky blurs boundaries between air and light, dissolving the horizon and producing a metaphor of threshold uncertainty. Light in the painting lacks a clearly identifiable source; rather than illuminating, it estranges. Overall, Hopper's compositional and chromatic choices operate as visual metaphors articulating liminality, turning architectural and natural forms into signs of existential 'in-betweenness.'

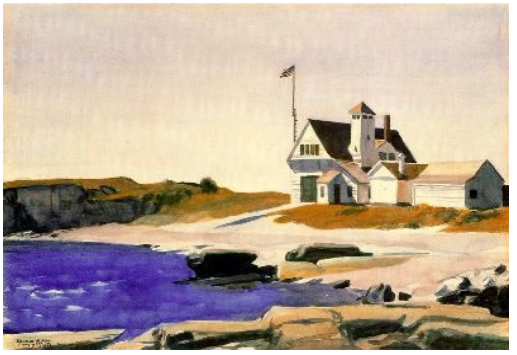


Figure 3. Edward Hopper, *Coast Guard Station, Two Lights, Maine* (1929). Watercolor over charcoal, Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York

Spatial metaphors of dissolution and dreamlike liminality

Beyond devices of compositional demarcation, the liminal effect in Hopper's paintings is often activated through the deliberate blurring of spatial boundaries. In his analysis of *The Lee Shore* (1941), Stanton notes that the composition is organized in such a way that the house appears to be situated at sea, while the boat, although located on the water, seems paradoxically anchored to the shore. This spatial ambiguity produces a striking perceptual effect akin to that of a dream, related to the way the eye and the mind process overlapping planes and unstable spatial cues (Strand 1994, 28). As a result, spatial relations lose their physical logic and acquire a metaphorical dimension,

transforming the depicted environment into a liminal zone where land and sea, stability and movement, exchange their conventional positions.

In *Rooms by the Sea* (Figure 4), the deformation of space further intensifies this metaphorical destabilization of boundaries. The viewer's perspective is disrupted through what Pamela Kubb (2004) describes as the surreal absence of land through the doorway. As Strand similarly observes, "The water seems to come right up to the door, as if there were no middle ground or shore" (Strand 1994, 63). The elimination of an intermediate spatial zone collapses the distance between interior and exterior, safety and exposure, rendering the doorway, which is itself a threshold space, not as a point of transition, but as an impossible, suspended boundary. In this way, spatial distortion functions as a visual metaphor of liminality, in which the very conditions of spatial orientation are unsettled, and the image evokes a dreamlike state of perceptual and conceptual in-betweenness.



Figure 4. Edward Hopper, *Rooms by the Sea* (1951).
Oil on Canvas, The Yale University Art Gallery

Taken together, *The Lee Shore* and *Rooms by the Sea* exemplify a distinct mode of blurred liminality in Hopper's work, in which spatial boundaries are perceptually dissolved, producing a metaphorical threshold where land and sea, interior and exterior, collapse into a dreamlike zone of unstable orientation and suspended meaning.

Windows as iconic metaphors of liminal consciousness

Recurrent metaphors of liminality in Hopper's paintings are the window of the solitary house, which are often veiled by darkened curtains or sealed by shutters, without reflections. These windows function as visual metaphors of closed eyes, blurring boundaries

between life and absence, the real and the imagined, interior and exterior, presence and non-being. As O'Doherty (1974, 25) observes, the window is "the most obvious and the most enigmatic motif" in Hopper's work, whose function "has only just begun to be understood". Traditionally a symbol of contact between interior and exterior, in Hopper's paintings the window disrupts this relation. Its inward orientation and opacity produce a threshold without passage, evoking a dreamlike or suspended consciousness: the house appears neither fully alive nor entirely dead, caught in a liminal state.

Windows recur throughout Hopper's oeuvre, in *House by the Railroad* (1925), *Telbot House* (1926), *Sunday* (1926), *Captain Upton's House* (1927), *Lighthouse Hill* (1927), *Adams House* (1928), *Coast Guard Station*, *Two Lights, Maine* (1929), and *The Lee Shore* (1941). Dark, impenetrable 'eye-windows,' as Ward (1985, 188) notes, resemble "some grotesque head dominated by eyes", consistently denying access to interior space. In *Early Sunday Morning* (1930), ten windows with shutters and curtains are metaphorically described as "eyes beneath the descending brow of the cornice" (Marling 1988) or "watching windows" (Hughes 1997, 422). These windows articulate a visual dichotomy between unity and variation: they appear in an orderly, rhythmic sequence along the red façade that extends across the canvas and beyond its frame, while differing in the configurations of curtains and blinds within each opening. Despite the absence of visible human figures inside the building, the curtains subtly suggest human presence, reinforcing the ambiguity between occupancy and emptiness.

In *Rooms for Tourists* (1945), black, curtained windows contrast with windows illuminated by intense artificial light emanating from within the house, as if the building itself were radiating light (Levin 1995, 42). Merging with an undifferentiated external light source that bathes the façade, this illumination produces a strange and estranging effect (Ibid, 42), one that simultaneously conveys comfort and unease. In *Sunday* (1926), two large dark windows function as a metaphor of emptiness, mirrored in the vacant gaze of the man seated with his back turned toward them. In industrial scenes such as *Approaching a City* (1946) and *Dawn in Pennsylvania* (1942), unlit, lifeless windows generate spatial metaphors of symbolic boundaries, marking thresholds between interior and exterior, reality and imagination, life and lifelessness.

Even in public interiors, windows operate metaphorically. In *Automat* (Figure 5), a vast black window occupies almost the entire

background, functioning as a visual metaphor of perceptual and existential void. Beyond it, no life is visible; instead, the glass yields only the repetitive reflection of identical rows of electric lights. This repetition operates as a metaphor of temporal arrest: time appears caught in mechanical duplication, generating a sense of enclosed pause and suspended duration. The window functions simultaneously as mirror and metaphoric threshold. By reflecting an intense artificial yellow light, it metaphorizes the instability of perceptual reality, visually multiplying space while rendering it ontologically uncertain. Reflection here destabilizes the visible world, transforming the surface into a metaphor of epistemic ambiguity.

The inky blackness of the window itself becomes a metaphor of denied access, indicating that the exterior is symbolically withheld and unavailable. At the same time, the reiterated lights, belonging physically to the café interior, are projected into this darkness, metaphorically occupying the void. This superimposition produces a doubled spatial code: the reflections exist both inside and outside, belonging fully to neither realm. The liminal impact of such repetitive reflection is supported by experimental studies that link liminal states to deviations from typical, expected configurational patterns (Diel & Lewis 2022), one of which is the replication of visual elements.

Thus, the window in the picture constructs a metaphorical topology of "between inside and outside." It becomes a liminal threshold surface, positioning the viewer within a suspended perceptual interval between two worlds, one of which is material, illuminated, and inhabited; the other opaque, indeterminate, and unreachable. The result is a metaphorical enclosure in which space, time, and presence are held in a state of threshold tension.



Fig. 5. Edward Hopper, *Automat* (1927).
Oil on Canvas, Des Moines Art Center, Des Moines

Thus, in Hopper's oeuvre, windows function as iconic metaphors of liminality, visualizing thresholds in which boundaries of presence, absence, and perception are persistently blurred and remain unresolvable.

Denied transitions: Doors, stairways, and empty interiors as object metaphors of threshold experience

Doors, stairways, and the noticeable absence of expected objects function in Hopper's paintings as potent metaphors of spatial and existential liminality. The meaningful absence of objects, such as furniture, doors, or human presence, triggers liminal perception, as suggested by Diel and Lewis in their deviation hypothesis (2022).

In *Sunlight in an Empty Room* (1963), the stripped interior becomes a visual metaphor for human absence. Sunlight entering through a darkened window acquires an almost lunar quality, destabilizing temporal logic. A vertical shadow echoes exterior darkness, reinforcing emptiness; as Kranzfelder (1998, 192) notes, the room lacks "even a trace of the requisites that would indicate human presence". A similar logic governs *Rooms by the Sea* (1951), where the emptiness of the interior is intensified by a trapezoidal wedge of sunlight that cuts through the room. The liminality of these interiors can be described using Strand's characterization of Hopper's work as offering a "vision of a world without us", "emptied of us" (Strand 1994, 58).

Doors in Hopper's work subvert their conventional function as connectors, operating instead as metaphors of threshold and disjunction. In *Compartment C, Car 293* (1965), a door devoid of handle or window promises passage yet denies it, becoming a paradoxical symbol of liminal stasis. The converging lines of the car roof form a trapezoidal channel, guiding the gaze while simultaneously reinforcing the sense of an unreachable passage, evoking both progression and impossibility. Strand (1988, 342) characterizes it as "an anxious connection between nowhere and nowhere, events of departure or arrival", where spatial logic and expectation collide.

Stairways similarly assume metaphorical significance, embodying transition toward the unknown. In *Stairway at 48 rue de Lille, Paris* (1906) and *Stairway* (1949), empty staircases metaphorically function as thresholds without passage, materializing the very essence of liminality. In *Stairway*, stairs descend past an open doorway into

indeterminate space, becoming a visual metaphor for suspended crossing between known and concealed realms. Kranzfelder (1998, 35) observes that Hopper used staircases as symbolic conduits between contrasting elements, often mediating the tension between human order and the indeterminate, untamed realm beyond.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that liminality in Edward Hopper's paintings is structurally articulated through a system of visual metaphors embedded in pictorial organization. Architectural forms, light–shadow configurations, spatial contrasts, and object-based symbolic codes function as metaphorical mechanisms that transform familiar environments into threshold spaces marked by ambiguity and suspension. In Hopper's visual language, concrete environments become metaphors of psychological, temporal, and existential in-betweenness.

The house emerges as the primary metaphorical locus of liminality. Solitary buildings function as visual metaphors of the human condition: anthropomorphized facades stand for psychological isolation, sealed windows metaphorize emotional inaccessibility, and architectural rigidity signifies temporal arrest. Positioned compositionally between illumination and darkness, habitation and abandonment, past and present, these structures become metaphors of suspended existence. These are dwellings that signify presence and simultaneously encode absence.

Beyond architecture, Hopper constructs extended metaphorical fields. Railroads operate as metaphors of historical rupture and blocked transition, separating epochs rather than connecting destinations. Coastlines function as metaphors of ontological thresholds, marking the unstable boundary between permanence (land) and flux (sea). Forest edges and urban peripheries become metaphors of existential boundary states, visualizing the liminal interface between culture/civilization and nature.

Light itself assumes a metaphorical function. Suspended illumination, twilight atmospheres, and artificial nocturnal lighting operate as metaphors of temporal indeterminacy, when time freezes between day and night, activity and stillness. Chiaroscuro contrasts metaphorize epistemic and emotional uncertainty.

Object and their configurations further reinforce Hopper's metaphorics of liminality. Empty interiors become metaphors of

human absence; doors without handles metaphorize denied transition; stairways metaphorically symbolize the transition toward the unknown. Such elements transform functional objects into threshold symbols, materializing the experience of 'crossing without crossing.'

The contribution of this article lies in establishing visual metaphor as a central analytical framework for interpreting liminality in Hopper's oeuvre. While prior scholarship has addressed spatial ambiguity and temporal dislocation, it has not foregrounded the metaphorical structures through which these effects are produced. By demonstrating how specific visual forms metaphorize ambivalent psychological states, temporal and spatial disorientation, and existential uncertainty, the study reaffirms visual metaphor as a key mechanism of artistic conceptualization.

This perspective positions Hopper's work as a metaphorically organized topology of thresholds, opening interdisciplinary pathways between art history, visual semiotics, metaphor theory, and liminality studies.

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Design beyond borders: Negotiating connection and identity across nations

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Abstract: Design in the twenty-first century embodies a productive paradox: it is at once a force that connects cultures through global circulation and a medium for expressing cultural and national identities. It evolves relentlessly — every day, every hour — often outpacing our ability to record or preserve its recent past. What was groundbreaking yesterday may already feel distant today, as design moves forward with remarkable speed, disregarding boundaries of nation, style, or tradition. The digital age, with its unprecedented access to ideas and methods, allows nearly anyone to follow emerging trends in real time. Yet this openness also highlights the importance of context: the way design is applied, understood, or valued continues to vary across different cultural and intellectual landscapes. This article explores design as a "boundary practice": a field that creates shared languages across borders while also safeguarding diversity by preserving cultural differences. Drawing on design theory, globalization research, and cultural studies of nationalism, it examines how design objects, practices, and discourses navigate the tension between universality and particularity. Through comparative analyses — ranging from Scandinavian and Japanese minimalism to French luxury and German precision, from diasporic design practices to global sustainability initiatives — the article shows how design fosters connections between nations without erasing identity. It concludes by advancing a hybrid theoretical framework that positions design as both connective and differentiating, offering new directions for scholarship in design theory, cultural studies, and transnational collaboration.

Keywords: design, arts, identity, culture

Introduction

Design has always crossed borders. The international reach of the Bauhaus[1] in the 1920s and 1930s, the global influence of Italian modernism after the Second World War, and the worldwide adoption

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AGATHOS, Volume 17, Issue 2 (33-34): 417-427, DOI 10.5281/zenodo.23407640
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of digital interface paradigms in the twenty-first century all demonstrate design's capacity to transcend national boundaries. Yet design is never detached from place. It remains deeply intertwined with questions of culture and identity. Designed objects are not only functional responses to practical needs; they also serve as vessels of meaning, bearers of tradition, and markers of collective belonging.

This dual nature — design as both a global connector and a marker of identity — reveals an ongoing tension within design studies. The dominant narratives of twentieth-century design history have tended to emphasize international modernism, functionality, and ideals of universality. In contrast, cultural historians and anthropologists have drawn attention to design's deep entanglement with local traditions, political contexts, and projects of national representation. Yet these perspectives have seldom been brought together within a unified theoretical framework capable of explaining how design can, at once, universalize and differentiate.

The aim of this article is to develop such a framework. It conceives of design as a *boundary practice* — one that enables dialogue and collaboration across communities while preserving diversity and multiplicity. This perspective makes it possible to understand how design connects nations through shared discourses, materials, and technologies, yet simultaneously distinguishes them through symbolic languages, aesthetic traditions, and projects of political identity.

The article unfolds in five stages. First, it situates the central problem within key theoretical debates in design studies, globalization, and nationalism. Second, it proposes a conceptual framework for understanding design as a hybrid practice. Third, it turns to comparative case studies that illustrate how design can connect and differentiate at the same time. Fourth, it reflects on the broader implications of these dynamics for design theory and global cultural exchange. Finally, it concludes by outlining potential directions for future research on the transnational dimensions of design.

Theoretical framework

[1] The Bauhaus, founded in 1919 in Weimar, Germany, by Walter Gropius, was a revolutionary design school that sought to unify art, craft, and technology. Emphasizing functionality, simplicity, and rational principles, the Bauhaus promoted the idea that design could serve as a universal language, transcending national and cultural boundaries while shaping modern architecture, furniture, and industrial design.

Design theory: Universality vs. particularity

The field of design theory has long moved between two poles: universality and particularity. Early modernist traditions — most notably the Bauhaus, the Ulm School, and the International Style — championed design as a universal language of form. Figures such as Walter Gropius and Hannes Meyer argued that design should be guided by functional and rational principles, rendering questions of style secondary or even obsolete. Likewise, theorists of the Ulm School advanced an approach grounded in systems thinking and communicative clarity, envisioning design as a medium of international visual literacy that could transcend cultural boundaries.

In contrast, later scholars have challenged this universalist vision by drawing attention to design's cultural, political, and local dimensions. Victor Margolin (2015) calls for a "world history of design" that resists the dominance of Western-centric narratives and acknowledges the plurality of design traditions. John Heskett (2005) emphasizes that design is not merely functional but also deeply symbolic, rooted in the fabric of everyday cultural practice. Tony Fry (2009) takes this argument further, portraying design as an inherently political act — one that shapes not only material environments but also social futures and collective identities.

This enduring tension between universality and particularity lies at the heart of design's central paradox: it circulates across borders, yet its meaning is always grounded in local contexts.

Globalization: Flows and hybridities

Globalization theory offers valuable perspectives for understanding the cross-border movement of design. Arjun Appadurai (1996) conceptualizes globalization as a network of cultural "flows" that move through various - *scapes*: ethnoscapes (migration), technoscapes (technology), finanscapes (capital), mediascapes (information), and ideoscapes (ideas). Design participates in all of these domains—designers migrate, technologies circulate, capital underwrites production, media disseminates imagery, and ideological frameworks inform global discourses on sustainability, innovation, and creativity.

However, globalization does not simply lead to homogenization. Homi Bhabha (1994) identifies *hybridity* as a defining condition of cultural exchange—one in which forms are not merely replicated but reinterpreted, generating new and composite identities. In design, hybridity reveals itself through the adaptation of global aesthetics to

local sensibilities and through diasporic practices that weave together inherited traditions with adopted styles.

Nationalism and identity

Theories of nationalism remind us that cultural difference endures, even amid accelerating globalization. Benedict Anderson (1983) famously described nations as "imagined communities" sustained through shared symbols, rituals, and collective narratives. Building on this, Michael Billig (1995) introduced the notion of *banal nationalism*, suggesting that every day practices — and even ordinary design objects such as currency, uniforms, or household items — quietly reproduce a sense of national belonging.

Design thus plays a crucial role in the construction and reinforcement of collective identity. Objects embody cultural values: French luxury goods evoke refinement and elegance; Japanese consumer products express harmony and restraint; German industrial design conveys precision and efficiency. Yet these identities do not remain confined within national borders—they circulate globally, generating both recognition and distinction.

Toward a hybrid framework: Design as boundary practice

Bringing these perspectives together, this article advances a framework for understanding design as a *boundary practice* — a concept adapted from Star and Griesemer (1989). Boundary practices enable communication and collaboration across different communities while allowing each to maintain its own interpretations and priorities. Within the realm of design, this suggests that objects, practices, and discourses generate shared languages that link nations, yet remain open to culturally specific meanings.

This framework resists the temptation to frame design solely as a product of global homogenization or as an expression of local essentialism. Instead, it positions design as a mediator between universality and particularity — a dynamic space where exchange and difference coexist.

Comparative case studies

Scandinavian and Japanese Minimalism

Minimalism is often described as a universal design language, yet its expressions are profoundly shaped by cultural context. In Scandinavia, minimalism — most visible in furniture and domestic design — embodies simplicity, functionality, and democratic accessibility.

Designers such as Alvar Aalto and Arne Jacobsen sought to create objects that were not only elegant and practical but also affordable and socially inclusive, reflecting the egalitarian ideals of Nordic societies.

Japanese minimalism, represented by figures like Naoto Fukasawa and brands such as MUJI, also celebrates simplicity and clarity of form. Yet its philosophical roots diverge: it is grounded in Zen aesthetics, the appreciation of *wabi-sabi* imperfection, and a deep cultural orientation toward balance and harmony with nature.

When these two traditions encounter each other in global markets and exhibitions, they often appear to speak a shared visual language of minimalism. However, their differences remain essential, enriching the global design conversation. Together, Scandinavian and Japanese minimalism exemplify how design can unite nations through shared aesthetic sensibilities while distinguishing them through their underlying cultural and philosophical values (see images 1-2).



1. Alvar Aalto's Stool 60 (Scandinavian minimalism) https://www.artek.fi/en/products/stool-60



2. MUJI wall clock (Japanese minimalism)

https://france.muji.eu/products/analogue-clock-large-brown-18911

French luxury and German precision

French and German design traditions hold distinct yet complementary positions within the global marketplace. French design — especially in fashion, cosmetics, and high-end consumer goods — embodies refinement, elegance, and a deep sense of cultural heritage. The label *Made in France* functions not merely as an indication of origin but as a symbol of national identity, evoking artistry, craftsmanship, and the continuity of tradition.

German design, in contrast, is grounded in the principles of engineering precision, functionality, and technical mastery. The enduring legacy of the *Deutscher Werkbund* and the Bauhaus continues to shape German industrial design, where clarity, rationality, and efficiency define both process and form. Iconic companies such as Braun, Volkswagen, and Siemens exemplify this design ethos, blending utilitarian rigor with aesthetic restraint.

On the global stage, these two traditions often converge—particularly within luxury and technology markets—where both sophistication and precision are prized. Yet their distinctions remain essential: French luxury speaks the language of cultural elegance, while German design communicates reliability and performance. Together, they illustrate how design identities can coexist within shared economic and aesthetic spaces, forging connections while preserving the integrity of their national narratives (see images 3-4).



3. Chanel No. 5 bottle (French luxury)

https://www.chanel.com/fr/parfums/p/125530/n5-eau-de-parfum-vaporisateur/



4. Braun SK 4 “Snow White’s Coffin” radio/record player

https://braunaudio.de/en/snowwhitecoffin-sk4-dieter-rams-hans-gugelot-design-moma/

Diasporic and hybrid designs

Diasporic communities generate hybrid design practices that bridge the cultural spaces between homeland and host nation. Armenian diasporic architecture in France, for example, gracefully fuses traditional Armenian elements — such as *khachkars* (cross-stones), carved stone ornamentation, and domed silhouettes — with French architectural styles, techniques, and materials. These hybrid structures act are cultural mediators: they embody Armenian spiritual and aesthetic identity while becoming part of the French urban and social fabric.

A similar phenomenon can be observed in Indian-inspired design across Britain, from restaurants and interior spaces to fashion and visual culture. Such designs reflect a dynamic negotiation of dual belonging — preserving cultural memory while adapting to contemporary Western contexts. The result is a fertile hybridity that enriches both hosts and homeland cultures, producing new forms of expression that are simultaneously familiar and reimagined.

Diasporic design thus reveals design's inherently transnational nature. It is not confined to the borders of a single nation or the logic of global markets, but emerges from lived experiences of migration, memory, and cultural transformation — where design becomes a tangible form of connection across distance and time (see image 5).



5. Armenian Apostolic church Sainte-Marie in Decine-Charpieu, France
Photo Author: Martin Harutyunyan, 2024, May 18

Global sustainability movements

The contemporary movement toward sustainable design exemplifies how global principles can take on distinct local expressions. Across the world, international organizations, design competitions, and professional networks champion sustainability as a universal imperative — promoting renewable materials, circular production systems, energy efficiency, and ecological consciousness.

Yet, the way sustainability is understood and practiced is profoundly shaped by local environments, materials, and traditions. In Southeast Asia, bamboo is celebrated as a renewable and rapidly regenerating resource; in Scandinavia, timber construction and passive heating systems reflect a long-standing harmony with northern

climates; in Armenia, stone masonry and vernacular building methods are being reinterpreted for contemporary ecological challenges.

These localized variations reveal that sustainability is not a singular model but a plural practice — one that connects nations through shared ethical commitments while respecting their material and cultural distinctiveness. In this sense, sustainability operates as a *boundary practice*: a global discourse that fosters collaboration and innovation without erasing local knowledge or identity (see image 6).



6. A bamboo pavilion by Vo Trong Nghia Architects (Vietnam)
https://vtnarchitects.net/bamboo-forest-pe257.html

Discussion

The comparative cases illuminate several core dynamics that define design as a boundary practice:

1. Shared aesthetics, and distinct philosophies: Scandinavian and Japanese minimalism may appear visually similar, yet their foundations differ profoundly — one rooted in social democracy and functionality, the other in Zen philosophy and natural harmony.
2. Convergent markets, and divergent identities: French luxury and German precision coexist within global markets but express contrasting cultural narratives — refinement versus reliability, heritage versus innovation.
3. Hybrid forms, and transnational belonging: Diasporic design practices connect homelands and host nations, generating hybrid forms that embody layered identities and lived experiences of movement.
4. Global discourses, and local adaptations: Sustainability offers a shared global vocabulary, yet its realization varies according to local materials, climates, and cultural values.

Together, these dynamics reaffirm that design is never neutral. It operates as an active mediator between universality and particularity, enabling exchange without erasure. In doing so, it challenges reductive views of globalization as a force of cultural homogenization and highlights instead the persistence of diversity and difference as engines of creativity.

Beyond these insights, the analysis broadens the horizons of design theory by placing its *transnational dimension* at the center. While universalist approaches privilege function and usability, and particularist perspectives foreground tradition and identity, the boundary-practice framework reveals their mutual dependence. Design is not purely global or national—it is *dialectical*. Its capacity to connect derives precisely from its ability to differentiate, and its cultural specificity gains meaning through participation in global networks.

Methodology

This study uses a *qualitative, interpretive methodology*. It draws on design theory, globalization studies, and cultural studies of nationalism to investigate design as a boundary practice. The approach emphasizes comparative analysis of design traditions, diasporic practices, and global sustainability initiatives to understand how universality and particularity coexist in contemporary design. The methodology foregrounds context-sensitive interpretation rather than purely quantitative measurement.

1. Comparative case studies: The article examines Scandinavian and Japanese minimalism, French luxury and German precision, diasporic Armenian and Indian hybrid designs, and global sustainability practices to illustrate the dual role of design.
2. Visual and material analysis: Selected design objects, architectural works, and products are analyzed for form, symbolism, and cultural significance.
3. Literature review: Design theory, globalization literature, and studies of nationalism provide the conceptual framework for interpreting case studies.
4. Cross-cultural interpretation: Objects and practices are analyzed in both local and global contexts to understand their boundary functions.

Analysis

The analysis identifies *patterns of convergence and differentiation*:

- Scandinavian and Japanese minimalism shares a visual language but differ in philosophical foundations.
- French luxury and German precision coexist in global markets while maintaining distinct national identities.
- Diasporic designs mediate between homelands and host nations, creating hybrid cultural expressions.
- Global sustainability initiatives demonstrate universal ethical goals implemented through local practices.

This demonstrates that design operates dialectically, connecting cultures without erasing their unique identities, confirming the proposed hypotheses. The analysis validates the concept of design as a *boundary practice*, providing a theoretical framework for future research on transnational design dynamics.

Conclusion

Design must be understood as a *boundary practice*—a force that simultaneously connects and differentiates nations. It creates shared platforms of discourse, markets, and aesthetics, while preserving distinct cultural identities. This hybrid function not only enriches design theory but also contributes to broader conversations in cultural studies, globalization, and transnational scholarship.

The implications are far-reaching. For practitioners, acknowledging design's dual role encourages attentiveness to both global frameworks and local traditions, fostering more culturally sensitive and contextually aware practices. For scholars, the boundary-practice framework provides a lens for analyzing transnational design dynamics without reducing them to either universalism or essentialism.

Future research might build on this framework by:

- Mapping specific cross-national collaborations and their negotiation of identity.
- Investigating diasporic design practices as laboratories of hybrid cultural expression.
- Examining the politics of cultural appropriation and power within global design flows.
- Exploring the impact of digital platforms — such as online marketplaces and AI-driven design tools — on the tension between universality and particularity.

By rethinking design as a practice that transcends yet respects borders, we gain a deeper understanding of how creativity connects nations while sustaining the uniqueness of their voices.

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AI-Assisted Translation Disclosure: In the preparation of this article, ChatGPT and Google Gemini were used as language-assistance tools for translating selected texts and source materials from Armenian to English and from Russian to English. The author reviewed, corrected, and verified the resulting translations and remains fully responsible for the accuracy, interpretation, and final content of the article.

Critical and dialectical leadership in the movie *Thirteen Days*: Cinematic representations of decision-making in a crisis situation

Auro Prasad Parida and Rashmi Ranjan Behera*

Abstract: This paper explores how the film *Thirteen Days* (2000) represents leadership during the Cuban Missile Crisis through the dual lenses of critical and dialectical leadership. It aims to reveal how cinematic narratives can illuminate ethical, reflexive, and dialogic dimensions of leadership in moments of crisis. Using a qualitative film analysis, the study examines key scenes, dialogues, and *mise en scène* to interpret leadership discourse through critical (power, ethics, reflexivity) and dialectical (contradiction, synthesis, negotiation) frameworks. The analysis reveals that effective crisis leadership emerges from questioning assumptions, integrating opposing perspectives, and synthesizing divergent viewpoints. Moreover, cinematic construction of leadership calls for the masterly fusion of elements such as framing, lighting, and dialogues. As a whole, *Thirteen Days* depicts leadership as collective, emotionally intelligent, and ethically grounded behavior rather than being heroic or authoritarian. By integrating leadership theory with film analysis, this study contributes to an interdisciplinary understanding of leadership in crisis, highlighting how cinema serves as a reflective medium for rethinking about power and delegation, decision-making, and moral responsibility in extreme crisis situations.

Keywords: crisis communication, critical leadership, Cuban Missile Crisis, dialectical leadership, film analysis, John F. Kennedy

Introduction

The film *Thirteen Days* (Donaldson 2000) enacts the historical Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962, a period marked by intense political and military conflict. It dramatizes a stretch of thirteen days during which President John F. Kennedy (JFK) was overwhelmed with tricky

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AGATHOS, Volume 17, Issue 2 (33-34): 429-449, DOI 10.5281/zenodo.23407752
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negotiations with external as well as internal forces, i.e., the intriguing Soviet Block and the very powerful and influential military-industrial lobby that every now and then pushed the political leadership into a war with the Soviet. JFK and his advisors were strained to skillfully balance the two extreme choices: military confrontation and/or diplomatic resolution. The film is particularly important for its portrayal of leadership practices that encompass both critical perspectives: (1) tactfully confronting and neutralizing the established power structures and (2) dialectical approaches that ask for practical result-oriented actions based on the synthesis of opposing forces and ideologies.

The concept of critical leadership interrogates power relations, encouraging leaders to reflect on the socio-political structures that underpin decisions (Alvesson & Spicer 2012). At the same time, dialectical leadership emphasizes the resolution of contradictions through dialogue, negotiation, and synthesis (Putnam et al. 2016). In a crisis marked by the potential for nuclear war, the film offers a compelling case for exploring how leaders negotiate these competing imperatives. The narrative centers on key figures who grapple with the dilemmas of authority, risk, and ethical responsibility—making *Thirteen Days* an ideal text for a multi-dimensional analysis of leadership.

Leadership scholarship has evolved substantially since the early conceptualizations of heroic or trait-based leadership. Traditional theories—such as transformational and transactional leadership (Bass 1985; Burns 1978)—often focus on individual charisma and influence. Transformational leadership, in particular, has been celebrated for its capacity to inspire change and motivate followers through a clear vision (Bass 1985). However, these paradigms have been critiqued for their overemphasis on individual leaders while neglecting the broader social, cultural, and political structures in which leadership is enacted (Conger & Kanungo 1988).

As a counterpoint, critical leadership emerged within a social and political critique of leadership that challenges hegemonic power structures (Tourish 2013). This perspective interrogates not only who is leading but also the socio-historical and cultural conditions that shape leadership practices. It places particular emphasis on issues of equity, voice, and the distribution of power (Collinson 2020). Proponents argue that leadership should be understood as a dynamic

process that is constantly negotiated and contested rather than a fixed set of traits or behaviors (Alvesson & Spicer 2012).

Critical Leadership Theory is grounded in critical theory and post-structuralist thought, which question established hierarchies and challenge normative practices in organizations and society (Collinson 2020). This framework highlights the importance of questioning assumptions, the language of leadership, and the implicit ideologies that underlie decision-making processes. It suggests that leadership decisions in times of crisis are not purely rational or objective but are influenced by power dynamics, cultural narratives, and ideological biases (Kreamer et al. 2025).

In cinematic portrayals, critical leadership is often evident in scenes where established power is questioned by those on the margins or in moments of internal dissent among the leadership team. As Putnam et al. (2016) note, critical leadership involves a reflexive stance that enables leaders to scrutinize their own decisions and the societal structures that inform them. Within the context of *Thirteen Days*, the film invites viewers to consider how political and military leaders engage in self-reflection and public accountability during one of history's most perilous moments.

Dialectical leadership, by contrast, centers on the process of resolving contradictions through dialogue and synthesis. Rooted in Hegelian and Marxist traditions, dialectics in leadership emphasizes the idea that conflicting forces can lead to a higher-order understanding or solution (Putnam et al. 2016). Unlike models that see decisions as binary or hierarchical, dialectical approaches view conflict as an inherent aspect of leadership that, when properly managed, can drive innovation and adaptive change (Martin 2006).

In *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, Schein (2010) calls attention to dialectical leadership process that involves the leader's ability to steer through and align opposing forces such as stability and change, hierarchy and collaboration, tradition and innovation within an organization. Schein argues that effective leaders must interpret and reshape culture through ongoing dialogue, reflection, and learning. Dialectical leadership involves managing paradoxes rather than eliminating them, fostering adaptive cultures where diverse perspectives coexist productively. By engaging in open communication and sense-making, leaders become cultural architects who continuously balance competing values to sustain organizational

learning, resilience, and long-term effectiveness in complex, evolving environments.

In crisis contexts, such as the Cuban Missile Crisis, the necessity for rapid decision-making often brings conflicting opinions to the fore. Dialectical leadership encourages openness to dialogue, where contradictory views are not silenced but explored and integrated into a cohesive strategy. This form of leadership is particularly relevant in *Thirteen Days*, where the tensions between military and diplomatic imperatives are navigated through intense negotiation and debate. Dialectical leaders, according to scholars like (Putnam et al. 2016), are those who can mediate between extremes and forge policies that reflect a synthesis of diverse perspectives.

Film as a medium has long been an influential tool in the portrayal of historical and political leadership. Scholars have noted that cinematic representations often idealize leadership through heroic narratives, yet they may also reveal the complexities and contradictions of decision-making in times of crisis (Bordwell & Thompson 2021). Movies such as *Thirteen Days* use narrative tension, dialogue, and visual symbolism to construct a layered narrative of leadership during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

In cinema, *mise en scène*—the arrangement of everything that appears in the framing of a film—plays a crucial role in conveying meaning. Lighting, camera angles, set design, and costume all contribute to how leadership is visually represented. In *Thirteen Days*, the interplay between shadows and light, close-ups of key decision-makers, and the dynamic editing of boardroom discussions all work together to create an atmosphere of tension and urgency. These techniques, when analyzed alongside the film's dialogues and thematic content, reveal both the overt and subtle dimensions of leadership under pressure. Against this backdrop, this study raises two research questions:

1. How does the film *Thirteen Days* represent critical leadership and dialectical leadership?
2. How does the film's dialogue and *mise en scène* contribute to an integrated understanding of the leadership dynamics during the Cuban Missile Crisis?

Methods

This paper leverages the dual lenses of critical and dialectical leadership to analyze the film *Thirteen Days*. The analytical

framework posits that effective leadership during a crisis can be understood through two interrelated dimensions:

Critical leadership dimension

- Questioning norms and established power: Leaders who challenge established power centers, conventional wisdom, and the status quo.
- Reflexivity: Leaders who are self-aware about their biases, the influence of ideology, and the socio-political context of their decisions.
- Ethical accountability: Leadership that is sensitive to issues of equity, voice, and responsibility.

Dialectical leadership dimension

- Contradiction management: Leaders who can negotiate between conflicting demands (e.g., military imperatives vs. diplomatic negotiation).
- Synthesis of diverse perspectives: The capacity to integrate opposing viewpoints into a unified strategy.
- Dynamic decision-making: An adaptive approach that continuously revises decisions in response to emergent circumstances (Collinson 2020).

The research adopts a qualitative approach to film analysis, combining cinematic discourse analysis with leadership theory. The study involves:

Selection of scenes, dialogues, and mise en scène

Several scenes within *Thirteen Days* were selected for detailed analysis:

- The Crisis Briefing Scene: A meeting of key advisors and political leaders where decisions about military response versus diplomatic negotiation are debated.
- The "Back-Channel" Dialogue: A sequence wherein a character, acting as a mediator, presents alternative perspectives that challenge the prevailing military view.
- The Final Decision-Making Sequence: A climactic scene where leadership must synthesize conflicting advice to prevent catastrophic action.

Within these scenes, dialogues are examined for how they articulate the tension between maintaining authority and engaging in critical self-reflection. Likewise, *mise en scène* elements—such as the use of dim lighting, close-up shots of facial expressions, and contrasting spatial arrangements—are analyzed to understand how they contribute to the portrayal of leadership in crisis.

Analysis

Thirteen Days is set during one of the most dangerous periods in modern history: the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962. The film meticulously reconstructs the atmosphere of urgency, fear, and ambiguity that characterized these thirteen days. Political leaders are portrayed as being caught between the imperatives of national security and the risk of global catastrophe. In this context, leadership is not a matter of unilateral decision-making but one that involves intense dialogue, negotiation, and moral reasoning. The film situates its narrative within a realistic framework, using historical documents and personal recollections to ground its portrayal of the crisis.

Throughout *Thirteen Days*, leadership is continuously characterized by profound dilemmas. First, the dilemma between authority and accountability: Leaders must balance the exercise of authority with the ethical imperative of accountability. For example, JFK, the president, in the film is depicted as both a decisive leader and a cautious mediator, hesitant to unleash irreversible military action. Second, the dilemma of traditional command structures versus emergent dialogue: Traditional hierarchical structures, which emphasize rapid command decisions, are challenged by the need for open dialogue and the incorporation of dissenting voices. This tension illustrates the need for critical leadership—where decision-makers are encouraged to question dogmatic approaches—and dialectical leadership—where contradictions are seen as opportunities for synthesis. Third, the dilemma of risk management: The film details how leaders are compelled to deliberate over risks not only in terms of military engagement but also in the moral and ethical dimensions of their decisions. The fear of nuclear annihilation forces a re-evaluation of established norms, aligning with critical leadership's call for reflexivity and ethical accountability.

Critical leadership in the film: Questioning established power structure

Critical leadership is visible in several key moments in *Thirteen Days* where established hierarchies and assumptions are openly challenged. The great power and influence of the US military in collusion with the arms industry is well-recorded. However, in this case, when military advisors present rigid plans for an air strike, a dissenting voice arises from within the ranks. This voice stresses the need for measured responses and criticizes the assumption that military might is the sole determinant of national security. The Executive Committee of the

National Security Council (ExComm) meeting stirs a montage of differing voices:

- Pushing hard the military option: "We have to get those missiles out." (Donaldson 2000, 00:17:10). Some urged immediate force. "We hit them... An air strike." (Ibid, 00:16:31)
- A voice of caution. "I still think there are diplomatic approaches we haven't considered yet." (Ibid, 00:20:01)
- A note of urgency: "If we decide to strike, we must agree now to do it before the missiles become operational." (Ibid, 00:16:41)
- A concern for ethics and image of the US: "How will that make us look? A big country blasting a little one into the Stone Age." (Ibid, 00:26:41)

Dean Acheson, Former Secretary of State, comes out with what seems to be a well-articulated consequence-conscious strategy: "Your first step, sir, will be to demand that the Soviet withdraw the missiles within 12 to 24 hours. They will refuse. When they do, you will order the strikes, followed by the invasion. They will resist, but will be overrun. They will retaliate against a target somewhere else in the world, most likely Berlin. We will honor our treaty commitments and resist them there, defeating them per our plans." (Ibid, 00:22:14-00:22:40)

JKF, a truly critical leader, dismantles this compelling narrative with a no-offense counter question: "Those plans call for the use of nuclear weapons. … And what is the next step?" (Ibid, 00:22:42-00:22:53)

Acheson is taken aback, but ominously pronounces that "Hopefully cooler heads will prevail before we reach the next step." (Ibid, 00:22:54-00:22:58)

JKF exposes the non-serious rhetorical bravado of Acheson with a single verbal stroke. This dialogue encapsulates the tenets of critical leadership. The film highlights that rather than blind obedience to established hierarchies and norms, effective leadership requires an ongoing process of questioning—of assumptions, strategies, and potential consequences. This reflective process is a hallmark of critical leadership, whereby leaders engage in self-critique and are open to feedback from all quarters (Collinson 2020).

A critical leader, JFK is endowed with reflexivity --one who is self-aware of his limitations -- specifically against the America First ideology rooted in the US politics and socio-cultural imagination. Even though he is the highest executive of the state of America, as a leader,

JFK is vulnerable to the notorious powers of the US military and media to manipulate the resources of the state and the public sentiment to escalate a situation that can go beyond his control. JFK's preemptive actions against the internal syndicate are achieved through a series of measures, executed mostly by his strong and loyal team:

1. Formation of ExComm as a counter to the pervasive power of the US military that can raise a war in collusion with the arms industry and the media (Ibid, 00:18:44).
2. Maintaining the official secrecy so that the crucial information never reaches to the media (Ibid, 00:18:56 & 00.33:30 & 00.36:56-58 & 00:37:44-48) and provocative information to the public (Ibid, 00:43:25-38).
3. Strict control over the frenetic acts of the military commanders in the sea in proximity to the Russian ships so that any act of arrogance or indiscipline triggers a war with the Soviet (Ibid, 01:17:44–01:21:38). JFK commands: "Captain. I want you to maintain contact with the ships and do nothing until I order otherwise. Is that clear?" (Ibid, 01:19:42-46)
4. Breaking the established protocol or communication channels, and allowing his personal assistant, Kenneth O'Donnell, to engage in personal communication with the pilot of the air craft who was designated to survey the Soviet activities in Cuba (Ibid, 00:59:00–01:00:04).

To sum up, by adopting the principles of state command over the military and control over the communication grapevine, JFK rises strategically over his limitations and harbors peace amid turmoil.

The critical leadership of JFK is also grounded in ethics. He is particularly sensitive to issues of equity, voice, and responsibility. He listens patiently to the intriguing voices of the war-mongering military but keeps his decisions alive without being swayed away by their rhetoric of fear and power. Secondly, he is also sensitive to America's commitments to the UN and the NATO, particularly, to the peace and tranquility of America's allies in the Western Europe.

Finally, the film's narrative structure itself reflects critical leadership by undermining the myth of the omniscient leader. Instead, decision-making is shown as being distributed among a group of advisors, with power emerging not solely from the title but from an individual's willingness to disrupt established protocols. This depiction resonates with the broader theories on leadership that questions heroic

individualism and calls attention to a more networked and accountable model of leadership (Alvesson & Spicer 2012).

Dialectical leadership in the film: Conflict, contradiction, and synthesis

Dialectical leadership is most apparent in scenes characterized by intense and contradictory viewpoints. During the crisis meetings, leaders and their advisors are seen engaging in heated debates that expose the inherent contradictions in policy proposals. For instance, the Pentagon meeting opens with urgency: "The situation is worse than we thought." (Donaldson 2000, 00:28:16) The generals push a counter offensive narrative by staging the numbers of Russian weapons in Cuba: "We now count 40 missiles." (Ibid, 00: 28: 18) Psychologically thickening the air with threat, they explode: "They can hit every place in the country except Seattle." (Ibid, 00:28:26) One of the generals pumps the rhetoric of speed and force: "You give me the order right now; my planes will be ready to carry out the air strikes in three days' time." (Ibid, 00:28:33) His confidence in a precision strike turns into pressure tactic as he pushes for: "All you gotta do is say go." (Ibid, 00:28:37) However, cutting through the clamour, President JFK resists the haste with a calm question: "General LeMay, do you truly believe that's our best course of action?" (Ibid, 00:29:03) That moment reflects dialectical leadership — JFK listens to all corners of the table; marshals through the contradictions between the civilian executives and military leaders. Notwithstanding the heated rhetoric of fear and war mongering, he refuses to surrender his judgment. General LeMay further insists: "It is the only course of action. America is in danger." (Ibid, 00:29:06) However, JKF's restraint keeps open the space between fear and reason. Psychologically, he works through the terrains of uncertainty; counters the false bravado of the Generals; engage the members in a democratic debate; and while peaceful, diplomatic resolution is his forte, he keeps all options open.

The exchange then unfolds into a lesson in democratic leadership. LeMay speaks in monologue—"It's our duty, sir, our responsibility to the American people to take out those missiles." (Ibid, 00:29:21) Yet JFK turns the one-way command into dialogue. "Now, General, what are the Soviets gonna do when we attack?" (Ibid, 00:31:07) His tone remains civil but sharp. LeMay replies with fatal confidence: "Nothing." (Ibid, 00:31:13) JFK's quiet rebuke shows moral clarity: "If we kill Soviet soldiers, they're gonna respond." (Ibid, 00:31:29) His question —"How would we respond if they killed ours?" (Ibid,

00:31:34) — brings empathy into strategy. He listens, he questions, and he teaches restraint by example. This is democratic leadership—built on patience, reason, and the courage to disagree respectfully. Even when mocked with, "You're in a pretty bad fix, Mr. President." (Ibid, 00:30:47), JFK's sharp reply restores balance: "Maybe you haven't noticed—you're in it with me." (Ibid, 00:31:01) This cool rebuttal reaffirms civilian authority over military license without degrading to mutual disgrace and humiliation.

Likewise, in every meeting or interaction, JFK ensures that tension is resolved through a dialectical process by engaging all important persons in iterative dialogues where each argument builds upon its contrary reaching to a nuanced consensus. Dialectical leadership, in this sense, involves embracing contradictions and using them as a crucible for creative and responsible decision-making (Putnam et al. 2016). The narrative further illustrates that the capacity to integrate divergent perspectives is central to preventing catastrophic outcomes. By demonstrating that a leader who remains open to conflicting voices can harness the wisdom inherent in dissent, *Thirteen Days* reinforces the idea that leadership is not merely about exerting power but about engaging in transformative dialogue that transcends simplistic binaries.

As a dialectical leader, JFK is gifted with dynamic decision-making: An adaptive approach that continuously revises decisions in response to emergent circumstances (Collinson 2020). Although he consistently guards against war as a solution to conflicts, but keeps options open vis-à-vis the actions and response of the Soviet leadership. Secondly, he does not abandon the military options, but leverages it as a strategic back up to diplomatic maneuvers. At discursive level, he captures the best of both realms by formulating the word "quarantine" that brilliantly masks the military "blockade" with the sweet nuances of diplomatic checkmate.

Dialogues, mise en scène, and representation of leadership

The film's *mise en scène* plays an integral role in conveying leadership dynamics. Camera angles and framing are of particular note, especially, the shot selection.

- Close-Up Shots: Frequently employed during crisis discussions, close-ups capture the emotional gravitas on the faces of key decision-makers. These shots invite the viewer into the internal conflicts and moral dilemmas that underpin the dialogue, emphasizing the human dimension of high-stakes leadership.

• Wide-Angle Shots: In sequences set in war rooms and briefing halls, wide-angle shots are used to visually represent the collective burden of leadership. They illustrate the tension between the individual and the group, underscoring that decision-making is distributed across a network rather than concentrated in a singular authoritative figure.

The role of *mise en scène* in the representation of JFK's leadership can be traced to several other cinematic effects such as dichotomous lighting, symbolic color palettes, set design and spatial composition, and music and the tone of delivery of dialogues. In *Thirteen Days*, the ExCommmeeting where JFK and his advisors debate between launching a military strike or imposing a naval blockade represents a critical juncture in the narrative. This scene (Figure 1) encapsulates the tension between immediate military action and cautious diplomacy, reflecting the complexities of decision-making during the Cuban Missile Crisis. JFK navigates these conflicting perspectives by engaging in a dialectical process. He challenges the assumptions of both camps, probing the potential consequences of each action. This deliberative approach reflects his commitment to a nuanced strategy that balances national security concerns with the imperative to avoid nuclear war.

Figure 1: JFK as a patient listener during the early ExComm meeting



Visually, the scene at the Pentagon employs a somber color palette, with dim lighting and tight framing to convey the gravity of the situation. The use of close-up shots on JFK's face captures his contemplative demeanor, emphasizing the weight of leadership. The

setting—a secure briefing room—adds to the atmosphere of urgency and confinement. The *mise en scène* reinforces the themes of isolation and pressure, as JFK is physically surrounded by advisors, yet mentally isolated in his role as the ultimate decision-maker. The visual composition mirrors the internal conflict and the burden of responsibility he bears.

JFK embodies dialectical leadership by refusing to act on the first impulse (military strike). He invokes reflection, synthesis, and consultation with advisors, managing contradictions between military urgency and diplomatic caution. He begins with a cautious, information-gathering phase—an "interest-based" strategy (Fisher et al. 2012), seeking facts before positions. The dimly lit Situation Room emphasizes urgency and shadowy ambiguity as JFK remains visually centered, framed between military and civilian advisors—a metaphor for dialectical mediation (Figure 2).

Figure 2. JFK visually framed as a moderator between the civilian and military leaders in the next round of ExComm meeting



The scene unfolds in the White House Cabinet Room as JFK, his brother Robert F. Kennedy (Bobby), and key members of the ExComm debate possible responses to Soviet nuclear missiles discovered in Cuba. The main options on the table are: (1) Air strike: A sudden military attack to destroy the missile sites; (2) Blockade/Quarantine: A naval blockade to prevent further shipments of missiles to Cuba, framed as a “quarantine” to avoid the legal connotations of war.

This debate represents a critical decision-making juncture that could lead either to escalation into nuclear war or to a controlled diplomatic

response. JFK deliberately invites dissent and listens to hawkish voices like General Curtis LeMay and other military advisors advocating for an air strike. At the same time, he considers the cautious counsel from Bobb yand Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, who favor a diplomatic and less aggressive approach. JFK does not dismiss either side but forces them to articulate their reasoning.

Key dialogues (Donaldson 2000, 00:28:20–00:28:50):

> LeMay: Mr. President, we don't have the luxury of time. We must eliminate these missiles now with an air strike.
> JFK: And when we kill a few thousand Russians? What happens then, General? Does this help us avoid war, or does it start it?

This demonstrates a dialectical tension—JFK recognizes the logic of a military strike (removing immediate threat) but juxtaposes it with the risk of escalation. JFK's leadership reveals integrative thinking, a hallmark of dialectical leadership. Instead of choosing between diplomacy and aggression, he frames a third path—a naval quarantine that is assertive yet not overtly aggressive. The quarantine approach satisfies the need for firm action while leaving room for negotiation.

> JFK: We are not going to be the ones who escalate this into a war. A blockade... no, let's call it a 'quarantine.' We will stop the missiles without firing the first shot. (Donaldson 2000, 00:31:10–00:31:30)

JFK's choice of terminology—"quarantine" instead of "blockade"—is itself a negotiation strategy, softening the perception of aggression in the international arena. JFK's decision reflects moral reasoning underpinned by dialectical thought. He questions the ethical implications of a pre-emptive strike, balancing the protection of national security with the avoidance of unnecessary loss of life and a potential global conflict.

The scene depicting President JFK's televised address to the American public during the Cuban Missile Crisis stands as a defining moment of leadership in *Thirteen Days*. On October 22, 1962, JFK's speech was a masterful exercise in dialectical leadership and rhetorical strategy, crafted to balance transparency, resolve, and calm reassurance amid unprecedented peril. This public communication was a critical component of the administration's negotiation strategy, as it publicly revealed the Soviet missile threat while outlining the U.S. response and appealing for national unity.

JFK's speech embodies dialectical thinking by addressing two conflicting imperatives: the need to inform the public fully and honestly about the grave threat posed by Soviet missiles in Cuba, while simultaneously maintaining calm and avoiding panic. This balancing act is central to effective crisis communication, demonstrating leadership that synthesizes transparency with reassurance.

The President's decision to publicly disclose the crisis after days of secret deliberation reflects a strategic use of openness as a form of pressure on the Soviets, coupled with a message designed to unify the American public. He states, "Unmistakable evidence has established the facts that a series of offensive missile sites are now in preparation on that imprisoned island." (Donaldson 2000, 00:51:07-00:51:16) Here, JFK chooses direct language to reveal the threat without resorting to alarmist rhetoric, thereby managing public perception. He proceeds:

> ….it shall be the policy of this nation to regard any nuclear missile launched from Cuba against any nation in the Western Hemisphere as an attack by the Soviet Union on the United States requiring a full retaliatory response upon the Soviet Union. (Donaldson 2000, 00:52:10–00:52:23)

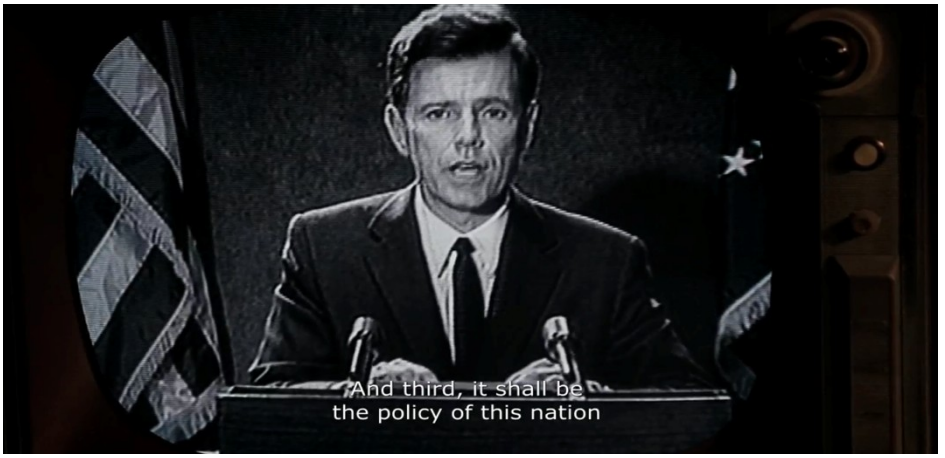
This dialectical leadership contrasts the adversarial tone against the Soviet Union with the conciliatory appeal for peace, encapsulating the tension between confrontation and diplomacy. JFK's speech not only informs but also positions the United States morally, justifying the quarantine and warning of the consequences of Soviet provocation, while simultaneously expressing hope for a peaceful resolution.

The speech's stylistics is characterized by formal, measured, and carefully crafted language designed to convey authority and composure. JFK employs a mix of declarative statements, conditional clauses, and appeals to shared values, creating a rhetorically balanced address. For example, he uses the phrase, "To halt this offensive build up, a strict quarantine on all offensive military equipment under shipment to Cuba is being initiated" (Donaldson 2000, 00:51:34-00:51:41). The term "quarantine" is repeated deliberately to emphasize the legal and measured nature of the response.

Visually, the scene (Figure 3) recreates the historic moment of JFK addressing the nation from the Oval Office, bathed in soft, natural light that highlights the President's solemn expression and composed demeanor. The framing centers JFK, underscoring his role as the nation's leader. The set is minimalistic and iconic—the Presidential

Lectern, the American flag, and the presidential seal—symbols of authority and continuity. These elements reinforce JFK's legitimacy and the gravity of the message. Close-ups on JFK's face capture subtle emotional cues—resolve mixed with a hint of vulnerability—that humanize the political leader and invite empathy. The restrained color palette, featuring muted blues and grays, contributes to a sober atmosphere that aligns with the serious subject matter. Intercut shots of American families watching the broadcast emphasize the speech's societal impact, showing a spectrum of reactions from concern to steadfastness, thereby reinforcing the address as a national unifying moment.

Figure 3: JFK addressing the nation over the television (In black and white shot)



The stylistic choices in the speech reinforce the administration's narrative of measured strength and moral clarity. The calculated use of repetition, parallel structure, and precise diction illustrates how language operates as a tool for shaping public opinion and diplomatic messaging. Visually, the *mise en scène* complements the speech's rhetorical power by portraying JFK as a calm, resolute leader embodying the nation's hopes and fears. The interplay between JFK's composed delivery and the visible reactions of citizens watching the broadcast highlights the speech's role in forging collective resolve. Ultimately, the scene reveals how effective crisis leadership necessitates not only strategic decision-making but also the ability to communicate with clarity and empathy, balancing competing demands to sustain national unity and deter adversaries.

Bobby's secret meeting with the Soviet Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin (Donaldson 2000, 02:09:11-02:12:01) is cast in a tense, dimly lit sequence. He conveys the unofficial compromise that the U.S. will remove Jupiter missiles from Turkey quietly later without a public declaration of the deal. This meeting is the film's moral and diplomatic climax — the moment that averts nuclear war.

Bobby initiates his verbal exchange with a public vow that sounds like democracy: "My brother, my friends, my countrymen, and I cannot and will not permit those missiles to become operational. I promise you that" (Donaldson 2000, 02:09:11–02:09:16). The sentence reaches outward. It invites collective trust. It is rhetorical and inclusive. Yet the room quickly pivots from public address to private calculus. When the Dobrynin counters, "Then I fear our 2 nations will go to war… And I fear where war will lead us" (Ibid, 02:09:19), the language tightens. The momentary dialectic — mutual speaking, mutual fearing — gives way to discrete bargaining. Leadership moves from speech to decision.

The refusal of a public *quid pro quo* exposes the shift to controlled channels. "That's not possible… The United States cannot agree to such terms under threat" (Ibid, 02:09:54). Public posture stays firm. Then a private path opens: "While there can be no quid pro quo on this issue, the United States can offer a private assurance" (Ibid, 02:10:20). The move is calculated: Leadership now uses secrecy as a tool. The public remains soothed while the chain of command executes the practical trade.

The deal insists on verification yet forbids publicity: "If the Soviet Union halts construction immediately, removes the missiles, and submits to U.N. inspection… the United States will pledge to never invade Cuba" (Ibid, 02:09:36–02:09:43). Inspection appears as a democratic check. In practice, it reassigns power to watchers. The U.N. inspectors become instruments of command. The state authorizes visibility but controls its meaning. Watching thus enforces compliance while preserving plausible deniability.

The private assurance is staged as both personal and administrative. "Now, our Jupiter missiles in Turkey are obsolete… This withdrawal should take place within, say, 6 months" (Ibid, 02:10:30–02:10:40). The timetable converts diplomatic morality into logistics. The caveat follows: "Of course, any public disclosure of this assurance would negate the deal… This private assurance… is not to be made public" (Ibid, 02:10:42–02:11:13). Authority now functions through tight

information control. Who watches, who reports, and who relays define power. The command rests on selective visibility.

An acute realization of the urgency of the situation drives the discussion into mutual obligations: "And we must have an answer tomorrow, at the latest. I cannot stress this point enough" (Ibid, 02:11:17). The tempo forces a decision. Dobrynin leaves Bobby with an assurance and urgency, "Then you must excuse me and permit me to relay the substance of our discussion to my superiors" (Ibid, 02:11:30). The democratic ritual of debate ends in delegative action. Leadership becomes choreography of backchannels, messengers, and sealed reports.

The diplomatic language throughout the negotiation avoids inflammatory rhetoric, instead emphasizing mutual respect and practical compromise. This reflects the real-world complexity of Cold War diplomacy, where face-saving and strategic communication was essential. On the American side, JFK and his advisors respond with cautious optimism. Their dialogue conveys relief but also the recognition of ongoing geopolitical tensions, reinforcing the notion that the resolution is a fragile but necessary step toward peace.

In the White House, lighting brightens subtly as JFK receives Khrushchev's message, symbolizing hope and relief. The contrast between the dark Soviet setting and the more open, light-filled American room visually narrates the shifting mood—from brinkmanship toward cautious optimism. Maps and communication devices appear prominently in settings, visually linking the two sides and reminding viewers of the continuous back-and-forth dialogue and monitoring underlying the resolution.

The stylistic choices in dialogue emphasize the delicate balance of power and the importance of rhetoric in maintaining face and facilitating peaceful outcomes. The avoidance of triumphalism in language reflects an understanding of the high stakes and the need to preserve future dialogue. Visually, the *mise en scène* reinforces the psychological and political dimensions of the crisis. The use of lighting, space, and body language effectively conveys the tension, isolation, and relief experienced by leaders on both sides. Ultimately, the scene serves as a compelling dramatization of how thoughtful leadership and communication can avert disaster, underscoring the film's broader themes of responsibility, diplomacy, and the human capacity for reason under pressure.

Discussion

The analysis of *Thirteen Days* through the lenses of critical and dialectical leadership yields several important implications for leadership studies.

First, the film demonstrates that effective leadership in crisis is not merely a function of decisive action; rather, it hinges on the ability to question, reflect, and synthesize divergent perspectives. This has practical implications for contemporary leadership in organizations and political institutions, emphasizing the need for structures that encourage reflexivity and open dialogue (Kreamer et al. 2025).

Second, the integration of critical and dialectical leadership in the film challenges the traditional heroic narrative often associated with leadership. In *Thirteen Days*, leaders are portrayed as fallible, conflicted, and deeply human—attributes that align with modern leadership theories that call for accountability, empathy, and ethical responsibility. By underscoring that leadership is inherently a collaborative and iterative process (Collinson 2020), the film contributes to a more nuanced understanding of how decisions are formulated under extreme conditions.

Third, the study's findings suggest that cinema can play a pivotal role in shaping public perceptions of leadership. By dramatizing the complexities of crisis management and the ethical dimensions of decision-making, films like *Thirteen Days* serve as cultural texts that inform—and sometimes challenge—conventional views about authority, responsibility, and the potential for transformative leadership.

The good aspects of leadership behavior in the movie can be summed up as follows:

1. *Dialectical and reflective decision-making*: President Kennedy and ExComm constantly weigh opposing viewpoints—military escalation vs. diplomatic restraint—showing leadership as a process of thinking, not of impulsive command.
2. *Civilian control over the military*: JFK and Robert Kennedy assert civilian supremacy, resisting pressure from the Joint Chiefs. This reinforces democratic leadership norms during national emergencies.
3. *Ethical restraint and moral responsibility*: Leadership prioritizes the avoidance of nuclear war and civilian casualties, framing power as a moral burden rather than a tool of dominance.
4. *Backchannel negotiation and strategic communication*: The use of secret diplomacy (e.g., Robert Kennedy's meeting with Soviet

Ambassador Dobrynin) shows pragmatic leadership that values quiet negotiation over public posturing.

5. *Team-based, inclusive leadership (ExComm)*: JFK listens to dissenting voices—Adlai Stevenson, Kenny O'Donnell, and others—demonstrating consultative leadership rather than authoritarian rule.

Despite the pedagogic importance of leadership mentioned above, some of the problematic aspects of leadership in *Thirteen Days* (2000) are worth attention:

1. *Overreliance on elite, closed-door decision-making*: Critical decisions are made by a small, elite group, excluding Congress, the public, and global stakeholders—raising democratic accountability concerns.
2. *Militaristic tunnel vision*: Some military leaders exhibit rigid, escalation-oriented thinking, prioritizing force over diplomacy and underestimating nuclear consequences.
3. *Gendered absence in leadership*: Leadership is portrayed as entirely male, reinforcing the idea that crisis leadership is a masculine, exclusionary domain.
4. *Secrecy and information manipulation*: Public communication is carefully controlled, sometimes bordering on misinformation, raising ethical questions about transparency in democratic leadership.
5. *Hero-centric narrative bias*: The film frames JFK (and close aides) as near-singular saviors, downplaying collective, international, and Soviet contributions to crisis resolution.

The interplay between artistic expression and leadership discourse is one of the most intriguing aspects of this research. *Thirteen Days* is not only a historical drama but also a reflective meditation on the nature of power. The film's cinematic techniques—its *mise en scène*, dialogue construction, and narrative pacing—are integral to understanding how leadership is embodied and performed in times of crisis. This intersection invites scholars to consider how artistic representations influence real-world expectations about leadership, inspiring a critical re-evaluation of both theory and practice.

Furthermore, the film illustrates that the representation of leadership is as much about emotion as it is about logic. The visual and auditory cues embedded in the film convey a sense of urgency, fear, and moral uncertainty that traditional leadership models often overlook. By bridging the gap between rational decision-making and the emotional undercurrents of crisis, *Thirteen Days* affirms that leadership in reality is an intricate interplay of both cerebral and affective processes.

Conclusion

This paper has explored the dual dimensions of critical and dialectical leadership in the film *Thirteen Days*. By reviewing literature on leadership theory, mapping out a theoretical and analytical framework, and analyzing key dialogues and cinematic elements, the study has demonstrated that effective leadership during crises involves both the rigorous questioning of established norms and the dynamic synthesis of conflicting perspectives.

The film's portrayal of leadership during the Cuban Missile Crisis highlights that decisive action is not synonymous with unilateral authority; instead, it is marked by an openness to dialogue, an ethical commitment to accountability, and the ability to navigate contradictions. The integrated framework presented herein shows that leadership is most effective when it embodies both critical reflection and dialectical negotiation—qualities that not only prevent catastrophic decisions but also pave the way for more responsible and resilient leadership practices.

As modern organizations and political entities continue to face complex and ambiguous challenges, the lessons drawn from Thirteen Days remain profoundly relevant. The film invites us to reconsider traditional hierarchies of power, to embrace the inherent uncertainties of crisis, and to see leadership as a collaborative, multifaceted process that evolves through continuous reflection and dialogue.

In conclusion, this study contributes to the broader discourse on leadership by offering an interdisciplinary examination of how leadership is constructed and communicated in crisis cinema. It underscores the need for leadership models that integrate critical questioning with dialectical negotiation—models that are better equipped to address the ethical and strategic dilemmas of the modern world.

While this paper has provided an in-depth analysis of leadership in *Thirteen Days*, several limitations must be acknowledged. First, as a cinematic text, the film is a dramatized account of historical events—an interpretation that may reflect artistic license as much as historical accuracy. Second, the analysis is largely qualitative and interpretive, meaning that alternative readings of the film might yield different emphases or conclusions.

Future research could extend this study in several directions: (1) A comparative study of crisis leadership portrayals in different films

could illuminate the cultural specificity of leadership narratives, and (2) Empirical research investigating how audiences interpret cinematic portrayals of leadership might provide quantitative insights into the impact of film on leadership perceptions.

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Hyperreal control of the psyche and intermedial simulation of subjectivities in *Cosmopolis* (2003/2012): A text–screen relational analysis

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Abstract: This research paper aims to explore the intricate but dynamic relationship between literary text *Cosmopolis* (2003) and its film adaptation (2012). The focus of this research is to analyse the role of verbal and visual signs, symbols and images in representing hyperrealist environment of control. This study also highlights the intermedial role of a literary text and its film adaptation in the representation of simulated individual subjectivities. The study further investigates the nature of film adaptation as an intertextual entity and its contribution towards manifestation of human perception in addition to its literary source. The study of both *Cosmopolis* (2003) along with its film adaptation (2012) of the same title, is quite significant as it strengthens the immense contribution of signs, symbols and images in mediating the human consciousness which is governed by the logic of consumption through media and technology. The study is qualitative in nature, and it highlights the latent and manifest structures of psychological power and control through theoretical insights of Linda Hutcheon and Jean Baudrillard. The study is also helpful in providing quality education and inclusive learning which is SDG# 4 by promoting critical thinking which helps the individuals to form better understanding of the society.

Keywords: hyperrealist control, consumption, simulation, adaptation, human consciousness

Introduction

Literature and cinema together create an understanding of the world for its readers and audience. Moreover, a literary text takes its reader into the fantastic world of imagination with the verbal imagery

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AGATHOS, Volume 17, Issue 2 (33-34): 451-466, DOI 10.5281/zenodo.23407828
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whereas a film has strong characteristics to construct that fantastic imaginary world right in front of the eyes of a spectator with the help of visual images, digital sound techniques and editing software. Both written and spoken forms are significant in order to create a sublime human understanding. Emergence of the film as a new form of art has heated a long debate of high art of literary texts against the democratic art of the films during 1990s. Vachel Lindsay, an early pioneer of American film theory (1915) predicted about the new era of images and symbols that has paved the way for innovative spectacle rather than reading or listening literature. He claimed modern visual mediums replacing text-based communication. However, the common aim of a literary text and a film is to show rather than to say. A novel develops through art of writing and cinema brings life to these writings through, sounds, visuals and images. It is very important to study both novel and film in order to understand a movie based on any literary text (Seed 2009).

Technological advancements and the capitalist consumer culture influence the literature and cinema's role in construction of social reality in the 21st century. Tom Wolfe, an American novelist (1992) argues for the prominence of the social reality among various dimensions of reality represented through fiction. He further argues that literature should be engaged with the social and thus manifests its entire web of significance based on reflection of the social upheavals into the texts. Mikhail Bakhtin ([1975] 1981) also argues about disparity between the personal and social that shapes the dynamics of a novel and presents the characters as social human beings with exaggerated descriptions. A fiction that tries to represent and critiques the social world, provides a great insight into the human life in general. In the 21st century, multi-cultural world with its micro politics of difference, social novel loses its grip as a medium of authentic representation. Towards the end of 20th century, cinema joined hand in hand with literature and dominated the mediums for the depiction of social reality through art and literature. Today, film is the unseparated part of human life. The images moving on the screen whether on television or in a movie theatre, appear to be as real as the reality of people's lives. The Barbie doll, Jurassic Park, Rambo and Doremon like characters are more known to us than our neighbors. The simulated reality is more popular and seems to be real than the reality itself. Baudrillard (1983) rightly calls the reality of today's culture is rampant that is created by media, technology and consumer culture.

Films are representing hyperrealist environment through signs, symbols and images and are closer to fiction than any other form of art (Srikandi 2020).

This research paper explores the reciprocal relationship between literary text *Cosmopolis* (2003) by Don DeLillo and its film adaptation by David Cronenberg in 2012, in the context of Linda Hutcheon's theoretical understanding of the nature of adaptation as a product and process of the culture in her book *A Theory of Adaptation* (2006) and Jean Baudrillard in his series of books *The System of Objects* (1968), *Consumer Society* (1970), *Symbolic Exchange and Death* (1976), and *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981). This study is significant in highlighting of the role of literary texts along with their film adaptations to contribute towards the manifestation of hyperrealist control of capitalist system. The selected text *Cosmopolis* (2003) and its adaptation (2012) both offer a critique of capitalism and a consumer culture along with the themes of illusion and reality. The objective of this research paper is to critique the role of media, technology, and consumer culture in manifesting the overt and covert systems of psychological control through the selected text *Cosmopolis* by Don DeLillo and its film adaptation by David Cronenberg.

Literature review

Slađana Stamenković (2021) probes into the concept of hyperreality and its effects on human lives. Furthermore, Stamenković also explores the concepts of personal identity in the technologically advanced world. Both the novels analyse the presence and use of technology at different levels and its effects on human lives. Jun Wang (2018) explains three different dimensions of time in the novel. These three perspectives of time are the evacuated now, the unreturnable past and the lost future. Jun Wang explores the impact of technological advancements on the perception of time in the novel. Ross Maffey and Yugin Teo (2018) examine the changing representation of technology in three of the novels. They point out the dismal and gloomy effects on human life in the technologically advanced world through examining the three novels of the author.

Similarly, Cristina Garrigós (2015) explores the themes of death, violence and destruction in the novel and its film adaptation by David Cronenberg. Garrigós highlights the dehumanization of the capitalist society through its representation of objects such as limousine becomes the more human than its characters. The study concludes that both the

film and the text represent the death drive that is caused by the capitalist practices in the society.

Randy Laist (2010) argues about the role of post 9/11 fiction in criticizing the capitalist global economy. It also highlights the capitalist human desire to reach the cybernetic apotheosis. Similarly, Kacper Bartczak (2011) explores the impacts of technology on culture and society. Bartczak draws a comparative analysis of the two of the novels *The Body Artist* and *Cosmopolis* and traces out the role of technology and new media in shaping the consciousness temporally. The existing scholars remain limited to analyze the novel through its representation of death, decay and materialist culture. Despite the growing body of research into the aspects of capitalism, the little attention is paid to explore the novel and adaptation with their mutual role to manifest hyperreal control of the psyche and intermedial simulation of subjectivities.

Theoretical framework

For analysis of the novel and film adaptation this study employs qualitative content analysis by Margrit Schreier (2012). Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA) is commonly known as thematic analysis in qualitative research methods. Schreier describes it in her book *Qualitative Content Analysis in Practice* (2012). It is a part of textual analysis which is focused on analyzing and interpreting the meaning within the texts. The selected science fiction text and its film adaptation have been analyzed within the theoretical background of simulacra, simulation and hyperreality by Jean Baudrillard and adaptation theory by Linda Hutcheon.

Hutcheon discusses adaptation in two different ways as a process and as a product. She focuses not only the process of creation but rather considers greatly the process of reception of any adaptation. Process of reception offers experiential aspects of any piece of work. It also determines the relationship between audience and the culture in which it exists. The relationship with source works is significant in order to understand the underlying power patterns/systems to construct meaning. For Hutcheon, adaptations are not autonomous works. These are examined as deliberate, announced and extended revisitations of the prior works. The relationship between adaptation and their source works is dynamic in 21st century. In addition to this, Baudrillardian concepts focus more on post-modern communication technologies and their role in creating images. Baudrillard criticizes the role of media

and television as an interface to present reality to contemporary audience. Simulacra and simulation present the world of unreflecting images. Image creating postmodern communication technologies such as television and cinema are the part of the logic of consumption. Baudrillard criticizes the capitalist logic of consumption. He believes that human beings are trapped in the system of psychological control. He represents his arguments by explaining the role of media, objects and technology.

Both Jean Baudrillard and Linda Hutcheon have significantly highlighted the role of context, and systematic relationships between human consciousness and culture. Film adaptation as the product and process of culture exists in the logic of consumption. Baudrillard explains the systematic logic of consumption as a strategy to foster a culture of consumerism. The culture of consumption has proliferation of signs, symbols and images through media particularly films which constantly shape the human consciousness and perception. Hutcheon also asserts the significance of adaptation including films as a repetition with difference, as a representation and product of culture. According to Hutcheon, an adaptation is the part of the logic of system and constantly perpetuates the systematic logic of capitalism through different modes of engagement particularly film adaptations. Hutcheon (2006, 28) argues as "These ways of engaging with stories do not, of course, ever take place in a vacuum. We engage in time and space, within a particular society and a general culture. The contexts of creation and reception are material, public, and economic as much as they are cultural, personal, and aesthetic". She explains further that a change in the context and culture, can shift the ideological and literal understanding of the work. Hutcheon believes that an adaptation is a unique process of understanding culture and society in the 21st century. Baudrillard (1976) argues that representation in the contemporary capitalist society is the manifestation of signs and images around human beings. Human consciousness is shaped by the representations around it. Electronic mass media, technology and objects maintain an illusion of actuality in order to manipulate different events, aspects of facts and figures. Electronic mass media propagate under political, social and cultural ideology systematically at work behind signs and images. It is not the message that is important rather a pattern of meanings associated with the images and signs. Through a common sense of fashion individuals connect themselves with other human beings in the realm of representations through unreal signs and images

thus creating a kind of metaverse (Ibid.). Baudrillard rejects modern use of excessive technology in the realm of objects and its impact on individuals in the consumer society. He elaborates it as a new form of social control to generate manipulated responses through televised programs, films and advertising. All the process is constant social control and every billboard, TV advertisement and cinema perpetuates the neutralization of the signified through the codes in the form of popular fashion. He further elaborates that contemporary individual is in the age of referendum where there is no referential. Every sign, message, poles and discussion programs are presented in the form of question/answer, pre-coded content. All the communication system in the contemporary technologically advance society is a perfect example of simulation. The questions prompt answers in audience. Meanings are pre-coded and imposed through mass media thus completing the cycle of communication. Baudrillard believes that every message, image and functional objects around human beings are a test which triggers response through stereotype simulated models. Every object and information have no connection with the functional value or reality rather "Both object and information already result from a selection, an edited sequence of camera angles, they have already tested 'reality' and have only asked those questions to which it has responded" (Baudrillard 1976, 84). Thus, he highlights the role of media in manipulation of information through images and codes, proliferation of objects around human consciousness. Baudrillard argues that the hyperreal control is a systematic logic of consumption. Human consciousness is bound to operate in the system of control and governance.

Discussion and analysis

Cosmopolis (2003) by Don DeLillo and its film adaptation (2012) by David Cronenberg represent a dialectical view of the American society during 21st century. DeLillo represents its protagonist along with the other characters, caught in the system of consumption in the rapidly changing world. Both the book and its adaptation offer an intense critique to the capitalist forces of control and authority in the sphere of virtuality.

Cosmopolis film adaptation (2012) works in a double way. It is a product of re-creation and interpretation and simultaneously a process of creation and reception, an act of appropriating and salvaging the source work. According to Linda Hutcheon (2006, 16), as a product an

adaptation is "an announced, extensive and specific transcoding" of the earlier work. *Cosmopolis* (2012) clearly announces the association with the literary source by maintaining same title and using the opening epigraph the very famous recurring line of the text by DeLillo. *Cosmopolis* novel represents the loss of meaning and degradation of human existence in the capitalist world by the reference to the poem in a very subtle way. The film adaptation, on the other hand, gives it an immediate prominence by making it an epigraph in bold white letters with black background. Unlike in written text, the opening epigraph sets the tone of the film adaptation for the viewers to perceive recurring themes of social collapse and absurdity. Visual signs are more prominent as compare to the verbal words in creation of the immediate effect of the tone of moral and social collapse.



Figure 1. Opening epigraph, as it appears in *Cosmopolis* (2012)

The film adaptation is also an extensive transposition of the earlier literary text as it maintains strong fidelity to the book's dialogue verbatim. The book *Cosmopolis* offers philosophical and rich narrative with extensive dialogues, philosophical discussions representing interior and exterior turmoil of the characters. The novel also offers a digressive narrative style oscillating between past and present. In comparison, the film adaptation holds a structured and focused narrative mainly focusing on present timeline. The film adaptation exhibits different life events of the protagonist Eric Packer most of the times in his limousine eliminating the other places mentioned in the text. In addition to this, the film adaptation skips most of the external events such as protests, external riots and detailed public events like the funeral of the famous Sufi rap singer Brutha Fez. These external events are just represented through some specific symbolical visual signs in the film adaptation. For instance, in the film adaptation the episode of the death of Sufi rap singer Brutha Fez is represented the dialogues between Eric and Kozmo Thomas, an old acquaintance of Eric. In one of the scenes the dead body of the singer is displayed lying

in the coffin covered with flowers. The coffin is passing by the limousine.



Figure 2. Mediated funeral as it appears in *Cosmopolis* (2012)

Representation of funeral in the text comprises of extensive details of the description. DeLillo represents details of the performances around the funeral. The novel also describes the larger entourage around the funeral consisting of people from different walks of social life. The book contains details of the Eric's emotional breakdown along with his companion. In comparison, the film adaptation is narrowed on describing complex internal emotional turmoil of the characters. However, despite different digressions in terms of re-telling and reinterpreting both the novel and the film adaptation offers a detailed critique to the consumer practices in the capitalist culture. The novel and film offer great contribution in highlighting hyperrealist system of control mediated through particularly media and technological progress. They also offer an insight to the psychological conditioning of human subjectivities particularly with regard to Eric Packer and Benno Levin. Their minds are aligned to the psychological conditioning offered through images, symbols and signs through capitalist system of control. *Cosmopolis* (2003) and its film adaptation (2012) present a dystopian view of the late capitalist society where technology, media and capital have integrated to form a system of control and power. Both the book and film adaptation create a hyperrealist environment where money, media and images create different spectacle of illusion. Human experience is bound to screens, technical gadgets and financial abstraction. DeLillo offers a de-corporealization of the physical, political and the social aspects in the text and its adaptation. He presents his characters operating into the system of consumer culture where they are striving to live for the authentic experience. However, DeLillo's critique is grim and full of grotesque and symbolical dark aspects of human life. Chronological compression, spatial enclosure, fragmented narrative and the symbolic

title form the structure of the novel to represent the logic of late capitalist consumer culture. The novel and the adaptation represent the Baudrillardian rejection of the technological control over human lives and the logic of control and power within the technological sphere. Eric Packer lives in the futurist technological control. He is surrounded by screens, monitors, cameras, electronic watches and other technological tools. He experiences reality, time and even himself through these technological gadgets. His life is digitized with the numbers and codes around him. For instance, his car displays monitors and screens showing digits and numbers on "where there were dashboard computer screens and a night-vision display on the lower windshield, a product of the infrared camera situated in the grille" (DeLillo 2003, 6). Packer is obsessed with the digital forms and numeric on the screens. His reality is mediated through screens and digital representations. He lives in the controlled and hyperrealist environment where he does not find any authentic experience; rather he perceives the world around him though mirrors and screens of monitors and cameras. The film adaptation displays the role of gadgets in Eric Packer's life as it shows the interior of the limo is full of technological tools. The figure below displays the electronic screen in Eric Packer's limousine.

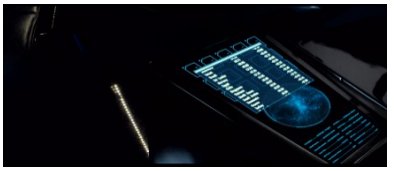


Figure 3. Digital Screen Data in the Limousine, *Cosmopolis* (2012)

Furthermore, Eric Packer wears and takes off his spectacles on various occasions in the novel and its film adaptation. It is symbolically important. It reflects deeper themes of perception and control. The specs signify the role of detachment and disinterpretation in perceiving the world around. His wife Elise Shifrin confesses of noticing Eric's eyes for the first time in their twenty-two-day interaction. "He took off his sunglasses, for effect. She gazed into his face. She looked steadily, with fixed attention. 'Your eyes are blue,' she said… 'You never told me you were blue-eyed'" (Ibid, 8). Similarly, the film adaptation illustrates the significance of objects shaping human perception in the capitalist system of control. Eric's character is portrayed by the renowned English actor Robert Pattinson. He is found wearing black

sun glasses throughout the film. It reflects the Baudrillard's idea of mediated reality in the capitalist society. Cronenberg uses spectacles as a transpositional device as DeLillo presents the idea of mediated reality through words whereas Cronenberg illustrates it through visual symbolism. Prose represents the symbolical significance of the spectacles as deep and interior to the narrative whereas the film adaptation externalizes it by using visual glasses.



Figure 4. Sunglasses as symbol of detachment and alienation, *Cosmopolis* (2012)

Baudrillard's idea of subjugated sexuality symbolized through automated technological objects. The protagonist particularly in his medical examination and oral sexual interaction with his chief of finance Jane Melman represents his suppressed desire. DeLillo further argues that automatism is considered as perfection of objects in the technological sphere but it has its self-destructive element. These are not only machines rather are the psycho-social metaphors for subjugated sexuality of human beings that work as slaves to them. Eric Packer kills his own chief of security and discards his weapon. Despite of the permanent threat to his life he then moves into the building to meet his prospect murderer Benno Levin. He, in a way, predicts his own death and destruction. Eventually he hurts himself through his weapon by shooting into his hand. He constantly tells his chief of finance that in the capitalist system of control human beings die every weekend and every day. Eric's chief of theory Vija Kinsky claims that capitalism has its own self-destructive element and it is getting out of control while Eric contradicts her and believes that these grave diggers are necessary for the system to perpetuate. "You know what capitalism produces. According to Marx and Engels, 'Its own grave-diggers', he said. …But these are not the grave-diggers. This is the free market itself. These people are a fantasy generated by the market. They don't exist outside the market. There is nowhere they can go to be on the outside. There is no outside" (Ibid, 38).

The objects are assigned human-like characteristics as Eric Packer talks to his weapon before he encounters Benno Levin in the

dilapidated building. Additionally, Eric's chief of security Torval has a Czech weapon which is controlled through voice command. Talking to a weapon metaphorically represents the control of man over objects. It embodies the height of technological control in the postmodern society of consumption. Eric compares the voice-controlled weapon with the gun he has in his hand and feels that the objects are nonfunctional in this system. It is the system that works not the objects and individuals. He argues that objects ad human beings both have lost their significance and functionality in the hyperreal world of consumption. Benno Levin's confessions are the representation of the other side story of the materialist society where abundance and scarcity both play a major role in affecting the consciousness of marginalized individuals. It is the society where all solid materials lose their functionality and turn into abstract signs for the capitalist system of control.

Cosmopolis (2003) and its adaptation (2012) represent many instances of Baudrillardian simulacra and simulation which creates hyperreal environment. These copies without real manifest human internal and external reality in the consumer society and human consciousness is bound to operate according to the logic of consumption. Eric Packer's routine of the day is full of such consumer practices which manifest his internal and external reality he admits that reading poetry can help him to perceive the world in a better way. "Poems made him conscious of his breathing. A poem bared the moment to things he was not normally prepared to notice. This was the nuance of every poem, at least for him, at night, these long weeks, one breath after another, in the rotating room at the top of the triplex" (DeLillo 2003, 4). Eric Packer insists on going for a haircut despite the constant warning by his chief of security Torval about the death threat. He wishes for the haircut from the same barbershop where his father used to bring him. The place holds his childhood memories. Eric strives for the authentic experience for which he lacks in his daily routine. He always finds himself struggling with numerical digits showing frequencies of finances in the world on the screens. Eric describes his urge for the haircut as an authentic experience which takes him out a hyperreal moment to perceive the world without technological gadgets and financial statistics around him. "A haircut has what. Associations. Calendar on the wall. Mirrors everywhere. There's no barber chair here. Nothing swivels but the spycam" (Ibid, 8). The consumer society which is abundant in images and signs fails to make sense to its individuals. They always lead purposeless lives

searching for meaning. In the capitalist society, the intimate experiences also work as perpetuating tools to operate in the logic of consumption. In Eric's hyperreal world, these intimate experiences also turn into simulations offering no real experience. It loses its significance to the individual and turns to be a mundane task. Human beings turn into commodities dealing only into the terms of finances. Human relationships are mere transactions based on symbolical value system. The sequence of meetings with different persons during his itinerary also reflects Eric's particular dealings with technology, finances and currency repeatedly. The film adaptation (2012) also represents death and decay. It illustrates chaos and meaninglessness of human life by representing different visual signs and symbols. Most recurrent sign is of the rat in the film adaptation. During different protests, anti-capitalists hold dead rats and spray paint slogans about the rat becoming the unit of currency. For the common people, workers and laborers money is now as invaluable and grotesque as the dead rats. Their consciousness operates in the capitalist system of control. Their protests are also the empty slogans of resistance. These actions are devoid of meaning and purpose. Below in the image taken from the film adaptation a woman shows a dead rat outside the limousine. Their actions appear repetitive and meaningless. It represents futility of human action in the system of consumption. Even the act of resistance is an act of simulation devoid of real meaning.



Figure 5. Meaninglessness of the protest, *Cosmopolis* (2012)

Cosmopolis (2003) deals with the concept of time and its relationship with the human consciousness in a subtle way. DeLillo presents time as a commodity, collapse of personal memory and the end of futurity. The book also presents non-linear time construction, temporal compression and dislocation. DeLillo (2003, 30) confesses "Yes. Because there isn"t time not to have it. Time is a thing that grows scarcer every day. What. You don't know this?"

These objects in the novel and its film adaptation personify human feelings and emotions. Inanimate objects are anthropomorphized in the text and are replete with symbolical and cultural meaning. They appear

as living characters whereas human beings appear devoid of emotional empathy and connection. The book *Cosmopolis* (2003) represents significant psycho-spatial relationship between human mind and the places around. In the hyper-capitalist consumer society, places, buildings and architecture turn into signs and symbols. The materiality of the solid structures is lost and consumed in the system of consumption. For instance, Eric Packer is unable to grasp the physical significance of the places like airports and offices. He tells his chief of technology, Shiner, that there is no need of airports these days. Furthermore, Eric also feels that there is no specific purpose associated with the building to name it as office. Virtualization of the experience of work has turned his car into an office. Eric can see and correspond to his employees through the cameras and virtual screens. "Shiner said, 'Any special reason we're in the car instead of the office?' … 'How do you know we're in the car instead of the office? If I answer that question… Based on what premise? I know I'll say something that's halfway clever but mostly shallow and probably inaccurate on some level. Then you'll pity me for having been born" (DeLillo 2003, 7).

Media also play an important role to turn these objects into signs and symbols in the capitalist system of control. The book *Cosmopolis* and its film adaptation represent a new kind of humanism in which the traditional system of human values and connections is destabilized. Human beings are estranged in the consumer culture (Baudrillard 1998). Eric feels the objects around his apartment are in connection to his mind. He derives energy out of them. "He went back up to the living quarters, walking slowly now, and paused in every room, absorbing what was there, deeply seeing, retaining every fleck of energy in rays and waves" (DeLillo 2003, 5). Eric also feels a connection with the tallest building in which he lives. "He went outside and crossed the avenue, then turned and faced the building where he lived. He felt contiguous with it" (Ibid.). He is connected with the objects in the barbershop where he wants to go for the haircut. These objects are the association with his past memories. Objects have replaced the human beings in his memory. "A haircut has what. Associations. Calendar on the wall. Mirrors everywhere. There's no barber chair here. Nothing swivels but the spycam" (Ibid, 8). Even his past recollections are full of references to the objects he used to have in his childhood. Eric constantly finds himself in a dilemma. He is caught between emotions and logic. His struggle to find affinities between nature and patterns of data abstraction reflects his involvement with

the finances. Eric's desire to buy the entire chapel instead of a single Rothko painting symbolizes his power to purchase. Eric does not want to buy painting for its aesthetic appeal rather he wants to prove his power to buy whole of the chapel. "Let them buy it. Let them outbid me. … Forgive the pissy way I say this. But the Rothko Chapel belongs to the world. …It's mine if I buy it" (Ibid, 13). Didi Fancher, confesses that she needs to understand the money and its importance. She feels that since her childhood she learns only to deal with the money matters but cannot understand it fully. Eric's marriage with Elise Shifrin is also objectified. Eric is more connected to her wealth than her as a person. Benno Levin's connection with the objects more than the persons in his life reflects the materiality of human relationships. Benno Levin is more concerned with the objects he uses. He describes "The pencil I'm writing with is yellow, with the numeral 2. I want to note the tools I'm using, just for the record" (Ibid, 25). DeLillo represents a society which is abundant in anxiety, alienation and depression. All the characters thrive in utter chaos. The film adaptation (2012) portrays sense of alienation and inner emotional collapse of the Eric Packer through visual representation of him.



Figure 6. Emotional collapse of Eric Packer, *Cosmopolis* (2012)

The image shows Eric Packer emotionally breaking down in his limousine. His limousine is the object of consumer culture which isolates him from the real world around him. In the image Eric is shown covering his mouth with his hand, trying to suppress his emotions. The gesture reflects the inner turmoil of the character. It also depicts his anxiety and frustration in the system of control. Despite his control over digital data and futurist approach, he feels trapped inside in the system of consumption. Benno Levin confesses that he suffers different kinds of psychological disorders. He writes his own life story beside the dead body of Eric Packer. Levin symbolizes collective insensitivity of the individuals in the society where violence is consumed every day. He confesses that "When I try to suppress my anger, I suffer spells of *hwabyung* (Korean). This is cultural panic

mainly, which I caught on the Internet" (DeLillo 2003, 25). During the protest, a man commits suicide by burning himself in front of the media and public. The incident is highly symbolical in representing sense of alienation and endless suffering of modern men. It also reflects that media plays a significant role to heighten the sight of suffering. Media manifest the incident into a mass spectacle for everyone. The melting of the eye glasses of the burning man symbolizes the destruction of perception. Glasses are the source of pain and suffering for the dying man. The human perception is full of suffering. In addition to this, fragility of human life is the hallmark of the late capitalist and technologically advanced society. Eric's excessive sense of hunger also reflects his constant anxiety and sense of alienation. He confesses that there are times when he feels excessive rounds of hunger without any other thought. The coded movements of the crowd on the streets across Manhattan, reflects a collective sense of mass alienation. Eric Packer's relationship with his mother is also the reflection of his alienated childhood. There is a general sense of detachment among human relationships as parents are left alone in the old homes. DeLillo represents it is the system of control which perpetuates violence and decline moral values. Eric is not able to distinguish between the psychological trauma and physical pain. He becomes insensitive towards human pain and suffering.

Conclusion

Cosmopolis (2003) and its film adaptation (2012) represent themes of consumer culture, alienation, proliferation of signs and symbols in capitalist society. The film adaptation by David Cronenberg works as acknowledged transposition of the earlier novel of the same title by Don DeLillo published in 2003. Its announced relationship with the book establishes an understanding of the viewer to look deeply into the capitalist system of power and control. Though the film adaptation mainly unfolds the sense of alienation focusing on the protagonist, yet its deliberate references to the book keeps the main thread intact. Both the book and the film adaptation work to reveal the underlying processes of control. These explicit and implicit processes of control contribute towards the understanding of human beings.

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A Western story in an Indian frame: A philosophical engagement with the cross-cultural adaptation of *The Last Leaf* into *Lootera*

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Abstract: This paper examines Vikramaditya Motwane's Indian film adaptation *Lootera* (2013), inspired by O'Henry's short story *The Last Leaf*, to highlight the transformation that occurs in a cross-cultural adaptation. Focusing on the philosophical aspect of the narrative regarding human suffering and hope, this paper shows a shift in the perception of these concepts when they are recontextualized in an Indian environment. The film employs a causal effect to expand the short story into a feature-length film by integrating the Indian motif of *karma* philosophy. This paper reflects on the connection between human creativity and spirituality advocated by ancient Indian knowledge. The objective of the paper is to highlight the underlying Indian philosophy that marks the artwork distinctively Indian, suggesting a cultural deviation. Through the analysis of this narrative, our aim is to offer a resolution of human suffering through the lens of Indian Knowledge Systems. Insights of key adaptation theorists and thinkers like Dudley Andrew, Linda Seger, Seymour Chatman, Sri Aurobindo, Kapila Vatsyayan, and other scholars play crucial role in the analysis of this study.

Keywords: *karma*, hope, suffering, creative instinct, spiritual freedom

Introduction

When a literary work is adapted for the screen in a different cultural environment, it does not simply translate the source but transforms it to suit the sensibility of new audiences. This paper analyses the Indian film adaptation *Lootera* (2013), inspired by O'Henry's short story *The Last Leaf* (1907), to address the key elements of cross-cultural adaptation, along with a philosophical intervention that deepens the constitution of the storyline. Murray Smith (2008, 50) suggests that

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AGATHOS, Volume 17, Issue 2 (33-34): 467-476, DOI 10.5281/zenodo.23407894
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many experimental and avant-garde films convey philosophical ideas, which encourages the viewers to become deeply involved in the structure and aesthetics of film. *Lootera*'s aesthetic beauty lies in its origin, in a four-page-long short story that deals with the deeper questions of life regarding human suffering and hope. The objective of this paper is to explore how the themes and characters of a narrative, when adapted into an Indian cultural setup, reflect the cultivation of philosophical ideas that implicitly lie underneath any story. The objective leads to the philosophical enquiry posing the question of why humans suffer and what offers an Indian perspective to resolve such suffering.

Methodology

The study critically analyses the Indian film adaptation *Lootera*, a cross-cultural adaptation inspired by O'Henry's short story *The Last Leaf* from an Indian philosophical perspective. This research relies upon the adaptation theories given by key theorists, such as Dudley Andrews's concept of "Borrowing" in the book *Concepts in Film Theory* (1984), Seymour Chatman's insight on "character" in the book *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (1978), Linda Seger ideas on execution and adaptation of themes in *The Art of Adaptation: Turning Fact and Fiction into Film* (1992), Thomas Leitch's apprehension of cross-cultural adaptation in the article "What Isn't a Cross-Cultural Adaptation, and, If You Know That, Then What Isn't a Cross-Cultural Text?" (2018).

Including this, for philosophical engagement in cross-cultural adaptation, the study takes into account the works of key thinkers including Mahadevan et al. in *Introduction to Indian Knowledge System: Concepts and Applications* (2025) to underline the difference between Western and Indian paradigms of human suffering, Sri Aurobindo's analysis of *Karma* philosophy in *The Renaissance in India and Other Essays on Indian Culture* (1997), Kapila Vatsyayan insight on creativity and artist in *Bharata: The Natyasastra* (1996) under "The Text and the Interpreters", Andreas M. Krafft, and Rajneesh Choubisa's perception of hope and its interpretation in both Western and Indian philosophy in *Hope for a Good Life* (2018) under "Hope in the Indian Psychology Context: Philosophical Foundations and Empirical Findings." Additionally, the existing scholarships, such as Karen Buckenham's article "Creativity and Spirituality: Two Threads of the Same Cloth" (2011), Dhirendra Mohan Datta's "The

Contribution of Modern Indian Philosophy to World Philosophy" (1948), Sergei Nizhnikov's "The Concept of Spiritual Creativity" (2017), Bruce R. Reichenbach's "The Law of Karma and the Principle of Causation" (1988) play a crucial role in the analysis of this study.

Background and context

The Last Leaf is a short story by the 19th-century American writer O'Henry, which was first published in 1907 in the collection "The Trimmed Lamp and Other Stories". The story revolves around the character Johnsy, who is an artist, lives in Washington Square, a colony for poor artists, with her friend Sue. Johnsy desires to paint the Bay of Naples, but she fell ill with pneumonia due to her circumstances. She loses all her hope and starts to believe that when the ivy vine on the wall outside her window loses all its leaves, she will die too. However, her neighbour Behrman, a failed artist, tricks her by painting the last leaf on the wall to release Johnsy from her dilemma. Johnsy recovers, but Behrman catches pneumonia while painting the leaf, and he dies.

Inspired by the story, the film *Lootera*, written by Vikramaditya Motwane and Bhawani Iyer, represents the recently independent India, primarily set in West Bengal. Pakhi, the female protagonist, is the rich daughter of Zamindar (landlord) Soumitra Roy Chaudhary, who lives in a big mansion and desires to be an artist. The first half of the film focuses on Pakhi's growing love and affection for a conman, Varun. Pakhi proposes marriage to Varun, but he betrays and runs away on the night of their marriage ceremony. Varun's betrayal results in Roy Chaudhary's tragic death, leaving Pakhi devastated; hence, the film justifies the title *Lootera*. The second half of the movie resonates deeply with the short story, when Pakhi takes a journey and secludes herself in the mountains of the Himalayas. She watches the leaves falling from the tree and thinks that she, too, will die when the last leaf falls. Varun eventually finds Pakhi and makes the last leaf as his last gesture to convey his love.

Karmic causality as narrative expression

The motif of *karma* (causality) has been very prevalent in the Indian storytelling tradition. In simple terms, it suggests a causal effect, though there lies a philosophical meaning attached to it from an Indian perspective. Unlike universal causation, which focuses on actions and their consequences in general, *karma* specifically focuses on the doers

of the actions and their effect on the doers. The law of *karma* is rooted in ethical consideration, depending on the intention and desires of the doers, further resulting in bad and good *karma* (Reichenbach 1988, 399-400). Motwane, while adapting the four-page-long short story for a 2-hour and 17-minute feature film, has used the motif of *karma* philosophy to extend the plot and give the film an Indian sensibility. Before putting forth the central themes of the story, like suffering and hope, the film develops a backstory by focusing on the actions of the characters, which eventually lead them to the central themes. Leitch (2018, 9) observes that cross-cultural adaptation is not limited to national boundaries. When a text is transported across different eras, historical contexts, or genres, it undergoes a process of 'reculturation', reshaping its meanings to engage new audiences.

The plot moves with Pakhi's actions, who comes from a privileged background, falls in love with Varun and proposes marriage to him. Varun, on the other hand, rejects her proposal due to his own troubled past. Ghosh (2023, 269) observes that Pakhi's character is largely shaped by the privileges of her class status and the excessive affection of her father, making her a self-centred individual. This social and familial privilege enables her reckless behaviour, usually at the cost of others' well-being. Ethically speaking, Pakhi's desire does not show any bad intentions towards Varun, yet the rejection hurts her ego, as she is the only child of a wealthy Zamindar (landlord) and is not accustomed to rejection. She almost imposes herself upon Varun to satisfy her own craving. If an action is done with greed, it suggests selfish habits and attachments, whereas when actions are done without desire, it reinforces positive qualities and leaves no lasting impression or pain of attachment (Reichenbach 1988, 401). However, Varun betrays her and runs away on the day of his marriage to Pakhi. Varun's action to abandon Pakhi is motivated by his past life, as he has grown up as an orphan under his uncle's influence, and feels obligated to do what his uncle wants him to do. His actions are ethically wrong and derive from personal gains, as he first agrees to the marriage and then later changes his mind. Varun constantly compares his life of scarcity to the *Zamindar*'s abundance and perceives his existence as an amalgamation of lacks, justifying his acts.

The wrong intentions behind these acts lead the protagonists towards suffering and an eventual desire to be free from the suffering. Seger (1992, 148), drawing on Aristotle, reminds us that it is not enough to know what to say, but it is also necessary to understand how

to say it. While adapting the themes and characters of an early twentieth-century American story and situating them in the socio-cultural context of newly independent India in the 1950s, the narrative reflects the transformed motivations of characters as per the new cultural codes. The second half of the movie emphasises the suffering of the characters, which arises from their past actions. Pakhi secludes herself in nature and seeks redemption rather than revenge from Varun, as she says, "*Mujhe bas mukti chaiye sab se*" / "I just want to be free". Similarly, when Varun realises that Pakhi's deteriorated state may be a consequence of his own wrongdoing, he starts seeking something beyond personal gain. The motivation to create a masterpiece painting for Varun is not only an artistic aspiration alone, but it also comes from a sense of guilt over his past actions. The narrative of the film shows that *karmic* causality functions as an executive principle in the Indian storytelling tradition. The law of *karma* is emphasized here as the "present life in its beginning is determined by the past" (Datta 1948, 555). It suggests that the moral worth of every action is preserved, and everyone gets their due either in this life or another. "No doubt, too, the idea that our present sufferings are the results of our past action, imparts a calm, a resignation, an acquiescence to the Indian mind which the restless Western intelligence finds it difficult to understand or tolerate" (Aurobindo 1997, 129).

Themes of suffering and hope: Western and Indian perspectives

Themes such as suffering and hope deal with fundamental questions about human life, pain, and existence, making them philosophical in nature. However, the psychology behind these themes varies across cultures. Seger (1992, 132), while discussing the importance of themes, suggests that themes constitute almost every strong narrative, whether it is a novel, a play, or a story. Themes shape both the storyline and the characters, and provide depth to the adaptation. *The Last Leaf* revolves around the themes of suffering and hope, which Motwane and Iyer adapted for the screen by employing a borrowing approach, through which they have reframed these themes from an Indian perspective and elevated them to a level of transcendence. Andrews (1984, 98) says that "in the history of the arts, surely borrowing is the most frequent mode of adaptation. Here the artist employs, more or less extensively, the material, idea, or form of an earlier, generally successful text". The portrayal of suffering and hope is the key idea that is not simply taken but transformed in the film

Lootera, suggesting the differences between Western and Indian psychological perspectives associated with these concepts. In the process of adaptation, creators don't just copy famous texts; they transform them in such a way that removes or challenges their original status, which is called 'excanonation' (Geal 2020, 23). The film does not remove, but indeed challenges the Western positioning of human suffering by portraying it as a path of self-discovery. The Indian approach to looking at the problem of suffering is different from the Western lens.

From the viewpoint of Western psychology, the physical behaviour of an individual determines the mental status. "The 'positive psychology' paradigm of the West has taken a superficial account of feelings and behaviour dynamics of an individual" (Mahadevan et al. 2025, 357). Looking at the narrative of Johnsy, we observe that in her case, pneumonia works like a catalyst for her mental imbalance. Focusing on the external cause behind her sickness, the doctor questions Sue if she had a man in her mind, and if that is not the case, then "it is the weakness" (O'Henry 1907, 29). Johnsy's psychological decline is related to the disease, as it has been introduced like a human who is making people sick around, as O'Henry describes it in his humorous style, "Mr Pneumonia was not what you would call a chivalric old gentleman. A mite of a little woman with blood thinned by California Zephyrs was hardly fair game for the red-fisted, short-breathed old duffer" (Ibidem). He indicates towards Johnsy's physical weakness, who is unable to endure such a cruel disease.

In contrast, Indian psychological traditions provide a more holistic framework, integrating body, mind, and consciousness. The philosophical view of body, mind, and consciousness goes beyond external realities to engage with inner experiences, examining how human suffering emerges from the imbalance between the external environment and internal feelings. Suffering can turn into a medium that mediates the journey toward the inner self or pure consciousness. "Understanding the manifestations of consciousness is only possible by self-experimentation and deep contemplation of one's experience" (Mahadevan et al. 2025, 363). In the film, Pakhi also struggles with asthma, a physical disease, yet it does not alone dictate her suffering; it is rather her wounded ego, a subjective feeling that leads her to such a state of depression where she seeks death through falling leaves. Unlike Johnsy, who remains a passive receiver of her material circumstances and shows little capacity to transform her suffering

internally, Pakhi actively engages with her inner dilemma through writing, as it becomes a meditative and transformative act for Pakhi, allowing her to observe, contemplate, and gradually transcend her suffering. Her practice resonates with the concepts of self-experimentation, reflection, and mindfulness, reflecting the Indian emphasis on the pursuit of *Purusha* (pure consciousness).

The second and most important theme of the story is hope, which is a universal concept, though it is understood in different ways. In Johnsy's case, hope becomes an outward achievement or goal. When she first encounters the leaf outside her window, she desires to paint the Bay of Naples, reflecting an individualistic approach to life where personal accomplishment is evoked through hope. Pakhi's hope, on the other hand, is relational and focuses more on inner satisfaction rather than on outer gain. Pakhi's hope towards life is filled with contentment as she feels completion in Varun's love. The act of forgiveness heals Pakhi's wounded ego, and she becomes able to make peace with her soul. Krafft and Choubisa (2018, 138) explore the concept of hope and its perception in Indian and Western philosophy, suggesting that Nietzsche views hope as an illusion that delays suffering, whereas Vivekananda sees it as a driving force for infinite aspiration and altruistic love.

Behrman's painted leaf serves as an illusion that deceives Johnsy into believing in its reality, which prolongs her suffering. Whereas, Pakhi instantly realizes that it is not real but made by Varun, yet it gives her hope to understand the true meaning of love and life. Pakhi's awareness of the truth leads her toward self-realization, as she acknowledges Varun's inescapable circumstances behind his deeds and understands that only forgiveness can provide her peace. Focused observation, or *Dharana*, helps individuals to have self-realization, which leads to self-transcendence that dissolves the ego and makes inner harmony (Krafft and Choubisa 2018, 135). Pakhi's hope to live life lies in its underlying meaning and not in outer desires. According to Snyder, Western psychology conceptualizes hope as a self-centred cognitive and motivational trait, which focuses on the attainment of personal goals. It pushes individuals to enhance their ability to create a goal or objective and then work accordingly to achieve it. Within the framework of Indian philosophy, hope is related to existentialism, where individuals seek inner harmony, fulfilment, and a meaningful life beyond material objectives (Ibid, 156-157).

Artistic creativity: A spiritual realization

The plot of the short story resonates deeply with artists' struggles, driven by a strong urge to create something that gives life meaning. The film adapts Behrman's desire to create a masterpiece painting within a distinctively Indian environment by linking creativity with spirituality. "True creativity occurs only when an artist realizes his own spiritual demands, driven by the personal interest of self-cognition and fulfilment" (Nizhnikov 2017, 528). In Varun's case, creativity provides not only great joy but also helps him recognize his guilt, which brings pain in his life, and he tries to become free from it and feels contentment in his artwork. Chatman (1978, 107) explains, while discussing character, that "a man's nature, environment, habits, emotions, desires, instincts, all these go to make people what they are". From an Indian sensibility, art, artist and creativity always reflect a glimpse of its cultural past related to *Natyashastra*. Artistic creation is not merely a technical exercise but a spiritual and experiential process in Indian culture. Vatsyayan (1996, 140-141) interprets the *Natyashastra* from the perspective of an artist, whether painter, poet, or writer, she says, "is motivated by freedom and emancipation". The creative process becomes a state of *Samadhi* (concentration), which produces a sense of balance where subject and object dissolve, eventually focusing on the communication of the core idea (*sthayibhava*). Varun's desperation to communicate the core idea or sthayibhava through his art is deeply relational, where he wants to console his guilty soul to feel free from everything. He works hard in the backyard until his art achieves its true meaning and becomes a vehicle of self-recovery, where he feels his soul in its purest form, distant from pleasure or guilt. "Art is also a meditative process, as both require paying attention, listening, centring and "a return to the source" (Buckenham 2011, 58). Right before Varun's death, when he ties the leaf to the tree, the background song "*Kuch maangnabaakinahi, Jitnamilakaafihai, Zinda huayaarkaafihai*" / "There's nothing left to ask for… Whatever I've received is enough, living even for a moment, is enough" represents a sense of redemption, which comes not from a sense of acquisition but from self-realization (Murti 1970, 213). Varun's concentration towards his art makes him conscious of human suffering, and by reflecting on it, he acknowledges human limitations tied to attachments.

Conclusion

The analysis suggests that within the process of cross-cultural adaptation, the source does not get removed but is transformed in a distinctive environment. O'Henry's short story *The Last Leaf* may seem like a simple story about illness and hope, but it raises deeper philosophical questions regarding human existence, hope, sacrifice, art, and the nature of truth, including why humans suffer, and whether this suffering is meaningless or transformative. The film adapts these key ideas, themes, and characters, allowing them to travel across cultures and open avenues for a philosophical discussion that lies underneath the story. While retaining the core of the original narrative, *Lootera* incorporates an Indian philosophical perspective into the themes of suffering and hope, including the plot structure that is driven by the *karma* philosophy, which resonates with the Indian storytelling tradition. The study reflects on the key factors with which human beings universally wrestle, like ego, desire, guilt, and anger, and carries the discussion forward toward a spiritual understanding of freedom from them. The film suggests that these internal conflicts can be dissolved through love, forgiveness, and creative instinct that give life a feeling of emancipation and not bondage.

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Translation, space and body in *The Hour Before Dawn*

Priyanka Kakoti[*]

Abstract: This paper analyses *The Hour Before Dawn* (2015), which is Maitreyee Chakravarty's English translation of the Assamese novel *Antoreep* written by Bhabendranath Saikia through the theoretical framework of translation studies, spatial studies and feminist criticism. Situating the text within the centre-periphery tussle and translations from Northeast India, the paper argues that translation goes beyond the linguistic transfer and reorganises cultural geographies. Drawing on Andre Lefebvere's notion of translation as rewriting and Susan Bassnett's emphasis on the ideological embeddedness of translation, the study foregrounds how the movement from a regional language to a globally dominant one is conditioned by asymmetrical power relations, publishing economies, and representational expectations. The translator's preface is read as a paratextual "threshold space" (Genette), revealing the paradox of retaining "regional flavour" while seeking global readability. A close reading of the text is made to analyse silence, sexuality and the body. A reading of fragile masculinity is made through the critical lens of R.W Connell. The silence of the protagonist is studied through Spivak's concept of "strategic opacity" while intersecting it with a study of physical and metaphorical spatiality using Foucault's notion of heterotopias and Doreen Massey's relational understanding of space. The study argues for understanding translated regional texts as critical sites where power, resistance, and subjectivity are continually reconfigured rather than as transparent cultural artifacts.

Keywords: translation, spatiality, sexuality, Northeast literature, Assamese fiction

Introduction: Translation and spatial politics

The Northeastern region of India is a geographical periphery. Constituting of eight states, this umbrella term encompasses a vastly heterogeneous region. In recent times there has been a gamut of writings from the region which portray the land and lives that inhabit.

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AGATHOS, Volume 17, Issue 2 (33-34): 477-486, DOI 10.5281/zenodo.23407946
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While there has been a considerable body of writings in English from the region, one cannot overlook the significance of regional literatures. In recent years many translated works from the region are also available. In the context of the negotiations between the center and the periphery, the translated literary works function as a spatial practice that seems to reorganize cultural geographies. In the context of this centre- periphery contestation, the movement of a text from a regional language to a globally dominant language is deeply political.

In the translator's Preface to the novel *The Hour Before Dawn*, Maitreyee Chakravarty asserts her fidelity to the source text and precisely mentions about one of her objectives behind such a translation – the attempt to increase readership in the following lines:

> What you see now is an attempt to bring some of Saikia's magic to the non Assamese reading folks. Every effort has been made to retain the narrative style of the original, and I have included a glossary and notes to explain the Assamese terms I felt had to be retained, so as to not rob the book of its regional flavour. (n.pg)

Here Chakravarty's assertion to the fidelity of the translated text to the original one asserts Henri Lefebvre's (1992) notion of translation as rewriting, where fidelity is not neutral but an ideological positioning. The position and culture of the translator is of equal importance as that of the author. When we talk of ideology in translation, encompasses questions like- who translates, from which culture and to which culture. When Lefebvre talks of translation as a form of rewriting, he positions rewriting as that which is deeply embedded in the literary, ideological and institutional structures of the target culture. This is further fore grounded in Susan Basnett's assertion that:

> Writing does not happen in a vacuum, it happens in a context and the process of translating texts from one cultural system into another is not neutral, innocent, transparent activity. Translation is instead a highly charged, transgressive activity and the politics of translation and translating deserve much greater attention than has been paid in the past. (Susan Bassnett 1993, 160-161)

This foregrounds power relations in translation in the process of cultural transfer because it shows that in being translated from a regional language to a global one involves power dynamics of language and culture. Here, the translator's preface acts as a 'threshold space' (Genette 1997). The attempt to "retain regional flavour" while aiming for global readership is problematic in the sense that it refers to

a central paradox of postcolonial translation, that is, how do we negotiate this cultural difference or how do we overcome cultural representations which resists translatability. Again when we refer to translation as rewriting, we notice that when we talk of translators, rewriting is not equally available to all and is largely dependent on recognition by such as publishing industries, funding mechanisms, and dominant language hierarchies-especially in postcolonial contexts. Hence, translation is not just a disruptive act but is limited by commercial and cultural norms.

In the context of writings from the Northeast of India translated into English, translation can be viewed as a spatial practice. While translation increases visibility, it is paradoxical in the sense that it remediates identity assertion (here visibility) through an external linguistic aid. The translated text does not merely move from one linguistic realm to another but from one culture to another. In this process it occupies an in-between space- a space of 'negotiation' (Bhabha 1994). Keeping these complex positioning and theoretical framework in mind, the paper attempts to read into the problematics of gender, body, space and translation in *The Hour Before Dawn* (2015) which is an English translation of an Assamese novel titled *Antoreep* written by Bhabendranath Saikia, an Assamese literary stalwart.

Gendered domestic space and patriarchal order

The novel *The Hour Before Dawn* which is set in a small village in Assam during the pre-independence days deals with the theme of conjugal betrayal, human relationships and a woman's hidden strength in the darkest phase of her life. Gendered space is the major focus of the novel. It is about how Menoka, the protagonist creates a space of her own in the male- dominated society. Later during a dispute between the two brothers – Mohikanto and Bhadrakanto; Bhadrakanto moves away from Mohikanto's house and settles in a different house with his family. Bhadrakanto thinks that by creating a space of his own away from his brother he would keep his identity intact. Menoka, on the other hand does not move out, she creates a space for herself within the constructs of the patriarchal set up which is represented here through the character of Mohikanto. She resorts to various means of protecting her identity when she feels that it is at stake because of her husband's second marriage. The empathy among the women characters is very succinctly brought out in the novel. The news of Mohikanto's marriage travels various mouths originating from Deukilal, the one

who sacrificed goats at the mill but it is a woman – Reboti who breaks the news to Menoka. Reboti is used to taking small denominations from Menoka to make up for her opium shortfall but the day she comes to break this news, she does not ask Menoka for any money because perhaps being a woman she would understand what Menoka was undergoing. Menoka's body language is in tandem with her thoughts and she is determined not to let Mohikanto touch her once he is back from the mill at nigt. When Mohikanto returns home, Menoka does not utter a word, she does not demand any explanation, nor does she accuse him. She is silent; it is a thoughtful and deep silence and it is this language of silence which becomes a language of resistance, a language of protest:

> Mohikanto rose from his seat and tottered to the bedside. Holding on to the carved headboard, he straightened himself and moved a few steps forward before sitting with a thud near Menoka. In a flash, his hand was on her waist. She instantly brushed it away, but ignoring this, he gripped her in an embrace and tried to rest his head on her shoulder. Pushing him to a sitting position, she rolled over to the middle of the bed, sat up and slid over to the other side. Both her body and mind felt weak, but just to ensure that Mohikanto could not touch her, and that she could escape if he tried, she remained sitting, her legs dangling. The very next moment, an uncontrollable sobbing wracked her body, notwithstanding the awareness that her four children were in the room. (Chakravarty 2015, 15)

Although Mohikanto is portrayed as a powerful patriarch, At the same time, he expresses his fear of Menoka's stoical silence: "Do you know why I didn't? Out of fear. I was afraid to tell you. Can I talk to you of these things? There are certain things that I can't hide, but I can't talk about either" (Chakravarty 2015, 15). Dressed as a bridegroom, as Mohikanto prepares to leave for his marriage, Menoka pays her last obeisance to him as if he were a dead body; signifying the metaphorical death of her husband from the day of his second marriage. Menoka's silence can be read in terms of Spivak's (1999) notion of "strategic opacity". Menoka's silence is akin to this notion of opacity where she withdraws from linguistic expression so that she becomes untranslatable and others, specially Mohikanto no longer has access to her emotions and feelings; even her rage.

Spatial reconfiguration and heterotopic sites

The metaphorical space that Menoka resolves to create for her own is symbolically represented by the physical space that she demarcates for her husband and herself in the house where they had lived together for

so many years. She does not leave Mohikanto's home but she shifts to another room in the house along with her children and restricts Mohikanto's entry into that room. The novel repeatedly foregrounds space - domestic rooms, bedrooms, groves, thresholds to represent Menoka's resistance. Menoka carves a space of her own in the household, into which she does not allow Mohikanto to enter either physically or metaphorically. While Mohikanto and Kiron are given a separate room, Menoka stays in the house with her children. Not only this, she makes it pretty clear that he would not be allowed to enter the room unless accompanied by Kiron when needed. The space in the groove of trees behind the house where the clandestine meetings between Menoka and Modon take place represent a space where the patriarchal norms are reversed. It is the female who leads in this space that she has created for herself. The groove functions as a 'heterotopic space' (Foucault 1986); a space where normative hierarchies are inverted. Patriarchal binaries of inside/ outside, private/public are destabilized by Menoka's refusal to leave her marital home. Her resistance is enacted through spatial resignification. In reconfiguring physical access or proximity, Menoka transforms her domestic space- her home from a site of domination to a site of resistance; a contested terrain.

In *For Space* (2005), Doreen Massey reconceptualises space against the idea of space as a static container or a bounded geography. According to Massey, space is relational, dynamic and foregrounds multiplicities. Space is where heterogenous identities and power relations intersect. In this context, we can reconceptualise the physical space in the novel. The home for that matter and how it attains significance not as a space where physical bodies live but also as a space where these physical bodies interact and how power relations among these physical bodies are negotiated over the years. A space owned and overpowered by the Mohikanto gives way to a space where soon Menoka starts dominating. Also the groove or the house built by Bhadrakanto can be read as alternate spaces- heterotopic spaces.

The female body: Sexuality and control

The kitchen becomes another contested terrain where Menoka avoids looking at the "new woman" Kiron. However, it is the body of the "new woman" that she cannot help noticing:

> Menoka was more obsessed with Kiron's head bath than with the fear of Mohikanto's imminent eruption after last night. She imagined what Kiron

> would look like as she hung out her wet clothes, freshly washed long hair screening her back. She couldn't possibly present a more seductive picture — like the fresh silver of the moon that shows up at the start of its waxing phase. Menoka only hoped the lure was sustained. The picture haunted her even after she put Moni to bed and fed the other three children. (Chakravarty 2015, 40)

During her conversation with Modon, she reiterates the body imagery which is so very central to the novel:

> But I have never deliberately done anything wrong, nor hurt anybody. I gave nobody any reason to dislike me. Yet...If so much had to happen only because my body is no longer new then I have to show them that these eleven years haven't taken their toll on me alone! I'll show them who's new and who's old. And how! (Chakravarty 2015, 104)

In the relationship that Menoka has with Modon, it is she who has an upper hand. She not only instructs him whether to meet at a particular night or not but also directs his movements. Luce Irigary (1985, 23) comments: "Female sexuality has always been conceptualized in the basis of masculine parameters ... about woman and her pleasure, this view of sexual relation has nothing to say". While Mohikanto's reason of remarriage is an assertion of the female body being valued interms of its productivity, what Foucault (1978) terms as "biopolitical economy". Menoka's withdrawal from conjugal sexuality is an act of denial- a refusal to participate in the sexual contract.

When Mohikanto gets to know of Menoka's pregnancy, he recedes into himself, envisioning the metaphor of a snake and a frog until he can think of being betrayed by none other than his younger brother Bhodrokanto. The body imagery is present throughout the novel and we find a significant role being played by body and sexuality in shaping the identity – 'the new one' -- of Menoka. When Mohikanto demands an explanation from Menoka for her pregnancy, the lady curtly replies:

> You had elephants, you had drums and music, so you could fetch a woman and make her the mother of your child right before my eyes. I have nothing. I have done whatever I could with my limited resources. It's the same thing. Now tolerate the situation as best as you can. May the realization eat into you. (Chakravarty 2015, 132)

Assertion of the body can be both empowering and restraining for women. As far as Menoka is concerned, we see that initially she is let down when her body is demeaned because her husband Mohikanto

thinks that her physical charm has waned after all these years of marriage. But it is the body which she uses to empower herself. From the day her body is demeaned by Mohikanto and a new woman is brought to replace Menoka on bed. Menoka decides to keep her body away from her husband's touch forever and she sticks to her principle till the end. Under no circumstance does she surrender to Mohikanto's sexuality. Mohikanto had used the body imagery to shrink Menoka's space in their conjugal life, Menoka resorts to the same body imagery to regain the space which she feels have been occupied by the second wife. It is female sexuality which becomes one major way of Menoka's emancipation. Later when it is pointed out by Indro that she had committed a mistake by forging a relationship with Modon, Menoka is determined not to be defeated in the eyes of her son. She said that whatever she did was not a mistake and very soon Indro would realise that his judgement is wrong. When Indro requests her to forget everything and return to his father, she denies explaining that nothing would atone for the pain that she has suffered all these years. Menoka's body becomes a site of resistance, negotiation and subversion.

Masculinity, performance, and patriarchal instability

Mohikanto had thought that the dictates of patriarchy which he exercised through his second marriage would expand the space that he enjoyed in the society and in his home but soon after his second marriage he realises that the space he had created for himself all these years has shrunk. The male body which is often absent in patriarchal narratives, is here described as insecure, fragile, anxious and diminished. R. W. Connell's (1995) theory of hegemonic masculinity explains how the masculinity of certain individuals is exalted in the society through social recognition and legitimatisation of their dominance over women and other men in the society. While the masculinity of some men is exalted, others are marginalised. Mohikanto is symbolic of Connell's hegemonic masculinity. His masculinity can be read not only in his domination of women as evident through the characters of Menoka and Kiron but also as stark contrast to the characters of the men in the novel - Modon and Bhodrokanto. An insight into Connell's work shows how this hegemonic masculinity is not inherent but is achieved through performance. Mohikanto's second marriage can be read through this framework of performance and hence his assertion of hegemonic

masculinity. Mohikanto compares his remarriage to showcasing his wealth to the rest of the society. Being a wealthy person, marrying another woman would just mean one more mouth to be fed. For him, women were commodities, the more one possessed, wealthier he was. But hegemonic masculinity is supposed to be unstable. Later, Mohikanto's imagery of frogs and snakes affirms this unstability - an unstability brought about by his excesses.

Various myths regarding the body of women have been responsible for pushing women to the peripheries. According to Kramer (2001, 28), "Contained within bodies, women are projected as either too passive or too active, as those who cannot and should not be left to themselves, who always need either protection from or control by men". The body imagery which is present in the novel all throughout, has been used by the author to subvert the myths associated with the female body. Body and sexuality which are limitations on a woman, have been used for emancipation of women. Women's sexuality makes her fit for only two accepted roles in the society – that of the wife and a mother. Although she is entangled by these two roles, it is these roles which give her the potential to be independent. We find this being exhibited in the novel *The Hour Before Dawn* through the character of Menoka. She uses her body as a means of emancipation: "Last night, one woman had died and she would never be born in the same form again. Another had been born and she would never die. Menoka would never fight herself ever again" (Chakravarty 2015, 30).

Motherhood: Institution and experience

Orleck (2007, 3-4) in "Tradition Unbound – Radical Mothers in International Perspective" states:

> Motherhood has been politicized in multiple ways, both as a means to control women –through state regulation, medical intervention, and brutal military assault — and as a means by which women have sought to regain control over their lives and the lives of their children.

Thus, motherhood, for most of the time is used to control and limit the space of women. But as far as Menoka is concerned, she uses the role of motherhood as a means of expanding her space in both the domestic and the social sphere. It is not only her own children who are dependent on her, but Kiron's children also start looking up to her. Menoka's maternal authority destabilises the notion that equates motherhood with confinement. Later, she not only supports Kiron's

children but also Modon's family. Motherhood empowers Menoka socially. Here, one can read into the ambivalence of motherhood that the novel represents- motherhood as an empowerment and at the same time women being caught in the traditional ties of nurturing and labour. This resonates with Adrienne Rich's (1976, 13) distinction between motherhood as an institution and motherhood as an experience articulated in *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution*: "Patriarchy would seem to require motherhood as an institution under which all women are subsumed; it also requires that mothering be kept from women." This means that while motherhood as an institution is seen as a kind of patriarchal control, motherhood as a lived experience includes physical experiences, emotional bonding, moments of connection, creativity and resistance.

Kiron, herself was jostling to create a space of her own in Mohikanto's house after marriage. Her marriage with Mohikanto had made her his second wife and hence entitled to a particular position. Before being married to him, since she was already aware of Menoka, she had often thought that there would be fights between her and Menoka; she would win these fights; grab the key of the house and would ultimately reign as the queen of Mohikanto's household. But, after marriage she found that Menoka had stepped down from the position of wife, entrusted all the responsibilities of Mohikanto on her and led her life like a servant. Kiron became the undisputed queen in the domestic space and this made her feel ashamed of herself. It made her guilty of Menoka's plight and she started suffering from a sense of self reproach.

Conclusion

This paper has argued that *The Hour Before Dawn* must be read at the intersection of gender, body, space, and translation, where each of these categories is mutually constitutive rather than discrete. Situated within the broader context of translations from Northeast India into English, the novel's English afterlife foregrounds translation not as a neutral linguistic transfer but as a spatial and ideological practice that reorganizes cultural geographies and power relations. The movement of *Antoreep* from Assamese into English exemplifies how regional texts enter national and global literary circuits through asymmetrical conditions shaped by language hierarchies, publishing economies, and representational expectations. Although subject to mediation, selective legibility or framing, the cultural life is made more comprehensible

through translation of the novel into English. The translator's preface, which speaks of global readership while trying to retain the 'regional flavour', points out to this tension. However, translation increases visibility and emphasises the necessity of comprehending the periphery by the center. It asserts that the Northeast needs to be noticed by the global readership. This situates the Northeast (Assam here) as a space which has to be understood. The novel's engagement with gendered bodies, domestic spaces, and silences parallels the condition of translated Northeast literatures themselves- visible yet negotiated, present yet peripherally positioned. By foregrounding these layered negotiations, the paper highlights translation as a powerful, though uneven, mediator of space and subjectivity, and argues for reading translated regional texts not merely as cultural artifacts but as sites where power, resistance, and identity are continually reconfigured.

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The literary environment of South Azerbaijan (1947–1978)

Lala Mikayilzade[*]

Abstract: The history of the Azerbaijani people has been shaped by complex geopolitical shifts, particularly since the early 19th century, when the region became a focal point of Russian-Iranian relations. Following the treaties of Gulustan and Turkmenchay, Azerbaijan was divided into northern and southern territories, falling under the influence of the Russian Empire and Iran, respectively. This article specifically examines the literary environment of South Azerbaijan between 1947 and 1978. It analyzes the socio-political pressures, including the prohibition of the Azerbaijani language in press and education, and the symbolic burning of books. Despite systematic cultural repression and bans on writing in their mother tongue, South Azerbaijani writers demonstrated remarkable resilience. This research explores how patriotic themes and the quest for national identity became the central ideological pillars of the period's literature, preserving the linguistic and cultural roots of the people within the Iranian state.

Keywords: South Azerbaijan literature, literary environment, national identity, patriotic themes, linguistic repression, cultural resistance, Pahlavi era, Northern and Southern Azerbaijan

Introduction

The historical trajectory of the Azerbaijani people is characterized by a complex process of cultural resilience and significant geopolitical shifts. At the heart of this historical framework lies the 19th century confrontation between the Russian Empire and the Qajar state, which fundamentally reshaped the region's political and social destiny. The treaties of Gulustan (1813) and Turkmenchay (1828) did not merely redraw borders; they effectively bisected a unified cultural and linguistic entity, placing the northern territories under Russian administration while the southern lands remained within the Iranian

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AGATHOS, Volume 17, Issue 2 (33-34): 487-496, DOI 10.5281/zenodo.23408008
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sphere. This division inaugurated a century-long period of divergent yet interconnected socio-political and literary developments.

While the 19th century laid the foundations for modern Azerbaijani artistic culture, the 20th century—particularly the period between 1947 and 1978—represents a uniquely contradictory and transformative era for the South Azerbaijani literary environment. Following the collapse of the National Government in late 1946, the literary scene in the South faced unprecedented systemic pressures, including strict prohibitions on the Azerbaijani language, the closure of educational institutions, and the symbolic burning of books. Despite these repressive measures, South Azerbaijani literature evolved into a potent medium for progressive ideas, national identity, and patriotic discourse. Influenced significantly by the literary movements in Baku and Turkey, writers in the South utilized both poetry and prose to navigate the constraints of the Pahlavi regime's 'White Revolution' and chauvinistic policies. This article examines how South Azerbaijani literature functioned during these years: both as a target of political repression and as a strong protector of the people's language and culture. By examining the contributions of key figures such as Mohammad-Hossein Shahriyar, Bulud Qarachorlu Sahand, and prominent prose writers, this study highlights how literature became the primary vehicle for preserving national consciousness in the face of forced assimilation.

Historical and literary dynamics of South Azerbaijan (1947–1978)

The history of every nation is a mirror of its destiny and one of the powerful factors that determines its future. The history of the Azerbaijani people, including their socio-political, scientific-literary, and generally cultural life, has passed through tumultuous paths. When we look at the history of the Azerbaijani state, we see that at the beginning of the 18th century, the socio-political and cultural-literary development of Azerbaijan was closely connected with Russian-Iranian relations. Of course, it is also an undeniable fact that in previous periods, the favorable geographical position and rich natural resources of Azerbaijan were one of the powerful factors influencing the formation of its socio-political life. The bloody wars between the Iranian Shah and the Russian Empire were mainly fought on the territory of Azerbaijan, which resulted in the "Gulustan" treaty of 1804-1813. According to this treaty, Iran agreed to the transfer of Dagestan, Georgia, Abkhazia, as well as the Baku, Karabakh, Ganja,

Shirvan, Sheki, Derbent, Guba, and Talysh khanates to Russia. But the southern part of Azerbaijan, along the Araz River, remained within Iran. However, Iran, which did not accept this defeat, started a new war against Russia in 1826. This war resulted in the victory of the Russian Empire in 1828 and Iran was forced to hold peace negotiations, the "Turkmenchay" treaty was concluded between the two states, and according to this treaty, the Nakhchivan and Iravan khanates were also annexed to Russia, while the southern part of Azerbaijan, along the Araz River, remained within Iran. As a result, the Azerbaijani state was divided into two, the northern part remained within Russia, and the southern part remained within Iran. Of course, the division of a state into two was a tragedy for the people. All this could not but cause fundamental changes in the socio-political, literary and cultural life of both the northern and southern parts of Azerbaijan from the first years of the century:

> One of the stages of Azerbaijani artistic culture, which has a rich and centuries-old history, distinguished by its ideological and aesthetic achievements, is the 19th century. The literature of this era, which grew up as a reflection of the new historical conditions, arose and developed on the basis of the eternal traditions of the classical heritage... (Asgarli 2010, 5)

It is true that the social, cultural and literary environment in South Azerbaijan was developing in the spirit of medieval Muslim culture. The processes taking place in the literature of South Azerbaijan in the 20th century were a continuation of a general trend that had already become apparent at the end of the 19th century. Of course, the literary environment of Tabriz benefited in parallel from two sources - the literary environment of Baku and Turkey, with the share of Baku being greater. Thus, South Azerbaijan literature developed not only in form, but also in ideas and content, becoming a poetic carrier of progressive ideas. Over time, in the process of evolution of literature in content and form, the glorification of ideas related to the national existence of the people became the leading line in the emerging literary - artistic, prose and poetic examples. In particular, in the South Azerbaijan literary environment, the freedom of the individual related to his native language and national roots was brought to the fore, and patriotism constituted the leading line of ideas of the emerging works. The main goal of the works of that time was the ideas of love for the homeland, freedom, independence. At the same time, one of the other main issues

touched upon by South literature was the theme of freedom of love, which has never lost its relevance and has always remained relevant:

> research once again shows that the selected topics, the progressive, democratic ideas put forward, were only combined with highly poetic, powerful artistic features that remained true to the realities of life, and a brilliant form, and therefore could become a program document for the Iranian revolutions and an example for future literature. (Nazim 2005, 230)

However, when we look at the history of South Azerbaijan in 1947-1978, we can see that this period was a contradictory one. In these years, Iran, which entered the war of the Anglo-American alliance, was promoting the slogan of the 'White Revolution'. This policy was a dream of the authorities, who supposedly wanted to modernize Iran. It was a well-known fact that at that time the laws and power depended on the will of one person. But these imaginary "reforms" were, of course, destroyed as a result of the Iranian Islamic Revolution that took place in 1978-1979.

The Iranian Shah's bloody policy, based on the West, contrasted with the chauvinistic policy carried out against the people of South Azerbaijan and the bloody policy of terror committed against the activists of the National Government that collapsed in the South on December 12, 1946.

> In fact, the struggle against the activists of the government established under the leadership of S.J. Pishevari was carried out not on the basis of an analysis of real factors, but with the savage logic of medieval revenge. (Amirov 2000, 146)

This struggle was led by military men, officials, and feudal lords of both Turkish and Persian descent. Therefore, the struggle against the democratic movement of the southerners and to eliminate its consequences was of a class nature. (Kave 1991)

The schools, cultural and educational institutions, periodicals, and theaters established by the National Government in South Azerbaijan were closed. The Iranian system of administration began to return to feudal-patriarchal thinking. In Iran, bans were imposed on the publication of press organizations in the Azerbaijani language, books in the native language were burned, and even our southern compatriots were forbidden to read, write, and speak in their native language (Mikayilzade 2024, 271). However, despite all these pressures, South Azerbaijani writers continued to write and create with great determination. In the 50s and 60s of the 20th century, the attitude of

the Iranian government towards the South softened somewhat. A number of works began to be published. Among the booms were H.M. Savala's "Turkish Chants", S. Javid's two-volume "Samples of Azerbaijani Folklore", B.G. Sahan's "Word of the Instrument", S. Behrangi and B. Dehghani's "Azerbaijani Legends", A.N. Okhtay's "Işıg", M. Mishovlu's "Chepik Dastani", and books by other authors.

After the democratic people's revolution flared up in Iran in the 1950s, books began to be published in the Azerbaijani language from time to time. One of such books that went from hand to hand was M. Shahriyar's poem "Salam to Heydarbaba". This poem gave a great impetus to the development of our native literature and our language in Iran. Professor E. Guliyev writes about this:

> The poem "Salam to Heydarbaba" is the peak of the master's creativity and also an emblem. The poem "Salam to Heydarbaba", which is as dear and sweet as a mother's lullaby for the Azerbaijani people, is especially characteristic in Iran in terms of the affirmation of Azerbaijani literature, literary language, artistic language capabilities, and in a broader sense, its rich history and present day (Guliyev 2004, 13).

This poem consisted of two parts, was written in 1953 and was first published in Tabriz in 1954. The poem was transcribed by the famous calligrapher Tahir Khoshnevis. The Azerbaijani reader (Northern Azerbaijan) became acquainted with this poem in 1966. M.A. Rasulzadeh played a major role in the spread of the poem "Salam to Heydarbaba" in Turkey. It was published and distributed by the "Azerbaijan" magazine, the organ of the Azerbaijani association in Ankara. The author of the first study of the poem (1955) entitled "A Literary Event" was the founder of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic, public figure, and writer M.A. Rasulzadeh. In his article, he writes: "Shahriyar is not influenced by any school. All the subtle moments in it and the favorite methods in his creativity are only the product of his own feelings and powerful thinking. In our opinion, there is no doubt that this extraordinary work constitutes an event in Azerbaijani literature." (Rasulzadeh 1955, 40-41)

The toponomic meanings remembered with longing in this work are generalized symbols of the components of the homeland. The longing in the poem is the longing for the homeland. M. Shahriyar's work "Salute to Heydarbaba" is a patriotic epic that glorifies deep love for the homeland and love for the homeland.

Of course, the internal conflicts that occurred during the Shah's regime and the subsequent periods led to a number of radical changes in various areas of public life in South Azerbaijan, as in all of Iran.

In South Azerbaijan, poetry has traditionally surpassed prose, and folk and village artists have preferred to convey to the reader and listener the painful problems that make them think, the fate of man and society, their joys and sorrows, through the use of poetic words. Such artists include Bulud Karachorlu Sahand ("Thinking", "Stone of Patience", "Look at my Tale", "Shallag"), Qasim Jahani ("It is snowing on Tabriz", "Hold the torch"), Karim Mashrutachi Sonmez ("Oh homeland"), Hasan Majidzadeh Savalan ("From our hands, from our tongue", "Sphar holiday"), Iqbal ("Bivable men", "To my homeland"), Kazim Khoshkhaber Abbasali ("Love of homeland"), Azim Qasim ("Sara's pain", "Song of the old man"), Majid Vahidi ("Savalan mountain"), Sahibeli Yusifi Kleiber ("I will", "Hech"), Gulamrza Sabri Tabrizi ("My homeland", "Vatan", "I have not had enough of my mother"), Çayoğlu Bahruz Dovlarabadi ("The stale hot spring"), Abdulali Mujazi Aslan ("My homeland", "I am from Shanjan", "Vatan"), Habib Farshbaf ("Savalanım", "Teacher's Heart"), and others can be cited as examples.

The poets of that period, keeping the pulse of the times, fulfilled very difficult and responsible tasks. That is, they brought new images, ideas, and meaningful means of expression to the Azerbaijani poetry. The poets professionally reflected socio-political events in prose lines and poetic verses, and at the same time, they captured the national values, ancient history, customs and traditions, and culture of the dear and native people with vivid images, bright landscapes, and the language of high poetry. Of course, the contribution of the poets of Northern Azerbaijan in this field is undeniable. New prose examples emerged on the basis of the examples of poetry in the North. Researchers of South Azerbaijan literature have admitted that: "In order to meet modern demands, prose must address diverse issues, reveal qualities that can serve social progress, and master the many facets of craftsmanship... secrets" (Amirov 2000, 146).

Among the successes of the new prose in the South, one can also mention works written in a satirical and humorous style. First of all, prose writers conveyed existing and urgent problems to the public in a satirical language. Writers writing in this style once again demonstrated that they took a more realistic and objective position and were far from idealizing political, economic, literary and cultural

problems in society. They even had their writings published under secret signatures. Despite all the difficulties, South Azerbaijani prose has created true masterpieces of art (pearls) and has mobilized all its efforts and skills on this path. M.H. Hasari's "Ali and Marjan", I. Hadi's "Dusky Days", B. Iftikhari's "A Sad Memory of a Night", Savala's "Gul and Dew", A. Azerlu's "Who Are They?", and other such stories have been written, and a number of successes have been achieved overall.

The stories written are dedicated to various topics. In the stories, the tragic fates of people, the ugliness of society, injustice and other issues have always made the writers think, and they have tried to show the readers the worries of believers, the suffering they endure, and the ways to solve all these problems. When reviewing the modern South Azerbaijani prose, it is possible to see that the novel genre is not very functional in literary circles. This is primarily due to certain objective and subjective reasons (Kodyrov 1982). Rahim Daqiqi, one of the prose representatives of literature that was repressed before the Islamic Revolution, was a South Azerbaijani. He became a victim of repression in 1937 and was exiled to Kazakhstan with his family. From there he was sent to Iran.

One of the prominent representatives of South Azerbaijani prose is Ali Dashgin. In his story "The Village Bride", illiteracy and ignorance were criticized. He expressed his thoughts as follows: "As everyone knows, in our country (South Azerbaijan is meant)" for many years there has been no school, writing, musical instruments, games... in our native language, Turkish, and we were all far from such a beautiful and necessary existence. After the overthrow of the Shah system, occasional Turkish writings, unfinished diaries, and occasional literary circles began to appear.

> But this seemed and still seems to be inappropriate for our Turkish language, which has a very inadequate and extensive writing. Leaving these aside, all that was written that saw the light of day was poetry, and ninety-nine percent of the poems were very weak and chewed-up words due to ignorance and illiteracy. There is no room for condemning anyone here, there is no room for scolding. Since poetry is short and can be said from the heart, all writings turned to it and began to say everything they thought (Daşgın 2000, 3).

When we look at the work of Ganjali Sabah, his story "Intigam" is like an artistic excursion into the history of social contradictions of the recent past. It should also be noted that this story of the writer was published in the magazine "Dede Gorgud". In the story, an attempt is

made to awaken the human feelings that have been destroyed in the reader's heart as a result of the combination of the motive of jealousy and tragedy. Of course, we see that the tendency to reveal human destinies with deep psychologism in the story is not so strong, and therefore this work can be called one of the first examples of the transition to new prose (Dorri 2005, 192).

It should also be noted that, without a doubt, the literature of Southern Azerbaijan has been and remains an integral part of Azerbaijani literature (Sovremennaya iranskaya proza 2010, 336). Azerbaijani literature is a very rich literature. Every period, epoch has its own literature and creative people. The existence of national literature is nourished and revived by the pearls created by the writers and creative people of that side (South) and that side (North) representing it.

Without any doubt, South Azerbaijani literature remains an integral and rich component of the overall Azerbaijani literary heritage (Sovremennaya iranskaya proza 2010). Each historical epoch is defined by its unique creative figures and intellectual achievements. The vitality of this national tradition is sustained and revived by the masterpieces produced by writers from both the North and the South, who collectively represent its unified essence.

The comprehensive influence of Azerbaijani poets and prose writers on Iranian and South Azerbaijani artistic poetry and prose, and their creativity, throughout all periods is an undeniable fact. In short, it should be noted that South Azerbaijan literature is a rich literature and the role of North Azerbaijan writers in the development of this literature is irreplaceable. When referring to the lives and works of Iranian and South Azerbaijani writers, they include Nizami Ganjavi (1141-1203), Mahammad Fuzuli (1494-1556), Molla Panah Vagif (1717-1797), Qasimbey Zakir (1784-1857), Mirza Alakbar Sabir (1862-1911), Jalil Mammadguluzadeh (1869-1932), Mirza Fatali Akhundzadeh (1812-1878), Suleyman Sani Akhundov (1875-1939), Abdulla Shaig (1881-1959), Aliaga Vahid (1895-1965), Samad Vurgun (1906-1956) named Suleyman. It is impossible to not notice the influence of Rustam (1906-1989), Mammad Rahim (1907-1977), Rasul Rza (1910-1981), Mirvarid Dilbazi (1912-2001), Nabi Khazri (1924-2007), Bakhtiyar Vahabzade (1925-2006), Mammad Araz (1933-2004) and others. All the famous poets and writers of Iran and South Azerbaijan were influenced by the valuable works of these penmen, wrote epigrams, similes, vows and so on. The works of these

artists were an inexhaustible source of inspiration for them and a school in the truest sense of the word.

Conclusion

The literary environment of South Azerbaijan between 1947 and 1978 represents a significant chapter in the history of Azerbaijani culture, characterized by a profound struggle for linguistic and national preservation. Despite the systematic cultural and political pressures of the Pahlavi regime, including the prohibition of the mother tongue and the destruction of books, the creative community demonstrated exceptional resilience. This period saw the evolution of literature from traditional forms into a powerful medium for national consciousness. The monumental influence of Mohammad-Hossein Shahriyar's "Saying Hello to Heydarbaba," alongside the emergence of patriotic poetry and satirical prose, proves that literature functioned as the primary guardian of the people's identity. Furthermore, the continuous intellectual exchange with Northern Azerbaijani classical and modern traditions ensured that South Azerbaijani literature remained an inseparable part of the broader Azerbaijani cultural heritage. In summary, the years 1947–1978 were not merely a time of repression, but a transformative era that laid the ideological foundation for future generations of writers and thinkers in South Azerbaijan.

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Deciphering the semblance of violence in Sarah Joseph's *Gift in Green*: A spatial disquisition

K. Mithun*

Abstract: The conventional from of literature has given much importance to aesthetic sense alone which theories like spatial criticism breaks it. Sarah Joseph, environmentalist, poet, novelist and short story writer hails from the state of Kerala. She is a living author and she is the recipient of a series of medals like Kendra Sahitya Akademi Award given by the union government of India, the Sahitya Academy Award given by Kerala. And the researcher has chosen her translated novel *Gift in Green* (2011) for the course of this study. The method of analysis employed in the study is interpretative one. The text analysis is carried in word to word manner. A close reading of the text with reference to the Lefebvre categorization of space and concepts like violence is fused to together as a novelty for this study. The researcher has found out that influential people like Kumaran, Government and non-governmental organizations misuse the space in Aathi. The violent activities of them ended in destruction of entire place and space of Aathi. This study induces and creates awareness among readers and other researchers to look after their nature and the gender problems as well.

Keywords: *Gift in Green*, Aathi, space, violence, urbanization, gender

Introduction

The conventional from of literature has given much importance to aesthetic sense alone which theories like spatial criticism breaks it. Spatial criticism is one such theory that mainly gives importance for spatial elements. Bertrand Westphal brings out a geocentred approach to literature in his book *La Géocritique: Réel, fiction, espace*. People have realized that life is impossible in earth by squandering the spaces of the earth. Humans in earth cannot survive without the spatial elements. Wherever there is good space, human can live in a peaceful

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AGATHOS, Volume 17, Issue 2 (33-34): 497-507, DOI 10.5281/zenodo.23408093
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manner. But the activities of humans have brought damnation to themselves as their activities spoil their space.

Sarah Joseph, environmentalist, poet, novelist and short story writer hails from the state of Kerala. She is a living author and she is the recipient of a series of medals like Kendra Sahitya Akademi Award given by the union government of India, the Sahitya Academy Award given by Kerala. Some of her works include novels include *Aathi* (translated as *Gift in Green* by Valson Thampu), *The Woman-Enemy*, *The Daughters of Alaha*, *Othappu: The Scent of the Other Side* (translated by Valson Thampu), *The Vigil*, *Budhini* (translated by Sangeetha Sreenivasan). *The Masculine of Virgin* is the collection of select short stories of Sarah Joseph published in 2012. The researcher has chosen *Gift in Green* novel for the course of his work.

Gift in Green deals with the island of Aathi. And the main characters in this story are Kumaran, Kunjimathu, Shailaja, Kumarettan, Siddhu, Dhinakaran, Ponamani, Baaji, Prakash, Kunjan Karnavar and Noor Muhammed. Kumaran is the native of Aathi who sold his land and went in search of good fortune in city. Nonetheless, he comes back with a plan of urbanising Aathi after a span of thirty past six years. He is assisted by the government and many people from cities. The struggle between the natives of Aathi for saving their land and water from the troops of Kumaran is the major plot of this novel. Even though, Kumaran cheats all people including his parents, Kunjimathu and the local people. Nonetheless, land and water wins the crew of Kumaran by accepting all the harmful activities done to the land and water of Aathi and retaliating in the form of flood cleanly sweeping every development made by him with the aid of the government and other agencies.

Methodology

Michel Foucault is the first person to talk about space. In his essay "Of Other Spaces" asserts that the current era is the era of space. The present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space. We are in the epoch of simultaneity: we are in the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed (see Foucault 1986, 22).

Space decides who the super nation is among the other countries of the world, because of spatial politics; they are in war with each other by occupying the territorial spaces of neighboring countries and other countries; space is not an empty container. Henri Lefebvre, in *The*

Production of Space (1974), critiques about how urbanization harms the natural space, mentioning,

> the emergence and development of capitalist modernity occurs through a particular '(social) production of (social) space' (Wegner) - that a space is fundamentally produced by and through human actions, and which is thus 'constituted neither by a collection of things or an aggregate of (sensory) data, nor by a void packed like a parcel with various contents, … it is irreducible to a form" imposed upon phenomena, upon things, upon physical materiality (Lefebvre 1974, 7)

Further, Dr. Sonia Freire-Trigo (2021) elaborates about Lefebvre's notion of space into three categories,

> Lefebvre presents space as the evolving product of a never-ending dialectical relation between mental space (i.e. its Cartesian conceptualisation), physical space (i.e. nature), and social space (i.e. itself a product of the dialectical relation between perceived, conceived and lived spaces).

The method of analysis employed in the study is interpretative one. The text analysis is carried out in word to word manner. A close reading of the text with reference to the Lefebvre categorization of space and concepts like violence is fused to together as a novelty for this study.

Discussion

By applying Henri Lefebvre's conceptual framework of categorization of space, there are two category of space that could be found in the translated work *Gift in Green*.

Nature as space in Aathi

The text gives much importance to the nature in the novel. The natural Space of Aathi is encircled by Mangrove forest resembling a 'Greenbangle' (Joseph 2011, 33). "Water is the life of Aathi, which is encircled by forest as circle cover as a green bangle". One could see the abundance of water in water bodies of Aathi especially in canals, ponds, water, springs, wells and also in fields and marshes in it. Further the children in Aathi had their schooling, employment within or nearby the land of Aathi. All children possessed good health since the physical environment was very conducive. And it is an island consisting of water on four sides surrounded by backwaters. Moreover, water will be available at all the days in Aathi, and hence rice cultivation, prawn farming and fishing were the main livelihood for the people of Aathi. In sum, water nurtured them by giving them harvest at

the right time. Further in the novel, the characters like Kunjimathu and Kayal are attached with land and waters of Aathi.

Kayal is a school child who is sexually abused in the space of metropolitan city. She came to the space of Aathi to get peace and get good physical and mental health. And she gets pacified by the space of Aathi. The characters in the novel have great affinity with water. Kunjimathu is a woman born in Aathi. She considers the space of water and land in Aathi as her life. According to her, the water of Aathi is omnipotent and knows each one's past, present and future. She loved the space of water and land in Aathi. She bought the land of Kumaran's parents from an outsider through her own money saved for her own wedding. She puts all her efforts to save Aathi from Kumaran's plan of converting the space of Aathi into a tourist spot and revenue center.

There existed a treaty between the people of Aathi and waters of Aathi such that each will protect one another's interest. Since the people of Aathi had good waters, the women who were married to outsiders suffered because of bad quality of water. Water of Aathi serves not just as a source of livelihood, but it comforts and soothes the troubled minds of all the inmates in various ways.

People like Divya, elder sister of Siddhu and Dhinakaran, had to leave her native place of Aathi and move to the new space of Mumbai. She got married to Balettan. And they both live in Mumbai where the quality of water space is poor and chlorinated. In fact, the quality of water is not fit for bathing too. Because of this they had a compulsion to buy drinking water for money. Another example is Shailaja who is a native resident of Aathi. And she married Chandramohan of Chakkam Kandam and goes there to live with him. But returns to Aathi on seeing the condition of water there. Thus, there has been an affinity between people and space of Aathi.

The breeze and water of Aathi act as a pacifier to the suffering people who had lost their loved ones. Also it serves as a source of inspiration. Further water acted as medicine to the people. For instance water gives relief to Markose when he suffers from the loss of his mother. On the same day, he finds a woman keeping a weeping child on the ferry bank. And, these above lines express the natural space of Aathi and how the people of Aathi had been blessed to have such a space of comfort in their land. It is this space that helped artists like Markose to compose poems, made people to rejoice inwardly than all naturalistic space.

> True. Instead, I succumbed to the sleep this forest induces. Although I can't have slept. My mind was overflowing all through the night. Words came knocking at its door and made me write a poem, which I shall recite for you. I doubt if I'll ever find a morning more conducive to the sharing of my poem.
> 'Why only for me? Aren't the birds and the trees also waiting to hear it?' Noor Muhammad smiled.
> 'And don't forget the fish and the water. The reason? It is water that composes all poems: the most enchanting as well as the most perilous' (Joseph 2011, 27).

Human beings do not realise the value of resources available at hand. The violence done to the place and space of Mumbai, Chakkamkandam made people to return to Aathi itself. The sexual violence done to the children like Kayal makes her to come to Aathi to overcome it.

Urbanizing the land space of Aathi

Urbanization in the land of Aathi destroys the natural space as well as infuses violence among the men and women of Aathi. Kumaran is a character in the novel who seeks for a sophisticated life and hence he settles outside Aathi for a span for thirty six years. Kumaran hates living in Aathi and he abhors water to the utmost level. He doesn't regard water as an essential entity. He comes back with a plan to urbanise the entire space of Aathi. Sustainable life is getting pure water, air and fresh food cultivated from soil that is not marred. To live a life being one with nature and enjoying the unadulterated resources is a blessing in itself. It's a pity that people like Kumaran not only realise it but also try to exploit it. He sold his land and went to seek a decent life outside of Aathi. In fact he had to leave his mother, father and the girl Kunjimathu who was waiting for him as a spinster to pursue a decent life. He comes back with plans to modify Aathi. He brings with him a private army, backed by the government. The government with the only motive of getting revenue from Aathi's land agrees to everything and supports Kumaran and his team from behind. Thus, government approves the violence to be inflicted in the land of Aathi and the space of Aathi is affected by anthropocentric activities of Kumaran and his army. This can be seen from the very first chapter in the novel.

Kumaran opens the door for the land encroachers to enter Aathi. Siddhu is the brother of Dhinakaran. And when he is asked to get inside the tent pitched by the newly arrived encroachers who are the

outsiders of the Aathi, so they can get some information about Aathi. In fact, there is a serious land dispute already going on between the encroachers and the native people of Aathi since the encroachers have annexed some parts of the Aathi. And they claim the land of Aathi to be theirs by producing the documents approved by the government. As a matter of fact, in the village administration office, documents produced by encroachers prove to be original than the documents produced by the people of Aathi. Through this incident, it is evident the documentation and registration adopted by the government is not people friendly or environment friendly rather it is influencers friendly and revenue friendly. Land is commoditized by the process of registration. As a result, the already registered lands are sold to multiple people showing it as new land and yet to be registered. Moreover, this in turn encourages real estate and document writers to treat the land as a commodity. To sum up, every environmental problem entering Aathi from outsiders is backed up by the government just because of the only reason that the government will get good profit and revenue from Aathi.

The land encroachers being outsiders get access to every first quality resources in the land and waters of Aathi. This is done by bribing local people, officials and others by knowing the weakness of certain people who can be conquered by giving more money in general. For instance, the good example is Baaji's father who is eyed by the encroachers. Accordingly, they buy his fish by giving more money than normal. The political space made foreigners to enter Aathi. The encroachers of the land of Aathi are handy in using machines like video cameras, telescopes and guns. Through which they can control Aathi and its people. Their Agency is exercised over the land, nature, people, waterfowls that are in Aathi. It is the liking for a gun 'machine' that made Siddhu to go inside the tent after men had smiled. Moreover, Baaji is the friend of Siddhu. His father's activities like selling fish, smoking and throwing the lit matchstick in water are recorded by them. Thus the land encroachers use machines to exercise their agency over native people.

The desire for urban space is instilled by Kumaran. He sends magician to admire children and to grab their attention by showing them a glimpse of new Aathi within a second and makes it to disappear. The glimpse of new Aathi contained cinema halls, parks, hyper malls, apartments created exclusively for the art of magic. Every business begins with an advertisement. Likewise the advertisement for

Kumaran's mega project is done by a Magician. The people are deluded to believe that a place is filled with malls, theatres, bridges and other facilities such as broad roads etc. They are tempted to live a life like the life of metropolitan. But, the cities as they do not know how much those people in the cities live a life of poverty devoid of any fresh and pure elements.

People of Aathi had access to good food and a better environment which they failed to understand. Aathi had been a place of refuge to the settlers as they had been ill treated, and discriminated against by the high caste people. When they sought refuge in Aathi, they supported the livelihood of those people. Those people learnt the art of cultivating rice in saltwater of Aathi and improved their style of living. Those who did not realise the struggles of their ancestors were longing for the illusory world outside Aathi. Indeed, youths of Aathi are first to fall prey to this advertisement. Ambu, Prakashan, Chandran are some of them since they are bored of the regular activities carried out in Aathi.

New Aathi is the place built with 'recognition' and 'shaped' by often 'oppressive institutional forces and social relationships.' This in turn makes native people to opt out of better place. The activities of Kumaran to sell the entire space of Aathi to foreigners began leading it to a land of commercial space. Later, many people came to exploit the land and waters of Aathi. People of Aathi found most of their lands to be registered in Kumaran's and newcomers' names. Even the land which was bought by Kunjimathu through the money that she saved for her marriage was found to be registered in the name of outsiders. And hence, the people of Aathi were helpless before the documents, As said by Doreen Massey, Places and the social relations within and between them are the results of particular arrangements of power, whether it is individual and institutional, or imaginative and material (Massey 2010, 7).

The man centered activities induced violence even in the Agricultural lands of Aathi into property land as led by Kumaran. Moreover, the livelihood jobs like rice farming, prawn farming, fishing which were the sources of living for the people of Aathi was destroyed by Kumaran since he bought the entire land of Ganesha Subramaniyam that gave them employment. But he does everything with the intention of urbanising the space of Aathi. Moreover, he plans to buy the entire land for commercialization thereby making the people deprived of their livelihood; the sweat of the people of Aathi shed from their first

generation to till now has made the soil of the land to be fertile enough for cultivation. Nonetheless, the lands were bought and land filled which included the three hundred acres of Ganesha Subramaniyam, where people used to cultivation of rice and fish were carried for generation. The people were now asked to do the work as daily wages to fill land which made the elderly people of Aathi bleed in their eyes. Thus, he creates a space for real estate merchants. He had also taken up the project of getting wastes from the nearby cities. As a result of which he is portrayed in the front pages of the magazine as a Superhuman.

The consequences of destroying the natural space of Aathi led to destruction of very Aathi itself. The wastes are dumped at the agricultural land of Aathi. The natural health of Aathi is spoiled by the dumping of wastes made the children of Aathi who went to school to get sick; previously there was never an occasion that they were ill continuously since the children enjoyed good drinking water and healthy food cultivated in Aathi itself. Because of this they got infected with diseases like typhoid, fever and diarrheal.

Kumaran hires people to destroy the natural space. He makes Komban Joy to take Kunjimathu's paddy field on lease to farm prawn. Driven by Kumaran, he dumps DDT in the land which leads to the death of yellow butterflies, and green frogs. Later he reveals that he mixes Endosulfan to get maximum fish. Such acts were done by selfish people to extract all fish in the last days of lease. Moreover, the mixing of endosulfan, quicklime, poison, pesticides and fertilisers in water in order to extract every fish for business purposes is also revealed. Kumaran also decides to buy all the paddy fields in western Aathi. He assures people to give one lakh rupees in compensation and a good housing in a nearby city. As a result many people leave Aathi and try to get Kumaran's offer.

Kumaran wants Aathi to be Man-centred, no longer water-centred or nature-centred and hence he works tacitly to make his ambitious plans for Aathi possible by the help of machines and government. The domination of machines in the land of Aathi is evident slowly. The use of guns to scare and hunt the water fowls, birds that are commonly seen in the mangrove forest of Aathi. Further, the huge transport and destruction vehicles were used to landfill the agricultural lands.

Chakkam Kandam is another space like Aathi. It also had clean backwaters. And the waters in Chakkam Kandam were also clean but violence induced activities transformed the place into an unsuitable

one to live in. The pure water of Chakkam Kandam had changed into a dark liquid. During the monsoon time, rain has its downpour in Aathi. Water from all directions entered the western region of Aathi. The western Part of Aathi is a low lying area such that during flood or in rainy season it will be covered with water alone. The houses are flooded with water and the whole of Aathi gets destroyed due to anthropocentric and violence activities of Kumaran. Thus all his plans become thwarted before water at the end.

Natural elements like water and land are affected by violent activities of human beings like Kumaran. However, waters of Aathi in all conditions and emerges as the winner. The study suggests that prolonged violence towards natural space leads to major issues of contemporary catastrophes like global warming and climate change. Further, violence against women will not lead us to a peaceful society in turn it will lead to utter chaos. And this study induces precautionary steps within the readers and obviously with the researcher as well. The attitudes of common people who are affected by violence towards nature and gender in the name of development could be clearly seen. This study induces and creates awareness among readers and other researchers to look after their nature and the gender problems as well. The hypocrisy of corporate conglomerates and the revenue based mindset of governments that support the former and its alliance that is happening today in all the countries of the world is obviously seen in this study.

Conclusion

Applying the conceptual framework of Lefebvre's space, the researcher has found out that influential people like Kumaran, the government and non-governmental organizations misuse the space in Aathi. The violent activities of them ended in destruction of entire place and space of Aathi. The researcher through the academic interdisciplinary theory of spatial criticism has brought the effect of spatial violence. Thus, this findings and discussion has been written in order to preserve, conserve, protect and meliorate the way nature and other spaces are used. And it battles in words against human activity that harms, destroys and depletes the various spaces of human life. The scope of the article is that it exposes the various spaces of Aathi and the nuances of violence in it.

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Gendered minority subalternity and colonial law in Sujata Massey's *A Murder on Malabar Hill*

Muhsina Najeeb*

Abstract: This article examines gendered subalternity within the historically privileged Parsi community of colonial Bombay through a literary-critical reading of Sujata Massey's *A Murder on Malabar Hill* (2018). It is the first novel in the *Perveen Mistry* series and a work of feminist historical crime fiction set in the 1920s. It reconceptualises subalternity not as a fixed class-based or economic category but as a relational, epistemic, and gendered condition produced at the intersection of minority privilege, patriarchal communal authority, and colonial legal modernity. While Parsis benefited from close alignment with British rule and enjoyed disproportionate access to education, commerce, and the legal profession, Parsi women remained subject to systematic marginalisation through gendered exclusions from legal practice, communal regulation of female respectability, and restrictions on spatial and professional mobility. The novel's protagonist, Perveen Mistry, modelled on early women legal practitioners in colonial India, occupies a liminal position as a legally trained solicitor who is barred from courtroom advocacy solely on the basis of gender. Her semi-professional detective work exposes the contradictions embedded within minority privilege, revealing how elite women are rendered epistemically invisible within masculinist legal and institutional frameworks. Through close textual analysis, the article demonstrates how Massey's narrative recuperates suppressed female testimonies located within domestic interiors and gender-segregated spaces, thereby contesting colonial legal epistemologies that privilege masculine forms of knowledge. By foregrounding the tension between communal privilege and gendered exclusion, the article proposes 'gendered minority subalternity' as a critical framework for understanding women's structural silencing within elite minority formations, contributing to interdisciplinary debates in postcolonial studies, feminist legal criticism, and literary studies.

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AGATHOS, Volume 17, Issue 2 (33-34): 509-520, DOI 10.5281/zenodo.23408170
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Keywords: gendered subalternity, Parsi women, Sujata Massey, feminist historical crime fiction, colonial law

Introduction

Subalternity occupies a paradoxical position within postcolonial studies. It is among the field's most influential conceptual tools, yet remains persistently unsettled. Rather than designating a fixed social group or stable identity, subalternity names a historically produced condition of structural subordination shaped by relations of power, representation, and epistemic legibility. As Partha Chatterjee (2012) has repeatedly argued, subalternity should not be treated as a closed theoretical category but as an unresolved political and ethical problem whose meanings remain contingent and historically variable. Its analytic force lies precisely in this instability, which allows the concept to travel across contexts marked by uneven power relations.

The conceptual genealogy of subalternity is well established, originating in Antonio Gramsci's rethinking of class, political organisation, and historical visibility under conditions of uneven development. Subsequent rearticulations by the Subaltern Studies Collective adapted the concept to colonial and postcolonial South Asia, challenging elite nationalist historiography and foregrounding political agency from below. Feminist and poststructuralist interventions, most notably by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, further complicated the concept by shifting attention from political marginality to epistemic foreclosure and gendered invisibility. Together, these interventions have redefined subalternity as a relational condition produced through historically specific configurations of power rather than as a sociological identity.

This article intervenes in these debates by examining the historical paradox of the Parsis in colonial Bombay. Descended from Zoroastrians who migrated from Central Asia to the western coast of India to escape religious persecution, the Parsis gradually established themselves across the subcontinent, with significant populations concentrated in Gujarat, Maharashtra, and West Bengal. Historiography consistently records the Parsis as one of the most educationally, economically, and professionally privileged communities in British India. Their early embrace of English education, mercantile capitalism, and professional modernity positioned them as indispensable intermediaries within the colonial economy. As Jesse S. Palsetia (2001) demonstrates, Parsis achieved

disproportionate representation in commerce, law, medicine, journalism, and civic institutions, while remaining a numerically small and culturally policed minority. Their success rested on the cultivation of public respectability, philanthropy, and alignment with colonial liberal ideals. Yet this very visibility also produced vulnerability within the Parsi community.

Parsi identity was sustained through continuous juridical, cultural, and communal scrutiny, particularly in matters of marriage, inheritance, sexuality, and gendered conduct. It is within this contradictory condition, simultaneously privileged and surveilled, that gendered subalternities emerge. Addressing a persistent gap in subaltern studies, this article argues that Parsi women in Sujata Massey's *A Murder on Malabar Hill* (2018) occupy gendered subaltern positions within an elite minority formation, produced through the intersecting forces of colonial law and patriarchal communal authority. Massey, an internationally acclaimed writer of historical crime fiction, is best known for the *Perveen Mistry* series set in 1920s Bombay, which combines meticulous archival research with feminist narrative strategies to foreground women excluded from both colonial legal structures and official historiography. By centring a young Parsi woman solicitor inspired by early twentieth-century legal pioneers such as Cornelia Sorabji and Mithan Jamshed Lam, Massey's fiction renders crime investigation a mode of historical and epistemic recovery. Read within this framework, feminist historical crime fiction emerges as a critical narrative form through which gendered subalternity within privilege can be made visible, legible, and analytically tractable.

Theoretical framework

Subalternity emerges in postcolonial theory not as a synonym for deprivation but as a conceptual apparatus for theorising structural exclusion from hegemonic power, particularly the conditions under which subjects are denied political representation, institutional voice, and historical verifiability. In Antonio Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks*, subaltern social groups are defined less by economic position than by their exclusion from organised political power and state formation. Their histories appear "fragmented and episodic" because they remain "always subject to the activity of ruling groups," lacking the capacity to consolidate themselves as a coherent political force (Gramsci 1971, 55). Subalternity thus names a condition of political disaggregation in

which domination operates through the denial of representational continuity. Gramsci's insistence that subaltern groups "cannot unite until they become a 'State'" underscores the centrality of institutional recognition to historical visibility (Ibid, 52).

Ranajit Guha (1982, xii) rearticulates this concept within South Asian historiography, extending subalternity beyond orthodox class analysis. He defines the subaltern as "the general attribute of subordination in South Asian society whether this is expressed in terms of class, caste, age, gender, and office or in any other way". This formulation shifts subalternity from a fixed category to a relational condition produced through asymmetrical power relations. The Subaltern Studies project's emphasis on recovering "the contribution of the people on their own" challenged nationalist and colonial historiographies that equated political agency with elite mobilisation and state-centred politics (Ibid, 3). Yet despite this breadth, early subaltern studies remained oriented toward collective formations, leaving unresolved questions of individual voice, representation, and gendered subjectivity.

A decisive epistemological shift occurs with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's intervention in "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988). Spivak relocates the analytic centre of subalternity from political economy to representation and discursive intelligibility, arguing that subalternity designates not marginality alone but a position of epistemic foreclosure. Her assertion that "the subaltern cannot speak" signals the structural impossibility of having speech recognised within dominant discursive systems rather than literal silence (Spivak 1988, 308). Crucially, she insists that "the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow," exposing the gendered intensification of epistemic exclusion (Ibid, 287). In later work, Spivak clarifies that subalternity is "a position with no identity," located where "lines of social mobility do not permit the formation of a recognizable basis of action," making self-identification possible only at the cost of displacing subalternity itself (Spivak 2012, 431).

Gendered subalternity thus names a condition in which women experience compounded forms of material, symbolic, and epistemic subordination, even within contexts of relative privilege. Simone de Beauvoir's assertion that "Humanity is male, and man defines woman not in herself but as relative to him" identifies ontological othering as the foundation of gendered inequality (de Beauvoir 2011, 26). Kimberle Crenshaw's theorisation of intersectionality further

demonstrates how gender interacts with other axes of power to shape differentiated forms of vulnerability and exclusion (Crenshaw 1991, 1244). Anna Carastathis (2016, 16) extends this insight by emphasising intersectionality's attentiveness to the "manifold manifestations of oppression" that resist singular categorisation.

Despite its critical force, Subaltern Studies has struggled to theorise gendered exclusion within elite formations. Sumit Sarkar (1997, 84, 89) observes that its early emphasis on class struggle produced a rigid elite–subaltern binary that obscured internal hierarchies, particularly those structured by gender. Partha Chatterjee (1993, 243) similarly cautions that culture remains "the site where patriarchal authority is most intensively reproduced," even within anti-colonial or nationalist projects. As Sophia Deterala (2018, 414) argues, subaltern frameworks falter when confronted with subjects who are "simultaneously privileged and marginal, able to speak in some registers while remaining unheard in others".

It is within this conceptual lacuna that feminist historical crime fiction assumes particular analytical significance. As Rosemary Erickson Johnsen (2001, 2) argues, the genre uncovers "hidden material" and offers "new ways of seeing women" excluded from official archives. By foregrounding investigative labour, unofficial knowledge production, and contested authority, feminist crime fiction provides a narrative form uniquely suited to theorising gendered subalternity within privilege, where exclusion operates not through absolute silence, but through regulated participation and conditional visibility.

Colonial Bombay and the Parsi community: Privilege, law, and gender

The Parsis' position in colonial Bombay was shaped by an early and strategic alignment with British imperial authority that distinguished them from most other Indian communities. From the seventeenth century onward, Parsis cultivated collaboration rather than confrontation, positioning themselves as reliable intermediaries within the colonial city. As Nicole Ashley Vance (2016, 7) observes, British administrators frequently regarded Parsis as "'almost British,' yet they saw themselves as natives in India," a dual positioning that enabled them to mediate between imperial governance and indigenous society. This intermediary status translated into sustained access to civic influence, administrative proximity, and urban authority, securing the

Parsis a visible and durable presence within Bombay's colonial public sphere.

Such proximity to imperial power facilitated disproportionate professional access, particularly in law, commerce, and English education. Long before other Indian communities, Parsis embraced Western schooling, legal literacy, and mercantile capitalism as strategies of advancement within the colonial order. Jesse S. Palsetia (2001, 128) notes that by the nineteenth century Parsis "came to dominate professions such as law, medicine, engineering, and commerce out of all proportion to their small numbers". Their economic success was inseparable from Bombay's emergence as a colonial commercial hub, with Parsi elites functioning as what Vance (2016, 2) describes as "middlemen, acting on behalf of their indigenous communities while maintaining close ties with colonial rulers". Education, professionalisation, and philanthropy thus became mechanisms through which Parsi privilege was consolidated and publicly legitimated.

Yet this outward modernity coexisted with a deeply conservative internal social order. Palsetia (2001, 217) cautions against equating communal advancement with gender equality, observing that Parsi society was "deeply conservative in matters relating to women, family authority, and sexual respectability". Domestic space functioned as a primary site of regulation, with family authority operating as "a crucial mechanism for regulating women's conduct and maintaining communal boundaries" (Ibid, 221). Female respectability emerged as central to communal identity and minority survival; as Palsetia notes, "women were made the primary bearers of communal honour, and their behaviour was subject to close scrutiny" (Ibid, 226). Consequently, Parsi women inhabited a paradoxical position – the beneficiaries of elite status and education, yet constrained by what Palsetia describes as "a pervasive moral surveillance that accompanied privilege" (Ibid, 229).

These internal hierarchies were reinforced by colonial legal structures that institutionalised gendered exclusion. As Janaki Nair argues (1996, 22), colonial law "did not merely reflect social patriarchy but actively reconstituted it through legal doctrine and institutional practice". Even when women accessed legal education, "women could be trained in law, yet were denied the right to practise it" (Ibid, 96). It is within these intersecting structures of privilege and exclusion that Perveen Mistry's liminal professional position emerges,

transforming exclusion from formal authority into an epistemic vantage point within colonial Bombay.

Perveen Mistry as a gendered minority subaltern subject in *A Murder on Malabar Hill*

Perveen Mistry is introduced in Sujata Massey's *A Murder on Malabar Hill* (2018) as a conspicuous anomaly within colonial legal culture: a woman formally trained in law yet structurally excluded from its authoritative spaces. Massey signals this anomalous status early by noting that Perveen keeps in her cabinet a "Bombay Samachar" article "touting her as Bombay's first woman solicitor," an achievement her father hesitates to display publicly lest it unsettle male clients (Massey 2018, 7). Visibility here is carefully regulated rather than celebrated. As David Ludden (2002, 18) argues, subalternity is not defined by invisibility alone, but by the "conditions under which visibility is produced without authority". Subaltern subjects are often rendered legible only as exceptions that reaffirm dominant norms rather than destabilize them (Ibid, 21). Perveen's professional recognition thus functions not as inclusion but as controlled exposure, preserving the masculine structure of colonial legal authority.

This structural marginality is reinforced by the conditions of Perveen's employment. Despite her legal education in England, she works exclusively within her father's firm because, as the novel states unequivocally, "There was not another law firm in the city that would employ a female solicitor" (Massey 2018, 15). Her labour sustains the institution, yet her position remains professionally isolating. Ludden (2002, 27) identifies this dynamic as characteristic of modern subalternity operating within elite institutions through "inclusion without mobility". Institutions depend upon subaltern labour while "systematically blocking access to authority, advancement, and representation" (Ibid, 31). Perveen's legal identity is thus shaped less by professional ascent than by containment, situating her within a gendered form of subalternity embedded in privilege.

Massey further underscores the disjunction between Perveen's expertise and her power through her relationship to legal language. Perveen reflects that "the subtlety of one word could mean the difference between a client's success and his ruin" (Massey 2018, 6), demonstrating her acute professional competence. Yet this mastery does not translate into courtroom authority. Ludden's account of subaltern epistemology clarifies this paradox: subalterns are not

defined by ignorance but by "the structural inability to convert knowledge into institutionally recognized action" (Ludden 2002, 34). Colonial modernity, he argues, routinely produces subjects whose expertise remains "epistemic rather than performative" (Ibid, 36). Perveen's knowledge thus exists in a suspended state which was necessary and respected, yet barred from authoritative enactment.

The most explicit manifestation of this exclusion is Perveen's categorical bar from courtroom advocacy. While her father pleads cases before judges, her labour is confined to preparation, documentation, and consultation. As Jamshedji reminds her, "your work as a contract solicitor is what keeps Mistry Law profitable" (Massey 2018, 15), tacitly affirming that her contribution, though indispensable, must remain backstage. Ludden (2002, 39) describes this precise configuration as emblematic of subalternity, where "productive labour is acknowledged while political or juridical representation is withheld". Courts function as "sites where authority is monopolized through exclusion rather than competence" (Ibid, 41). The courtroom thus emerges as a masculinized zone of power structurally inaccessible to women like Perveen.

This contradiction between competence and powerlessness is intensified through Parsi matrimonial law, which exposes gendered subalternity operating directly through legal doctrine. When Perveen investigates divorce provisions under the Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act of 1865, she discovers that a husband's sexual relations with prostitutes do not constitute legal grounds for divorce: "According to Parsi law, a husband's engaging in relations with a prostitute is not cause for divorce or even legal separation" (Massey 2018, 259). Male sexual transgression is normalized, while women are denied reciprocal protection. Subalternity here is juridical rather than economic, embedded within the very language of law. Even severe domestic violence fails to meet the legal threshold for recognisable harm. Perveen is told that unless violence results in permanent injury, "you did not lose an eye, you were not stabbed, you didn't go to hospital", it does not qualify for divorce (Ibid, 259). Her protest, "But he hurt me badly," is rendered legally unintelligible. This moment exemplifies epistemic foreclosure: suffering exists, but cannot be translated into institutional recognition. Law becomes a mechanism that produces silence not by absence of speech, but by refusing intelligibility. The law further authorizes coercion through restitution of conjugal rights. If the court rules in favour of her husband, Perveen may be legally

compelled to return to him or face fines or imprisonment. Her response is telling: "Living with his family would be like going back to prison" (Massey 2018, 260). Marriage emerges as a form of oppression and surveillance, where elite women are subjected to confinement through juridical means. Ludden (2002, 69) reminds us that subalternity is sustained not only through overt domination but through "everyday regimes of bodily control and spatial discipline".

This logic is reinforced through community surveillance within Parsi matrimonial courts. Divorce cases are decided not by judges but by juries of Parsi laymen: "The marriage court's cases are decided by juries of Parsi laymen" (Massey 2018, 260). Perveen quickly realizes the futility of justice in a closed patriarchal community: "Every plaintiff in this room is connected somehow to at least one juror" (Ibid, 337). Minority status here intensifies surveillance rather than alleviating oppression, producing what Ludden (2002, 56) terms internal subalternity, the marginality generated within elite formations. The courtroom becomes an archive of collective female suffering. Perveen observes that most women seek divorce only after decades of abuse, not months. One testimony describes a husband who moved a prostitute into the marital bedroom, forcing his wife to remain silently in the corner. These narratives form a counter-archive of gendered subaltern experience, typically erased from official histories that privilege male property, lineage, and respectability.

Religious tradition functions here as another disciplinary apparatus, enforcing compliance through spatial confinement and moral stigma. Taken together, Perveen Mistry emerges as a gendered minority subaltern subject whose agency is forged through constraint rather than despite it. Her legal knowledge, investigative labour, and urban mobility are all shaped by exclusion from formal power, yet these exclusions generate alternative epistemic authority. As a semi-professional detective, her marginality enables access to domestic interiors and women's testimonies inaccessible to male authorities. In Ludden's terms, Massey's fiction demonstrates that "subalternity is not silence, but structurally mediated speech" (Ludden 2002, 74). Feminist historical crime fiction thus operates as a counter-archive, recovering suppressed legal histories and rendering visible the conditions under which gendered subaltern agency becomes thinkable at all.

Feminist historical crime fiction as a space of recuperation

Sujata Massey's *A Murder on Malabar Hill* operates as a sustained project of feminist recuperation by foregrounding women's lives and testimonies systematically excluded from the legal, police, and social archives of 1920s Bombay. Feminist historical crime fiction is particularly suited to this task because, as Rosemary Erickson Johnsen (2001, 2) argues, it "searches out information about women in the past; it uncovers hidden material, records sometimes surprising facts, and offers new ways of seeing women". Massey situates archival erasure at the centre of the narrative through the obituary of Omar Farid, which meticulously records a male heir while omitting wives and daughters as legally insignificant. This selective remembrance exemplifies what Andrea Petö (2014, 84) identifies as the masculinist logic of historical knowledge production, wherein public and institutional lives are privileged while women are relegated to "zones of historical invisibility". Crime fiction thus functions as historiographic intervention, exposing the gendered selectivity of the archive itself.

Perveen Mistry's position as one of Bombay's earliest female solicitors places her at the threshold between institutional authority and domestic invisibility, enabling mediation between colonial law and purdahnashin women inaccessible to male investigators. As Johnsen (2001, 24) notes, feminist historical crime fiction centres women "whose lives often went unrecorded" and whose histories require "alternative narrative strategies rather than official documentation". Exclusion from courtroom advocacy paradoxically facilitates Perveen's access to zenanas and curtained interiors, aligning with Petö's claim that feminist crime fiction approaches history as an "unfinished project" re-entered from marginal locations (Petö 2014, 86). Massey thus mobilises liminality as an epistemic resource.

Investigation itself becomes a mode of historical recovery through meticulous "discovery work" uncovering concealed mahr rights and fraudulent legal manoeuvres. As Johnsen (2001, 1) argues, feminist historical crime fiction insists that such narratives "add to the historical record and offer readers new ways of perceiving history". Domestic interiors such as the jali screens, hidden corridors, and the binamazi room described as a "stinking prison", emerge as sites of concealed violence, confirming Johnsen's observation that crime fiction can "lift the lid on home lives otherwise unrecorded and invisible" (Ibid, 31). While colonial authorities presume secluded women have 'seen or

heard nothing,' the novel demonstrates that confinement produces forms of witnessing illegible to masculinist institutions.

Crucially, the novel recuperates women's agency without conflating subalternity with silence. Razia and Mumtaz reclaim financial and legal authority, while Perveen enables their claims to enter legal visibility rather than speaking for them. This strategy resonates with Spivak's clarification that subalternity is not muteness but a condition where agency lacks institutional recognition (Spivak 2012, 431). Ultimately, *A Murder on Malabar Hill* demonstrates that historical recovery becomes possible through feminist narrative mediation. As Petö (2014, 94) contends, feminist crime fiction provides "a vocabulary appropriate for telling gender- and intersectionality-sensitive narratives about the past", reframing recuperation as epistemic, legal, and political.

Conclusion

This paper has argued that gendered subalternity cannot be reduced to economic deprivation or absolute marginality but must be understood as a relational and historically produced form of exclusion that can operate within privilege itself. The primary contribution is the idea of gendered minority subalternity. Reading *A Murder on Malabar Hill* through subaltern studies, feminist theory, and legal history, the analysis has shown how Parsi women in colonial Bombay occupy paradoxical positions of access and exclusion, visibility and silencing. Their subalternity is shaped not by a lack of education or mobility, but by structural barriers that prevent cultural capital and legal knowledge from translating into institutional authority. Through the figure of Perveen Mistry, Massey's novel exposes the gendered limits of colonial liberalism and minority privilege. Perveen's professional training and proximity to colonial institutions do not dissolve subalternity; instead, they reveal the discontinuities between knowledge, agency, and power that structure gendered exclusion. Her exclusion from courtroom advocacy and formal policing authority exemplifies the epistemic and institutional constraints imposed on women, even as this marginality enables alternative modes of investigation and witnessing inaccessible to male authorities. Exclusion thus emerges not merely as loss, but as a condition that produces alternative epistemic positions. The paper has further demonstrated that feminist historical crime fiction functions as a critical space of recuperation, intervening in archival silences and

exposing the gendered selectivity of historical knowledge. By foregrounding domestic interiors, women's testimony, and unofficial forms of evidence, *A Murder on Malabar Hill* reconfigures detection as a mode of feminist historiography and extends subaltern analysis to gendered marginalities within elite minority formations.

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The religio-theatrical dynamics of the Via Dolorosa: Its significance for the Church in Nigeria

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Abstract: The aim of this study is to interrogate the spirituality of Via Dolorosa (the Way of the Cross) to the Christendom, especially Christian faithfuls in Nigeria and the didactic and theatrical value to the society in general. An exposition of the study enables Christians in Nigeria to come to terms with the signification of Via Dolorosa in relation to their spiritual orthodoxy and its theatrical value thereof. Via Dolorosa is an essential memorabilia in Christendom and represents the traditional route in the ancient City of Jerusalem that Christ travelled on the day he was crucified by Pontius Pilate at a place called the Praetorium. The study reveals the 14 locations marking the routes through which Jesus Christ traversed to the place of crucifixion under the excruciating pains in the hands of his persecutors. It is this unique, religious, and theatrical dynamics of Via Dolorosa that the study seeks to examine. Scarcely had the issue of Via Dolorosa been examined from the theatrical perspective. Via Dolorosa is thus adapted as a dramatic masterpiece for the social benefits of Christians and other numerous audiences.

Keywords: theatricality, memorabilia, crucifixion, Via Dolorosa, Praetorium

Introduction

The term "Via Dolorosa" is not actually mentioned any way in the Bible. However, etymologically, "Via Dolorosa" means "The Way of the Grief" in Latin. Literarily, "Via Dolorosa" means "The Sorrowful Way," or "The Way of the Cross." Since time immemorial, Via Dolorosa has been celebrated by the Christian faithfuls to

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AGATHOS, Volume 17, Issue 2 (33-34): 521-537, DOI 10.5281/zenodo.23408215
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commemorate the judgement, crucifixion, burial and the resurrection of Jesus Christ on Mount Calvary in Golgotha. Traditionally, Via Dolorosa represents the route (path) where Jesus was lead in agony by his accusers, carrying the cross of crucifixion. Jesus was accused by the Jewish people of corrupting the nation, and refusing to give tribute to Caesar; and also assuming to be Christ and the King. They also accused him of stirring up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to Jerusalem – offence which Pilate himself testified that he found no fault in this man as recalled thus:

> And they began to accuse him, saying, we found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding giving tribute to Caesar, saying that he himself is Christ a King. And Pilate asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answered him and said, 'Thou sayest it'. Then said Pilate to the chief priests and to the people, I find no fault in this man (Luke 23:2- 4).

Biblewalks.com (2019) submits that after Pontius Pilate's judgement, Jesus was beaten, mocked and spit upon by the Roman Soldiers. Thereafter, he was forced to carry the cross by himself through the streets of Jerusalem to Golgotha, where he was eventually crucified. The gospel according to Mathew (3:27) re-echoed this that:

> When Pilate had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified. Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers. And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe. And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews! And after they had mocked him they took the robe off from him, and led him away to crucify him.

The "Via Dolorosa" is currently marked with fourteen "Stations of the Cross" from the initial seven stations in remembrance of the fourteen incidents that occurred along the route by which Jesus was led from the Praetorium to Golgotha, a location commonly known as the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

In his article title "Walking the Via Dolorosa in Jerusalem," Bumgardner (2019, 1) submits that, "the Stations of the Cross are stops (locations) that commemorate events during the torture, sentencing, carrying of the cross, crucifixion, death, and burial of Jesus." The Via Dolorosa consists of segments of several streets and one of the main segments is the modern left over of the two main east-west routes, referred to as the "Decumanus Maximus" (Ibid, 2).

Via Dolorosa is a prophesy fulfilled right from the Old Testament period and marks an important foundation of the Ministry of Jesus on earth. Isaiah (9:6-7) had prophesized this that, "for to us a child is born, to us a Son is given; and the government will be upon his shoulder and his name will be called "Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." Luke (1:30-3 1) also emphasizes thus:

> And the Angel said to her, Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David (NKJV 2013).

Just as Christ's birth was prophesized by Isaiah the prophet in the Old Testament, his crucifixion and resurrection was equally foretold in the New Testament in an encounter between Jesus' disciples and the angle of the Lord. The angel had said, "Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified and on the third day rise" (Luke 24: 6-8). Via Dolorosa has attracted a lot of commentaries but little or nothing has been said about the theatricality of Via Dolorosa. That exactly is the pursuit of this research.

The study, therefore, is to interrogate the implication of Via Dolorosa to the spiritual and social well-being of Christians in Nigeria and the world at large. It underscores the significance of Christ's crucifixion; for by his death humanity was saved.

Religious exegesis of Via Dolorosa

Via Dolorosa represents the crucifixion of Jesus Christ in Jerusalem, Israel, an event that took place before 8th century. Jerusalem is one of the most fascinating cities – a city of immense duality in which the Orthodox Jews live alongside the Uberhip Jerusalemite crowd. The Old City has an immense layered history, religious and cultural draws. The Via Dolorosa also known as Stations of the Cross in Christendom commemorates events during the torture, sentencing, carrying of the cross, crucifixion, death, and burial of Jesus (Bumgardner 2019, 1). The path of Via Dolorosa is established according to custom than by any archaeological evidence. Writing about the relevance of Via Dolorosa to Christendom, Holy Land Voyager (2014, 1) asserts that, "of the journeys taken by heroic men in human history, no expedition has been more central to our culture

than the one taken by Jesus of Nazareth on his way to the crucifixion."

The "Via Dolorosa" is one of the most important urban landmarks in the world and arguably the most important site to the Christian world, to celebrate Christ's sacrifice and its redemptive powers. The signification of Via Dolorosa for the Church in Nigeria cannot be overemphasized. Jesus' crucifixion and death on the cross is a constant reminder to Christians in Nigeria of the humongous sacrifice the Lord Jesus made in sacrificing and dying on the cross. The physical cross is of no significance to Christians but metaphorically, the cross signifies "crossing out" all sensory driven characteristics of the body that do not bring any material benefit. For as Nowacki (2018) pointed out:

> Our body is our cross in this material world – our spirit is held captive in it (the cross) while on Earth. His dying on the cross and resurrection shows that the physical world is but an illusion and only by living a perfect life devoid of sin can Christians achieve complete spiritual body.

The cross is predestined by God to redeem humanity and also show God's love and in return, our love for God. For Christians in Nigeria to reciprocate this love, therefore, they must carry the cross to depict their live lived as a living sacrifice – to live a Christ-like life otherwise known as "Christification.' As recorded in Mark 8:34, Jesus had called on the people and His disciples in particular to pick up the cross and follow Him. He was calling them to follow His examples and move away from their comfort zones to go and fish-out souls for God. As the Lord called on His people, and nay, His disciples to follow Him, Nigerian Christians are not exclusive of this call, rather the cross which they behold passionately should remind them of His message. They need to be non-conformist but be determined to follow His example of humility, shame and the persecution He suffered for His namesake. Above all, Nigerian Christians should decide to live in the world but not of the world; adopt a value system of following Christ with all their faith and trust; and allowing Jesus to become the model for their life and lifestyle.

The spiritual essence rather than the symbolic or physical nature of the cross is more valuable to Christians because it is the message of the cross that empowers their lives to live for Jesus. To this end, Karpathiou (2016) prayed for the Holy Cross to give all Christians the strength to achieve their highest goal of reaching heaven and to

meet their Maker, the Lord God Jesus Christ. Romans (3:23) also reminds Christians that, "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. To this extent, with the transgression of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, all men have sinned and for our salvation, Jesus died on the cross. The cross, therefore, is atonement for our sins, only if we confess, believe and trust that Christ died for our sins.

To Christians in Nigeria, the cross is a symbol of strength and Jesus cannot give them a cross they cannot bear, especially with the current health challenges of COVID-19 pandemic worldwide. Looking onto the cross give Christians the hope of conquering and subduing all health and spiritual challenges. They should consider the cross as their flag so much that, irrespective of their transgressions and guilt, they should have the faith that Christ cares for them and the cross is the promise of eternal life – the reason for which He died on the cross.

The theatricality of Via Dolorosa

The history of theatre as an ancient art is a long one. But the point of its evolution is speculative due to its primitive nature. Theatre is a universal art and as Ogundeji (2000, 2) points out, "theatre and drama have religio-genic root, which is true of other arts or other disciplines, based on the life and beliefs of a people." The implication is that every society like the Greek society has its own form of theatre. This is in tandem with Enekwe's (1991, 12) argument that, "society and history determine the shape of drama; and as European theatre itself demonstrates, the apparatus of the theatre can be put together in different ways which reinforces Edith Hamilton's (1963, 35) view that, "the way a nation goes whether that of the mind or that of the spirit is decisive in its effect upon art." However, what we have today as complete examples of Greek plays emanates from the Athenians. In line with this historical antecedent, Eze (2008, 3) posits that, "Athens maintained as it were, a certain degree of superiority in theatre of the ancient Greece because it enriched its drama with materials from its immediate past history and mythology." The Greeks encouraged competitiveness in dramatic activities which enable dramatists to enjoy noble status. This development brought fame to the Greek theatre. By definition, theatre literarily means a place or building, consisting of a stage and seating, in which an audience gathers to watch plays, musical performance, and public ceremonies, among others. But the world of the theatre has

tremendous range and embraces within itself many diverse areas. Theatre does not only refer to a physical playhouse but also what happens inside this house. To this end, Eze (2011, 19) in his book, *The Essence of Drama*, reasons that, "theatre is used to describe all the performing art areas, including the masquerade display dance, western type of drama, song, music, circus, etc. Theatre takes place when one or more people consciously project himself or themselves in a creative activity by means of bodily and/or vocal signs before an audience within a given space and time. Theatre, therefore, is "an integral part of man's communal existence, and is directly connected with the poetry of life, its rhythms and life cycles" (Kennedy 1973, 42).

Theatrical activity can either be mimetic or non-mimetic; in a mimetic theatre, activity is essentially an imitated act, an act of make-belief where performers merely create illusion of actuality. The non-mimetic theatre refers to other forms of theatre where performers are usually themselves, and not other people's surrogates – human beings in their total physical being are not juxtaposed with an imagined act to produce an illusion of actuality (Beckerman 1970, 22).

Drama flourished in Greece and Rome before the birth of Christ; but the first dramas in England during the Middle Ages were purely native productions. These native dramas or productions began in Churches and were intended to make the sacred stories of the Bible clearer to the congregation and other common people. The plays at this time contain few sentences and were performed in Latin. Marriott (1948, 30) believes that, "the church service, with its liturgy and the celebration of High Mass, tends itself to dramatization; and abundant materials for plays were to be found in the Bible." Other scenes from Old and New Testament were acted, and as the congregation grew larger, it became necessary to perform the plays outside the church. The priests and choristers were the first actors and later the laymen were invited to assist.

The first plays were called mystery plays as they dealt with the Bible stories while miracle plays were added, which dealt with the stories of Jesus Christ and the Apostles and the miracles they performed. It also contains Jesus' encounter with the Jews, trial, and his eventual crucifixion on the Cross of Calvary. Through these liturgical dramas, it was possible to witness for instance, "the Day of Creation," "the Garden of Eden," "the Murder of Abel," "the Sacrifice of Isaac," "the Deluge in the time of Noah," "the Story of

Moses and the Israelites," "the Occupation of the Promised Land," "the Life of Jesus Christ from his Birth, through Judgement, Crucifixion and finally His Resurrection." In fact, the original idea behind the churches in encouraging plays was to familiarize the congregation with the sacred stories and then to drive home a moral which should help people in their daily life – to teach a lesson.

The Via Dolorosa, therefore, falls into these realms of theatricals. It encompasses the epic of Jesus Christ from his judgement, crucifixion and resurrection. Christ's last moments spanning from his trial to his crucifixion constitute an epic in itself like Homer's *Odyssey*. As a result, Holy Voyager (2014) contends that, "Jesus' final walk through the streets of Jerusalem has become a legend for all monotheistic religions."

According to Canby (1999, 1), "there is one extremely theatrical moment in Via Dolorosa – a scenic effect that appears near the end as a kind of vision of peace." This scenic effect lasts no longer than a slow blink of the eye and it is all that is needed. Via Dolorosa is an experience of most uncommon theatricality. A retrospective view of the biographical antecedents of Jesus Christ readily revealed that he was persecuted and finally crucified in the hands of his accusers in a bid to save mankind. A historical account of these events from the Holy Bible, documentaries, films or movies, plays, etc all portray the dramatic way in which Jesus was betrayed, arrested, docked, mocked, judged, crucified, and finally buried for an offence which Pontius Pilate himself attested that he did not commit. But trying to please the multitudes, Pilate released Barabbas for them instead of the innocent, good man. This dramatic irony and ridiculous pervasion of justice is equally emphasized in New King James Version that:

> Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged him. And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head and they put on him a purple robe, and said, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' And they smote him with their hands. Pilate therefore, went forth again, and said unto them, Behold, I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him (John 19:1-6).

What a dramatic irony, to crucify a man who was found faultless and to release the one who had actually committed an offence. Tragically, to show the rebellion against Jesus, about 600 soldiers of the whole Roman cohort were commissioned to arrest only one man. He was dressed up in purple and a crown of thorns not actually to eulogize him but in mockery of him saying "Hail, King of the Jews!" Mark

(15:18-19) recorded that, "they kept beating his Head with a reed, and spitting at him, and kneeling and bowing before him." This explains another way of mocking Jesus by hailing him as "King of Jews and kneeling and bowing before him; yet mocking and spitting him at the same time (Davis 1965, 1). Though the Bible did not mention the fall of Jesus or why it was necessary to seek the assistance of Simon of Cyrene to help him carry the cross, however, some Gospel writers has described these hours of suffering as enunciated by Curtis (2007) thus:

> He agonized in the Garden and was soaked with sweat, and soon men were beating him up, and then officially he had been whipped until his back was a pulpy mess. He had hardly slept, and his head had been hit again and again with a rod so that Jesus knew extremely weakness and loss of blood.

Subsequently, not knowing what next to do to humiliate Jesus, they put his own clothes on him to a Cross. Jesus' offence was clearly written on aboard, carried by one of the soldiers to the execution site at Golgotha - to ensure his suffering permeates. This was to act as a warning and deterrence to many other people. The Romans took this action in order to instil fear to everyone who might want to indulge in law-breaking.

These scenarios starting from Jesus' arrest, judgement, crucifixion, burial and resurrection at Mount Calvary are what has been celebrated since time immemorial as the Via Dolorosa - the route or path which he followed in the course of his travails. The Via Dolorosa which marks these events, constitutes materials and locations for dramatics and, therefore, theatrical. Today, Christians all over the world, especially the Roman Catholics, celebrate the "Station of the Cross," in commemoration of the above events and the path Jesus took from the place of judgement (Praetorium) to Golgotha where he was crucified.

Stations of the Cross is celebrated every Friday, especially on Good Friday by 3 pm. Processions along the Stations of the Cross are an important epoch-making events and part of spiritual practice of millions of Christians. Via Dolorosa is an historic route. It is theatrical in itself because the celebrants who constitute both the actors and the audience, process solemnly and devotionally along the routes starting from the Lion's Gate at the Muslim Quarters and terminating at the Christian Quarters. The celebrants also carry the Cross signifying the 'character' of Jesus Christ amidst candle light,

incense, and other props, marching through the routes chanting songs, lyrics and other musical accompaniments. The celebrants comprising of the clergies and the laities appear in their historical robes or costumes denoting their religious status. The whole episodes are quite dramatic and aesthetically illuminating.

As far back as the 4th century during the Byzantine era, Christians have venerated Jesus' walk (Via Dolorosa) to the place of his crucifixion. The Stations of the Cross or the route through which Christ walked connotes a stage in theatrical parlance, where his travails took place. Each Station of the Cross or locale is marked with a Roman Numeral Plaque to commemorate the event that took place there. Because it is not always easy to identify the plaques, there are commentaries to guide visitors who may not be familiar with the routes. The 14 stations historically mark an important spiritual significance of Via Dolorosa. Aesthetically, the path of Via Dolorosa winds through busy streets with lined up snack stalls and tourist shops. The Way of the Cross is open to the public and visitors can chose either to make their own way or book a guided tour to add context. The path is also a busy one and often noisy, with the bustling of outdoor markets. It is easy to get lost in the winding maze of lively streets that make up the Arab Souk in the centre of the Muslim Quarter. Moreover, the buzzing outdoor markets are a sight to behold, with traders hawking wares on streets that are thousands of years old.

The significance of the 14 stations of the Cross for the Church in Nigeria

Via Dolorosa represents the fourteen Stations of the Cross in commemoration of Jesus' walk from the Praetorium to the place of his crucifixion. Through this Sorrowful Ways, as eminently captured in Isaiah (53:5), Jesus was pierced and suffered for our transgressions; crushed for our iniquities, the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by His wound we are healed. Patty (1989) equally re-echoed this event in an emotional lyrics entitled, "Via Dolorosa – The Finest Moment" and states:

> Down the Via Dolorosa in Jerusalem that day
> The soldiers tried to clear the narrow street
> But the crowd pressed in to see
> The man condemned to die on Calvary…
>
> Down the Via Dolorosa called the way of the Suffering

> Like a lamb came the Messiah, Christ the King
> But He chose to walk that road out of
> His love for you and me
> Down the Via Dolorosa, all the way to Calvary.

For the Christians in Nigeria and elsewhere, the Via Dolorosa is an exercise in faith – believers are by this development strengthened in their faith about the true meaning of Christ's crucifixion. Christ's crucifixion on the cross of Calvary has brought salvation to mankind and has become a source of spiritual practice and upliftment to millions of Christians today. Via Dolorosa also reflects catholic tradition more than mere history.

The cross in which Christ was crucified has a way of calling our attention to eternal life through our faith and trust in the death for which he died for our salvation. Jesus allowed what happed to him in the hands of his accusers because of his love for us. The cross was meant to provide mankind salvation even if it entails his being alone (Curtis 2007). Bucher (2019) also reverberates this love of Christ to mankind and states that:

> It was out of love for us that God sent his Son, and love that compelled Christ to accept the fate of the cross. His sacrificial love redefined the human understanding of the word. Love was the main focus of Jesus' ministry on earth. He redefined acceptance, paying attention to those on the fringes of life. He healed beyond our human capacity to understand, and granted forgiveness for sins which had been deemed unforgivable.

In John (13:34) Jesus himself had said, "a new command I give you: love one another, as I loved you, so you must love one another." Christians in Nigeria and elsewhere should love one another as Christ loves the Church. They should live their lives in truly Christian way by loving their neighbours as themselves. This is the remarkable difference between Christian love and societal love. It is a selfless love in which the "love for others" is emphatic.

Jesus did not choose to die. He died because of the sins of the world and without his death, it is impossible to earn grace. Jesus made a way; and the way he died granted mankind freedom and forgiveness. Through Christ, the Holy Spirit lives in us, and we are able to communicate with God through prayers and His word. The crucifixion He suffered on the cross was the way to eternal salvation (2 Cor. 5:17). The love of God is pre-eminent as emphasized in John (3:16-17) that, "for God so loved the world that he gave his one and

only begotten Son, that everyone who believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world but to save the world through him."

Jesus' death on the cross has provided a redemptive sacrifice to all mankind to which Christians today celebrate through the symbol of the cross. The cross also gives a retrospective perception to Christians about the suffering of Christ from the point of prosecution to crucifixion which He undertook on their behalf so as to receive joy in God through Jesus whom they received atonement. To this end, Okanlawon's (2018) study, therefore, encourages Christians in the nation to imbibe the behavioural lifestyle of Jesus Christ as exemplified in His sacrificial and his servant hood. The implication being that, the sign of the cross reminds Christians of God's love for them through Christ's sacrifice. The cross also symbolizes Jesus' resolve to die in atonement for the sins of the world and to reconcile humanity with God. And for Fowler (1991, 43), "the death of Jesus on the cross is the remedial action precedent to the restorative action of God's indwelling life in man."

Nigerian Christians should see the Stations of the Cross as their hope for the light overcoming darkness (all principalities and powers), of good overcoming evil, of victorious life over death and the hope of salvation through Jesus Christ. For the sacrifice He made on their behalf for dying on the cross, Christians too should emulate this virtue of sacrificing for others. This is achievable through unity of purpose in their Christian living and forgiving one another in all things. Through unity the reason for Christ's death and resurrection will not be in vain. The Stations of the Cross as celebrated in Christendom is a symbol of strength. It is in fact the Christian's beacon of strength and assurance to their lives. This is because many Christians (especially Roman Catholics) hardly leave their houses without wearing the physical cross-chain-like necklace on their necks. This is a hope for protection against unknown forces which humanities face on daily basis. Thus, Christianity without living the lifestyle of Christ and the purpose for which He died on the cross is an aberration. Because we are all responsible for His death, one may reason that our collective sins may have put Him on the Cross." Charles Wesley's hymn also re-echoes this assertion which states:

> And can it be that I should gain
> An interest in the Savior's blood?
> Died He for me, who caused His pain—

For me, who Him to death pursued?
Amazing love! How can it be,
That Thou, my God , shouldst die for me?
Amazing love! How can it be,
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me …. ?

Christians have been walking the 14 stations for over hundreds of years now. However, the first and the last stations are the most famous – the Praetorium from where Jesus carried the cross to the place of crucifixion now called the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Originally the stations seven in number, is now fourteen as examined respectively:

Station 1: signifies the place of the Condemnation of Jesus Christ by Pontius Pilate at the Franciscan convent of the Flagellation. The two churches in Franciscan compound – the Flagellation and the Church of Condemnation is where Jesus was condemned and a crown of thorns put on his head. For Pilate having then delivered him unto them to be crucified, took Jesus, and led him away" (John 19:17).

Station 2: is where Jesus received the Cross onward to "the place of a skull" in Golgotha. Thereafter, Pilate wrote a title on the cross bearing: "Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews."

Station 3: signifies the first fall of Jesus while carrying the cross. Station three is located at Hagai Street at a sharp turn to the South-east.

Station 4: Jesus met his mother, Mary, at Station 4 according to the Jewish tradition. It is stated in John (19:26) that, "when Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciples standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother woman, behold thy son!"

Station 5: Here Simon the Cyrenian was commissioned to assisted Jesus with the cross. It is recorded that "… as they led him away, they laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, on him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus" (Luke 23:16).

Station 6: houses a small Great Catholic Church called "The Holy Face" signifying the wiping of Jesus' face with a silk veil by Veronica. Station 6 is where Jesus met by a great multitudes of men and women who had gathered to sympathize with him saying, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children" (Luke 23:27-28).

Station 7: This station according to tradition shows the route Jesus passed through from the "Gate of Judgement" to the place of

crucifixion. Due to the nature of the hill and pressure from the cross, Jesus falls a second time.

Station 8: shows Jesus' encounter with the daughters of Jerusalem. Luke 23:28 states, "But Jesus looked unto them said, daughters of Jerusalem weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children." It is also identified with a stone on the wall with an inscription "IC-XC NI-KA" meaning "Jesus Christ Conquers." A procession marking the Via Dolorosa is celebrated every Friday by 3pm stopping at Station 8.

Station 9: signifies the 3rd fall of Jesus Christ on his way to the crucifixion at Mount Calvary, Golgotha. Pilgrims follow this path of Via Dolorosa, singing and reading verses while holding a wooden cross – this presents a very dramatic scene in itself. It is also marked with the presence of the Armenian Chapel of St. Helen, Ethiopian Church of St. Michael and Quarters for the Ethiopian monks.

Station 10: this location signifies how Jesus was stripped off his clothes. Mark 15:24 captures this more vividly that, "when they had crucified him, they parted his garment; casting lots upon then, what every man should take."

Station 11: it is located within the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and represents where Jesus was nailed to the cross at Golgotha.

Station 12: Jesus was crucified, died on the cross thereby ending his agony. The exact location of this event is symbolized by a silver disk with a central hole, underneath the altar where the Cross stood, and pilgrims kneel and kiss the spot – portraying another dramatic scene.

Station 13: According to John (19:40), "Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jew is to bury." Here, Jesus is taken down from the Cross and according to Jewish tradition was laid on the stone (tomb) after removing it from the Cross. Another remarkable feature of this location is the stone of anointing that greet the visitors, who kneel, pray and kiss the stone.

Station 14: it is where Jesus was laid in the tomb decorated with a marble lid cover. It also marks the final station of Via Dolorosa house called "Rofunda." For in Luke (24:50-53), "a man named Joseph from the Jewish town of Arimathea, a member of the council, a good and righteous man; went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then he took it and wrapped it in a linen shroud, and laid him in a rock-hewn tomb, where no one had ever yet been laid."

These historical antecedents of Via Dolorosa bring to an end the journey of the "Way of the Grief" which Jesus suffered. However, a new journey has evolved from this, kick-starting a new faith that has changed the world. The entire Christendom is now awash with this historical event – The Via Dolorosa.

The Cross and Black African liberation

The study is dealing with the issue of the cross and African liberation, with reference to the concept of liberation theology and the significance of the cross in the African suffering. Theology of liberation is part of praxis oriented theology. Liberation theology was developed in the Latin America of the early 50s. Post colonial Latin America is the home of liberation theology, though liberation theology is prevalent in practically every part of the world (Retour, 2005). Liberation theology was born in the context of the new consciousness of the new age in the history of Latin America, an age which stressed the participation of the people in the process of their liberation. The mission of Jesus cannot be said to be complete without liberation of the poor, less privileges which he said he came to accomplish in his manifesto in Luke (4:18-19), muted succinctly during his post baptism and suffering Galilean proclamation:

> The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the poor. He has sent me to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed; and to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord (Vrs. 18, 19).

The above manifesto of Jesus as Ukoma (2006) calls it could not have been realized without the death of Jesus at the cross. The Via Dolorosa could be contextualized in African as well as Nigerian cosmology as suffering. This Cross is portrayed in a vivid manner as a symbol of suffering of the black race that had passed through the crucible and excruciating pain of racial discrimination of western hegemony - politically, culturally, economically etc. This is rooted in the pseudo-ideological white supremacy. In the Seventh station of the cross painted by Cohen (2008, 139), Simon of Cyrene, the man of Cyrene in North Africa was forced to help Jesus carry the cross by a Roman who represented the West. This is a symbol of suffering, injustice and racial discrimination against Africa. Yet, the cross of Jesus in the long run brought Africa into limelight as far as the salvific history of humankind is concerned. The same cross that is a

symbol of shame and suffering for the black African, Nigerian Christian amidst Islamic persecution in form of terrorism and the entire human remains a means of liberation of humanity and African race from corruption, poverty, social inequality, political apathy and western hegemony. This is what motivated erstwhile African Fathers to develop political theology for African Liberation in form of Negritude, Ethiopianism and African renaissance of Ujama, Ubundu factor and later dialectical political theology to enable Africa stage a liberation theology from the perspective of Christian Faith and Pan African Nationalism (Kalu 2000; Agha 1996; Chinwokwu 2001, 2008; Ngele 2008, 2013). The idea of theology of liberation of Africa muted here is in line with Latin American liberation theology as well as praxis oriented theology formulated by African-American to address the state of injustice, racial discrimination, social inequality and hegemony of all strands in the 50s and 60s in Western clime. The Via Dolorosa in the context of this study remains a point of focus in that, it reminds readers that the cross is significant in the liberation of Africans in that the cross of Jesus is not only a symbol of Nigeria Christianity as well as the Church in Africa sharing in the suffering of Christ Jesus, but remains a means of the liberation of Africa and the entire human race.

Conclusion

In retrospection to the trials, condemnation, and eventual crucifixion Jesus faced in the hands of his accusers, it is worthy to note how a good and righteous man had to suffer for the sins of the entire humanity. For as Peter (2011) avers, "false accusations; condemnation for speaking the truth; rigged trials; unjust imprisonment; misunderstanding; jealousy; the innocent dying while the guilty get off free" all trailed the fate of Jesus. It is such a hopeless situation where the good men standing by and doing nothing. Nowhere was this rejection of Jesus Christ more truly and agonizing than as captured in Via Dolorosa – the Road of Sorrows. As we cast our minds back to Christ's redemptive mission on earth, Christians should not forget the precious price he paid for the sake of their salvation. Prophet Isaiah, however, have some words of succour for Christians generally that Christ, "… was pierced for our transgression; crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him; and by his wounds we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5).

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Playing with meaning: Pragmatic functions and semantic ambivalence of gobi in Japanese youth slang

Olena Kravets, Oksana Asadchykh and Iryna Shepelska*

Abstract: The article examines the semantic ambivalence and pragmatic functions of the *gobi* postfix varieties in Japanese youth slang. Based on an analysis of informal online conversations, and spoken interactions in real-life situations, the study shows that the meaning of *gobi* is highly context-dependent, with positive or negative connotations shifting based on the speaker's intent, situational factors, and shared background knowledge. This flexibility allows *gobi* to play a dynamic role in shaping meaning, making them essential tools for pragmatic adaptability in youth communication. From the perspective of politeness theory, *gobi* serve dual roles. They contribute to positive politeness by fostering in-group identity and reducing social distance, while also acting as negative politeness mitigators. Ambiguous or emotionally exaggerated *gobi* soften potentially face-threatening acts, allowing speakers to manage delicate interactions more tactfully. This reflects the broader cultural norm of avoiding directness in Japanese communication to maintain social harmony. The dependence of *gobi* on context also leads to violations of Grice's Cooperative Principle, particularly the maxims of quantity and clarity. Rather than being accidental, these violations are strategic, supporting communicative subtlety and politeness. Additionally, *gobi* serve as markers of expressive speech acts, conveying emotional involvement and strengthening the speaker's connection with the audience. These functions align with both positive politeness strategies and expressive communication styles.

Keywords: *gobi* postfix, semantic-pragmatic ambivalence, context, politeness, cooperative maxims, expressives

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AGATHOS, Volume 17, Issue 2 (33-34): 539-550, DOI 10.5281/zenodo.23408321
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Introduction

The innovative character of Japanese *wakamono kotoba* (youth language), particularly in its online form, raises important questions about the relationship between linguistic form, social identity, and digital communication. Network communication occupies a central place in the everyday interactions of young people, as evidenced by a survey conducted by the research media company Tes Tee Lab in October 2022. Among 4,226 respondents, 97.3% of middle school students, 98.9% of high school students, and 97.9% of university students reported using social media in their daily communication (Corporation Tes Tee 2022).

One understudied feature of the youth sociolect is the use of semantically ambivalent linguistic units that, depending on contextual cues such as shared background knowledge and the local communicative context, can convey either positive or negative evaluative meanings. These units challenge traditional expectations of clarity in communication and introduce interpretive layers that rely heavily on social and contextual awareness.

Of particular interest are slang elements such as *gobi*, defined as "word or phrase endings" (Roni et al. 2023; Yoshida 2002) and functionally comparable to postfixes. Unlike standard affixes expressing modality or tense, *gobi* in youth sociolect primarily adds stylistic nuance and evaluative ambiguity, allowing meanings to shift according to conversational or textual context. This morphological flexibility enables playful and creative language use and often blurs the boundary between positive and negative evaluation.

Although *wakamono kotoba* has been widely examined (Kikuchi 2014; Koyano 2006; Tsujimoto 2017; Yonekawa 2016), the role of *gobi* in producing evaluative ambivalence, as well as the pragmatics of such semantically ambivalent slang units, remains largely unexplored.

Focusing on *gobi*'s capacity to alternate between positive and negative meanings depending on context, this article aims to address this gap by examining their pragmatic role in enhancing expressiveness, managing politeness, and negotiating between directness and indirectness, including the strategic violation of cooperative maxims in contemporary youth communication.

Literature review

The youth sociolect as a language of everyday communication among Japanese youth has been widely studied in scientific research from

various perspectives. In several works, it has been examined as a distinctive indicator of cultural stereotypes, developmental levels, values, and beliefs of a specific "youth culture" (Horiuchi 1989; Kudo 2022; Yonekawa 2022). From a linguistic standpoint, the Japanese youth sociolect has been studied in terms of its creativity (Kuroda 2021) and its word-formation, lexical, and morphosyntactic features (Kravets2023a; 2023b; Seraku and Akiha 2019; Li 2021).

In particular, Horio (2022) explored the Japanese youth sociolect in online spaces and its impact on changes in standard Japanese; Tanaka (2014, 2021) and Kuroda (2011, 2021) focused on the written form of youth internet communication; Inoue (2006) examined the paralinguistic elements of youth online communication; and Kuroda (2021) traced the influence of conversion systems on the textualization of Japanese youth vocabulary. The impact of globalization processes on youth language was studied by Coleman, Silverstein, Lambert, Inoue, Matsuda, and others.

Regarding *gobi*, or sentence / word endings, which are the focus of this article, one of the most thoroughly studied words in this context is *yabai*, which has been predominantly analyzed from a sociolinguistic perspective (Sano 2012; Kumagai 2014). In the pragmatic aspect, there are limited studies on *gobi* – for example, addressing the issue of double interpretation conveyed by the adjective function of *yabai*. In particular, Takeuchi (2007) applied, in this regard, a cognitive-pragmatic approach, based on Sperber and Wilson's Relevance Theory.

At the same time, certain features of the youth dialect in general, and the semantically ambivalent postfixes studied in this research in particular, directly intersect with the interests of pragmatics. An important differential characteristic of the youth sociolect is its expressiveness, emotionality, and evaluativeness. In this regard, Yonekawa Akihiko (2009) notes, "for young people, it's not only important what they say, but also how they say it". This feature correlates with both positive politeness strategies (Brown and Levinson 1987) and the illocutionary force of direct and indirect expressive speech acts (Searle 1969; Norrick 1978; Weigand 2010).

Another equally important feature is the ambiguity of expressions. This characteristic aligns with the traditional Japanese linguistic culture's tendency to avoid vocabulary and speech acts that threaten the interlocutor's "face." To this end, Japanese people use euphemisms to avoid definitive or categorical responses. Youth slang also meets

such criteria but in an even more refined and playful manner. In their communication, which serves as a form of entertainment and enjoyment, young people strive to "smooth things over" in any way possible, which manifests in the euphemistic nature of the youth sociolect. For example, the expression *omoshiroi kamocan* be translated as "It might be interesting" or "It could be fun". *Kamo* in this phrase is a casual, softened version of *kamoshirenai*, which means "might" or "could be," expressing uncertainty or possibility. This expression is often used to avoid making a firm and a categorical statement and to sound more tentative or non-committal, allowing the speaker to veil their feelings so as not to offend the interlocutor. From this perspective, semantically ambivalent postfixes correlate with negative politeness strategies (Brown and Levinson 1987, 131) – politeness of non-imposition and tactfulness aimed at avoiding or mitigating face-threatening acts – and can also be examined through the lens of violating certain cooperative maxims (Grice 1975). The purpose of this article is to analyze semantically ambivalent slang postfixes, demonstrating the level of their contextual dependence and substantiating them from a pragmatic perspective, respectively their pragmatic functions in youth communication.

Material and methods

The material for this study consists of a corpus of Japanese youth slang expressions containing postfix varieties of *gobi*. The data were collected from social media, informal online communication, and spoken interactions, covering a range of communicative contexts in order to capture the pragmatic and semantic variability of *gobi* in contemporary youth discourse.

The study employs a qualitative methodological framework combining several complementary approaches. First, descriptive analysis was used to identify instances of *gobi* and to examine shifts in evaluative connotation (positive vs. negative) depending on context. Second, pragmatic analysis was applied to assess how *gobi* interacts with Grice's conversational maxims, particularly those of quantity and manner, as well as with politeness strategies (Brown and Levinson 1987), including the mitigation of face-threatening acts and the management of directness, indirectness, and expressiveness. The analysis also considers the role of *gobi* in expressive speech acts, extending beyond Searle's original framework, and partially draws on the concept of multifaceted pragmatics (Kravchenko 2017;

Kravchenko and Zhykharieva 2020). Finally, contextual analysis was conducted to demonstrate how the pragmatic effects of *gobi* are locally determined and used to soften or intensify utterances.

By integrating these methods, the study aims to provide a systematic account of the semantic and pragmatic versatility of *gob*i in Japanese youth slang.

Results and discussion

In contemporary Japanese youth communication, a number of slang expressions typical of youth sociolects function as context-dependent markers of emotion, including *ngo*, *pien*, *katan*, *maji-manji*, *myon*, *tanien*, and others. A defining feature of these units is their pragmatic ambivalence: the same form may convey contrasting emotions, and without access to shared contextual knowledge it is often impossible to determine whether the evaluation is positive or negative. From a grammatical perspective, these units are indeclinable and occur in a fixed final position, which allows them to be classified as *gobi*, or postfixes. Unlike normative suffixes, *gobi* do not encode modal meanings but instead add stylistic, expressive, and evaluative nuances, often introducing ambiguity.

This property makes *gobi* particularly relevant from a pragmatic perspective. Their use enables speakers to modulate emotional stance while relying heavily on contextual cues and shared assumptions. A representative example is the postfix *pien*, which, as noted by Kudo (2022), can express a wide range of emotions, from sadness or disappointment to playful or emotionally exaggerated reactions.

Compare the expressions: If you say that, it's *pien*!, and If you say that, it makes me sad. While both convey sadness, *pien* adds a layer of youthful, spontaneous expressiveness, often perceived as playful or exaggerated. Its interpretation depends entirely on speaker intent and situational context, unlike the more neutral and unambiguous expression of sadness. As a result, *pien* can soften negative emotions or render them emotionally ambivalent.

This effect is illustrated in the utterance *Ie kara tookute totemo sabishikute, shinitai kibun (pien)* / I feel so lonely far from home that I want to die (*pien*). Although the propositional content expresses despair, the addition of *pien* introduces phonological softness and reduces the seriousness of the statement, transforming a clearly negative emotion into an ambivalent one. Thus, *pien* demonstrates how

semantically ambivalent postfixes function as pragmatic devices that reframe emotional evaluation through contextualization.

A clearly positive emotion can also be conveyed by the same postfix, as in *Kyou no neiru kawaii sugiru muri pien* / Today's manicure is too cute to handle (*pien*), where *pien* expresses joy and admiration. In both positive and negative contexts, *pien* functions as an emotional modifier that either softens negative affect or intensifies positive evaluation.

The context-dependent semantics of *pien* is further evident in its grammaticalized derivatives, including verb, adjectival, and nominal forms, which retain the core emotional meaning while expanding its functional range. These forms illustrate the creative morphological adaptation typical of youth sociolect, allowing emotional states to be expressed through multiple grammatical structures.

Another productive *gobi* variant is *maji-manji*, which signals a high degree of emotional involvement and can express both positive and negative evaluations. As noted by Kudo (2021), *maji-manji* functions as a sensory term whose interpretation depends entirely on context, ranging from admiration to irritation. For example, it may convey enthusiasm in reactions to food, or frustration in response to technical failure. Thus, the same expression can encode opposite emotional stances.

The frequency of *maji-manji* in youth language is confirmed by its prominence in popular usage over recent years, including its ranking among the top youth expressions in 2017. Grammatically, it exhibits properties of evaluative adjectives or emotional predicates.

Another postfix *yabai* (meaning Oh no!) is a versatile and commonly used term in Japanese youth language and informal speech. Originally, it meant "dangerous" or "risky," but over time, it has evolved into a slang expression with a wide range of meanings depending on the context. Due to its prevalence, it is also used by older generations, for example, *Houkoku wasureta. Kyou shimekiri da yo – . Yabai!* / Terrible! I forgot about the report. *Yabai* can be used to convey both positive and negative emotions depending on the situation, ranging from excitement and admiration to concern or regret. Some of its most common interpretations include:

1. "Awesome" or "Incredible" – When used in a positive context, it can express amazement or excitement. For example, if something is extremely impressive or exciting, you might say *Yabai!* to mean "That's amazing!" or "That's awesome!" For example: *Omae, kyō*

yabaina!, meaning 'You look amazing today!' In this case, *yabai* has a positive connotation, meaning something impressive or outstanding. *Yabai! Kyō sugoku yokudekita!*, meaning 'Wow! I did really well today!'. *Yabai* here conveys excitement and positive emotion, emphasizing the speaker's surprise or satisfaction.

2. "Bad" or "Terrible" – On the flip side, *yabai* can also indicate something negative or problematic. It can be used to express that a situation is "bad," "dangerous," or "out of control." Examples: *Yabai, chikokusuru!*, meaning 'Oh no, I'm going to be late!' or 'This is bad!' *Yabai* here expresses a negative connotation of being in trouble or having a problematic situation. *Tanni sukunakute maji de yabai*, meaning 'I have really low credits... this is really bad.'

3. "Extreme" or "Over the top" – It can be used to emphasize that something is extreme in either a good or bad way, often with a tone of exaggeration. For example, *Yabai kore oishii* means 'It's ridiculously delicious.' Examples: *Totemo atama ga itai toki, Yabai kurai atama ga itai...*, meaning 'When the headache is very strong, My head hurts so much... it's crazy...'. *Yabai* expresses here a strong negative feeling, indicating that the pain is intense or overwhelming. (*Shinjirarenai hodo yoi toki) Kono ryōri yabaihodo oishii*, meaning '(When the food tastes amazing), This food is unbelievably delicious!' *Yabai* here has a positive nuance, describing something as being so good that it's almost unbelievable.

Recently, there has been a clear trend where young people use *yabai* with a highly positive connotation, for example: *Nihongo no sensei... yabai...* / The Japanese teacher is really awesome!

Thus, with the use of *yabai*, young people express a wide range of emotions, and thanks to this the word became a very flexible expression in modern Japanese. At the same time, it can be understood only through the context of the conversation, the tone of voice, and the speaker's facial expressions. In a sentence, this word acts as an attributive adjective, which not only gives an idea of the situation, but also evaluates it, giving the phrase expressiveness and increasing the intensity of negative or positive evaluative meanings.

The pragmatic rationale for different types of *gobi* attracts, at the very least, three pragmatic perspectives: Politeness Theory, Grice's Cooperative Principle, and Speech Act Theory. From the perspective of Politeness Theory, any slang expressions, regardless of whether they have positive or negative connotations, realize positive politeness, particularly the strategy of "Use in-group identity markers." By using

slang, youth minimize distance, demonstrate complete equality, and eliminate interpersonal boundaries. However, along with the general function of positive politeness, the functioning of *gobi* or sentence endings with context-dependent semantics solves a number of other pragmatic tasks also related to politeness.

Thus, unlike words from the standard lexicon, which in similar situations would be unambiguously associated with negative emotions capable of damaging the face of both the speaker and the interlocutor, *gobi*, which express negative emotions, always impart an exaggeratedly playful, lighthearted connotation to the utterance, thereby reducing the threat to the interlocutor's face.

For example, *Jeonyeoseok, nae bimil-eul binnagaya haetda! Jinjja seoul neunga ssuku!,* meaning 'He revealed my secret! I feel really disgusted!', expresses intense negative emotions while simultaneously serving as a means of mitigating them.

Respectively, in the context of politeness, *gobi* can be classified as a kind of pragmatic mitigators that soften the effect of negatively connoted information. In this case, like other mitigators, they become tools of not positive politeness (solidarity), but negative politeness of tact, non-imposition, and distancing, aimed at compensating for potential face damage.

From the perspective of Grice's Cooperative Principle, the high dependency of the interpretation of semantically ambivalent slang *gobi* on the context of background knowledge and local context of the message, where they can take on either positive or negative connotations, suggests that they violate the maxims of clarity and quantity of information. Specifically, this observation is supported by some Japanese researchers who point out that the communicative and pragmatic properties of slang *gobi* violate the maxim of quantity, according to which, in Grice's terms, "one should provide as much information as needed for easy comprehension" (Kudo 2022), considering the specific communicant and the situational context. Simultaneously, the violation of such maxims may indicate, as noted by researchers in the field of multifaceted pragmatics (Kravchenko and Pasternak 2018; Kravchenko and Zhykharieva 2020), the use of negative politeness as politeness of tact and non-imposition.

Finally, *gobi*, which implies a somewhat hyperbolic positive or negative evaluation, is, in our view, associated with the category of expressive speech acts. Expressiveness refers to the property of certain vocabulary to convey the speaker's subjective attitude toward the

conversation content, the addressee, or specific phenomena as vividly as possible. In the language of youth, expressiveness is determined by the pragmatic nature of the evaluative component, i.e., its ability to express positive and negative emotions. In this sense, expressive acts are not limited to "social-etiquette" expressives defined by Searle (1969), but are related to other definitions of such acts that broaden the scope of expressives with acts associated with the speaker's "concern with desire" or "the predominance of desire" (Weigand 2010), as well as with all acts underlying emotions (Norrick 1978, 282–290).

The presence of expressive illocutionary force in utterances ending with *gobi* is supported by the correlation of expressive illocutionary force with politeness strategies, which, as mentioned earlier, are realized both by all youth slang expressions and by slang sentence endings. In particular, linguists have noted that the connection between expressive acts and the devices that index them and positive politeness is due to the fact that both groups of pragmatic devices create an emotional bond between the speaker and the audience, ensuring emotional engagement (Kravchenko et al. 2024). Emotional engagement, in turn, correlates with two strategies of positive politeness: involving both the speaker and the audience in the activity, and the assumption or assertion of reciprocity.

Conclusion

The analysis of the semantic ambivalence of *wakamono kotoba* slang postfixes (*gobi*) and their pragmatic functions leads to several important conclusions:

The semantic ambivalence reveals significant reliance of these slang elements on the local context of speech and the communicative situation. The positive or negative connotations of the entire phrase in which these postfixes are included can shift depending on the immediate circumstances of the conversation, the speaker's intent, and the background knowledge shared by the interlocutors. This fluidity demonstrates that *gobi* play a dynamic role in constructing meaning, making them powerful tools for pragmatic flexibility in youth communication.

From the perspective of politeness theory, youth slang *gobi* fulfil dual functions. On the one hand, they realize positive politeness strategies by minimizing social distance and fostering in-group identity through shared slang, thus promoting interpersonal closeness and solidarity. On the other hand, slang *gobi*, particularly those with

ambiguous or exaggerated emotional connotations, act as pragmatic negative politeness mitigators by softening the impact of potentially face-threatening acts, allowing speakers to navigate delicate or emotionally charged interactions with tact and discretion. By incorporating playful or exaggerated tones, these postfixes reduce the intensity of negative emotions or criticisms, making the utterance less confrontational or harsh. This dual function enhances the speaker's ability to manage social relationships and protect both their own and the interlocutor's face in communication. This mitigatory function aligns with the broader cultural tendency in Japanese linguistic culture to avoid directness and maintain social harmony, further supporting the role of *gobi* in mitigating face threats.

The high dependence of gobi on contextual interpretation suggests that they often violate the Cooperative Principle as proposed by Grice, specifically the maxims of quantity and clarity (unambiguity). Their semantic flexibility can lead to the provision of less explicit information than what is required for straightforward interpretation, forcing the listener to infer meaning based on contextual clues. This violation, however, is not accidental but rather a strategic choice that aligns with the goals of politeness and communicative subtlety, especially within informal or youth contexts.

Gobi in youth slang also function as markers of expressive speech acts, allowing speakers to convey their subjective emotional stance towards the content of the conversation, the interlocutor, or the situation itself. These expressive elements enhance the emotional connection between speaker and audience, fostering engagement and participation. The expressive illocutionary force of *gobi* underscores their capacity to evoke and manage emotions, aligning with both positive politeness strategies (emphasizing solidarity and emotional involvement) and expressive communication styles that prioritize the speaker's emotional state.

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Anaphora and cataphora on the select State of the City Addresses of the mayor of Dapitan

Mark Herman Sumagang Potoy*

Abstract: State of the City Address (SOCA) is a speech modelled after the State of the Nation Address, through which, the general public is made to know the performance of the local government unit and its agenda for the upcoming year. Therefore, it is imperative for SOCAs to clearly convey its message and carry out the myriad function of enlightening its readers which could be achieved through the proper use of reference. This paper seeks to identify the types of reference employed on the SOCAs from 2014 to 2016 of Hon. Rosalina Garcia Jalosjos, Mayor of Dapitan City and look into how the references contribute to the clarity of the message of the text. The qualitative method of research is used in this study through an in-depth analysis of the corpus. After a thorough analysis, it is found out that the two reference types namely, anaphora and cataphora are both employed on the three SOCAs, the former being used more frequently than the latter accounting to 80% and 20% of actual usage, respectively. Moreover, the use of anaphors and cataphors on the three addresses helps in conveying the message clearly because they primarily become aids to avoid the repetition of the same element in the text especially when there wasn't a need to emphasize a point. Finally, it is recommended that writers of State of the City Addresses should have a vast knowledge on how reference should be used and the functions they take in the text, since this is a vital tool to clearly transmit a message.

Keywords: anaphora, cataphora, reference, syntax, grammar, State of the City Address

Introduction

Globalization has brought many challenges by leaps and bounds in this country, most especially in the field of education. In fact, at present, there is a demand for schools to produce graduates who will not only survive but also thrive in a borderless and competitive world. In keeping pace with the recent development and challenges, it becomes

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AGATHOS, Volume 17, Issue 2 (33-34): 551-563, DOI 10.5281/zenodo.23408430
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imperative for everyone to learn the language of the global arena, the English language. Admittedly, Filipinos have preference of the English language, basically, because it has undeniable economic, social, even political advantage. To put it aptly, the crucial role of the language in advancing the cause of the Filipinos gives reason to urge the people to have acquired the skill for English language use. For it is and will remain a medium of communication across countries for many more years to come. It is used more frequently in the Philippines as compared with its neighboring countries in the ASEAN region. And like in other countries in the world, the language has tremendous influence in government and politics. It has become an important vehicle in shaping the political image, earning voters' confidence and disseminating political platforms.

Yet, quite a number of deficiencies confront our written utterances especially with cohesion and coherence. Cohesion and coherence are two textual elements which have long been recognized as important features of good writing. So, language learners indispensably need to write coherent and cohesive texts to qualify English writers, whether they are EFL or ESL learners.

Cohesion and coherence are on textual level. This level is the underlying structure of the surface structure achieved through the use of grammatical elements to form the sentences and the first stage to the formation of the text through cohesion and coherence constructed on the basis of the textual cohesion through the readers' efforts to interpret. The relations between the sentences, at this level, play a major role in the achievement of coherence. Cohesion can be established by various means. These means include reference, a certain item in every language including English, which instead of being interpreted semantically in their own right, they make reference to something else for their interpretation. Wales as cited by Ahmed (2008) further explained that "reference is concerned with the relation between words and extra-linguistic reality: what words stand for or refer to in the outside world or universe of discourse." Traditional semantic view of reference is one in which the relationship of reference is taken to hold between expressions in a text and entities in the world, and that of co-reference between expressions in different parts of a text.

In grammar and text linguistics, reference is used in a much broader sense to mean any kind of designation, textual as well as situational. Even in semantics it is recognized that not all elements of a language

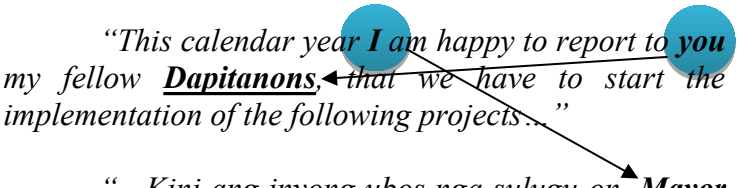
refer to specific objects in the outside world, chiefly the grammatical or function words (e.g. prepositions, conjunctions, determiners and pronouns). Pronouns, however, like other classes of words, can point to something in the environment, whose semantic reference will yet change from situation to situation. In the text, the terms reference and refer are convenient to describe the function of words like pronouns and determiners to designate a noun phrase they identify within the immediate co-text. Additionally, reference is the meaning relationship that links full lexical expression of an entity or circumstance with the pro-form/substitute to which it refers. It is in this premise that this study was conducted primarily to identify the types of reference employed on the State of the City Addresses (SOCA) of the Mayor of Dapitan City. Specifically, the study sought to determine the types of references that are evident on the SOCAs as to, anaphora and cataphora.

Anaphora and cataphora found on the SOCAs

According to Chaleshtori (2009), in his study entitled *Investigating the Role and Variability of Miscellaneous English Cohesive Devices across Registers*, reference is defined as the "semantic relationship between words and things that they stand for." This term in semantics conveys the relationship between words and to what they are pointed out in the real world. In this study, two types of reference were treated for investigation, these were anaphora and cataphora. As Morley as cited by Ahmed (2008) puts it, "the various markers refer either back to something that has already been mentioned (or implied), in this case they have Anaphoric Reference or forward to something which is about to be said, in this case they have Cataphoric Reference." After a comprehensive analysis, evaluation and interpretation of the topic, the study revealed the following results.

Reference was found to have occurred 39 times in the 2016 SOCA. Both anaphora and cataphora were employed by its writer through the usage of the following references, *us*, *its*, *them*, *they*, *their*, *I*, *he*, *his*, *her* and *your*. To illustrate the occurrence of reference, an excerpt below taken from the SOCA of Honorable City Mayor Rosalina G. Jalosjos is presented. The statement was chosen because it registered the most number of cataphoric references in the SOCA. Cataphora is a sub-type of endophoric reference which refers forward to something that is mentioned later in the text. The encircled words "I" and "you" are the cataphoric references of the underlined words "Dapitanons"

and "Mayor Rosalina Garcia Jalosjos." These references all refer forward to the presupposed element that was mentioned after these cataphors appeared in the text.



*"This calendar year **I** am happy to report to **you** my fellow **Dapitanons**, that we have to start the implementation of the following projects…"*

*"…Kini ang inyong ubos nga sulugu-on, **Mayor Rosalina Garcia Jalosjos**…"* (This is your humble servant, Mayor Rosalina Garcia Jalosjos…)

According to *The American Heritage Dictionary* (2025), "cataphora is the use of a linguistic unit, such as a pronoun to refer ahead of another unit, for example the use of him to refer to John in the sentence, Near him, John saw a snake." In the excerpt above, the two encircled words directly stand for the words *Dapitanons* and *Mayor Rosalina Garcia Jalosjos*, which were the items being referred to and the same thing pointed out by the writer. Hence, these references stand for and in place of the word they refer. Reference could use quite a handful of mechanisms for anaphoric and cataphoric relations depending on the syntactic structure of a sentence as well as its semantic purport. In the case of the above excerpt, it is obvious that the two personal pronouns, the former being in the first person singular possessive case and the latter in the second person plural possessive case, were used by the SOCAs writer as cataphors of their antecedents which came after them. In the quest for cohesion in text, the pronoun and its antecedent should match, that is, a human pronoun must have a human antecedent while a non-human pronoun should have a non-human antecedent. In effect, cataphoric referencing should follow this agreement, hence we have the human pronoun *I*, as a cataphor of its human antecedent *Mayor Rosalina Garcia Jalosjos* and human pronouns *you*, cataphoric reference of the human antecedent *Dapitanons*. A lesser number of studies have been done which were focused on observing and/or investigating the nature of cataphoric referencing. However, one of the earliest investigations of Cowart and Cairns as cited by Fedele and Kaiser (2014), found that a strong preference to interpret a cataphoric pronoun as referring to the first possible noun phrase that appears after the cataphor. This observation is half false and half true based on how the above excerpt appears to be wherein the first cataphor's antecedent

is not the noun phrase immediately following it. As found in the SOCA, its antecedent is situated at the second to the last paragraph of the text. On the other hand, the finding was evident in the occurrence of the second cataphor that shows the close proximity of cataphoric referencing from the cataphor which is immediately followed by its noun phrase antecedent.

It could be noted from the above excerpt that except for the purpose of avoiding the repetition of the same words, they serve an essential function in the text. The cataphor *I* in the entire 2016 SOCA was found to have been used the 10 times, notably the most number of occurrences in the three SOCAs from among the three personal pronouns used as cataphors which were *I*, *you*, and *your*. Undoubtedly, this scenario has been predicted to occur because of the very nature of the text. Which certainly demands to become voraciously personal since it is addressed to the constituents of the city. The prevalent use of the cataphor *I* was delicately done to inject an element of thrill and excitement in the text since readers are left hanging as to who is being referred to by the cataphor. Eventually, the revelation of the antecedent then becomes emphatic because of the emphasis put forth on it. Similarly, the main function of the cataphor *you* is to serve as an agent in emphasizing the antecedent that comes after it. It is the writer's obvious intention to direct the focus of the readers to the antecedent, that is why it was not mentioned immediately and instead, placed an emphatic element to set the momentum towards highlighting the word *Dapitanons*.

This observation is half false and half true as far as the above excerpt is concerned wherein the first cataphor's antecedent was not the noun phrase immediately following it. As found in the SOCA, its antecedent was situated at the second to the last paragraph of the text. On the other hand, the finding was evident in the occurrence of the second cataphor that shows the close proximity of cataphoric referencing from the cataphor which was immediately followed by its noun phrase antecedent. With the use of the abovementioned device, the message of the excerpt was clearly transmitted to the readers. The use of cataphoric references added a little bit of rhetoric drama, since the readers would be left hanging as to who were referred to by the encircled words in the excerpt. It was also very effective in telling the readers of the whole story given that no unnecessary repetition of words was found but instead, references were used for brevity.

It is in the 2015 State of the City Address wherein reference was least used by its writer. In fact, it was found to have been employed on the aforesaid SOCA for only 10 times. Further, its two sub-classifications were used by the writer which were anaphora and cataphora through the employment of the references, *them*, *their*, *his*, *her* and *I*.

Shown below is an excerpt taken from the 2015 SOCA being studied where the above mentioned devices were employed by its writer. The below statement was chosen because it contained the most number of occurrences of anaphoric referencing in close proximity.

> *"The role of the city government as we approach the new millennium should not be to dominate any facet of Dapitanon life but rather to aid and encourage* ***people, communities, institutions and NGOs*** *to deal with as many difficulties and challenges facing* ***them*** *as possible, and to help see to it that* ***every Dapitanon*** *has equal opportunity to realize* ***his*** *or* ***her*** *potential."*

Azarizad and Tohidian (2012) defined anaphora as"a linguistic relation between two textual entities which is defined when a textual entity (the anaphor) refers to another entity of the text which usually occurs before (the antecedent)." Further, Akamajian et al. (2001) noted that anaphoric referencing "deals with the relation between pronouns or noun phrase and a set of antecedents." To put it aptly, it is the connection between, for example a pronoun and its noun phrase antecedent, both referring to the same thing. In the above excerpt, two sets of anaphoric referencing are evidently used by the writer of the SOCA. The first one has the plural pronoun anaphor *them* with its noun phrase antecedent, *people*, *communities*, *institutions* and *NGOs*. The other anaphoric relations involved an unusual two personal possessive singular pronoun anaphors, the first one denoting masculinity which was *his* and the other, femininity with the use of *her*. Both anaphors refer back to its antecedent *every Dapitanon*, a noun phrase consisting of an adjective every that signals the inclusion of each person or thing in a group or series; and a noun *Dapitanon* which means a native or resident of Dapitan City. Therefore, the antecedent was referring to each of the people living in Dapitan City regardless of what their sexual orientation is. Because of this, the

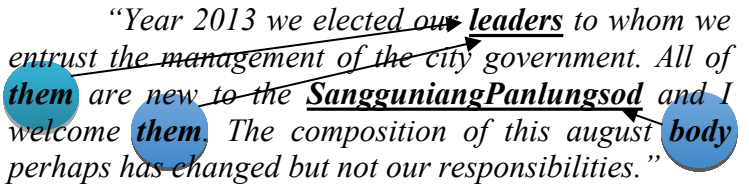
writer then used *his* and *her* to specify who these Dapitanons were, which of course each of the people residing in the city.

The use of anaphora in oral and written utterances helps in conveying a message clearly because it primarily becomes an aid to avoid the repetition of the same item in the utterance especially if there is no need to repeat it for emphasis. To illustrate this observation, the excerpt above was rewritten but without incorporating the use of pronouns as anaphors in referring to their antecedent, instead they were completely repeated. The original excerpt would then look like the one below:

> The role of the city government as we approach the new millennium should not be to dominate any facet of Dapitanon life but rather to aid and encourage *people*, *communities*, *institutions* and *NGOs* to deal with as many difficulties and challenges facing *people*, *communities*, *institutions* and *NGOs* as possible, and to help see to it that *every Dapitanon* has equal opportunity to realize *every Dapitanon*'s potential.

As one could notice from the above excerpt, two sets of noun phrases are being repeated in a sentence. This is how the statement would look like if not employed with anaphoric referencing; the same elements are completely repeated hence, becoming exceedingly wordy to the extent of being messy. Donellan as cited by Ahmed (2008) had a similar viewpoint when he said, "in some cases repetition of information makes the discourse sound like the awkward language of a child's first reader." This phenomenon could be explained by the nature of our language wherein speakers and writers do not reiterate much given information (Ibidem) since repetition would only exist if there is a need to emphasize a certain element in the text.

From the two types of endophoric reference, which were anaphora and cataphora, only the former was employed by the writer of the SOCA. The 2014 SOCA registered 28 occurrences of anaphoric referencing, these were: *their*, *they*, *this*, *it*, *them*, *his*, and *ours*. All of these anaphoric references were used to refer to something that had already been previously mentioned in the text. Below is a line taken from the SONA analyzed, where anaphoric referencing was found to have been employed by the writer. The below excerpt was chosen because it was identified to have one of the most number of anaphoric referencing in close proximity with each other.



One could find three anaphors from the excerpt illustrated above. The first two occurrences of anaphora through personal plural pronoun *them* signals the act of referring to their common antecedent which is the plural noun *leaders*. As the rule suggests, a plural anaphor should also have a plural antecedent while a singular anaphor has a singular antecedent. The second set of anaphoric referencing in the above excerpt is quite unusual because the anaphor being used is not a pronoun but a noun. However, according to Levinson (1983) "anaphora covers any expression which the speaker uses in referring on the basis of which the hearer will be able to pick out the intended referent given certain contextual and co-textual conditions." This was explained by Nneka Umera-Okeke in his study *Anaphoric Referencing: A Cohesive Device in Written and Spoken Discourse*, when he said that, "other things or structures can realize anaphoric reference apart from pronouns. For quite some time, the term anaphora seemed to have been used to refer to only pronouns as the only thing that refers back in English language. This is because pronouns are the paradigm examples of expressions used by most speakers to refer to given entities. But because pronouns lack 'content,' linguists have argued whether they could pass the test of any theory of reference." It is for this reason that one would notice from the above excerpt that the second anaphoric relation involves a noun phrase, being the antecedent and a superordinate, being the anaphor.

According to Tutin and Viegas (2000), a superordinate is a widely known element that can be used to introduce anaphoric coreferential NPs. They further added that a superordinate used as an anaphor would appear unnatural if the hyponyms are not of the same pure referential perspective. However, if the referents to be lexicalized constitute a heterogeneous set which can be lexicalized by co-hyponyms, the superordinate term turns out to be quite natural as an anaphor. In the excerpt above the noun phrase antecedent is *Sangguaniang Panlungsod* which was followed by its superordinate anaphor *body*. This relation best illustrates the discussions above wherein instead of a pronoun, another word is being used as an anaphor to refer to a

previously mentioned sentential element. The anaphor is a hyponym of its antecedent used by the writer to avoid repeating it in close proximity with each other. This is a technique to make the utterance more cohesive so that the message could be clearly conveyed. From the three SOCAs subjected for analysis, this is the only occurrence of anaphoric referencing wherein the anaphor is not a pronoun.

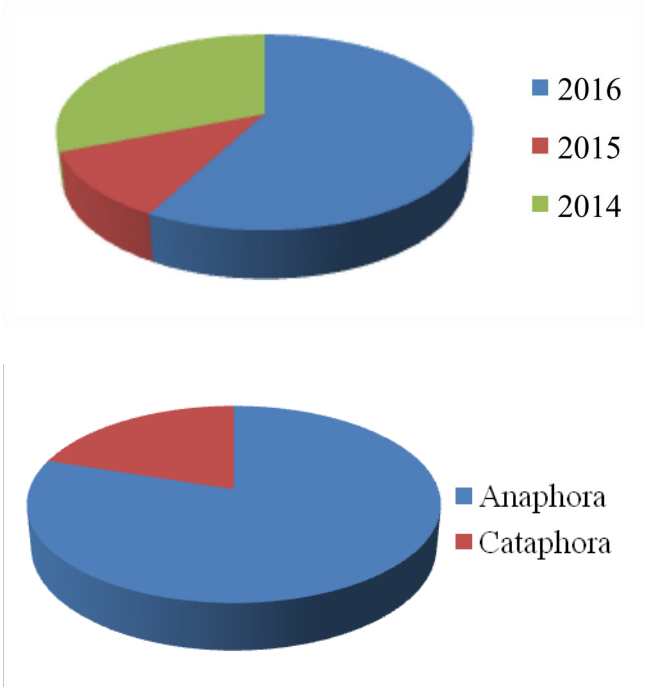


Figure 1. Distribution of employed reference of the 2014-2016 State of the City Addresses

The figure above illustrates the usage frequency of reference on the State of the City Addresses of Hon. Rosalina Garcia Jalosjos, Mayor of Dapitan City from 2014 to 2016. Presented on the left side is a pie graph showing the distribution of reference relations per year. Noticeably, the 2016 SOCA registered the highest number of references reaching up to 58% or 52 occurrences whereby 39 were anaphoric relations and 13 were cataphoras. Among the three addresses, the 2016 SOCA had the second highest number of words reaching up to 3,943 with 971 Cebuano-Visayan words. Came in second was the SOCA delivered in 2014 which had the most number of words accounting to 4,104 with Cebuano-Visayan words of 940. Its writer had used 28 anaphoric references and found to have not

employed cataphors in the address. The least number of references was found in the 2015 SOCA which was only 11% of its total, reaching up to only 10 references which were equally shared by anaphors and cataphors. This result must have been due to the fact that the 2015 address registered the least number of words of only 3,097 but also the most number of Cebuano-Visayan words of 1,496 or 48% of the total words, hence, the underwhelming number of reference.

A total of 90 references were employed on the three SOCAs. As could be gleaned from the pie graph on the right side, anaphora had been overwhelmingly used as compared with cataphora. 80% or 72 of the sum total of 90 references were anaphoric relations and only 18 occurrences or 20% involved cataphors. This means that the SOCAs writer/s preferred using anaphors than cataphors in referring to some elements found in the addresses. The findings above is supported by Azarizad and Tohidian (2012) in their study *A Comparative Study on the Frequency of the Usage of Cataphora and Anaphora in English and Persian Narratives*, where they found that, "the use of anaphoric referencing is more common in both English and Persian narratives and short stories; however, the cataphoric referencing is not that frequent in Persian narratives, comparing to that of those in English narratives."

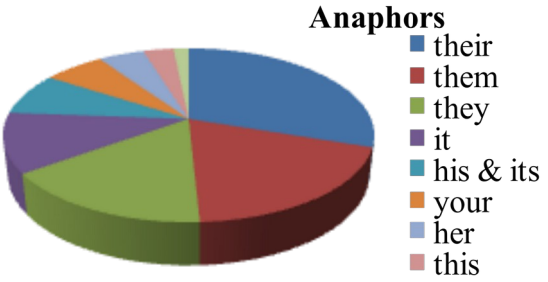


Figure 2. Frequency of employed anaphors on the 2014-2016 State of the City Addresses

Figure 2 shows the frequency usage of the different anaphors on the three SOCAs. The most frequently employed anaphora was the pronoun *their* which registered 19 occurrences or 26% of the total anaphoric relations evident on the addresses. This was followed by 12 actual usage of *them*, 10 of *they*, 7 of *it*, 5 of *his* and *its*, 4 of *your*, 3 of *her*, 2 of *this* and 1 usage of each of the pronouns *he*, *us*, *I* and *ours* and the superordinate *body*. It is quite obvious that the preferred anaphors

used by writer/s of the SOCA were pronouns to refer to something that had been previously mentioned in the text. Underscoring the same point, Kilborn as cited by Ashipu (2012) averred that one way of tying sentences and paragraphs together involves using reference words that point back to an idea mentioned previously. Among the many reference words that can be used to tie one sentence to another or one paragraph to another are words like this, these, those, such and that. These reference words should not be used by themselves but should be combined with the important words and phrases from the previous sentences or paragraphs.

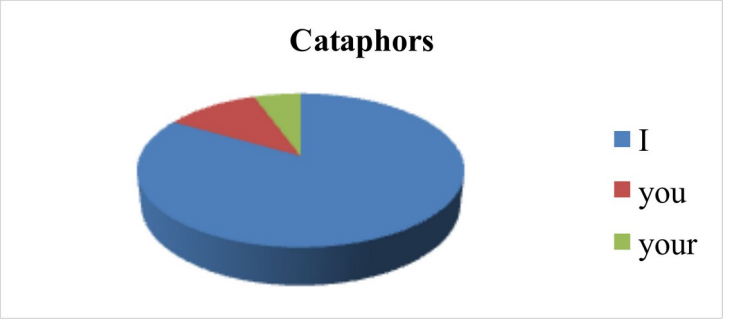


Figure 3.Frequency of employed cataphors on the 2014-2016 State of the City Addresses

Shown in the above figure is the distributionof the actual usage of cataphors on the three SOCAs being studied. It was found that only three cataphors were employed by its writer/s, these were the pronouns *I*, *you* and *your*. Among these three, the cataphoric reference *I* was the most frequently used, hence taking 83% of the total cataphoras or an equivalent of 15 occurrences. Evidently, *I* registered the highest number of actual usage because the text in itself was written from the perspective of the writer who happens to be the performer of the tasks as well. The corpus of the study were the SOCAs of a city mayor hence, it is given, that the manner in which the message should be conveyed must be personal, and one of the best ways to be truly personal is through the use of the personal pronoun *I*. The remaining 17% was then shared by the usage of the pronoun cataphors, *you* and *your* with 2 or 11% and 1 or 6% occurrences respectively. The use of personal possessive pronouns *you* and *your* on the addresses was used to direct a statement towards a certain person or entity for the purpose of expressing gratitude, commendation or challenge. Through its usage, one could notice a certain degree of emphasis on the statement because

it somehow lets the readers to remember who or what was being referred to since they were in close proximity, a natural phenomenon for cataphoric relations.

Conclusion

After a thorough analysis and interpretation of the data, it can be concluded that, the two reference types namely, anaphora and cataphora were both used on the three State of the City Addresses of Hon. Rosalina Garcia Jalosjos, the former being used more frequently than the latter. Moreover, from 72 actual occurrences of anaphoric referencing, the pronouns *their*, *them* and *they* were the top 3 most frequently used anaphors hence, accounting for an overwhelming 57% of the total anaphora. Cataphoric referencing on the other hand registered only 18 occurrences dominated by the pronoun *I* which was used 15 times thus, taking the 83% of the cataphora's total actual usage. Furthermore, the use of anaphors and cataphorson the three addresses helped in conveying the message clearly because they primarily became aids to avoid the repetition of the same element in the text especially when there wasn't a need to emphasize the point. The findings of this study revealed the essential role that reference play in a text, therefore, it is recommended that writers of State of the City Addresses should have a vast knowledge on how reference should be used and the functions they take in the text, since this is a vital tool to clearly transmit a message. Moreover, English teachers should explicitly teach the proper usage of anaphora and cataphora, as instruments to develop cohesion in written discourse, to enable students to write not only with sense but also with fluidity in tying utterances together. Finally, a similar study could be undertaken to further investigate the phenomena revealed herein.

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Elif Shafak's *The Island of Missing Trees* through the lens of Félix Guattari's *The Three Ecologies*

Vishnupriya S and Ramya Niranjani*

Abstract: The words of Wordsworth (1789, lines 21-24) "One impulse from a vernal wood / May teach you more of man, of moral evil and of good, / Than all the sages can", no longer find their way to human hearts as the world is becoming anthropocentric where nature is seen just as scenery and people forget that it is the healing power for the human spirit. The present article aims to highlight the dynamic relationship between humans and the natural world through Elif Shafak's novel, *The Island of Missing Trees* (2021), and Félix Guattari's theory of Three Ecologies, whose approach extends beyond traditional ecological thinking by incorporating psychological well-being and social engagement. The article highlights the three triadic models of ecological domains, such as environmental, social, and mental, and studies how personal trauma, collective memory and ecological consciousness are interwoven in the character's journey toward healing and inner balance. Shafak's choice of the fig tree as the narrator symbolises the deep-rooted connections between nature, identity and history and bridges the gap between individual consciousness, social cohesion, and ecological sensitivity, providing a literary embodiment of Guattari's vision and illustrating how reconnecting and rediscovering a relationship with nature leads to harmony.

Keywords: Guattari, mental ecology, social ecology, environmental ecology, trauma, memory

Introduction

In today's technological world, people often forget that their path towards self-progression is highly interlinked with preserving the ecological balance of the planet. While walking towards their modern pursuits, they tend to consciously or unconsciously forget how their careless walks destroy and disrupt nature's selfless services, which

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AGATHOS, Volume 17, Issue 2 (33-34): 565-575, DOI 10.5281/zenodo.23408476
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they ignore as collateral damage, without realising that they are causing damage not only to their mental health but also to their descendants. Elif Shafak is an acclaimed writer whose novels portray the existing problems in the human and natural worlds through stories and dialogues. As a British-Turkish author, she often challenges political sensitivity, and her passion for storytelling stems from knowing not only the people who are left unnoticed and hidden beneath the surface but also the natural world. In an interview with Samira Ahmed, Shafak accepts,

> I am also drawn to silences-and the silenced. There is a part of me that wants to understand where are the silences in my society and who are the silenced. (Shafak 2024, par. 4)

Though Shafak (2021, 165) feels that this is "neither the right time nor the right place to carry on about plants and animals…" her novel *The Island of Missing Trees* (2021) is nothing but a desperate love letter to nature, which places "nature in all its forms and glory" (Ibid.). People see plants, trees and flowers as background scenery and forget that they also deserve a rightful place in the web of life. Shafak's natural world is sentient, storied and is "based on true accounts" (Ibid, 381), which brings out the ecological sensitivity, environmental loss and emotional distress carried by the characters to reflect upon how the environment is deeply entangled with human life.

Methodology

The research article is an interdisciplinary approach to bring out the coexistence of humans and the natural realm through the theory of three ecologies by Pierre-Félix Guattari ([1989] 2000, 71), a French psychiatrist and philosopher who insists on "a sense of responsibility, not only for its own survival but equally for the future of all life on the planet". His ideology perfectly aligns with Shafak, who believes that

> . . . there was no hierarchy or there should be none between human pain and animal pain, and no precedence of human rights over animal rights, or indeed of human rights over those of plants, for that matter. (Shafak 2021, 359)

Guattari ([1989] 2000, 41) identifies three interconnected domains "under the ethico-aesthetic aegis of an ecosophy: social ecology, mental ecology and environmental ecology," which explore the relationship between nature and humans, examine the structure of human institutions, highlight the consciousness and the trauma of the

characters. According to Guattari, this ecosophical study proposes a more harmonious and sustainable way of living within the labyrinth of the world and provides balance across environmental, social and mental existence. Shafak's *The Island of Missing Trees* will undoubtedly have a profound impact on the reader's mind in this ecocritical context. Her treatment of ecology with due respect and care will make people listen to the natural world and feel its grief and form a compassionate bond with nature and thus resonating with Guattari's theoretical base.

Environmental ecology

The novel is a blend of historical fiction, set against the backdrop of a war-torn Cyprus and cosmopolitan London. It draws attention to war, history, intergenerational trauma, displacement and the plea of the non-human world, which is intensely ecological both in form and content. The literary realm celebrates the significance of trees and nature as a living presence that shapes stories and human emotions. It elaborates on how trees act as a profound embodiment of wisdom and how "we humans encounter in our environment, language, and culture" (O'Neill 2024, 796). Richard Powers emphasises how the shared evolutionary origins between humans and trees remind readers that they are biologically connected. In the work *Overstory*, the narrator says,

> You and the tree in your backyard come from a common ancestor. A billion and a half years ago, the two of you parted ways. But even now, after an immense journey in separate directions, that tree and you still share a quarter of your genes. (Markovits 2018, par. 6)

that deeply reflects the bond between nature and humans. These authors' views resonate with Shafak (2021, 97), who writes in her novel how trees "watched, waited and witnessed".

In *The Island of Missing Trees*, Shafak's storytelling strategy extends beyond the human realm to a non-anthropocentric narrator, the fig tree, which helps reshape people's understanding of ecological consciousness and memory. In the novel, the fig tree takes root in "The Happy Fig" (Ibid, 98), a secret tavern in Nicosia run by Yiorgos and Yusuf, Greek and Turkish Cypriots. The tavern is a neutral zone and a space of unity amid a city torn apart by conflict. The novel centers around a Greek Cypriot, Kostas Kazantzakis, and a Turkish Cypriot, Defne, their teenage daughter Ada and the fig tree. The relationship between Kostas and Defne grows in the tavern where the fig tree

serves as a witness to their forbidden love. The fig tree's narratives unfold in a non-linear manner, moving back and forth between the past and the present, between London and Cyprus, between home and migration, which connects the three ecologies. Angeline Nikita and Dr. Mary Vidya Porselvi rightly observe,

> The structure becomes all the more crucial in its relevance to the contents of the novel as the process of burying the tree can represent the repressing of trauma and memory associated with the conflict, while the process of unburying the tree can represent the act of digging up the past in order to understand the present. (Nikita and Porselvi 2024, 151)

The concept of memory or remembering is central to both Shafak's novel and Guattari's ecosophy, in which he calls for reclaiming repressed desires. As Guattari believes the tree is a living ecosystem, Shafak also describes how the fig tree, once a sapling, has now gradually grown into a powerful listener of the island. It narrates the division of the island and how, "in the eyes of the entire world" (Shafak 2021, 151), it becomes "an international crisis" (Ibid.), expressing its sorrow at the loss of harmony. David Souter finds that,

> The Cyprus problem has been a source of international tension in the eastern Mediterranean for more than thirty years… repeated clashes between the island's Greek and Turkish communities culminating, after the Turkish invasion of 1974. (Souter 1984, 657)

This partition turns the island into a war zone, symbolising the island's unending conflict and colonial legacy. The fig tree expresses its sadness that they have completely forgotten how, in an

> island plagued by years of ethnic violence and brutal atrocities, humans were not the only ones that suffered. So did we trees-and animals, too, experienced hardship and pain as their habitats came to disappear. It never meant anything to anyone. What happened to us. (Shafak 2021, 211-212)

This emphasises that the destruction of nature is also the destruction of culture and memory. Through the fig tree's association with the other forms of nature, Shafak insists that nature is always in harmony, unlike human beings, as the fig tree says,

> It matters to me … as I am able to tell this story, I am going to include in it the creatures in my ecosystem—the birds, the bats, the butterflies, the honeybees, the ants, the mosquitoes, and the mice. (Ibid, 212)

Shafak highlights the interconnectedness of nature and strives hard to blur the line between humans and the environment. Each natural being carries a unique tone in the ecological chorus, yet they bring a collective environmental awareness. The fig tree speaks tenderly of butterflies, which "can fly for an impressive 2500 miles" (Shafak 2021, 289). Though "humans regard butterflies as fragile" (Ibid.) and compare the butterflies with the generational migration experience of the people passing on to their heirs, Shafak decentralises the human perspectives, stating that "what mattered was not the final destination but to be on the move, searching, changing, becoming" (Ibid, 290). Even if it dislikes the mosquitoes, it respects the ecological existence of mosquitoes as "humankind's nemesis". (Ibid, 301) It also talks about ants, which are "resilient and hard-working" (Ibid, 320), and honeybees, which are "tireless foragers" (Ibid, 327), and mice, which safeguard themselves in the basements and claim it as their kingdom. It draws a comparison to the immigrant experience of Cypriot people who serve as quiet witnesses, having migrated to other continents due to war and its devastating impacts on the island.

Social ecology

According to Guattari, ecological deterioration disintegrates the social bonds and shared identities. The novel opens with the fig tree as a reflective voice, not only as a witness but also as a bearer of intergenerational memory. The fig tree mentions how it was displaced from the home island of Cyprus and the painful memory it carries. It says,

> It has been many years since I fled that place on board a plane, inside a suitcase… adopted another land, England, where I have grown and thrived, but not a single day passes that I do not yearn to be back. Home. Motherland. (Shafak 2021, 7)

The novel disseminates the themes of how migration, displacement and generational trauma impact the lives of people who leave their motherland and exile themselves to countries far away to survive and mask their memories deeper inside their minds. In Cyprus, love between a Greek and a Turkish Cypriot is not only frowned upon but also forbidden. Though Kostas and Defne's love defies the boundaries drawn by politics, ethnicity and tradition, when their relationship is discovered, the world outside is unkind. Panagiota, Kostas's mother, strongly disapproves of the relationship between them, as she upholds

the social and ethnic divisions and does not empathise with Kostas's feelings or question the injustice of the divided society. She forces him to leave the island where hundreds and thousands of people die every day, as she has already lost her husband and two sons.

Under the crushing weight of inherited prejudice and radical ideologies, the social ecology disintegrates. After Kostas leaves for London, Defne discovers that she is pregnant, but chooses not to reach out to Kostas; instead, she handles it on her own with the help of Dr. Norman. However, she decides to give the baby to the English couple for adoption. But unfortunately, the child dies of "acute respiratory distress caused by the insect-borne parasite" (Shafak 2021, 304), which forces her to get into the habit of smoking and drinking. When Kostas returns to the island after "twenty-five years" (Ibid, 219), as a botanist immersed in the world of plants and trees, he meets Defne, who has become a successful archaeologist. They both identify that the love once forbidden still lingers inside them. They begin to speak again, to trust again, to remember again how they have come all this way over the years, carrying the weight of their past. Choosing each other again is not an easy decision, but when they revisit "The Happy Fig" (Ibid, 98), a symbolic site of their youthful love and find that it still survives despite all the odds and scars, their love for each other is rekindled. They decide to start their life together in London.

Kostas carefully wraps the fig sapling in his suitcase to carry it to London. It becomes the symbol of his longing to preserve the past. The fig tree says, "I liked my new home in London. I worked hard to fit in, to belong" (Shafak 2021, 65). They plant the fig tree in the garden; it grows with the unborn baby of Kostas and Defne, carrying both memory and hope. One can understand why Ada, their daughter, gets the intergenerational trauma when the fig tree says, "They thought they were bringing only me into England, unaware that they were also bringing their unborn child" (Ibid, 40). They are overwhelmed, but at the same time, Defne feels frightened and experiences recurrent dreams of getting lost in the forest, and fears, "What if it turns out I'm a terrible mother? What if I fail?" (Ibid. 334) She becomes quite happy when she realises Ada and the fig tree are "healthy and growing" (Ibid., 335), but that does not last long, as she says, "...pain becomes part of your flesh. It stays with you and marks you permanently" (Ibid, 351-52) which clearly shows that she is not able to heal herself from the social exclusion from her native island.

The novel reveals how silence and secrecy act as undermining forces of social ecology. Kostas and Defne decide not to share their past trauma with their daughter, as Defne says,

> I don't want Ada to be burdened by the things that hurt us. I want you to promise me, Kostas. You won't tell her much about our past. (Shafak 2021, 351)

When Kostas goes on a research trip to Australia with a team of scientists, Defne dies in London, and her "time in London primarily portrays her continual remembrance of her homeland through a lens of gloom and sadness" (Zehra and Mohsin 2023, 399). Thus, Shafak exposes how environmental degradation and social systems result in the exclusion and repression of the characters.

Mental ecology

According to Guattari, mental ecology addresses the subjective experiences of an individual's psychological well-being and existential experience. It explores anxiety, alienation and identity crises in the face of modernity as a fragmenting force of an individual. The death of Defne makes Kostas seclude himself not only from society but also from his daughter and he turns to trees, which offer him "solace" (Shafak 2021, 358). Ada and Kostas become distant after the death of Defne, as Kostas always gets lost in the "cloud of lethargy" (Ibid, 360). He avoids speaking about his past or her mother's life in Cyprus.

Through the character Ada Kazantzakis, Shafak maps out the resilient reinvention of empathy and reconnection. Ada struggles with her broken identity and digs into her family's past through Meryem, Defne's sister and the fig tree. Ada's family secrets are the primary reason for her psychological collapse, which erupts in the present timeline of the novel. She questions, "What I don't understand is why my own parents never talked about the past even after they moved to England. Why the silence?" (Ibid, 347) Shafak portrays Ada as a victim of intergenerational trauma and shows how she screams in the class uncontrollably, "So unpredicted and forceful and impossibly high-pitched was her voice that other students fell quite" (Ibid, 33). After this incident, some of her classmates posted record snippets of her scream and tagged her in a hashtag stating "#doyouhearmenow" (Ibid, 138), tormenting her emotional breakdown by publicising it on social media.

As Ada was born in London, she has no access to the cultural roots of her parents' family. Her unprocessed mourning for her mother, confusion, isolation and inherited trauma result in ruptured mental ecology. She

> experiences the tension between past and present, between motherland and the new land because she appears to be in constant search of a missing part of herself. (Sabbah and Ayuningtyas 2022, 65)

Meanwhile, the emotional breakdown at school is a symbolic event representing the grief that she has been carrying. Shafak believes,

> You carry a place in your soul, even through the stories you were not told. You can sense the void. The past matters because it shapes us, whether we know it or not. (Cooke 2021, par. 5)

Through Meryem, Ada learns why her parents never told her about Meryem or the history of Cyprus. Meryem acts as a bridge between generations and geographies, bringing back the familial warmth, the unspoken truth of her mother's death and the cultural significance of the family. Meryem says,

> Kostas was the love of her life. Your mother adored your father. They both paid a heavy price, though. You grew up without seeing your relatives. (Shafak 2021, 156)

through which Ada finally begins to realise the burden of Kostas and Defne and the reason behind their silences. With Meryem's support, she becomes more confident in facing the bullying in the school. As Meryem says,

> But girls your age should not be worrying about such things. Sorrow is to the soul What a worm is to wood . . . Look everyone has done something silly in their youth that they thought was beyond repair. Maybe you feel lonely right now. You think your classmates laughed at you and maybe they did, but that's human nature . . . But my point is, you'll come out stronger. One day you'll look back and say, why was I even worried about that? (Ibid, 196)

Guattari emphasises that mental ecology thrives on sustained connections across generational memory and rootedness in the place where one belongs, fostering psychological balance. The fig tree itself plays a significant role in restoring the interconnectedness between the natural world and the human mind and thus provides the mental stability in the characters. Though it acts as a silent companion in the initial stage, witnessing her grief and remaining disconnected, much

like her parents' history, when time progresses, it provides healing to Ada and Kostas. Gardening becomes his meditative act, a nonverbal way of reconnecting with memory and emotion. Ada understands the affinity of her father with the fig tree as Ada says, "No matter the time of the day, her father seemed to prefer the company of trees to the company of humans" (Ibid, 17). Kostas listens, nurtures and learns from the fig tree. It is evident that he loves the "arboreal world, but he neither differentiates between human suffering and arboreal suffering nor gives priority to one kind of suffering over the other" (Raval 2024, 165). When Ada asks him, "you bury a tree, does it feel pain?" (Shafak 2021, 50), Kostas replies,

> We're only just beginning to discover the language of trees. But we can tell with certainty that they can hear, smell, communicate - and they can definitely remember. They can sense water, light, danger. They can send signals to other plants and help each other. They're much more alive than most people realize (Ibid.)

which shows the in-depth bond between him and nature. It acts as a surrogate mother to Ada and a soulful companion to Kostas when their inner selves encounter existential crisis due to their emotional bereavement. Kostas reconnects with her daughter, saying,

> Your mother loved you very much, more than anything in this world. Her death has nothing to do with the absence of love. She was blooming and thriving with your love, and I'd like to believe with mine, too, but underneath, something was strangling her-the past, the memories, the roots. (Ibid, 368)

At the end of the novel, he promises to take her to Cyprus. Ada's statement, "I'll come to the island… 'I just want to meet islanders, like myself,'" (Ibid, 374) is a kind of return to nature to heal, to coexist and proves how,

> In the most surprising ways, the victims continued to live, because that is what nature did to death, it transformed abrupt endings into a thousand new beginnings. (Ibid, 359)

Conclusion

Every tree is a living testament of time, but people pass it like passersby. The text chosen for the study, *The Island of Missing Trees*, illustrates how silenced ecocritical voices and the destiny of humankind are intertwined. As the novel foregrounds the principle of ecosophy, Shafak employs the fig tree's narrative to explore the complex lives of human characters and the lost knowledge of

ecological awareness. The modern world, which is filled with digital noise, urban alienation and socio-political conflicts, estranges people from the environment. As people drift further from the rhythms of nature, they are losing not only the balance but also a vital part of humanity. Shafak's novel teaches how rekindling and rediscovering the relationship with nature leads to harmony and inhabiting the world with compassion. In chasing the future, people often forget the roots from which they were once grounded. An analysis of this novel through Guattari's triadic model comprising environmental, social and mental ecologies reveals that Shafak's narrative transcends the themes of life and death and emerges as a vision of a moral, ethical, relational and interconnected mode of existence.

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Fragmentation as freedom: A psychogeographical study of Anjum Hasan's *Neti, Neti: Not This, Not This*

Deepa V and Ramya Niranjani S*

Abstract: Literature is a boon for the ever-evolving society and Indian writing in English often explores themes of identity, belonging, cultural conflict and emotional dislocation, which helps readers process their emotional catharsis and provides self-reflection. Anjum Hasan's*Neti, Neti: Not This, Not This* (2016) portrays the "middle-class youth of the brave new India" (2009 Outlook News Desk), and examines the intersection of space, memory and identity in the quest for meaning. Set against the backdrop of two contrasting cities—Shillong, which symbolises cultural exclusion and family pressure and Bangalore, which embodies consumerism, emotional detachment, and urban loneliness—the novel chronicles the life of Sophie Das, a young Bengali woman from Shillong who struggles with feelings of alienation and disconnection. Her journey from escaping a confining hometown to negotiating the overwhelming chaos of a metropolis is a transformative one, reflecting her evolving sense of dissatisfaction with her surroundings, relationships and self. This article applies Guy Debord's theory of psychogeography to analyse how Sophie's physical and emotional movements illustrate the dériveor urban drift. As Sophie moves through different environments, this study explores how space impacts her psyche, behaviour and self-perception. Sophie returns to Shillong hoping to find peace, but instead encounters further disintegration. This article is an attempt to study how, at the end of the novel, Sophie accepts a fragmented identity shaped by loss and survival, and returns to Bangalore, which highlights how *Neti, Neti: Not This, Not This* is an influential tool, emphasising the importance of living in the present and moving forward. Hasan does not provide a solution, as she believes that fragmentation may be a sign of liberation, a rejection of rigid notions of belonging, home and self.

Keywords: alienation, cosmopolitanism, displacement, identity, psychogeography

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AGATHOS, Volume 17, Issue 2 (33-34): 577-587, DOI 10.5281/zenodo.23408582
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Introduction

Anjum Hasan is an Indian writer whose works, encompassing novels, short stories, and poetry, explore the lives of ordinary people, urban spaces, questions of identity, and the evolving roles of women in contemporary India. Born in Shillong, Meghalaya, in 1972, she completed her studies in philosophy at North-Eastern Hill University. Despite migrating to Bangalore in her twenties, "the influence of Shillong is all pervasive in her writing. Evidently, Shillong is her Muse which inspires her imagination" (Divya 2014, 22). Her narratives often center on introspective, displaced characters who navigate between tradition and modernity. Hasan frequently portrays the socio-political realities of Northeast India through personal narratives, making her a significant voice in contemporary Indian literature. Her fiction often features women who are independent and determined to shape their lives, especially in rapidly changing urban spaces. While many critics approach her work through a feminist lens, Hasan offers a more nuanced perspective. In an interview with Sumana Roy, Anjum Hasan remarks:

> I do write about female characters but never without a certain wariness... I'm also aware that we're living through a revolution where women are concerned — at no time before this have so many women been out of the home, working, visible, audible, self-contained... Yet the fact that one can write about a woman being liberated in this way is possibly revolutionary in the Indian context. (Hasan 2015, par. 24)

The novel's title, *Neti, Neti*, is derived from a Sanskrit phrase meaning 'not this, not this', a Vedantic method of negation used in the search for ultimate truth. This concept firmly believes that every man in this world has a search for the meaning and purpose of life. One is constantly on the move to find something that can make oneself content. Hasan uses this concept as a metaphor to show her protagonist's restless search for identity, belonging and purpose. The article highlights the protagonist's journey between the two locations, Shillong and Bangalore and examines how she navigates her dissatisfaction, liminality, and rootlessness.

Guy Debord's psychogeography theory

In his influential book *The Society of the Spectacle* (1967), Guy Debord – the French revolutionary, filmmaker and theorist who strongly criticised modern society and founded the Situationist

International (SI) - explains how media and visual culture dominate people's everyday lives, reducing authentic human experience and leading to emotional alienation.

This article applies Debord's psychogeography theory, which he defines as "the study of the precise laws and specific effects of the geographical environment, whether consciously organised or not, on the emotions and behaviour of individuals" (Debord 1955, quoted in Bauder and Mauro 2008, 23). It also combines psychology and geography to examine how urban spaces influence human emotions, thoughts and behaviours.

A central technique within psychogeography is the *dérive*, a French term meaning 'drift', which Debord (1958) describes as a "technique of rapid passage through varied ambiences" that involves "playful-constructive behavior". The *dérive* encourages "an unplanned urban journey guided by environmental cues" (Fiveable 2024) and enables individuals to wander without fixed routes, allowing the city to shape their state of mind. The *dérive* is not simply aimless wandering; it is a method of understanding and experiencing the city in a new way, helping the individual to break free from the constraints of everyday life and discover new perspectives and meanings within the urban environment. As Anjum Hasan's *Neti, Neti* closely engages with urban spaces such as Shillong and Bangalore and their effect on the protagonist Sophie's life, the theory of psychogeography is a powerful tool to analyse the impact of spatial mobility. Debord's theory helps reveal how cityscapes influence the inner lives of individuals.

Shillong: The alien homeland

Hasan's *Neti, Neti: Not This, Not This* is an earnest attempt to make humanity understand that one should live in the present with contentment. Sometimes people do not aspire to a grand life, but they cannot endure the one imposed on them. People often try to go somewhere, to become someone else. Through this novel, Hasan brings out the nature of many individuals who are unsure of what they want, constantly saying 'not this' to whatever life offers.

The novel's central character, Sophie Das, is a twenty-five-year-old Bengali woman residing with her family in the hill town of Shillong. Her father, Mr. Das, a Bengali from West Bengal, is a strict and idealistic English teacher with unfulfilled dreams, and her mother, Mrs. Das, a Hindi-speaking North Indian, is a successful history teacher who remains emotionally distant. Although both parents are

educated, they constantly "spend much of their time blaming others, apportioning responsibility amongst themselves and the rest of the world" (Hasan 2016, 54), which leads Sophie to refer to them as a "hide-and-seek family" (Ibid, 55). Her younger sister, Mukulika, frequently hurts herself and shows disturbing behaviour because she feels unloved and emotionally neglected. Sophie and Mukulika are profoundly affected by the broken ancestral ties in their family. Sophie reflects:

> They never went away to visit an extended family, like the rest of their settler or *dkhar* classmates. Their father's parents were dead and he considered his other relatives a waste of time. Their mother's relatives had cut her off for marrying their father. (Hasan 2016, 196)

This absence of extended family roots intensifies Sophie's sense of cultural isolation. Although Sophie grows up in Shillong, her Bengali identity makes her feel alienated within a tribal majority region. Shillong itself, once a "tiny tribal settlement" later transformed by the British into a colonial administrative town with "schools, churches, the lake, the polo grounds" (Hasan 2016, 57), gradually becomes home to "Bengalis bearing the message of Brahmo Samaj and Vivekananda," alongside traders, doctors, and civil servants (Ibid, 58). However, Sophie is born into a time when the city begins to "throw off this crazy past and become the pure thing it had possibly never been" (Ibidem), as if trying to erase its mixed heritage and reclaim a more narrowly defined identity. As a result of this transformation, Sophie becomes increasingly estranged from her environment.

Sophie's growing unhappiness with her life deepens after an emotional disappointment with Ribor, a Khasi music shop owner. She loves Ribor, who remains distant, which makes her feel alienated in Shillong. Sophie is forced to face the agonising realisation that she has been clinging to a fantasy rather than love when she witnesses him with another woman. She feels humiliated, abandoned, and completely out of place in that moment, not only in Ribor's store but across the entire town. When she tells him she is leaving Shillong, Ribor asks, "Why? Have you got a job or something?" She simply replies, "I need to find out what lies on the other side of the mountains as they always say in fairy tales" (Hasan 2016, 57), which reflects her inner state of mind.

Sophie's urgency to leave intensifies when she encounters the local madwoman known as Killer Queen, who walks confidently down the

street, dressed in "musty black velvet and dark glasses" and wearing a "cobwebby-looking hairnet" (Hasan 2016, 13), suddenly shouts at Sophie, "What are you staring at? Haven't you seen a good-looking woman before?" (Ibidem). This encounter leaves Sophie deeply shaken, as it makes her aware of her inner fear and she questions, What if she never escapes this life? What if she grows old in the same town, walks the same streets, and becomes a madwoman like Killer Queen? Fear takes "root in Sophie that would banish her to Bangalore" (Ibidem). In that moment, she confronts the frightening realisation that her life may never change and she might remain trapped in the same place without a future. This fear ultimately drives her to leave Shillong and move to Bangalore, where she wants to be "out of reach, never to be found again … escape" (Ibidem). She feels unsettled by Shillong's changing landscape and the emotional dissonance it evokes. Shillong no longer gives her a sense of belonging; instead, it repels her, making her feel rootless and invisible. Leaving Shillong is not simply a matter of personal choice; it becomes a necessary response to a place that no longer feels like home.

Bangalore: Freedom and disillusionment

In Bangalore, Sophie's lifestyle begins to transform and she struggles to meet the expectations of urban life. She enters a life of urban modernity, characterised by emotional detachment and consumerist distractions. She has a relationship with Swami, a man obsessed with property, loans and financial success, who believes "Land is gold" (Hasan 2016, 65). However, Sophie finds his materialism empty and emotionally exhausting. She confesses, "Words like love have lost meaning for me" (Ibid, 68). Although she finds moments of fun with her friends, including Ringo Saar, Anu, Shiva, and Mia, she still feels a deep sense of loneliness inside. Their lifestyle reflects Westernised Bangalore, where alcohol and drugs are a regular part of life. Hasan portrays this metropolitan atmosphere as

> people drinking their beer, passing around joints, guffawing not with the intention of breeding envy in the hearts of the Residents Welfare Association office-bearers but simply because life looked at from the perspective of a chilled Kingfisher on a Saturday night was funny". (Hasan 2016, 17)

Despite the freedom the city offers, which she once longed for, Sophie still feels restless. When her mother wishes to send her sister Muku to live with her, hoping it might change Muku's rebellious behaviour,

Sophie panics at the thought that "if her sister moved here, Sophie's secret would be out: the fact that she does not work in a publishing house, like she had told her family, but a BPO company" (Hasan 2016, 28). She feels trapped once more between her disenchantment with life and her family's demands.

From a psychogeographical perspective, Sophie's experiences in Bangalore demonstrate how the city shapes her emotions and perception of identity. Her small flat becomes claustrophobic and Chinnappa, her conservative neighbour, along with others, constantly judges her for being a single and independent woman. She cannot experience a sense of belonging, even inside her home, as Mr. Bhatt, her landlord, frequently monitors her actions and passes moral judgments. Even her act of drying her underwear on the balcony brings shame and scrutiny. When she reads about Bangalore's wealthy partygoers, she feels excluded from that urban hierarchy. As Hasan writes:

> She shook out the newspaper angrily and scrutinized the partygoers featured in it… the city's rich were too many and too anonymous and this way of appearing in the papers was for them a means of confirming their existence. (Hasan 2016, 23–24)

Through these daily experiences, the novel illustrates how urban space generates alienation, surveillance, and emotional loss for Sophie. Debord and Coverley argue that "psychogeography affects how an individual's emotions and behaviours within specific environments are caused and influenced directly by their environments" (quoted in Khaidzir, Hashim and Yusof 2022, 245). In a similar way, when Sophie attends Anil's rooftop birthday party at an elite apartment, known as "Bangalore's most exclusive piece of heaven" (Hasan 2016, 121), her psychological state begins to shape. She finds the excess of wealth oppressive. Anil showcases his affluence to her in every way by boasting about his BMW, hiring a top DJ for the party and wearing a heavy cologne scent, which makes her uncomfortable. The apartment building itself becomes a symbol of inequality and privilege, as

> Every resident owns six, yes, six parking lots, and enjoys spending a few minutes every evening wondering which of the four swimming pools to use. (Hasan 2016, 120)

The space around her feels more like a showroom than a home. The "gilt-framed mirrors on the walls and mahogany tables holding fresh,

tall-stalked gerberas, and notepads with golden pens" (Hasan 2016, 121) make her feel less. She compares the living room, "which was so large that it got positively blurry at its far reaches, was like a posh version of the minotaur's labyrinth" (Ibid, 122). This comparison reflects the extravagant lifestyle that dominates her everyday life and completely alienates her. She starts to "experience that familiar lurch of nausea mixed with awe that wealth in all its forms evoked in her" (Ibid, 121), making her realise that the whole world is made only for the rich and leaving no space for people like her. Then Sophie notices Anil's mother, who sits on a sofa as if

> trapped in the heart of the labyrinth on whose neck and ears Sophie could, even from that distance, see egg-sized pearls softly glowing. The surprising thing is not the size of the pearls but the way the woman sat, staring into space with her hands clasped in front of her. (Hasan 2016, 122)

This image reveals how such lavish surroundings completely freeze emotions. Mina Najafi and MustafaKamal Bin Mohd Shariff (2011, 1054) state that "a place is a strong affective bond between a person and a particular setting" however, this bond is absent in Sophie's experience. From a psychogeographical perspective, Sophie's experience reveals that even the most luxurious spaces can feel alienating and out of place.

Even in a modern and diverse city like Bangalore, Sophie still cannot escape the stereotypes tied to her origins, which intensifies her search for identity. When Shiva remarks to Sophie, "I hear you're from the Northeast. What a tragic place" he silences her, reminding her how others often stereotype her region as an "amorphous, eternally misty region whose people apparently spent their lives either fighting each other or resisting the bullying arm of the Indian state" (Hasan 2016, 124). These encounters show that, even far from home, the burden of prejudice and the trauma of displacement continue to fracture her sense of self.

Trauma and disconnection in the urban everyday

Sophie's emotional struggles become worse after a traumatic incident at the mall, where a child dressed as Superman falls to his death. She is horrified as "she saw a child sprawled face down on the Mercedes Benz" (Hasan 2016, 72). Despite the tragedy, what disturbs her even more is the way people around her continue to shop and act as if nothing had happened. This moment leaves Sophie emotionally

shattered as she realises that "now when pleasures were graded for her and lay stretched out in every direction like some version of paradise, all she got was suffocation, death, people screaming" (Ibid, 74).

The darkest moment comes when Ringo murders his girlfriend Rukshana in a fit of jealousy and dumps her body near Ulsoor Lake. In the apartment, Sophie's friends Swami, Mama Mia, Anil, Shiva and Anu struggle to process the news, repeatedly ask in disbelief, "He had a knife in the car? He stabbed her till she died? He dumped her by a lake?" (Hasan 2016, 136), which horrifies Sophie. She sees herself as "the chosen recorder of other people's suffering" (Ibid, 129). She recalls how she pressured Ringo to spare Mr. Bhatt from public humiliation and feels partly responsible for upsetting Ringo's fragile peace of mind. Overwhelmed by violence, alienation, and moral chaos, she returns to Shillong in search of peace.

The return and the *derive*

Sophie's journey from Bangalore to Shillong reflects the *dérive* since she travels through several settings, each of which has a significant, unforeseen impact on her feelings, memories, and sense of self. As her plane lifts above Bangalore, she notices "houses packed together in a way that suggested only unpleasant things—haphazard construction, claustrophobia, over-population" (Hasan 2016, 181). She remembers all the people she left behind: Ringo, Rukshana, Swami, Mrs. Bhatt, Anand and Anandi, Shiva, until she feels a sense of disconnection. Then, when she wakes up mid-flight, the landscape has changed to "clean white sunlit snow that unfurled in every direction, extending till the horizon" (Ibid, 182), and she feels calm, almost heavenly.

This sudden emotional shift continues when she meets Uncle Rock, who also shares how Bangalore has made him feel alienated, saying, "I didn't get the right vibe" and that people there "can't handle us—our strange names, our strange languages, our strange accents" (Hasan 2016, 183). At Calcutta airport, Sophie sees Northeast Indian faces and feels a sense of return, unlike in the polished, impersonal Bangalore airport, where people sound like "a play on the brain-dead middle class" (Ibid, 185). Finally, on the road to Shillong, it feels peaceful and nostalgic and she recalls Emma Bovary's thought that "certain places on earth must bring forth happiness, as a plant peculiar to the soil" (Ibid, 186). Sophie's changing emotions through these varied environments, such as airports, skies, cities, and hills, beautifully

reflect the *dérive*, as the places she moves through actively shape her inner state.

Back in Shillong, Sophie finds her family in a state of disintegration. Her father plans to move to Shantiniketan, and her mother plans to move to Benares while Muku grows emotionally distant. Although Sophie longs to preserve her bond with Muku, it now exists only in memory. During another encounter with the Killer Queen, she asks, "When will it all end?" and the Queen replies, "It will end on the last page" (Hasan 2016, 202), symbolising unresolved struggles of life. Muku's teenage pregnancy further destabilises the family. After the abortion, she turns inward and stares "at the ceiling" (Ibid, 250) and distances herself from others. When she gradually recovers, Sophie asks Muku to accompany her to Bangalore and they both decide to begin again.

Fragmentation and survival in a postmodern landscape

In cities, cultures, roles, and desires, Sophie always finds herself in the no-man's land, which embodies the theme of *Neti, Neti*. Ultimately, she chooses to return to Bangalore, a decision that symbolises her acceptance of her unstable existence. Her choice to live in a multicultural metropolis reflects her understanding that movement, displacement and constant self-reflection shape identity. As Anjali Vaidya (2017) notes, "Sophie is an outsider wherever she is, be it Bangalore or Shillong, always a bit dissatisfied with the options at hand". Still, this dissatisfaction does not hold her back; instead, it allows Sophie to explore, drift or start again.

The novel ends with Swami's statement to Sophie, "The only problem we'll have in life from now on is the problem of where to find parking space" (Hasan 2016, 287), a line that reminds everyone it is enough to focus on what 'this' particular moment needs. In the same way, Sophie's life in *Neti, Neti*, full of departures and returns, silences and longings, makes clear that even when no place truly feels like home, survival lies in the willingness to keep moving.

Conclusion

This article demonstrates how *Neti, Neti: Not This, Not This* serves as a literary cartography of fragmented identity and emotional survival in post-liberalised India. By applying psychogeographical theory to Sophie's spatial journey, it becomes evident that movement across different spaces and emotional displacement are deeply intersected in

the construction of fragmented selves. Her transitions through shifting environments reflect the instability of identity in a world where certainty is elusive. She does not escape her dislocation; instead, she learns to live with it. Sophie's journey offers a powerful insight: even when one's direction is uncertain and the sense of self feels scattered, it is still possible to move forward. Her experience reveals that healing does not arrive through sudden, dramatic change but unfolds gradually through continuous acts of endurance, adaptation and resilience. And sometimes, that is enough. By portraying dislocation as a catalyst for inner strength, Hasan's narrative redefines notions of belonging and freedom, presenting fragmentation not as an end but as a potential path to liberation that challenges fixed ideas of home and self.

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SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH

Product of broken home: A story of survival and success

Van Ryan I. Alipoyo, Jemwil Delos Santos, Clarence S. Collado, Harold S. Asenjo, Kian S. Letegio and Nancy E. Aranjuez*

Abstract: This research studied the lived experiences of individuals raised in broken households, revealing both the problems they experienced and the avenues of resilience they sought. Using a narratological-phenomenological approach, this participant was purposively selected to share their tales, which were examined thematically following Braun and Clarke's paradigm. Four major themes and twelve subthemes emerged that highlight how family disturbance causes emotional suffering, financial pressure, and social exclusion, but also how resilience is built via coping techniques, support systems, and ambitions for education and activism. The findings stress the significance of enhancing school-based counseling, family and community support networks, and culturally grounded interventions to empower children from broken homes.

Keywords: broken home, resilience, coping strategies, youth development, phenomenology

Introduction

The family is widely recognized as the basic basis for socialization and emotional development. However, family breakdowns, particularly those induced by parental separation or divorce, exhibit severe impacts on children's psychological, social, and intellectual well-being. Recent research reveals that disordered family structures are substantially associated with emotional instability, behavioral issues, and lower educational achievement (Pryor 2021; Arora & Kaur 2022; Stadelmann et al. 2023). Children from broken households typically carry the burden of stigma and internal struggle, which impact their identity development and social connections (Garriga et al. 2020; Poole et al. 2022).

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AGATHOS, Volume 17, Issue 2 (33-34): 591-602, DOI 10.5281/zenodo.23609928© www.agathos-international-review.com CC BY NC 2026

Despite these hurdles, an expanding corpus of literature stresses the resilience and flexibility of children and teens who suffer family dissolution. Studies suggest that some acquire coping methods based on peer support, school involvement, and goal-oriented behaviors, helping them to overcome adversity and achieve success (Murray & Farrington 2020; Kim 2021; Zainudin et al. 2022). This resiliency illustrates that while family disturbance involves dangers, it does not automatically predetermine bad results. Instead, the combination of human resolve and external resources can generate favorable trajectories.

In the Philippine setting, family fragmentation due to separation, migration, or economic difficulty is a major societal problem. Reports show rising numbers of children are exposed to divided family structures, although research generally focuses on the negative effects, such as delinquency, school dropouts, or substance addiction (De Castro & Alampay 2020; Gonzales & Reyes 2023). Far less attention has been dedicated to the narratives of survival and success stories that show how young people convert misery into inspiration. This divide is most prominent in rural and provincial regions, where community resources are limited, but where resilience may take culturally distinctive forms.

This study tries to bridge these gaps by investigating the lived experiences of kids from broken homes who have successfully navigated personal and societal barriers. Guided by a narratological-qualitative perspective, it captures their problems, coping mechanisms, and goals, while setting their experiences within wider issues of resilience and youth development. By foregrounding survivor narratives, this research contributes to a more nuanced view of family disturbance, highlighting that success is achievable even within brokenness when supporting networks of personal agency converge.

Methodology

This study adopted a narratological-phenomenological approach to analyze the lived experiences of a child raised in broken households. Phenomenology was picked because it stresses participants' subjective realities and meaning-making processes, making it extremely suited for sensitive circumstances such as family dissolution (Alipoyo 2022; Bacroya and Aranjuez 2025; Neubauer et al. 2019; Alase 2021; Braun & Clarke 2021). The participant was purposively selected based on their firsthand experiences with parental separation and their

willingness to contribute tales of survival and success, assuring depth and complexity of the testimonies (Palinkas et al. 2019; Etikan & Bala 2019).

Data were obtained through in-depth, semi-structured interviews performed in the participants' choice language to enhance comfort and authenticity. All sessions were audio-recorded with consent, transcribed verbatim, and confirmed by participant verification to preserve accuracy. Following the idea of horizontalization, each response was given with equal weight before grouping into key statements and themes (Braun & Clarke 2021; Nowell et al. 2022). Ethical protections were scrupulously observed: informed permission was gained, pseudonyms were utilized, and confidentiality was assured. Trauma-sensitive interviewing approaches were utilized, participants kept the right to withdraw at any time, and referrals for therapy were made accessible when needed (Orb et al. 2020; Anderson et al. 2022).

Data interpretation followed Braun and Clarke's (2021) reflexive thematic analysis methodology, which incorporates repeated familiarization, coding, theme development, and synthesis. To increase trustworthiness, member checking and peer debriefing were applied, while extensive descriptions assured credibility, reliability, and transferability of the findings (Nowell et al. 2022). This thorough and ethically based approach allowed the study to accurately portray participants' views, showing both the obstacles and the resilience of kids from broken homes.

Results and discussion

Theme I: Background and upbringing

1. Family dynamics and early influences

Participants reported their early family experiences as defined by instability, conflict, and absence. One shared, "I grew up seeing fights almost every day; it felt normal until I realized it wasn't." (P1). These experiences created a foundation of insecurity that influenced their identity formation and emotional development. Research confirms that children exposed to family conflict and separation often face long-term risks of anxiety, depression, and diminished trust in others (Pryor 2021; Arora & Kaur 2022; Kim 2021; Hughes et al. 2023; Wilson et al. 2021). Such early instability left participants feeling vulnerable, but it also became the context where resilience later emerged.

Others explained that early family disruptions shaped their motivation to succeed. One participant said, "I wanted to study hard so I wouldn't end up like my parents" (P4). Literature supports this narrative, noting that some children of broken homes transform adverse circumstances into motivation for self-improvement (Nguyen & Patel 2023; González et al. 2022; Botero-García et al. 2023; Allen & Hensley 2023; Stadelmann et al. 2023). Early exposure to hardship, while painful, sometimes fostered determination and adaptability, reinforcing that adversity can become a foundation for resilience.

2. Socioeconomic background and early struggles

Financial difficulty was a distinguishing factor of many participants' childhoods. Several recounted taking up part-time jobs or forsaking school activities to fund home necessities. One recalled, "I had to work while studying since there was no one else to help." (P6). Research indicates that children from broken households are disproportionately subjected to economic hardship, which frequently restricts educational prospects and intensifies psychological suffering (Sardinha et al. 2022; González et al. 2022; Lindert et al. 2023; Johnson et al. 2021; Campbell et al. 2022). For participants, the lack of financial means was not just a real issue but also a cause of embarrassment compared to peers.

At the same time, participants noted that these financial problems promoted resourcefulness and tenacity. "Even if I had little, I learned to be independent early" (P2). Studies suggest that financial misfortune may nurture practical coping skills and resilience when linked with determination and support networks (Sari et al. 2021; Poirson et al. 2023; Botero-García et al. 2023; Kim 2021; Hughes et al. 2023). This dual impact, both burden and training ground, illustrates how socioeconomic factors both restrict and influence the development of resilience in adolescents from broken households.

3. Cultural influences

Participants noted the weight of cultural shame associated with family separation in provincial locations. "People in the community always whispered about us, saying I would grow up useless because my parents had separated." (P3). This pressure reflects research showing that collectivist cultural norms often intensify stigma for children of broken homes, framing them as deviants from expected social norms (Jarabe & Rahayuwati 2024; Wamoyi et al. 2022; Adjei et al. 2020; Miller et al. 2021; Wilson et al. 2021). For these youth, the cultural

environment added layers of judgment that compounded their emotional struggles.

Despite stigma, cultural and regional contexts also offered unique forms of resilience. Faith-based groups, barangay initiatives, and kinship systems provided support not always available through formal institutions. One participant explained, “My church group became my family; they accepted me without judgment” (P5). Studies confirm that in low-resource or rural contexts, community and faith institutions often serve as protective factors that foster belonging and healing (Nguyen & Patel 2023; Botero-García et al. 2023; Johnson et al. 2021; Campbell et al. 2022; Hughes et al. 2023). Thus, cultural influences acted both as barriers through stigma and as strengths through community-based supports.

Theme II: Memories and experiences of the childhood home environment

1. Unconventional fami1y roles

Participants recounted adopting adult duties at an early age. One said, “I became the one taking care of my younger brothers even when I was still a child myself.” (P2). This tendency, known as parentification, is widely established as a typical experience among children in disturbed homes, sometimes leading to role pressure and early maturity (Nguyen & Patel 2023; Allen & Hensley 2023; González et al. 2022; Hughes et al. 2023; Stadelmann et al. 2023). While demanding, it also taught responsibility and leadership abilities that participants retained into adulthood.

Others noted that taking on atypical responsibilities was both empowering and taxing. “I learned how to cook, budget, and manage the house when I was just 12” (P4). Literature suggests that while these experiences might hasten independence, they also risk depriving children of normative developmental chances (Pryor 2021; Poole et al. 2022; Botero-García et al. 2023; Kim 2021; Wilson et al. 2021). The narratives highlight how unusual family roles developed resilience, but they came at a personal cost of missing childhood experiences.

2. The role of extended family and community

For several participants, extended family members filled the parental void. “My grandmother became my mother figure; she gave me the strength to go on.” (P3). Studies confirm that kinship networks are critical sources of emotional and practical support in contexts of family disruption (Johnson et al. 2021; Adjei et al. 2020; Botero-García et al. 2023; Campbell et al. 2022; Lindert et al. 2023). These connections

provided stability that buffered the negative effects of broken homes, particularly in provincial communities where formal services are limited.

Community networks also played a pivotal role. Some participants mentioned that mentors, teachers, and religious leaders offered guidance and affirmation. “My teacher became my second parent; she never gave up on me” (P1). Global evidence supports this, showing that supportive community figures act as protective factors that promote resilience and positive identity development (Nguyen & Patel 2023; Poirson et al. 2023; Hughes et al. 2023; Wamoyi et al. 2022; Miller et al. 2021). These findings underscore that resilience among youth from broken homes is often co-constructed within community support systems.

3. Emotional landscape of home

Participants described their childhood homes as emotionally unstable. “The house was full with people, yet it never felt like home.” (P5). The absence of harmony and prevalence of conflict generated circumstances where children felt afraid. Research indicates that such emotional climates contribute to chronic stress, insecurity, and emotional dysregulation (Miller et al. 2021; Poirson et al. 2023; González et al. 2022; Nguyen & Patel 2023; Pryor 2021). These narratives stress how the quality of the emotional environment, rather than physical construction, shapes children’s feeling of home.

Some individuals also recalled families defined by silence and emotional mistreatment. “We never talked about problems; everyone just kept quiet” (P6). This mirrors results that emotional unavailability and lack of communication in disturbed families perpetuate isolation and impede children’s emotional development (Stadelmann et al. 2023; Johnson et al. 2021; Wilson et al. 2021; Hughes et al. 2023; Botero-García et al. 2023). Thus, the emotional environment of broken households typically intensified feelings of loneliness and abandonment, changing participants’ self-perceptions and coping techniques.

Theme III: The biggest challenges encountered

1. Emotional turmoil and struggles

Participants reported growing up in broken households as an emotional hardship. “I always questioned if it was my fault my parents separated.” (P6). This sense of self-blame and confusion reflects findings that children of separated parents are more likely to experience depression, anxiety, and attachment insecurity (Kim 2021;

LeMoult et al. 2020; Wilson et al. 2021; Hughes et al. 2023; Arora & Kaur 2022). Emotional turmoil was not only an individual challenge but also influenced how participants related to peers and mentors.

For some, the struggles extended into adolescence and young adulthood. Participants explained that unresolved feelings of abandonment and rejection continued to affect their confidence. “Even now, I feel I am never enough for people to stay” (P2). Research supports that these lingering emotional wounds often persist into adulthood, shaping relational trust and self-perception (Nguyen & Patel 2023; González et al. 2022; Botero-García et al. 2023; Poirson et al. 2023; Stadelmann et al. 2023). Such findings affirm that family disintegration leaves long-lasting psychological imprints unless addressed through supportive interventions.

2. Financial hardship and lack of resources

Economic hardships were a common topic. One participant recounted, “I had to suspend studying for a year because we couldn’t pay the fees.” (P4). Broken families typically result in single-parent households with low financial resources, constraining access to education and opportunities (Sardinha et al. 2022; González et al. 2022; Lindert et al. 2023; Johnson et al. 2021; Campbell et al. 2022). These challenges not only harmed academic achievement but also reinforced feelings of inadequacy compared to peers from intact households.

Despite these struggles, financial challenges occasionally encouraged tenacity. Some participants proved resourceful, taking on jobs or scholarships to fund their study. “I sold snacks in school so I could buy my own notebooks” (P1). Evidence suggests that while financial stress brings hazards, it may also encourage self-reliance and practical coping mechanisms (Sari et al. 2021; Poirson et al. 2023; Botero-García et al. 2023; Kim 2021; Hughes et al. 2023). Thus, economic difficulty was both a barrier and a driver for personal progress.

3. Social stigma and peer judgment

Participants reported facing humiliation and mockery from peers and neighbors. “My classmates always teased me about not having a father at home.” (P2). Such peer judgment reinforced isolation and feelings of shame, a finding echoed in research showing that stigma exacerbates the psychosocial challenges of children from broken homes (Stadelmann et al. 2023; Miller et al. 2021; Johnson et al. 2021;

Wamoyi et al. 2022; Jarabe & Rahayuwati 2024). Peer discrimination was not merely teasing but a significant contributor to low self-esteem.

Others explained that stigma limited their willingness to seek help. "I kept everything to myself because I didn't want people to look down on me" (P5). Studies show that stigma and fear of judgment often discourage children from disclosing struggles or accessing support systems (Nguyen & Patel, 2023; Hughes et al., 2023; Poirson et al., 2023; González et al., 2022; Wilson et al., 2021). This silence reinforced cycles of loneliness, highlighting how social stigma compounds the effects of emotional and financial struggles.

Theme IV: Pivotal moments or turning points

1. Key decisions and self-determination

Participants stressed that making purposeful decisions to seek education or self-improvement became defining events in their life. One commented, "I promised myself I would not let my position define me; I chose to finish school no matter what." (P1). Such acts of self-determination match with studies indicating that purposeful goal-setting develops resilience and helps kids from disturbed homes to overcome adversity (Sari et al. 2021; González et al. 2022; Kim 2021; Botero-García et al. 2023; Hughes et al. 2023).

Others recounted important decisions about resisting bad influences. "I stayed away from friends who used drugs because I didn't want to add more problems" (P6). Literature indicates that intentional decisions to avoid hazardous behaviors work as resilience strategies, shielding vulnerable children from compounding the impacts of family instability (Nguyen & Patel 2023; Poirson et al. 2023; Wilson et al. 2021; Campbell et al. 2022; Johnson et al. 2021). These decisions indicate agency in influencing one's direction despite structural and emotional constraints.

2. Overcoming a specific adversity

Some participants reported transforming experiences of overcoming adversity. One explained, "I failed my exams once and thought about quitting, but I pushed through and passed the next time." (P4). Such experiences illustrate resilience as a process of adaptation, not linear success. Evidence supports that successfully navigating adversity fosters confidence and strengthens coping resources (Nguyen & Patel 2023; Tedeschi et al. 2018; Hughes et al. 2023; Poirson et al. 2023; González et al. 2022).

Participants also described how confronting specific adversities reshaped their outlook. "When I survived that year of dropping out, I

realized I was stronger than I thought" (P2). Research highlights that post-traumatic growth often emerges from moments of overcoming hardship, allowing survivors to reconstruct meaning and develop new perspectives on life (Botero-García et al. 2023; Stadelmann et al. 2023; Wamoyi et al. 2022; Allen & Hensley 2023; Campbell et al. 2022). These pivotal adversities became milestones in resilience-building.

3. A mentor or supportive figure

Mentorship and supporting individuals were regularly cited as turning events. "If not for my instructor, I may not have finished school." (P3). Mentors offered not just academic instruction but also emotional validation, functioning as role models in times of uncertainty. Studies indicate that mentorship considerably increases resilience and psychological well-being among children from disturbed households (Anderson et al. 2022; Adjei et al. 2020; Johnson et al. 2021; Botero-García et al. 2023; Lindert et al. 2023).

Faith leaders and community mentors also affected participants' resiliency. One commented, "When I joined the church youth group, I felt I finally belonged" (P5). Research indicates that faith-based mentors frequently give both emotional advice and a sense of identity that assist kids negotiate stigma and loss (Nguyen & Patel 2023; Wamoyi et al. 2022; Hughes et al. 2023; Miller et al. 2021; Poirson et al. 2023). These ties functioned as lifelines, changing vulnerability into empowerment.

Conclusion

This study demonstrated that adolescents raised in broken households endure substantial emotional and social disturbances, including feelings of abandonment, stigma, and strained relationships. These issues typically extend beyond schooling and economic stability, demonstrating how family dissolution reverberates beyond the household into every facet of young people's lives. Yet, despite these problems, individuals displayed extraordinary resilience, finding strength in social support, personal coping strategies, spirituality, and the will to achieve. Their voices indicate that resilience is not inert endurance but an active, dynamic process of meaning-making, adaptation, and growth.

Aspirations for school, professions, and activism further underline that adolescents from broken homes envisage futures defined not by victimhood but by action and transformation. Their resolve to pursue achievement, raise healthy families, and help others in similar

situations indicates both post-traumatic growth and a rejection of intergenerational cycles of deprivation. These findings reinforce that brokenness does not predetermine failure; with the correct assistance, resilience may be developed into paths of empowerment.

Based on these observations, numerous recommendations are made. Schools and colleges should expand counseling services and develop peer-support groups to reduce stigma and provide safe spaces for afflicted youngsters. Local government entities and community groups can implement family counseling and livelihood efforts to lessen the economic constraints of family dissolution. Faith-based and civic groups should continue to act as accessible forums for resilience-building, especially in resource-limited places. Finally, more research should analyze varied narratives of survival and achievement among children from broken households across rural and urban contexts to inspire holistic solutions.

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Parental and elder support in Kalanguya learners' education: Insights from teacher-made Kalanguya narrative instructional materials

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Abstract: Teacher-made narrative instructional materials (IMs) connect classroom learning with cultural heritage, particularly by portraying the family roles that shape children's educational journeys. Despite their significance, limited research has examined how such narratives represent parents and elders in indigenous contexts. This study investigated the portrayal of children, parents, and elders in teacher-made *Kalanguya* narrative IMs, and how these reflect cultural values and changing community perceptions toward education. Employing a descriptive-evaluative research design, data were gathered through documentary analysis of six *Kalanguya* IMs and semi-structured interviews with five teacher-authors from Tinoc, Ifugao, Philippines. Thematic analysis revealed that children were consistently portrayed as responsible learners who prepared for school, attended classes, and engaged in home-based tasks. Parents and elders appeared as key supporters, providing encouragement, financial assistance, moral guidance, and cultural wisdom. These highlight their essential role in reinforcing learners' motivation, perseverance, and identity formation. The study revealed a notable shift in the *Kalanguya* community's outlook, that, while education was once undervalued, it is now prioritized, with parents and elders demonstrating strong commitment to schooling. The findings suggest that teacher-made *Kalanguya* narrative IMs can bridge cultural traditions with modern education, strengthen school-community ties, and foster intergenerational learning.

Keywords: elders' support, *Kalanguya*, narrative instructional materials, parental support, Ifugao, Philippines

Introduction

Teacher-made instructional materials (IMs) that use narratives serve as powerful tools for teaching, combining content with storytelling, and

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AGATHOS, Volume 17, Issue 2 (33-34): 603-618, DOI 10.5281/zenodo.23610075
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thus, make lessons more engaging, memorable, and relatable for students. When teachers design narrative IMs, such as storybooks, poems, or culturally grounded tales, they deliver academic concepts and model values, cultural knowledge, and problem-solving strategies that support holistic learning. Teachers often use narrative IMs as a creative bridge between home and school, shaping narratives that include parents and elders in real and relational ways. In many classrooms, these IMs feature parents as caring guides, helping with homework, offering encouragement, or modeling perseverance. These portrayals do not only depict parental support, but also, illustrate how family relationships shape children's motivation and identity as learners. Storytelling in elementary classrooms highlights how narrative, even when crafted by teachers, can forge emotional connections, reinforce learning through memory cues, and reflect students' lived experiences (Bugtong et al. 2025; Canuto et al. 2024; Lumecio et al 2026; Shirley 2005).

Similarly, elders, such as grandparents or respected family figures, often appear as wise narrators or sources of cultural knowledge in teacher-made stories. Multilingual or culturally responsive storytelling projects use family members in the storytelling process, acknowledging elders as carriers of tradition, and validating students' identities (Ollerhead and Pennington 2024). Studies show that how integrating family stories, including elders' narratives into the curriculum, can empower students and families, turning stories into shared learning experiences (Machado 2023).

Teachers often include parents and elders in their stories to model positive attitudes and values. Through these characters, teachers guide students to become caring and resilient learners. Storytelling is effective because it helps students connect new ideas with prior knowledge, improves memory through narrative, and engages emotions (Shirley 2005). Further, reflective teacher-made storytelling nurtures agency and growth mindsets in children (Collier 2023; Johnston 2012).

Despite the potential impact of teacher-made stories that portray parents and elders, this narrative strategy remains understudied. Few studies examine how these roles shape children's views of family, school, and their identity. There is also limited analysis of such instructional materials in local indigenous contexts. Thus, this study examines how children, parents, and elders are portrayed in local teacher-made narrative materials and how these reflect cultural values

and evolving community views on education. This study is significant as it highlights how locally teacher-made IMs bridge cultural heritage and formal education by portraying the supportive roles of parents and elders in shaping learners' academic and identity development.

Literature review

Parents' roles in teacher-made narratives

Teachers frequently craft classroom narrative IMs that place parents at the heart of children's learning lives, portraying them as practical partners, cultural informants, and emotional anchors. Studies of family-literacy practice and classroom narrative show teachers intentionally depict parents doing everyday educational work, reading aloud, helping with problems, encouraging persistence, modelling concrete learning practices for students, and linking classroom tasks with home routines (Palmer et al. 2000). Such portrayals also treat parents as holders of local knowledge and values. When teachers bring family anecdotes into lessons or design stories that echo students' home lives, parental voices become curricular resources that broaden background knowledge and validate cultural identity (Machado 2023; Vitali 2016). Increasingly, these teacher-made narratives take digital or multimodal forms. Digital stories co-created with families make parents visible as narrators or co-authors, reinforcing that learning is a shared, relational activity across the classroom and home (Rahiem 2021; Wessels and Trainin 2020).

Beyond the concrete depiction of tasks, teacher-crafted parental characters often function pedagogically to shape attitudes and belonging. Stories that show parents modeling patience, problem-solving abilities, or pride in learning are used to scaffold students' motivation, socio-emotional skills, and academic identity (Palmer et al. 2000; Vitali 2016). Digital-story and narrative-inquiry approaches document how these portrayals are produced (teachers' choices about parental roles to highlight), and how they can foreground parents as co-educators, rather than peripheral supports (Machado 2023; Wessels and Trainin 2020). This suggests that teacher-made stories that foreground parents serve a greater purpose than simply illustrating family life. They intentionally use parental figures to connect curriculum to children's lived experience, model supportive learning behaviors, and legitimize home knowledge as part of the classroom's learning ecology (Palmer et al. 2000; Vitali 2016; Wessels and Trainin 2020; Machado 2023; Rahiem 2021).

Elders' roles in teacher-made narratives

Teachers often include elders, such as grandparents and community elders, in classroom narratives as sources of cultural knowledge, moral guidance, and practical problem-solving. Studies on intergenerational learning and family literacy show that these characters often transmit traditions, share family histories, and model practices that enrich curricular learning (Jelenc Krašovec and Kump 2012; Kenner et al. 2007). Clearly, teacher-made stories use elder characters to link school topics with children's home experiences. By representing local knowledge and cultural ways of knowing, these figures validate students' backgrounds and enrich academic learning (Machado 2023). Some studies also show elders' voices included in classroom or digital stories as narrators or subjects, highlighting the value of intergenerational experiences (Rahiem 2021; Wessels and Trainin 2020).

Beyond content enrichment, teacher-crafted portrayals of elders also serve socioemotional and identity functions that support children's engagement and perseverance. Literature suggests that elders in classroom stories model patience, resilience, and community responsibility. These portrayals are used to nurture students' sense of belonging and provide social scripts for handling academic challenges (Dunifon and Bajracharya 2012; Kenner et al. 2007). Participatory and digital storytelling projects highlight that when elders or their stories are included in classrooms, they are portrayed as co-educators who contribute to knowledge rather than simply background figures (Machado 2023; Rahiem 2021). Thus, teacher-made stories foreground elders to enrich lessons, connect curriculum with family experiences, model learning attitudes, and affirm family wisdom in children's education (Jelenc Krašovec and Kump 2012; Wessels and Trainin 2020).

Teacher-made Kalanguya narrative instructional materials

The *Kalanguya* people of the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR), and adjacent provinces in Northern Luzon, Philippines, maintain a vibrant oral narrative tradition rich in riddles, mind-twisters, lyric poetry, and folktales that reflect their agricultural life, social ideals of humility and peace, and veneration for ancestors and ritual life (Guinsiman 2015; Tallungan, Salas, and Basconcillo 2023). Their cultural fabric includes sustained agricultural rituals and oral forms,

which provide moral guidance and practical cultural education, linking spiritual beliefs, communal ethics, and everyday learning (Albano, Dongen, and Takeda. 2015; Guinsiman 2015; Tindaan 2013). *Kalanguya* traditional knowledge systems are deeply embedded in ecological awareness, such as seasonal indicators, demonstrating how oral tradition, environmental stewardship, and livelihood knowledge converge in community consciousness (Local Biodiversity Outlooks 2018; Lumidao, Espique, and Canuto 2024). Gendered and customary roles also feature prominently (Bando, Lumidao, and Canuto 2024; Lumidao, Bando, and Canuto 2024), with elders acting as community authorities in rituals and governance, reflected in storytelling roles and communal decision-making (Camaya and Tamayo 2018; Guinsiman, 2015).

Teacher-made narratives in *Kalanguya* classrooms extend oral traditions by integrating indigenous knowledge, practices, and rituals into stories. These narratives connect academic content with students' lived experiences, while affirming cultural identity and indigenous ways of learning, supporting culturally responsive and heritage-rooted instruction.

Current study

Research gap

Existing studies show that parents and elders in teacher-made narratives act as cultural guides and co-educators, however, limited research focuses on indigenous contexts like the *Kalanguya* community. Research has largely examined family literacy, intergenerational learning, and digital storytelling in diverse communities, yet a noticeable gap exists in exploring how indigenous storytelling traditions are adapted into teacher-created classroom narratives. While the *Kalanguya*'s oral literature, ecological knowledge, and ritual practices have been documented, little is known about how teachers adapt *Kalanguya* storytelling traditions into classroom narratives or how learners interpret these roles, leaving questions about their impact on cultural transmission, identity, and engagement.

Research significance

This study highlights the value of teacher-made *Kalanguya* narratives in connecting home and school learning, recognizing parents and elders as co-educators, and preserving indigenous culture in education.

Locally, the findings provide teachers with models for culturally responsive instruction, strengthen learners' engagement and identity, and guide schools in integrating community knowledge into classroom practice. Internationally, the study contributes to global discussions on indigenous education, narrative pedagogy, and culturally-sustaining practices by showing how storytelling can transmit values, promote intergenerational learning, and support inclusive, identity-affirming education across diverse contexts.

Research aims and questions

The study examined how teacher-made *Kalanguya* narrative materials portray children as responsible learners and depict parents and elders as contributors to elementary learners' education. It also explored how teacher-authors perceive changing views of parents and elders in the *Kalanguya* community regarding the importance of education. The following questions guided the study:

1. How are children's roles as responsible learners portrayed in teacher-made *Kalanguya* narrative IMs?
2. How are parents and elders portrayed in teacher-made *Kalanguya* narrative IMs as contributors to the educational experiences of elementary learners?
3. What are the changes in the perceptions of parents and elders in the *Kalanguya* community on the importance of education as observed by the teacher-authors of the *Kalanguya* IMs?

Method

Research design

This research used a descriptive-evaluative design, combining documentary analysis and interviews to examine how parents and elders were portrayed in teacher-made narrative *Kalanguya* IMs, and how these depictions support the educational journeys of elementary learners. Documentary analysis was employed to review and interpret teacher-made narratives, focusing on how parental and elder figures were represented concerning learners' academic and cultural development. Complementing this, interviews with teacher-authors were conducted to capture perspectives on the intentions behind story construction, and the cultural meanings embedded within them. This dual approach allowed for systematic analysis of textual portrayals and ensured that educators' lived experiences and cultural insights

informed the interpretation of findings, enhancing the study's contextual depth (Bowen 2009).

Participants

The study participants were five female teacher-authors of the teacher-made *Kalanguya* narrative IMs. They were purposely chosen from the Department of Education (DepEd), Tinoc District, Division of Ifugao, Ifugao, Philippines. The teachers are fluent *Kalanguya* speakers handling Kindergarten to Grade 3 levels, and used *Kalanguya* language as the supplementary medium of instruction (MOI) to English and Filipino languages. To deepen the documentary analysis, the teacher-authors were interviewed to clarify the cultural and educational intentions in their narratives. They were assigned pseudonyms P1 to P5. The simultaneous use of documentary analysis and interview ensured that the textual content and the authors' perspectives were considered in the interpretation.

Materials and instruments

The research utilized two primary sources of data: teacher-made *Kalanguya* narrative IMs and interviews with the authors. Six narrative IMs, consisting of Big Books and regular-sized books, were collected and subjected to documentary analysis. Table 1 shows the list of the IMs used in the documentary analysis. These IMs featured content authentically drawn from the local *Kalanguya* culture, or adapted from community-based practices. To complement this textual analysis, interviews were conducted with the teacher-authors of the collected materials. These interviews served as an instrument for clarifying the cultural, pedagogical, and creative intentions behind the narratives, providing richer insights into how character roles were represented within the stories. The IMs and interviews ensured that both the tangible instructional content and the teachers' perspectives were systematically examined.

Table 1. Titles of the teacher-made *Kalanguya* narrative instructional materials

Kalanguya Instructional Materials	English Translations
1. *Hi Bugan Ullaw di Ihkulan*	Bugan Goes to School
2. *Hi Jestoni tan hi Aljur*	Jestoni and Aljur
3. *Oras nihi Bong Ni Inneggew*	Bong's Everyday Schedule
4. *Kalay Nakuhpit hi Lola*	Why Grandma is Stingy
5. *Hutta Ballu'n Badu nihi Mina*	Mina's New Dress
6. *Adal, Kaimpultanti-an*	Education, the Most Important

Validity and reliability

The validity and reliability of this study were ensured through the combined use of documentary analysis and interview-based thematic analysis, which allowed for triangulation of data sources. Documentary analysis systematically examined the IMs, ensuring content validity by focusing on how children, parents, and elders were portrayed within authentic cultural and educational contexts. Thematic analysis of teacher-authors' interviews enhanced reliability by corroborating textual findings with the intentions and perspectives of the creators, reducing researcher bias. The study employed coding consistency and participant validation of interpretations to further strengthen trustworthiness. These measures ensured that the findings are credible and reliable, accurately reflecting the cultural and pedagogical significance of the narratives.

Procedure

The research began with the approval of the study by an ethics review committee to ensure that all processes adhered to ethical research standards. Formal permission was solicited from relevant school officials to collect and use teacher-made *Kalanguya* narrative IMs, and interview teacher-authors. Six materials were then gathered and subjected to documentary analysis, focusing on how children's, parents', and elders' roles were portrayed in the narratives. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the teacher-authors, each of whom provided informed consent prior to participation to guarantee voluntary involvement and confidentiality. The data from the documents and interviews were organized, coded, and thematically analyzed to capture both the textual portrayals and the authors' perspectives, ensuring that findings reflected cultural authenticity and educational relevance. Presentation of the themes and findings followed through.

Data analysis and management

The data gathered from the IMs and the interviews with the teacher-authors were analyzed through qualitative techniques, particularly documentary and thematic analysis. The documentary analysis focused on systematically examining the content of the IMs, identifying recurring themes, cultural references, and the roles attributed to children, parents, and elders. To enrich and validate these findings, interview transcripts were coded and analyzed thematically, allowing

for the identification of patterns on how teacher-authors intentionally embedded character roles and cultural practices in their narratives. Cross-analysis between the textual content and the interview data ensured triangulation and trustworthiness. This process allowed for the description of the portrayals of children, parents, and elders, and the evaluation of their educational and cultural significance as represented in teacher-made *Kalanguya* IMs.

Ethical consideration

This study strictly adhered to ethical research standards throughout its conduct. Before data collection, an ethics review committee reviewed and approved the study. Formal permission was solicited from relevant school officials for access to the IMs. Written informed consent was obtained from all participating teacher-authors. Participants were fully briefed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their involvement, and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. To maintain confidentiality and anonymity, pseudonyms were assigned to all participants, and identifying details were excluded from the final report. All collected data were securely stored and used solely for academic purposes, ensuring respect for the *Kalanguya* community's cultural integrity and the teacher-authors' intellectual contributions.

Findings and discussions

Children as active and responsible learners in Kalanguya narratives

The recognition of the importance of education is well-highlighted in the teacher-made *Kalanguya* narrative IMs. Children were presented to carry out various roles relative to the completion of school-related tasks reflected in the following:

> 1) *Hi Bugan Ullaw di Ihkulan: Illa tudda ta balun, hambag tan payung tu. Nakahaganna la hi Bugan ni ullaw di ihkullan*. (She took her packed lunch, bag and umbrella. Bugan is now ready to go to school.)
> 2) *Hi Jestoni tan hi Aljur: Nunta hakey eggew, kaman tultulag di Jestoni tan hi Aljur ni ullaw di ihkullan. Ida hinged di dalan ey mankuyug ida ni ullaw di ihkullan*. (One day, Jestoni and Aljur agreed to go to school together. They then waited for each other, and together, went to school.)
> 3) *Oras nihi Bong Ni Inneggew: "Bong, bangun ka! Six o'clock la." Nu seven o'clock ni agsapa, mangan nunta da nasustansyan makan…Nu madetengan i-nine o'clock, maki participate hi Bong nunta activities da… Man addal ni manbaha hi Bong nu eleven o'clock ni agsapa… Kaman study hi Bong ni one o'clock et han man buya di telebisyon*. ("Bong, wake up! It is already six o'clock." At seven o'clock, he usually has his healthy breakfast. When the clock strikes at 9 o'clock, Bong has to participate in their school

activities. Bong enhances his reading skills at eleven o'clock in the morning… Bong studies his lessons at one o'clock before he watches television.)

The above-mentioned IMs punctuate the fulfillment of various roles reflecting the responsible nature of children in the *Kalanguya* community toward getting education. Roles of young learners include self-preparation before going to school presented in the first IM, through a young female character named Bugan, and attending classes regularly as maintained in all the three IMs, with the addition of the young male characters in the second and third IMs namely Jestoni, Aljur, and Bong. Participating in the different classroom tasks and doing personal follow-up activities at home are likewise highlighted in the third IM, which once more heighten various academically-related roles observed by children. This echoes the nurturing capability of narratives among children as Collier (2023) and Johnston (2012) noted.

Parental roles in nurturing the value of education

The following IMs reflect the active roles of parents in supporting the education of their children. The fourth IM accentuates the supportive nature of a mother (*ina*) to the extra-curricular activities of the daughter, highlighting parents' understanding of the holistic development of children, not solely focused on the academic aspect.

4) *Hutta Ballu'n Badu nihi Mina: Hakey eggew ni Domingo, an limmaku di Mina tan hi ina tu ni badu di malkittan. Ida limmaku ni barbaru ni badu ni uhalentu nunta programa di ihkullanda. Pinilida dadan hi'gatu ni mankanta nunta selebrasyon da ni "Linggo ng Wika"*. (One Sunday morning, Mina and her mother went to buy clothes at the market. They went to buy new clothes which she will use during the program in school because Mina was chosen to render a song number in their upcoming "Buwan ng Wika" celebration.)

On the other hand, the fifth IM below tells of the disadvantages experienced by someone who did not heed his parents' advice, and thus, did not give due importance to education in his younger days, which he came to regret at the end.

5) *Adal, Kaimpultanti-an: Waday hakey tuu a mahlu tan naanuh. Ngadan tu men hi Kullidaw. Namindekkel ni tingpu-an tu'y nangina'n presyo nem an man-illaku….. Kamalugi-lugi tep agtu amtan manlihta tan mantutal nunta daka laku-in nateng tu…. Palallu'y babawi tu ni agtu nan-ihkulan. Agtu pinatti'd ama tan ina tu nunta ka-ik-ikut tu. Kinahing tuy bilin da men andila'y mabalin*. (There was once a man who was very industrious and kind.

> His name is Kullidaw…Many times his harvest would mean profit as the price is good, yet he always ends up losing profits as he does not know how to perform simple mathematical operations like computing his gain... He truly regretted disobeying his father and mother who advised him to study well when he was young. Now, there is nothing that he could do except being regretful.)

The IM above shows how the father and the mother (*ama tan ina*), acknowledged the significance of being educated as suggested by the performance of their parental role of providing pieces of advice to their child, particularly in getting educated. The fourth and fifth IMs establish the various roles of parents toward the education of children. This aligns with the claim of Palmer et al. (2000), Vitali (2016), Wessels and Trainin, (2020), Machado (2023), and Rahiem (2021) that the deliberate inclusion of parental characters in narratives aids in bridging curriculum content with the students' real-life experiences, demonstrating affirmative learning attitudes, and affirming the connection of home-based knowledge and classroom learning. Further, it supports Palmer et al. (2000) and Vitali (2016) who shared that stories demonstrating parents with patience, problem-solving capabilities, and pride in learning aid in increasing students' motivation, enhancing social-emotional skills, and deepening academic self-perception.

Elders' roles in nurturing the value of education

The active engagement of elders in support to children's obtaining of quality education is likewise acknowledged, as illustrated in the following IM:

> 6) *Kalay Nakuhpit hi Lola: Idi kindeng lan Jaymar i elementary, inhel lan lulang tu nu kalay daka ibangbangku ta pilak. Kantu ey, "Naka paiduldulin hutta taka pan-illakwi et hiyan waday gastusen mu ni panag-ihkulam et hiyan maka-adal ka li tep hiyaman i itawid kun hi'gam*. (When Jaymar graduated in elementary, his grandmother told him the reason why they had to save money. She said, "I save our collection from vending so that you can go to school and finish your studies because that is the only inheritance I can give you.")

The IM punctuates the sacrifices made by a female elder, exemplified by the common noun *lulang* which means grandmother, through vending, economizing, and saving money to ensure that her ward can continue with his studies. It underlines that elders view education as a rich inheritance, which motivate them to hurdle hardships in order to

send the children to school. Indeed, elder characters in teacher-made stories are used to connect school learning with the student's family experiences, expound positive learning traits, and acknowledge the significance of familial wisdom as an integral part of education among elementary learners, as recognized by Jelenc Krašovec and Kump (2012) and Wessels and Trainin (2020).

Evolving mindsets: From disregard to strong valuation of education among the Kalanguyas

The teacher-authors commended the notable change in the mindset of the *Kalanguya* people with regard education. The interviews with teacher-authors disclosed the progressive mindset of the members of the *Kalanguya* toward education as reflected in the following responses:

> P1: Before, the parents do not advise their children to go to school because what they taught is, it will make them lazy. But now, most parents know the importance of education, and if they need to force their children to go to school, they will.
> P2: Actually, the people before were like, "why do you need to go to school?" They had a negative notion about education, but now, they are sending their children to school. At least, they are giving importance to education at present, and they are doing everything they can in order to send their children to school.
> P3: Education was not really given importance before. But now, through our survey, we learned that all school-aged children are attending school. Also, during meetings, we could see that parents are supportive; they support whatever was agreed upon during meetings and provide the needs of their children. This means that they value education.

The statements of P1, P2, and P3 revealed the lack of appreciation of the *Kalanguya* community on the value of education, particularly in the earlier years. This, however, is no longer the scenario at present. The unending support of parents, guardians, and elders is emphasized in the above-cited responses which could be best summarized in the statement of P3. The result of local surveys that show good attendance of school-aged children as mentioned by P3 accounts to the increased number of professionals in this group, as cited by the following statements of P4 and P5:

> P4: As of now, people here give importance to education. The growing popularity of highland-vegetable raising affords them to financially support the education of their children. Indeed, very few *Kalanguyas* were able to finish their studies before, but now, many are already professionals and are

> even holding high offices like in the Department of Education and other agencies.
> P5: It is really good to see that most teachers and personnel in the different offices are from this place. Before, our teachers were not *Kalanguyas*; they were from different municipalities of Ifugao, but now, most of the teachers are *Kalanguyas*…It's because people have stable source of income now so they can send their children to school. Gardening really opened opportunities for both males and females to earn money.

P4 and P5 noted that economic progress is tied to good education. Advances in local agriculture help the *Kalanguyas* improve their financial situation, enabling them to support their children's education. Similarly, the increasing number of educated individuals in this group, as noted by the last two teacher-authors, support Tindaan (2013) and Guinsiman's (2017) observation of many educated *Kalanguyas* working in different government and non-government agencies, with others actively involved in various businesses across the country.

Conclusions and implications

The portrayal of parents and elders in narrative IMs reflects their crucial roles as nurturers, guides, and cultural bearers who support children's educational journeys both academically and socially. With this, this study examined how the roles of children as responsible learners were portrayed in teacher-made *Kalanguya* narrative IMs. It also analyzed how parents and elders were depicted as contributors to the educational experiences of elementary learners. It explored the changes in the perceptions of parents and elders in the *Kalanguya* community regarding the importance of education as observed by teacher-authors. The findings reveal that children were consistently represented as diligent learners who prepare for school, participate actively in classes, and engage in follow-up learning tasks. On the other hand, parents and elders were portrayed as vital supporters who provide encouragement, resources, and advice while modeling values of sacrifice and perseverance. The narratives highlight a significant cultural shift within the *Kalanguya* community, from earlier periods of undervaluing education to a present context where parents and elders strongly advocate for schooling, resulting in improved attendance and an increasing number of professionals from the group.

The findings of this study imply that teacher-made *Kalanguya* narrative IMs can serve as a practical tool for integrating cultural values and family roles into classroom teaching, making learning more relatable and meaningful for elementary learners. The study suggests

that teachers can strategically use these narratives to highlight the supportive roles of parents and elders, thereby strengthening school-community relationships, and promoting intergenerational learning. Furthermore, the results imply the need for continuous development of culturally responsive IMs that preserve indigenous knowledge and align with contemporary educational goals, ensuring that the roles of parents and elders remain visible and influential in shaping learners' attitudes toward education.

Limitations and recommendations

This study was limited to analyzing six teacher-made *Kalanguya* narrative IMs, which may not fully represent the broader spectrum of *Kalanguya* stories, or the diversity of cultural practices across communities. The interviews were conducted only with the teacher-authors of these materials, which, while providing valuable insights, did not include the perspectives of parents, elders, or learners themselves. The analysis focused mainly on content portrayal rather than the actual impact of these narratives on learners' attitudes and performance, thereby, limiting the generalizability of findings beyond the studied materials.

Future research may include more stories, involve broader community perspectives, and assess classroom effectiveness of these narratives in improving students' motivation, cultural identity, and academic performance. Finally, teachers may need capacity-building programs to continuously develop culturally responsive instructional materials that integrate indigenous knowledge while meeting current educational standards.

Acknowledgment: The author is grateful to the elementary teachers who participated in the study.

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Examining the communication skills of student evaluators in higher education accreditation processes: The case of Türkiye

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Abstract: Quality and accreditation are key concepts of our age. In the new world order shaped by the globalization process, the importance given to quality and accreditation at the institutional level is increasing. Higher education institutions are not exempt from this trend. The Turkish Higher Education Quality Council, established in 2015, has increased awareness and consciousness of quality and accreditation in higher education. This study aims to examine the evaluator competencies of student evaluators involved in accreditation processes. As internal stakeholders of higher education institutions, student evaluators play a significant role in quality and accreditation processes in higher education. The effectiveness of evaluation processes depends on the high evaluator competencies of student evaluators. The study, which adopts quantitative research design, was conducted using survey techniques and statistical analysis methods. The sample of the research consists of student evaluators in the evaluator pool of the Turkish Communication Education Evaluation and Accreditation Council (ILEDAK). ILEDAK, a national quality assurance organization, has a key role in communication education and communication accreditation. The study found that student evaluators in the ILEDAK evaluator pool had knowledge and awareness about quality and accreditation. This situation was interpreted as the positive effect of the training they had previously received regarding the evaluation process. The findings obtained within the scope of the study are parallel with the international and national literature and draw attention to the importance of evaluator competencies and communication skills of student evaluators.

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AGATHOS, Volume 17, Issue 2 (33-34): 619-633, DOI 10.5281/zenodo.23610164
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Keywords: accreditation, quality assurance, student evaluator, communication skills, higher education

Introduction

With the globalization process, higher education institutions are evolving from a classical structure operating within national boundaries to a new understanding shaped by the influence of multiple actors and requiring strategic management (Marginson 2022; Atalay et al. 2024). Quality and accreditation are the key concepts of this new understanding that shapes higher education institutions. The sustainability of quality and accreditation processes in higher education is directly proportional to the competency levels of the evaluators involved in these processes (Olszakand Sączewska-Piotrowska 2025; Ramezani and Mostafavi 2025). In particular, student evaluators stand out as an important component of the quality assessment ecosystem (Kaynak Altıngüzgün and Coşgun 2020; Gardezi 2024). This study, which aims to examine the competencies of student evaluators, seeks to contribute to quality and accreditation practices in the higher education ecosystem and to guide subsequent studies in the field of higher education research. This study contributes to the limited body of research examining the competencies of student evaluators in higher education quality and accreditation processes through quantitative research methods. It offers original contributions to the literature, particularly in terms of analyzing in detail the cognitive, emotional, and behavioural dimensions of student evaluators' communication skills and addressing their competencies in accreditation processes.

A quantitative method was used within the framework of the study's purpose. For the survey technique applied within the quantitative research method, the researchers developed a question set related to accreditation and quality and subsequently used the communication skills inventory (Reed et al. 2021). Quantitative research, in its simplest terms, is empirical research in which data is in the form of numbers (Punch 2020). The reason for selecting quantitative research in the study is to make generalizable explanations regarding the evaluation competencies of student evaluators in Türkiye. According to Arıkan (2018), to use the survey technique, the method, purpose, and subject must be suitable for this technique, it must not be directive, there must be a sufficient number of participants, the survey must be designed without errors by experts, observation and

literature review must also be used with this technique, and the obtained information must be suitable for data entry, analysis, and tests.

The success of higher education quality and accreditation processes depends on the qualifications and competencies of the evaluators involved in these processes (Jafarov 2024). Evaluators are the main actors who carry out and manage quality and accreditation evaluation processes in higher education institutions (Serrano et al. 2025). In this context, evaluators provide guidance for the improvement of processes while assessing the compliance of higher education institutions with legislation, quality system requirements, and accreditation criteria (Uludağ et al. 2021).

Kaynak Altıngüzgün and Coşgun (2020), in their study examining student participation in the quality and accreditation processes of educational programs, comparatively analyzed student participation processes at national and international levels. By examining international examples, the researchers classified the roles of student participants in evaluation processes under three main headings: participation in the internal quality processes of the program, serving on evaluation teams of accreditation organizations, and contributing to the preparation of self-evaluation reports. As a result of the research, it was determined that the participation of student evaluators in the processes both strengthened communication with students and made significant contributions to the improvement and development of the quality system by ensuring the accurate evaluation of student feedback. In addition, Atatekin and Dulupçu (2018), in their study examining the evaluation of quality processes in higher education, comparatively analyzed the institutional internal evaluation reports of five state universities from an educational perspective. The researchers conducted an evaluation in terms of the participation of internal and external stakeholders in the process, the performance of faculty members, services for students requiring special approaches, student orientation programs, the richness of learning resources, career development services for students, student satisfaction, and graduate tracking systems, and determined that the participation of student participants in the processes made significant contributions to the improvement and development of the quality system. Uludağ et al. (2021), in their study examining student participation in quality work in higher education, evaluated the views of students who had experienced the quality assurance process in higher education in

Türkiye about quality work. As a result of the research, they determined that students had positive understandings and normative beliefs about quality work, but did not feel competent due to insufficient institutional approach or support. In this direction, it was emphasized that active student participation in the quality assurance processes of higher education institutions in Türkiye should be encouraged. In this direction, the first hypothesis of the study is as follows:

H_1. The communication skills of student evaluators in the ILEDAK evaluator pool differ according to whether or not they have accreditation experience.

The knowledge, experience, communication skills, and analytical thinking abilities that quality evaluators possess in higher education processes directly affect the success of quality and accreditation evaluations. The quality and accreditation processes of higher education institutions require special expertise and equipment (Duarte and Vardasca 2023). Evaluators in higher education must have knowledge about higher education legislation and system, as well as academia, quality, and accreditation, and must possess the characteristics that a quality evaluator should have (Ryan 2015). Harvey and Green (1993), in their study defining and evaluating the concept of quality in higher education, addressed quality as continuous improvement efforts in the fields of teaching-learning and research-development. As a result of the study, it was determined that ensuring and sustaining quality in higher education institutions and processes is a fundamental requirement for the development of individuals and societies and their ability to exist in the world of the future. Ulker (2021), in a comparative study examining the effect of student evaluations on teaching quality in higher education institutions in Türkiye and America, determined that faculty members needed training in interpreting evaluation results, and that the lack of this training negatively affected the effectiveness of evaluation processes. Schomaker (2015), in research examining accreditation processes in the Egyptian higher education system, analyzed the factors affecting the efficiency of quality assurance systems. As a result of the study, it was determined that evaluators needed to be supported by training programs and their competencies needed to be continuously developed for the success of quality assurance processes. In this direction, the second hypothesis of the study is as follows:

H_2. The communication skills of student evaluators in the ILEDAK evaluator pool differ according to whether or not they have received training on accreditation.

The effective implementation of quality assurance and accreditation processes in higher education is possible through the development and documentation of evaluators' competencies (Almusallam 2013). Supporting evaluators involved in quality evaluation processes, especially through training and certification is of critical importance for the reliability of the process (Ayvaz et al. 2016). Özçiçek and Karaca (2019), in their study examining quality assurance and accreditation processes in higher education institutions, revealed that accreditation is the process of approval by an authorized organization of the quality that institutions and organizations are trying to provide and its examination at certain intervals. As a result of the study, it was determined that certification played a key role in demonstrating that higher education institutions met quality standards and in gaining international recognition. Furthermore, Ryan (2015), in a literature review, stated that the training received by evaluators is an important part of accreditation for the success of quality assurance systems. In this context, the third hypothesis of the study is as follows:

H_3. The communication skills of student evaluators in the ILEDAK evaluator pool differ according to whether or not they hold a training certificate or certification related to accreditation.

Methodology

In this study, which employed a quantitative research method, the research population consisted of all student evaluators in the ILEDAK student evaluator pool. As of 2024, there were 95 student evaluators in the ILEDAK evaluator pool. In this context, a total of 95 evaluators from undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral levels who earned the right to become student evaluators by participating in ILEDAK's Student Evaluator Workshop constituted the research population. The principle of voluntariness was adopted for the general data collection approach, and the study was conducted on the entire research population. Evaluators who met the conditions of being willing to participate, being an ILEDAK student evaluator, and having ongoing student status were included in the study.

Due to the small population size and the feasibility of reaching the entire population, the entire population was invited to the study without any sampling, and responses were obtained from volunteer

evaluators. In this context, a total of 58 responses were received from the population of 95, representing 61.05% of the population.

The data collection process of the study was conducted within the scope of January 2024 - June 2024, in parallel with the research calendar. Data were collected by reaching participants through Google Forms.

General Information Form: It contains 12 questions regarding the accreditation process, along with questions inquiring about participants' personal information and their experience and training related to accreditation. The general information form was developed by the researchers for this study.

Communication Skills Inventory: In the study, participants' general communication skill levels were determined by the total score obtained from the communication skills inventory developed by Ersanlı and Balcı (1998). The inventory, which has three sub-dimensions (mental communication skills, emotional communication skills, and behavioural communication skills), is of 5-point Likerttype. The score that can be obtained within the scope of the communication skills inventory ranges from 45-225; the score that can be obtained from each sub-dimension ranges from 15-75. The questions of the sub-dimensions were presented in groups:

- Mental Communication Skills: 1, 3, 6, 12, 15, 17, 18, 20, 24, 28, 30, 33, 37, 43, 45
- Emotional Communication Skills: 5, 9, 11, 26, 27, 29, 31, 34, 35, 36, 38, 39, 40, 42, 44
- Behavioral Communication Skills: 2, 4, 7, 8, 10, 13, 14, 16, 19, 21, 22, 23, 25, 32, 41

When scoring the scale, some questions are scored directly, while others are scored inversely. The scoring of questions is as follows:

- Directly Scored Questions: 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 25, 26, 28, 30, 33, 36, 38, 39, 40, 42, 43, 44, 45
- Inversely Scored Questions: 3, 5, 9, 10, 11, 16, 23, 24, 27, 29, 31, 32, 34, 35, 37, 41

A high score on both the total Communication Skills Inventory score and the scores obtained from the sub-dimensions indicates high communication skills. Additionally, the sub-dimension with the highest score among the sub-dimension scores indicates the area in which the individual is better. In the study in which the Communication Skills Inventory was developed and validity and reliability analyses were conducted, the Cronbach's Alpha values for

the inventory and its sub-dimensions were as follows (Ersanlı and Balcı 1998):

- Communication Skills Inventory Total Score Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Coefficient: 0.72
- Mental Communication Skills Cronbach's Alpha Value: 0.83
- Behavioral Communication Skills Cronbach's Alpha Value: 0.82
- Emotional Communication Skills Cronbach's Alpha Value: 0.73

IBM's SPSS software version 24.0 was used for data analysis. Kurtosis and skewness values were examined to assess normality, and values between -1.5 and +1.5 were accepted as normally distributed (Tabachnick and Fidell 2013). Descriptive statistics were utilized in the analysis of general characteristics. T-Test was applied to examine the differences between participants' general characteristics and the Communication Skills Inventory total score, as well as the scores of the inventory's sub-dimensions—mental communication skills, emotional communication skills, and behavioural communication skills. Findings were evaluated at a 95% confidence interval and 5% significance level. The comparison of some independent variables with the Communication Skills Inventory and the scores obtained from the inventory's sub-dimensions was presented with graphs prepared in the same SPSS program.

Ethics committee approval of the research

The research has an ethics committee approval document with protocol number 2335, pursuant to decision number 02/19 dated 28/02/2024 of Ege University Social Sciences and Humanities, Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee.

Findings

The general characteristics of the student evaluators who voluntarily participated in the study are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. General characteristics of the participants

		n	%
Gender	Female	31	53.4
	Male	27	46.6
	Total	58	100.0
Age	18-20	1	1.7
	21-23	14	24.1

	24-26	6	10.3
	27-30	21	36.2
	31+	16	27.6
	Total	58	100.0
Education	Undergraduate	18	31.0
	Graduate	40	69.0
	Total	58	100.0
Experience in assessment-evaluation, continuous improvement, or accreditation preparation (accreditation coordinator, stakeholder, etc.) in domestic and /or international accredited communication programs	Yes	39	67.2
	No	19	32.8
	Total	58	100.0
Experience in quality processes related to communication education accreditation in general	Yes	41	70.7
	No	17	29.3
	Total	58	100.0
Having received any training (seminar, workshop, course, etc.) related to accreditation, quality management system, quality assurance, continuous improvement process management	Yes	48	82.8
	No	10	17.2
	Total	58	100.0

Of the participants, 53.4% (n=31) are female and 46.6% (n=27) are male, with the majority (69.0%) consisting of graduate students. 67.2% of the participants (n=39) have experience in assessment-evaluation, continuous improvement, or accreditation preparation (accreditation coordinator, stakeholder, etc.) in domestic and/or international accredited communication programs, while 70.7% have experience in quality processes related to communication education accreditation in general. Additionally, 82.8% have received training (seminar, workshop, course, etc.) related to accreditation, quality management system, quality assurance, and continuous improvement process management.

The views of the student evaluators participating in the study regarding program evaluation are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Participants' views on program evaluation

		n	**%**
Which is correct for program evaluation processes?	The primary purpose of program research is to develop a new knowledge base or expand an existing knowledge base	4	6.9
	The primary purpose of program evaluation is to provide information related to specific program improvement or	19	32.8

	program management decisions		
	Both are correct	33	56.9
	Both are incorrect	2	3.4
	Total	58	100.0
The concept that best describes program evaluation activities	Recommendation	3	5.2
	Inspection	1	1.7
	Guidance	5	8.6
	Supervision	9	15.5
	Certification	3	5.2
	Measurement	9	15.5
	Compliance with criteria	24	41.4
	Professional competence determination	3	5.2
	Research capacity	1	1.7
	Total	58	100.0
The primary task of the evaluator	To take part in the execution of program evaluation activities	46	79.3
	To determine whether the program complies with the criteria and apply sanctions	8	13.8
	To learn what they are curious about the program	2	3.4
	To rank programs by grading them	2	3.4
	Total	58	100.0
Knowledge, skills, and experience that an evaluator should have (Multiple options could be selected)	Quality and accreditation knowledge and experience	52	89.7
	Communication skills	54	93.1
	Interpersonal skills	38	65.5
	Analytical thinking skills	41	70.7
	Problem-solving skills	36	62.1
	Expression and questioning skills	48	82.8
	Time management skills	40	69.0
	Stress management skills	27	46.6
	Teamwork skills	53	91.4
	Ability to take responsibility	42	72.4
	Ethical conduct skills	52	89.7

56.9% of the participants (n=33) reported that both statements, “the primary purpose of program research is to develop a new knowledge base or expand an existing knowledge base” and “the primary purpose of program evaluation is to provide information related to specific program improvement or program management decisions,” are correct. It was determined that 41.4% of the participants (n=24) selected “compliance with criteria” as the concept that best describes program evaluation activities. The least selected concepts were “inspection” at 1.7% (n=1) and “research capacity” at 1.7% (n=1). The selection rates

of other concepts are presented in Table 2. The primary task of the evaluator was selected at a rate of 79.3% (n=46) as "to take part in the execution of program evaluation activities." In the question asking about the knowledge, skills, and experience that an evaluator should have, multiple options could be selected. The most frequently selected characteristics in this question were "communication skills" at 93.1% (n=54), "team work skills" at 91.4% (n=53), "quality and accreditation knowledge and experience" at 89.7% (n=52), and "ethical conduct skills" at 89.7% (n=52), respectively. The least selected characteristic was "stress management skills" with a rate of 46.6% (n=27). The rates for other characteristics are presented in Table 2.

Table 3. Distribution of total score and sub-dimension means of the Communication Skills Inventory

	$\bar{X}$	SS
Communication Skills Inventory Total Score	168.05	12.282
Mental Communication Skills	58.52	4.899
Emotional Communication Skills	54.36	5.444
Behavioral Communication Skills	55.17	3.844

In the present study, the Cronbach's Alpha value for the Communication Skills Inventory total score was calculated as 0.827. The average total score obtained by the participants from the Communication Skills Inventory is 168.05±12.282. When the sub-dimensions of the inventory are considered, the mental communication skill score was found to be 58.52±4.899, the emotional communication skills score 54.36±5.444, and the behavioral communication skills score 55.17±3.844. The highest mean score obtained by the participants from the sub-dimensions of the inventory is mental communication skills.

Table 4. Distribution of areas where participants' communication skills are high according to Communication Skills Inventory sub-dimensions

Sub-dimension with the Highest Score	**n**	**%**
Mental Communication Skills	44	75.86
Emotional Communication Skills	4	6.90
Behavioral Communication Skills	7	12.07
Mentaland Behavioral Communication Skills Scores **Equal**	2	3.45
Mental and Emotional Communication Skills Scores **Equal**	1	1.72

According to the Communication Skills Inventory sub-dimensions, 75.86% of the participants (n=44) have high mental communication skills, 12.07% (n=7) have high behavioural communication skills, and

6.90% (n=4) have high emotional communication skills. 3.45% (n=2) had equal Mental and Behavioral Communication Skills scores, and 1.72% had equal Mental and Emotional Communication Skills scores.

Table 5. Comparison of Communication Skills Inventory Total Score and Sub-dimension Means According to Variables

		Communication Skills Total Score		Mental Communication Skills		Emotional Communication Skills		Behavioral Communication Skills	
		X̄±SD	p	X̄±SD	p	X̄±SD	p	X̄±SD	p
Gender	Female (n=31)	171.83±11.919	0.011*	59.70±4.748	0.046*	55.70±5.866	0.042*	56.41±3.354	0.007*
	Male (n=27)	163.70±11.404		57.14±4.793		52.81±4.540		53.74±3.928	
Education	Undergraduate (n=18)	170.94±13.644	0.232	60.00±5.594	0.123	54.61±6.436	0.818	56.33±3.940	0.124
	Graduate (n=40)	166.75±11.564		57.85±4.469		54.25±5.021		54.65±3.731	
Accreditation Experience	Yes (n=39)	167.53±12.953	0.652	58.41±5.255	0.814	54.25±4.897	0.834	54.87±4.105	0.398
	No (n=19)	169.10±11.034		58.73±4.201		54.57±6.568		55.78±3.258	
Communication education accreditation experience	Yes (n=41)	168.17±12.012	0.910	58.68±4.844	0.693	54.53±4.759	0.708	54.95±3.827	0.501
	No (n=17)	167.76±13.287		58.11±5.158		53.94±6.977		55.70±3.949	
Having received training on accreditation	Yes (n=51)	168.80±12.369	0.211	58.49±4.742	0.911	55.03±5.075	0.009*	55.27±3.975	0.590
	No (n=7)	162.57±10.875		58.71±6.369		49.42±5.883		54.4±22.820	
Training certificate/certification related to accreditation	Yes (n=48)	169.20±12.012	0.117	58.77±4.736	0.393	55.00±4.881	0.05	55.43±3.880	0.255
	No (n=10)	162.50±12.668		57.30±5.735		51.30±7.118		53.90±3.573	
*p<0.05; t-test									

The comparison of the Communication Skills Inventory total score and sub-dimension means according to variables is presented in Table 5. The Communication Skills total score and scores obtained from all sub-dimensions differ according to gender. Female participants' Communication Skills Inventory total score, mental communication skills score, emotional communication skills score, and behavioral communication skills score are higher than those of males ($p<0.05$).

The emotional communication skills score of participants who reported having received training on accreditation is statistically significantly higher than those who did not receive training. Accordingly, H_2 was confirmed. No statistically significant relationship was found between other variables and the total score and sub-

dimension scores of the inventory. Accordingly, H_1 and H_3 hypotheses were rejected.

Conclusion

The concept of quality has become a fundamental element that ensures the sustainable success of higher education institutions and their ability to maintain a presence in the global competitive environment. Enhancing the quality of education and training, research and development, and social contribution processes strengthens the contribution of higher education institutions to the future of both individuals and societies. Quality and accreditation in higher education emerge as a necessity for raising educated and well-equipped generations, adapting to the future, and maintaining existence in the global world.

Accreditation is a comprehensive quality management mechanism used to evaluate and ensure the compliance of higher education institutions with specific standards. Accreditation promotes not only compliance with existing standards but also an approach focused on continuous development and improvement. This process enables the dissemination of a quality assurance culture in higher education and allows higher education institutions to gain credibility, recognition, and reputation at national and international levels.

The role of evaluators in quality assessment and accreditation processes stands out as a factor that directly affects the success of the process. In particular, student evaluators make significant contributions not only as recipients and users of these processes but also as active actors. Students support quality processes within the institution as internal stakeholders and participate in quality assessment processes as evaluators, ensuring the inclusion of the student perspective in these processes.

For students to succeed as quality evaluators, they must possess not only knowledge and experience in quality and accreditation processes but also competencies such as effective communication skills, analytical thinking, focus group interviewing, problem-solving, and stress management. These competencies are noteworthy as elements that enhance the effectiveness of the process at both individual and institutional levels.

This research aimed to examine the competencies of student evaluators in quality and accreditation processes in higher education. The results of the research reveal important findings regarding the role

and competencies of student evaluators in quality and accreditation processes in higher education. The study, conducted with 58 participants from a population of 95 student evaluators in the ILEDAK evaluator pool, was designed using a mixed research method.

The demographic findings of the research indicate that 53.4% of the participants were female and 46.6% were male, with the vast majority (69%) consisting of graduate students. As a striking finding, the fact that 82.8% of the participants had received training in accreditation and quality management reveals the qualification of the evaluator pool.

Findings related to program evaluation activities reveal that 56.9% of the participants view program evaluation both as a tool for developing a new knowledge base and for providing information for program improvement decisions. In terms of evaluator competencies, the most prominent characteristics were determined to be communication skills, teamwork skills, knowledge of quality and accreditation, and ethical conduct skills, respectively.

A noteworthy finding regarding the competencies of student evaluators is that 70.7% of the participants have experience in the field of quality processes related tocommunication education accreditation. This experience is considered an important indicator of the effectiveness of evaluation processes.

The results of the communication skills inventory showed that participants' mental communication skills ($\bar{X}$=58.52) were higher compared to other sub-dimensions. The factthat 75.86% of the participants were more successful in mental communication skills indicates that their analytical thinking and problem-solving abilities are strong. The fact that 56.9% of the participants view program evaluation as a process both for developing a new knowledge base and for program improvement decisions supports this holistic perception.

In conclusion, it has been observed that the effective implementation of quality assurance and accreditation processes in higher education is possible through the development of evaluators' competencies and the enhancement of student participation. It is clear that these processes are of indispensable importance both in ensuring the sustainability of higher education institutions and accreditation organizations and in contributing to the future of individuals ands ocieties. Based on the research results, it is recommended that future studies comparatively examine the competencies of student evaluators in different accreditation organizations. Furthermore, priority should be given to strengthening emotional and behavioral communication skills, in

addition to mental communication skills, in the training of student evaluators.

Acknowledgment: This study was supported by the Communication Research Association (İLAD) under project registration number 2025/01.

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Unveiling the experiences of student boarders to privacy breaches among HEIs

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Abstract: This study examines the lived experiences of student boarders in the region, specifically, how vulnerable they are to privacy breaches in boarding facilities and shared accommodation. The study sought to define and understand recurring patterns of privacy breaches, as well as to provide contextualized advice for students in higher education institutions. To capture the lived experiences of student boarders, a qualitative study design including phenomenology and the descriptive technique was employed. Ten individuals were intentionally chosen from various HEIs. Data were acquired through interviews and processed using thematic content analysis to uncover recurring themes. The findings revealed that student boarders are highly vulnerable to privacy risks caused by both the physical structures of boarding houses and the dynamics of social interactions. Broken locks, inadequate lighting, overcrowding, and an absence of enforced house rules were among the most common structural problems. Interpersonal issues such as harassment, gossip, unauthorized access, and theft undermined students' sense of security. Emotional difficulties, notably homesickness and loneliness, were common and aggravated by a lack of effective preventive measures. The study shows that comprehensive safety improvements, the implementation of clear policies, and effective management practices are essential to safeguarding the privacy and overall well-being of student boarders in higher education institutions.

Keywords: student boarders, privacy breaches, shared accommodation, emotional difficulties, interpersonal issues

Introduction

The expansion of higher education has led to a parallel increase in student dormitories and boarding houses, making shared living arrangements an integral part of the student experience. While such accommodations provide accessibility and affordability, they also

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AGATHOS, Volume 17, Issue 2 (33-34): 635-648, DOI 10.5281/zenodo.23610332
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present complex challenges related to personal privacy. In shared spaces, including bedrooms, bathrooms, kitchens, and common areas, the distinction between private and public domains becomes blurred, exposing students to frequent and often subtle forms of privacy intrusion. Unlike the structured privacy afforded within family homes, dormitory living places students in environments where their personal belongings may be accessed, conversations overheard, and personal boundaries unintentionally or deliberately crossed. These recurring experiences, though sometimes normalized, constitute meaningful infringements on individual privacy and may have significant implications for students' psychological well-being, autonomy, and sense of security (Jones et al. 2020; Tsai et al. 2020).

Privacy intrusions in shared student accommodations can manifest through various interpersonal behaviors, including unauthorized access to personal belongings, unpermitted borrowing of devices, and unintentional eavesdropping due to architectural limitations such as thin walls or shared rooms. Even seemingly minor actions, such as entering without knocking or disregarding personal space during moments of vulnerability, may undermine trust and contribute to discomfort and interpersonal tension among residents. Although privacy protection laws exist in certain jurisdictions, their application primarily focuses on digital and institutional data protection rather than interpersonal privacy within shared living environments. Moreover, many students remain unaware of their privacy rights or lack the means to assert them effectively in communal residential contexts (Bonta 2020). Consequently, formal legal protections often fail to address the everyday, peer-based privacy violations that students encounter in their immediate living spaces.

Despite growing scholarly attention to privacy in educational and digital contexts, there remains a significant gap in the literature concerning the lived privacy experiences of student boarders, particularly within regional and socio-cultural contexts such as the Zamboanga Peninsula. Existing studies largely emphasize institutional surveillance, technological privacy, or general student welfare, while insufficient attention has been given to peer-to-peer privacy intrusions occurring within boarding houses and dormitories. Furthermore, regional boarding arrangements are shaped by unique socio-cultural norms, spatial limitations, and economic conditions that may influence how privacy is perceived, negotiated, and violated. The study addresses this gap by examining the privacy vulnerabilities

experienced by student boarders in higher education institutions in the Zamboanga Peninsula. By centering on students' lived experiences, this research seeks to describe and interpret the patterns, contexts, and implications of privacy intrusions in shared accommodations. Through this regional and student-centered approach, the study contributes to the limited body of knowledge on interpersonal privacy in student housing and provides contextually grounded insights that may inform institutional policies, housing practices, and student support mechanisms.

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research design, specifically phenomenology supported by a descriptive approach, to explore the lived experiences of student boarders regarding privacy breaches in shared accommodations. As cited in the study of Aranjuez (2025), Bacroya and Aranjuez (2025), and Alipoyo (2022) phenomenology was appropriate as it enabled the researcher to capture the meanings participants attributed to their personal experiences of privacy intrusion and how these experiences influenced their emotional well-being, coping responses, and perceptions of safety within communal living environments (Polit & Beck 2021; Finlay 2021). The descriptive qualitative component complemented this approach by allowing a contextualized examination of privacy violations, including peer-related intrusions, unauthorized access to personal belongings, and digital privacy risks. The research was conducted in boarding houses near three higher education institutions in Region IX. These settings were selected because shared housing conditions, often characterized by limited space, overcrowding, and inadequate security, may increase students' vulnerability to privacy violations. Ten purposively selected student boarders participated in the study, with representation from each institution. Participants met the following criteria: (1) currently residing in shared dormitories or boarding houses, (2) having relevant experiences related to privacy vulnerabilities, and (3) residing in their current accommodation for at least one semester to ensure sufficient experiential insight. This sampling approach allowed for rich, in-depth descriptions and meaningful interpretation of privacy-related experiences across diverse boarding contexts.

Data were collected using a researcher-developed semi-structured interview guide consisting of four main questions with corresponding sub-questions designed to elicit detailed narratives about privacy

intrusions, their impacts, and students' coping strategies. The instrument underwent expert validation to ensure clarity, relevance, and appropriateness for capturing participants lived experiences. Before data collection, ethical approval was secured from the Jose Rizal Memorial State University Research Ethics Committee, and institutional permissions were obtained from participating schools. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, emphasizing voluntary participation, confidentiality, anonymity, and the right to withdraw without penalty. Interviews were conducted in a respectful and supportive manner, audio-recorded with participant permission, and supplemented by field notes for accuracy. Data were analyzed using thematic content analysis, which involved familiarization with the data, coding, identification of recurring patterns, and development of themes that reflected participants shared experiences and meanings (Ozden 2024). To ensure ethical integrity, all identifiable information was protected through the use of pseudonyms, and data were securely stored in password-protected files accessible only to the researcher. This rigorous methodological process ensured the credibility, trustworthiness, and ethical soundness of the study while providing a comprehensive understanding of privacy vulnerabilities among student boarders in shared living environments.

Results and discussion

Data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis, as cited in Aranjuez (2025) and Bacroya and Aranjuez (2025), to systematically examine the lived experiences of student boarders regarding privacy and security breaches. Consistent with descriptive phenomenology, the analysis applied horizontalization, treating each participant's statement with equal importance to capture the essence of their experiences (Alipoyo 2022). Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed *verbatim*, and analyzed using a researcher-developed interview guide, including coding, pattern identification, and theme development. Participants were purposively selected student boarders residing near Jose Rizal Memorial State University–Tampilisan Campus, Sibugay Technical Institute, and Southern Peninsula College, where shared accommodations presented potential privacy vulnerabilities. The resulting themes reflected participants' boarding experiences, emotional and psychological responses, impacts on well-being and academic functioning, and recommendations for improving

privacy and safety in shared living environments. They are the following:

Experiences of student boarders

The responses to the interview established the experiences of the student boarders. Two emerging themes were discovered in the study: intrusion into personal spaces and power imbalances with boarding staff and peers. The following terms were covered comprehensively below:

1. Intrusion into personal spaces.

This theme deals with the unauthorized entry, monitoring, or surveillance in dormitories and boarding houses, causing discomfort, tension, or a feeling of threat. Students feel nervous and exposed when the space lacks privacy and security. According to the statement of Participant 8: I might be the only one being watched… maybe when I'm around, they talk nicely, but once I turn my back, they talk about me differently (SS79 P8). Sexual harassment is any unwanted sexual behaviour that makes the boarding students feel upset, scared, offended or humiliated either personally or digitally. Participant 5 shared how persistent and suggestive text messages from someone disrupted their emotional peace. This kind of boundary intrusion illustrates how even digital harassment within or near boarding contexts can create mental fatigue and discomfort. Participant 5 also emphasized the repeated need to transfer boarding houses due to feeling unsafe, reinforcing how physical and emotional threats affect one's sense of belonging. "He kept texting me and always gave things another meaning. I couldn't relax anymore" (SS37 P5).

When boarding house environments violate their boundaries, student boarders often experience serious emotional distress. These emotional struggles include fear, discomfort, and anxiety, especially when faced with harassment or inappropriate advances. Participant 1 also recounted an instance of sexual harassment involving an individual who persistently catcalled and made physical advances. This incident adds another layer to the danger some boarders face - not just from strangers but even from individuals within close quarters. As experienced by Participant 1, stating: "There was a 'gay' person asking for an allowance. He catcalled me, came close, and even touched me" (SS15 P1). And participant 3 stated: "He suddenly knocks… I thought it was my roommate… He suddenly enters and then starts touching me" (SS32 P3).

2. Power imbalances with boarding staff and peers.

This theme indicates the experiences of privacy violations linked to authority figures or co-boarders. Many student boarders live with ongoing fear, anxiety, and discomfort because of unsafe surroundings as a result of power imbalances. These issues affect the student boarders' peace of mind almost every day and make it hard for them to feel safe, even in their supposed private space. Feeling uncomfortable around men among participants, which may stem from negative experiences in the boarding house. According to Participant 6: "I was really uncomfortable, especially with other men around, not my family" (SS47 P6).Peer pressure bolsters power imbalances, which adversely impact the student boarders. According to Participant 9: "Turns out I'm the only one being watched… maybe when I'm around, they talk nicely, but when I turn my back, they talk behind me" (SS83 P9).

As stated by Participant 9, participant revealed feelings of being singled out and closely watched by others, suspecting that peers behave kindly in P9's presence but speak negatively about P9 once they are gone. This interpretation reflects power imbalances as well as a deep sense of distrust and social insecurity. The fear of being gossiped about behind a participant's back creates emotional tension, discourages open communication, and fosters isolation. Such perceptions of betrayal or hypocrisy contribute to a hostile social environment, where the students feel unsafe and emotionally vulnerable, further weakening their sense of belonging within the boarding community. And finally, Participant 10 stated: "Sometimes I just pretend everything's okay and stay quiet. I'm the only one here. I'm afraid to speak up" (SS91 P10).

Altman (2021) said people need to manage their privacy to stay mentally healthy. But if a student lives in a place with no proper walls, lighting, or locks, that control is lost. This study supports that idea, as seen in the discomfort and worry of the participants. These long-term effects of fear, worry, and discomfort show how badly a broken environment can affect students emotionally and mentally. Sometimes, the owners are overprotective of boarders while ignoring safety issues in the boarding house itself. The student boarders feel exposed, especially when boarding rooms are overcrowded, the walls are thin, or the lights are missing. This implies that the social environment in some boarding houses not only promotes unsafe behavior but also cultivates anxiety (Maher & Passmore 2022).

Effects of privacy breaches on their security and safety

1. Fear and anxiety.

This involves the constant worry about being monitored, stalked, or harassed as experienced by the student. It negatively affects the students' quality of life and may potentially lead to anxiety, stress, and reduced well-being when their privacy has been breached. When boarding house environments violate their boundaries, student boarders often experience serious emotional distress. These emotional struggles include fear, shame, discomfort, and anxiety, especially when faced with harassment, inappropriate advances, or exposure to illegal behavior such as drug use. As stated by one participant: "It is difficult…especially when you're alone because you have to think about everything by yourself" (SS85 P10). Adjusting becomes more difficult without familiar faces or support. As stated by Participant 10. Participant 7 chooses a private way of coping, showing that students adapt differently based on their emotional needs and available resources. As the participant emphasized: "Sometimes I just cry. I have no one to talk to. I'm all alone" (SS88 P10).

According to Mendoza and Sales (2024), the burden of always being the one to adjust, even in shared spaces, can lead to emotional withdrawal and lowered self-worth. This aligns with prior accounts, suggesting that unsafe or emotionally neglectful boarding environments amplify stress and inhibit social harmony.

2. Loss of trust.

This theme deals with the declining confidence in dormitory management, peers, or even institutions. As stated by participant 7: "Only my close friend is the one I talk to. Even if we don't talk, it feels like she understands me" (SS62 P7). As pointed out by Participant 7, emotional support in boarding life often comes from selective, trusted friendships. The reliance on a close friend, even in silence, reflects how students navigate emotional safety by limiting their social interactions to those who offer non-verbal understanding and comfort. This mirrors the coping mechanisms mentioned by Participants, who also emphasized the importance of emotional trust in environments where openness is risky. One participant also mentioned that: "I kept transferring boarding houses because of drugs; my boardmates were using drugs" (SS5 P1).

According to Worsley et al. (2021), students who feel socially or emotionally disconnected are more prone to loneliness and isolation.

Similarly, Gao et al. (2020) found that experiences of alienation can worsen if students feel that their vulnerability is not understood or respected by others. Clemente (2020) also noted that the psychosocial adaptation of boarders heavily depends on their ability to trust and relate to others in their new environment.

As mentioned by Indresh (2024), emotional distress in boarding houses often arises from repeated exposure to illegal behavior and personal harassment. This aligns with the student's experience of transferring multiple times due to peers' drug use, showing how environmental insecurity leads to chronic instability and emotional exhaustion. Such conditions are not only disruptive but also psychologically damaging, creating a constant state of fear and anxiety that detracts from academic focus and mental well-being.

3. Behavioral adjustments.

In addressing the privacy breach by the student borders, they adopted measures to address it. This includes coping mechanisms and social support. In the face of the problem of privacy breach, Participant 7 stated: "I just put it in my journal to express my feelings" (SS56 P7). As stated by Participant 7, journaling serves as a silent outlet to release emotional burdens in the absence of open communication or supportive spaces. Participant 7 adopted a different approach, stating: "Sometimes I just drink to forget" (SS53 P7). Due to ongoing discomfort and fear from privacy breaches, many student boarders strongly prefer to live alone. Participant 7 opted to: "I moved to a farther boarding house because it was more private" (SS76 P7). Many student boarders began adopting protective behaviors in response to their experiences with privacy violations. These behaviors are their way of protecting their personal space, emotions, and routines. Whether through withdrawing socially or engaging in sports, these actions reflect how students try to manage the emotional impact of past experiences. Participant 7 stated: "I just play basketball when I feel heavy" (SS71 P7).

4. Perceived vulnerability.

Student boarders often face physical and emotional insecurities due to many factors. These factors include mixed sex boarding houses, ignorance, and sleep disruptions. The presence of mixed sex boarding houses increases the vulnerability to privacy violations. As experienced by Participant 2, stating: "My previous boarding house was kind of creepy since male and female boarders were mixed, and outsiders would hang out; the house was not strict" (SS25 P2). The

abuse of privileges by other boarders or the violation of the house rules is also one factor that contributes to the vulnerability to privacy violations.

Many students' boarders struggle to adjust socially in the boarding environment due to past negative experiences, uncertainty, and the absence of a supportive network. The transition into independent living often leads to feelings of confusion, distrust, and emotional isolation. Students become hesitant to connect deeply with others, guarding their trust and withdrawing socially. Despite the presence of peers, communication is limited, and emotional bonds are sometimes formed silently or with a select few they feel safe with. As stated by a participant: "During my first year... I didn't really know what to do as a boarder" (SS42 P6). The following responses illustrate how sleep disruptions and the surrounding factors added to vulnerability to privacy violations as experienced by the participants. Participant 10 stated: "I can't sleep well. Especially when noises are loud outside or if I feel someone else is in the room. I keep waking up" (SS89 P10).According to Participant 10, the felt fear triggered by surrounding noise or imagined presence in the room leads to hyper-alertness and sleep disturbance.

Impacts of privacy breaches on students' quality of life

1. Emotional and psychological strain.

This shows the impact of privacy breaches by limiting interactions to avoid further risks. This study delves into the ongoing emotional distress that student boarders endure following privacy breaches or unsafe living conditions. Their stories show how they carry sadness, fear, and changes in behavior long after the events. Some avoid others, move out, or change their daily habits just to feel safe. These responses show how deep the emotional wounds go and how challenging it is for boarders to feel secure and at peace again. Participant 2 stated: "Before, we used to eat together, but not anymore. So, the adjustment I made was to avoid them; I transferred to a boarding house" (SS29 P1).

Participant 2 decided to leave the boarding house and live somewhere else just to avoid certain people. The same participant turned off the lights while sleeping to avoid being seen, showing how fear changed even simple things like sleeping, stating: "I used to sleep with the lights on, but now I turned them off so if they try to peek, they won't see me" (SS96 P2). The aftermath of distressing experiences in the boarding house triggered contrasting coping mechanisms.

Participant 6 stated: “Because of what happened, we became more open with each other” (SS52 P6). One participant chose to withdraw from social settings like group meals due to fear, signalling heightened anxiety and emotional vulnerability. Participant 7 stated: “I no longer join group meals because I’m afraid” (SS69 P7).

Lingering emotional trauma can deeply affect students’ behavior and mental health. When students feel unsafe or embarrassed, they start changing how they act. Cherry (2023) noted that emotional stress among college students often leads to isolation and sadness. In the same way, Tang et al. (2020) found that students living away from home often struggle emotionally because they feel alone and unsafe. In the responses, we see students choosing to leave boarding houses or avoid social settings to protect their feelings.

2. Academic disruptions.

This theme indicates the impact of privacy breaches through difficulty concentrating, decreased productivity, and a negative impact on learning outcomes. Privacy breaches of the students significantly harm their academic performance due to stress. Boarding house experiences filled with stress, fear, and noise have made it challenging for student boarders to concentrate and do well in school. Many students shared how their emotional strain, triggered by feeling watched, unsafe housing, or noisy surroundings, affected their focus, sleep, and mental health. These ongoing emotional struggles led to poor sleeping patterns, fear, and even drinking to cope. All these made it harder for them to perform well in their studies. As one participant stated: “I get suddenly triggered when someone knocks at the door (SS64 P7).One participant recalled: If there’s a slight bump or a loud noise, I get bothered. It’s like a flashback” (SS90 P10).

As stated by Participant 10, even minor sounds or bumps can be disturbing and feel like flashbacks. This points to the presence of emotional responses that remain active even in less intense moments, indicating how past experiences continue to affect current mental states. This finding shows that their academic performance is affected not because they lack interest but because their environment is disturbing. Tomas reported that boarders often struggle more than commuters due to poor living conditions. Salindo and Ubat (2018) also found that when boarding houses are unsafe or uncomfortable, students may lack energy and focus for school. Their emotional condition becomes a barrier that lowers their learning performance and motivation.

3. Social withdrawal and isolation.

This shows the impact of privacy breaches by limiting interactions to avoid further risks. Living in a boarding house, especially after experiencing privacy breaches or emotional stress, affects how students interact with others. Many student boarders start to feel distant, untrusting, or isolated. These feelings make it challenging for them to form close friendships or feel like they belong. This theme shows how the students' social ties slowly weaken, causing them to withdraw or avoid group activities due to fear, judgment, or mistrust. Participants' experience illustrates the emotional toll of a boarding environment that becomes too difficult to endure, prompting a desire to escape. However, this is contrasted by the same participant's attempt to maintain social connection through immediate disclosure to a board member. This contrast suggests that even in moments of emotional burnout, student boarders still seek interpersonal outlets to cope. It reveals how emotional resilience is sometimes sustained not by the environment itself but by the presence of even minimal social support. As mentioned by participant 6: "We have monthly meetings... we decided to report. We had shared rooms, ma'am... no boys allowed" (SS50 P6).

As stated by Participant 6, regular meetings among boarders suggest a collective attempt to maintain order, share concerns, and build a sense of solidarity in managing shared living conditions. This reflects proactive behavior in addressing ongoing issues, such as safety or privacy concerns. Meanwhile, the mention of shared rooms without male presence indicates a rule meant to promote safety, yet it also implies a proximity that can either foster stronger social ties or create discomfort depending on individual experiences and past incidents. Together, these statements reveal how student boarders navigate community-building and personal boundaries in tightly shared spaces. Participant 7 stated: "I don't like being around them anymore; it's hard to trust people now" (SS67 P7).

As stated by Participant 7, the emotional toll of negative experiences in the boarding environment has led to a strong sense of withdrawal and isolation. The decision to avoid others and the difficulty in trusting people highlight how deeply breaches of privacy or betrayal can affect a student's capacity to form or maintain relationships. This distancing is not merely a preference but a protective response, illustrating how emotional wounds shape future interactions. The shift from openness to guardedness reflects a

significant impact on the border's overall social adjustment and emotional health. And further stated: "They're acting differently, like we're strangers, and I don't want to talk to anyone anymore" (SS68 P7).

As stated by Participant 7, the respondent expressed that their peers are acting differently and that they no longer feel connected, as if they have become strangers. They also shared that they no longer want to talk to anyone. This reflects a growing sense of alienation and emotional detachment. Despite being surrounded by people, the student feels isolated and alone. The changes in peer behavior and communication have contributed to feelings of disconnection and loneliness. This emotional withdrawal suggests a breakdown in trust and comfort within the boarding environment, which significantly affects the student's social and psychological well-being.

After experiencing stress, fear, or privacy breaches, many students begin to feel isolated, distrustful, and emotionally distant from their peers. Harrowdev (2020) asserts that emotional trauma in shared living spaces often disrupts social ties among students. These disruptions diminish their inclination to participate, voice their opinions, or establish new relationships, ultimately impacting their daily emotional well-being. Many experience judgment or discussion, leading them to withdraw and cease involvement in group activities or conversations.

Conclusion

The findings revealed that privacy violations in student boarding houses are frequent and multifaceted, arising from both structural deficiencies and interpersonal dynamics within shared living environments. Inadequate physical safeguards, such as broken locks, overcrowding, and insufficient lighting, alongside peer-related intrusions, significantly compromise students' ability to regulate personal boundaries, consistent with Altman's Privacy Regulation Theory. These violations produce adverse psychological effects, including anxiety, emotional distress, hypervigilance, and diminished trust, while also negatively affecting academic functioning through poor concentration, sleep disturbances, and reduced engagement, reflecting the importance of safety and psychological security emphasized in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Despite individual coping efforts, the absence of institutional oversight and formal support systems exacerbates students' vulnerability, highlighting a critical gap in safeguarding student welfare in off-campus housing

contexts. These findings underscore the urgent need for coordinated institutional and regulatory interventions to ensure safe, secure, and privacy-respecting boarding environments.

Thus, it is recommended that Local Government Units, in collaboration with Higher Education Institutions, establish and enforce regulatory standards for boarding houses, including secure physical infrastructure, adequate safety measures, and regular compliance monitoring. Institutions should also strengthen student support services through confidential counseling, reporting mechanisms, and privacy awareness programs to address the psychological and academic impacts of privacy violations. Furthermore, the implementation of orientation programs, peer support initiatives, and housing accreditation systems can promote accountability and empower students to protect their privacy and well-being. These measures are essential to safeguarding students' dignity, enhancing their sense of security, and fostering boarding environments conducive to academic success and holistic development.

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Never married women and the social difficulties they faced in Turkey in the context of the institutionalization of bachelorhood

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Abstract: Among other things, the modern urban life has changed the dominant norms regarding the family and marriage. The trends of delayed marriage and never marrying after divorce have become prevalent. Relative normalization has followed the prevalence of this trend. According to the basic argument of this study, in the third stage, like the others, the trend of never marrying has also reached to the stage of institutionalization. Especially among women, the trend of never marrying attracts much more attention compared to that of men. While numerous studies have been conducted on this issue in many countries around the world, this topic has not yet been studied adequately in Turkey. The aim of this study is to investigate and discuss the societal pressures and problems faced by the never-married women in Turkey. The data of the study is based on the questionnaires and interviews conducted with a total of 60 unmarried women over the age of 35 from three different cities in Turkey. Thus, it became possible both to obtain quantitative data on this topic for the first time in Turkey and to make a comparison among three Turkish cities with different social and cultural characteristics. The data shows that, as in the rest of the world, never marrying has been institutionalizing in Turkey as well, but parallel to this process, the women face serious exclusion, obstruction, deprivation, and stigmatization from the society.

Keywords: never-married women, institutionalization of non-marriage, Turkey, societal pressure, gender roles

Introduction

The modernity deeply influenced and transformed every institution, including the family and marriage.

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AGATHOS, Volume 17, Issue 2 (33-34): 649-670, DOI 10.5281/zenodo.23610419
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The phenomenon of living alone arose as a significantly different social reality for both men and women, without having the necessity of marriage in two different aspects. Firstly, the phenomenon of living alone became represented by a larger and growing group unlike ever before. Secondly, the notion of men and women choosing to live without marriage started to exist as a conscious and voluntary choice and as a lifestyle, unlike the exceptional or obligatory circumstances of the past.

In this study, the notion of unmarried women refers to the women who have never been married and currently do not have a marital or partner relationship. They are not divorced or widowed women or those living with a partner. The unmarried women in different cultures are labeled with various terms ranging from the least pejorative to the most derogatory. Some of those terms include "single woman", "unmarried woman", "old virgin", "old maid", "spinster", "leftover woman" and "surplus woman" (İbrahim and Hassan 2009, 397; Alwi and Lourdunathan 2020, 2; Situmorang 2005). In the literature, there is also the term of "parasite singles" (Yamada, as cited in Knarvik Svendsen 2006, 42), which refers to women who, despite being of marriageable age, continue to live under the care of family members. However, at least in the context of Turkey, it is not unmarried men but unmarried women who make more sacrifices, as they are often tasked with the care of the elderly parents or unmarried siblings. According to the TÜİK data (2018), while the percentage of men with care giving responsibilities in the population not participating in the workforce is 14.8% in Turkey; for women, this percentage is 45.9%.

Increasing numbers and rates of the unmarried women in Turkey, as a country undergoing modernization, are following an upward trend. Comparing Turkey with the Asian countries and societies would be appropriate in this regard. In the literature, the following statement regarding the Asian countries is noteworthy: "The Asian avoidance of marriage is new, and striking. Only 30 years ago, just 2% of women were single in most Asian countries. The share of the unmarried women in their 30s in Japan, Taiwan, Singapore and Hong Kong has risen 20 points or more" (Beri and Beri 2013, 858). In other modernizing Asian countries, similar trends are observed in varying degrees. While Turkey is one of the countries where the percentage of the unmarried women has significantly increased, it may be argued that the research on this topic is inadequate when compared to the volume of research conducted on other Asian countries.

In many Asian countries, the rate of unmarried women, which was only around 2% among women 50 years ago, has increased tenfold, reaching up to approximately 20% in some modernized countries such as Japan, Taiwan, Singapore, and Hong Kong. Similarly, in Thailand, the proportion of unmarried women over the age of 40 was 7% in 1980, but forty years later, it increased to 12% (Beri and Beri 2013, 858). The figures from different countries, especially among those women in their 30s and 40s, indicate significant changes in those rates. Contrary to the past practices, nowadays it has become quite normal for women to marry in their 30s.

According to a study conducted in Malaysia, the rate of unmarried women aged 30-34 increased from 6% in 1990 to 9.7% in 2000 (Saili and Saili 2018). Another data related to Malaysia indicates that the proportion of unmarried women over the age of 30 was 3.1% in 1960, but by 2000, it increased to 23.3% nationwide and to 37.8% in the capital city of Kuala Lumpur (Ibrahim and Hassan 2009, 396).

Considering the widespread worldwide trend of living without marriage, this phenomenon may be seen as the institutionalization of virginity and bachelorhood; and it may be argued that virginity and bachelorhood are no longer viewed as temporary states but as established norms. The state of being unmarried applies to men as well, but it is more prevalent among women. This is because the society perceives a woman's solitude as a greater problem than that of a man. However, the institutionalization of bachelorhood will not be as straightforward as the institutionalization of marriage. Marriage has been endorsed, commanded, and legitimized by religions, traditions, and cultures, externally and in a top-down manner. Conversely, bachelorhood lacks such external legitimization and faces significant opposition. Under these conditions, the institutionalization of bachelorhood, with little potential support from the values of modernity, would be much more challenging and laborious than the institutionalization of marriage.

Institutionalization and the institutionalization of bachelorhood

As it is stated in the literature (Marshal 2009), a social institution is a different concept than the culture. The culture is concerned with meanings, whereas a social institution is concerned with social existence. This is precisely why the social institutions resemble social structures rather than culture. A social institution represents a stable cross-section of life and embodies a certain degree of consolidation. At

the core of social institutions are habits, and a series of stabilized, patterned, and generally accepted behaviors. If a behavior or series of behaviors is endorsed, practiced, or potentially applicable by all or most members of society, it emerges as a social institution.

In the pre-modern societies, remaining unmarried, staying single, and living a single lifestyle were exceptional and rare occurrences. However, in the modern society, they have evolved into a lifestyle choice. What was once not fully approved by the entire society or its dominant majority, such as being single and living a single lifestyle, has become increasingly accepted or has become regarded as acceptable by the majority, particularly in the last decade. Thus, concepts like family, marriage, divorce, and widowhood, among others, have started to evolve into social institutions as norms. Previous studies have emphasized phrases like "remaining single in a married world" or "living single in a married society" (Situmorang 2005). However, nowadays, it's not about "remaining single". Not marrying and being single are now about choice, preference, and it is a way of life. Namely, in the past, being single for women was an external condition determined by men, but today, it's a choice made by women, a way of life, and an internal state. It is self-determined and requires no validation from others. Individuals construct their existence by themselves. Ultimately, in today's world, being single in older age is becoming almost as normal as getting married, even trending towards becoming an institution.

This study claims that singleness and the single lifestyle are becoming increasingly institutionalized as widespread behaviors. Based on this main claim, field research data on the societal issues of single or never-married Turkish women was collected, compared with similar examples from around the world, and finally interpreted.

Literature

As previously mentioned, there are relatively few and recent studies conducted on the topic in Turkey. One of the first studies conducted on the topic is the article titled "Silent and Invisible, "Young" and "Woman": Unmarried Daughter in the House" by Lüküslü and Çelik (2008). However, this study is a qualitative study and obtained its data through interviews. The participants consisted of a total of 30 individuals aged 15-25, half of whom lived in Istanbul and the other half in Ankara, and they neither worked and studied. The article is highly significant and noteworthy within its scope, as it is almost the

first and the last study by using a qualitative method which examines the problems of young women, who do not receive education or work, in their parents' homes. Nevertheless, there is no numerical data or percentage concerning the unmarried participants or this specific group in Turkey in the study.

Another study regarding the topic is an article written by Çelik (2018). According to Çelik's study, like cohabitation, living alone is also rare in Turkey. Less than 10% of the population is living alone, and nearly half of this population is above the age of 65. In this respect, Turkey is the least "western" country ranked 69 in the Gender-related Development Index (in 2013), with a low level of women in the labor force (28% in 2014) which is1% of the never-married women and a fertility rate of 2.17 (cited from TUİK, 2014 by Çelik, 2018). In her article, Çelik (2018) emphasizes that there hasn't been a sociological study conducted on the never-married women aged 35-50 in Turkey. The current study is particularly significant in addressing the relevant gap in the literature.

The noteworthy studies on the subject in Turkey are limited to those mentioned above. One of them is an unpublished master's thesis, and the oldest one dates back to 2008, totaling three studies. This situation may indicate that this issue has emerged as a relatively new social phenomenon in Turkey and also points out the inadequacy of scientific research on the topic. However, this subject has been researched and studied globally for many years.

The studies on the topic in the U.S. date back as far as 90 years ago. As early as 1932, Housheer and Moseley (1932) conducted a study titled "A Study of the Unmarried", focusing on the reasons for remaining unmarried by surveying 65 unmarried women and 55 unmarried men. The authors examined those reasons under four main categories: economic, emotional, social, and familial. However, considering that the topic was addressed alongside men, it is understood that the preference of women for remaining unmarried was not yet a widespread or individually significant topic for examination in the U.S., or it was not seen as a topic worthy of examining separately. Ten years later, Foster and Wilson (1942) focused on the college-educated women in their study, questioning 100 college-educated women about their reasons for remaining unmarried. The authors received responses highlighting self-sufficiency, freedom, shyness, sensitivity, and being tense as prominent reasons. In the same year, Reed (1942) published a book titled "The Single Women", in

which she extensively examined the reasons for remaining unmarried under five main headings: social, economic, educational, familial, and personal. Reed, who conducted her study through interviews conducted with 300 women, may be considered to have written the first book on the subject in the U.S.

In his study, by directly focusing on the reasons for remaining unmarried, Stone (1949) found out the parental attachment, no physical desire, homosexuality, feelings of inadequacy, fear of sex, and illness as reasons for remaining single.

One of the early articles that thoroughly researched and analyzed the subject in the literature belongs to Gigy (1980), where open-ended questions were directed to 66 unmarried women over the age of 30. The participants of the study mentioned the mismatch between marriage and career, as well as not having encountered anyone they would consider marrying up to that point. Additionally, the participants expressed that they believed marriage would significantly impact their personal freedoms and independence in their private lives in a negative manner, which they were not willing to compromise at that stage. Another reason cited by the participants for remaining single was their sexual orientation. A similar early article study was conducted by Loewenstein in 1981. In this study involving 60 women aged 35-65, 38 of whom had never been married, the reasons for remaining single were investigated. The 24% of the participants reported that they had chosen to remain unmarried, 13% indicated that they had previously been in a serious relationship but had not pursued a new one after it had ended, and 8% stated that they remained single due to the incompatibility of the marriage with their career (cited by Apostolou 2017 from Loewenstein et al. 1981).

The studies conducted in India (Prabakhar 2011; Krishnakumari 1987) have shown that the percentage of unmarried women in urban areas was twice that of rural areas. This data may be considered as an indication that remaining unmarried was somewhat more feasible and easier in modern settings as a challenge against the traditions by women, whereas it was much more challenging in rural and traditional settings.

Yamada identified four common characteristics that may be observed among most single women, except for exceptional cases, which may provide insight into why those women haven't married. Firstly, the unmarried women generally have pursued a career and have a professional occupation. Secondly, most unmarried women

have mothers who are homemakers. Thirdly, the unmarried women have parents who are supportive of them dating and having boyfriends. Finally, all unmarried women either have a boyfriend or are generally in a position where they could find one whenever they want (Yamada 1999, 41).

One of the notable studies conducted in England is by Macvarish (2006), which is based on interviews conducted with 14 women aged between 34 and 50. According to this study, the proportion of single women living alone, representing all unmarried women, divorced, and widowed women in England, increased from 17% in 1971 to 31% in 2000 (Macvarish 2006, 81). Although the percentage includes the other two groups besides those who have never married, it is evident that the number of single women living alone nearly doubled over the course of 30 years. Undoubtedly, Apostolou et al. (2023) conducted the most comprehensive study in the literature. This study, authored by a total of 22 researchers, is a complete international collaborative work. The data for this study were collected from 7,141 single women and men aged 18 and over from 14 different countries, including Turkey. A total of 953 individuals participated from Turkey, 684 of whom were women. Without gender distinction, it was found that 22.2% of the Turkish participants were voluntarily single, while 14.6% experienced involuntary singlehood, meaning they were currently waiting for a suitable partner and still had hopes of getting married (Apostolou 2023, 6). It is understood that this group worldwide constituted the significant portion of those who have never married.

Turkey presents a variable and dynamic outlook in terms of women living alone, situated between Asia and Europe, in a transitional phase from traditional to modern, characterized by both stability and change.

Method

This study was conducted with the unmarried women aged 35 and over, a demographic segment for which reaching out to and persuading for survey participation and interviews are quite challenging tasks. The reason for targeting the unmarried women over the age of 35 is the perception that the societal pressures and stigma are even more pronounced for the women in this age group due to the belief that they have passed the typical age for marriage. The survey research was conducted with 60 unmarried women in total and 20 women from each of the cities of Gaziantep, Eskişehir, and Zonguldak, and the interviews were conducted with 32 of them.

The decision to conduct this study in three different cities is related to Turkey's structural conditions and its tripartite cultural character. The first of these is Turkey's inland character, where relatively traditional culture prevails. The second character is its coastal character, where modern culture is more dominant. The third character is the transitional culture experienced in regions between traditional and modern (Mardin 1991) Gaziantep has been chosen for the first cultural type, Zonguldak for the second, and Eskişehir for the third, and field studies have been conducted in these cities. It is considered that the problems experienced by unmarried women living in each of these three cities, representing each of the three regions and cultures, will differ.

The sample was determined by using the snowball sampling method. When interpreting the societal pressures on the unmarried women, both the social and cultural context of Turkey and the different social, economic, and cultural characteristics of the three cities were taken into account. It should be noted that these interpretations and inferences are not universally applicable, and the limitations of the survey should be considered. While the entire study contains detailed data ranging from the reasons for remaining unmarried to the outlook on marriage, this paper specifically focuses on the data related to the problems experienced by the unmarried women, the interpretations of the data, and the relevant interview transcripts.[1]

Demographic data

When examining the age range of the participants, it was observed that 48.3% were aged 35-40, 16.7% were aged 41-45, 23.3% were aged 46-50, and 11.7% were aged 51 and above. As seen above, the percentage of the unmarried women decreases as the age increases, while the percentage of widowed women increases. Therefore, it may be said that the age group of 35-40, which has the highest proportion in this study, represents the main target audience for the research in this subject matter.

When the educational levels of the participants are considered, it was found that 5% were illiterate, 3.3% were literate, 13.3% were elementary school graduates, 10% were middle school graduates, 18.3% were high school graduates, 16.7% had associate degrees,

[1] This study obtained the permission of the Ethical Board of Social Sciences at the Black Sea Technical University, dated 21 January 2022, and numbered E-82554930-050.01.04-255205.

18.3% had bachelor's degrees, 11.7% had master's degrees, and 3.3% had doctoral degrees. Comparing these data with the Turkey Women's Survey conducted by the Turkish Statistical Institute (TÜİK) in 2018, it can be observed that the educational level of the unmarried women was higher than the overall educational level of women in Turkey. From this, it may be inferred that there is a positive correlation between the level of education and being unmarried, and particularly that the higher education process may be a reason for delaying marriage among women.

The participants in the research sample were asked with whom they lived, and a large majority of the participants, around 70%, stated that they were living with their families, while 3.3% were living with their siblings, and 26.7% reported living alone. Fry and Parker (2021, 11) have addressed this issue in the literature, and according to a study conducted in the U.S., 24% of the unmarried women live with at least one family member. Although this percentage is considerably higher compared to the 2% rate among the married women, the rate of the unmarried women in Turkey living with family members is much higher. This situation can be associated with Turkey's relatively traditional family structure. These data reveal that only about 1/4 of the unmarried women in Turkey dare to live alone. The majority of the rest do not dare to live alone due to both economic and social reasons, or their individual or societal conditions do not allow for it. Özbay (2015, 106) indicates that women who struggle with poverty, do not work in any job, lack institutional security, and undertake childcare and eldercare tend to prefer living with their families as a survival strategy. On the other hand, it may be argued that the male-dominated understanding in the Turkish society exerts "neighborhood pressure" on women in this regard. In the in-depth interviews, it has been observed that the care of elderly and sick parents is often entrusted not to the male children but rather to the female children, especially to the unmarried daughters.

R3: My father passed away when I was 23 years old, and since then, I have been taking care of my mother, and I couldn't think of getting married.
R4: I needed to help my family, so I worked and supported them. Their health was my top priority, and I couldn't think of myself before they recovered.
R28: My mother was ill, and I dedicated all my youth to her. There were many people who wanted to meet me or sent news, but I postponed marriage for my mother's health. I just lost my mother, and if I am going to marry, I may do it in the future.

R35: I have two elder brothers, and they are like my mother and father. They prevented me from getting married with excuses like "How will we manage without you? We did not get married, and neither will you".
R55: My family was very difficult. My father, may he rest in peace, was bedridden, and I was taking care of him. My mother was taking care of him at home, and I was working.

By those statements, all participants indicate that the responsibilities of the family fell on the unmarried women. Especially the responsibilities such as caring for family members' health, providing care and financial support have led those women to postpone their thoughts of marriage. The losses or serious problems in the family such as the death of a father and the illness of a mother, as seen in the statements of P3 and P28, have caused those women to spend their lives caring for the family members. This has been a significant factor in postponing their thoughts of marriage. These statements highlight that the family responsibilities are not equally distributed within the family, with unmarried women bearing a heavier burden of the family responsibility compared to the married or unmarried men.

The employment status of the research sample was also examined. Accordingly, it was determined that 63.3% of the participants were employed, while 36.7% were unemployed. These results indicate that the majority of the unmarried women participating in the survey are actively engaged in the workforce and economically active. According to the TÜİK data (2014), the labor force participation rate among the unmarried women in Turkey is 39.7%, while, it is 30.7% among the married women. The likely reason for the higher rate in the study sample is probably partly due to the time difference and more significantly due to the 17-year age gap between the ages of 18 and 35. When the employment status is considered at the level of different cities, the rates are 55% in Zonguldak, 60% in Eskişehir, and 75% in Gaziantep. It may be said that Gaziantep is surprising in this regard compared to other issues. Being an industrial, agricultural, and service-oriented city and the strong economy of the city seem to have had an effect in this regard. Zonguldak, on the other hand, is a city known especially for its mining sector. Since its economy is more based on this sector, and mostly men are employed in this sector; it may be said that there are not sufficient employment opportunities for women. Additionally, being a small city may translate into limited job opportunities for Zonguldak.

Societal pressures and challenges experienced by the single women

Understanding the experiences of unmarried women aged 35 and over regarding the societal pressure to marry, our surveys and interviews addressed the participants' thoughts and experiences through various questions. The participants were asked about the pressures and difficulties they encounter in their daily social lives.

Table 1:"Survival for the unmarried women is harder than that of men."

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	22	36.7
Agree	9	15
Partially Agree	10	16.7
Disagree	10	16.7
Strongly Disagree	8	13.3
Missing System	1	1.6
Total	60	100

36.7% of the participants strongly agreed with the statement of "The single women have a harder time standing on their own feet compared to the single men", while a total of 68.4% responded positively to this proposition. This suggests that the single women face more difficulties and societal barriers compared to the single men. Based on these findings, it may be argued that the Turkish society, despite undergoing a modernization process spanning over a century, still exhibits patriarchal characteristics, demonstrating a tendency to tolerate single men while being less tolerant towards single women. In the Turkish society, remaining unmarried still carries gender-specific implications, making the lives of single women even more challenging.

The responses given for this proposition also exhibit significant differences across cities. The overall responses agreeing with this proposition are 95% in Eskişehir, 75% in Gaziantep, and 55% in Zonguldak. The inland characteristics in the first two cities, corresponding to patriarchal, traditional, and controlling social structures, contrast with the coastal city's tolerant, egalitarian, and individualistic societal structure, which appears to have influenced the results. The unmarried women aged 35 and over, across the research field, have indicated that they are disadvantaged compared to the unmarried men, with rates reaching up to 70%, clearly stating that this disadvantage is entirely related to the gender roles. Additionally, the participants have indicated that they are under even more pressure due to the gender-biased approach in Gaziantep and Eskişehir compared to

Zonguldak. Overall, these results indicate that marriage is still a societal norm for the women in all three cities and that this norm affects the potential for the unmarried women to thrive.

Table 2: "I struggled to find rental housing because I live alone"

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	2	3.3
Agree	2	3.3
Partially Agree	6	10
Disagree	12	20
Strongly Disagree	36	60
Missing System	2	3.3
Total	60	100

According to the findings of this study, 16.6% of the single women aged 35 and over have reported experiencing difficulties in finding rental housing in varying degrees. However, since the question begins with the phrase "Because I live alone," the responses of the single women living alone would be more explanatory than the entire sample. In fact, the cross-tabulation reveals that while this rate remains at 10% for those living with their families, it rises to 37.6% for the single women living alone. These results indicate that despite undergoing modernization for at least a century, Turkish society, while to some extent tolerating single women living with their parents within the sanctity of the family concept, does not show the same tolerance towards the single women living alone. More than one-third of the single women living alone are rejected and excluded from the society simply because they are single and living alone.

When the issue is examined at the level of different cities, the rates of the women struggling to find rental housing due to living alone manifest as 10% in Zonguldak, 15.8% in Gaziantep, and 21.1% in Eskişehir. Despite having the same rate of living alone by 25% in both Zonguldak and Gaziantep, it is quite understandable that the difficulty in finding rental housing is higher in Gaziantep, which supports and extends all previous interpretations about this city. This city's inland, conservative, and traditional characteristics have led to greater difficulties for the single women living alone in this regard. Conversely, the coastal, individualistic, and open-minded environment

of Zonguldak has somewhat alleviated the difficulties experienced by the single women in this regard. These figures indicate that the single women still face significant challenges due to their status of living alone. During the in-depth interviews, the participants expressed their experiences and views on the matter as follows:

> *P6: I faced difficulties in finding a rental apartment when they learned that I would live alone because I am single.*
> *P43: I faced difficulties in finding a place to live because they treated being single as a crime, so I could only rent a house through acquaintances. My boss intervened and helped.*
> *P57: They prefer the married couples more when renting a house, and the singles are judged as unreliable.*

The participants have stated that the society perceived the singles as "unreliable" and viewed them as potential criminals, and for these reasons, the landlords did not rent out apartments to the singles without the intervention of the intermediaries and did not include the singles in their midst. This situation is a strong indication that the single women may experience social isolation and feelings of loneliness.

Table 3: "I believe that the unmarried women are excluded from society"

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	23	38.3
Agree	4	6.7
Partially Agree	9	15
Disagree	16	26.7
Strongly Disagree	8	13.3
Total	60	100

The unmarried women may face stigmatization and ultimately exclusion from the society due to societal pressures aimed at preserving the sacred family values and upholding the social morals (Lüküslü & Çelik 2008; Uslu 2012). A significant portion of the participants, 38.3%, strongly agreed with the statement of "I believe that the unmarried women are excluded from the society". Though to a lesser extent, when combined with the other two affirmative responses, this rate reaches to 60%, which is quite high. When the matter is examined in terms of different cities, the percentage of the participants who responded affirmatively to this statement is 40% in Zonguldak,

75% in Gaziantep, and as high as 90% in Eskişehir. As usual, being a coastal city, Zonguldak may have fostered a more open-minded population over time, resulting in relatively lower feelings of exclusion among the unmarried women in this city. Conversely, the inland characteristics of the other two cities may have cultivated a culture that tends to exclude the unmarried women from the society over time.

The participants have expressed their views on this matter as follows:

> *P11: I live with my family, so I didn't struggle, but when I interacted with my friends, I felt that I was left out of the conversation. It's really difficult to have nothing to contribute when they talk about their family life, spouses, and children.*
> *P24: We're seen as those who can't relate to our married peers. We face exclusion and judgment, and these are problems stemming from the entrenched ideas in the society.*
> *P31: The unmarried women are stigmatized by being labeled not as unmarried but as 'staying at home.' If you're not conventionally attractive or slim, you're seen as unable to get married for those reasons. Those who remain unmarried due to family pressure are perceived as single not because of what their family did but because of their own choices or preferences.*
> *P57: In another form of pressure, when I'm the only single one in my friend group, they don't invite me to gatherings.*

The literature reveals that some studies have found similar results, identifying various forms of exclusion faced by the unmarried women despite their advancing age. For instance, in a study conducted in Malaysia (Situmorang 2005, 302), the participants reported feeling excluded and perceived as a threat to their married friends' husbands during the social gatherings among friends, echoing sentiments reiterated by the participants in the study conducted by Reynolds and Wetherel (2003). Indeed, one of the earliest studies on the subject in the U.S. (Weiss 1973) was titled: "Loneliness: The experience of emotional and social isolation", emphasizing the loneliness experienced by the unmarried women.

According to Sharp and Ganong (2007, 836), as the number, proportion, and visibility of the unmarried women increase, so does the discrimination, labeling, and othering against them. This negative attitude, termed "Singlism" by DePaulo and Morris (2006), has been extensively studied in the U.S. and Europe (DePaulo & Morris 2005; Morris, DePaulo, Hertel, & Taylor 2008; Greitemeyer 2009; Hertel, Schütz, DePaulo, Morris, & Stucke 2007). Perhaps labeling exclusion, isolation, and othering of the single women as a common behavior and

belief as “anti-singlism” with a slight modification could be a clearer and more appropriate concept.

Table 4:“I was considered immoral because I am single and living alone”

Responses	Frequenc y	Percent
Strongly Agree	2	3.3
Agree	2	3.3
Partially Agree	4	6.7
Disagree	12	20
Strongly Disagree	40	66.7
Total	60	100

The percentage of those who indicated that they were seen as immoral because they were single and living alone is 6.6%, while this percentage doubles when combined with the “Partially Agree” response. Furthermore, when looking at the responses of those who live alone in the cross-tabulation, the first percentage rises to 18.8%, and the second percentage rises to 25%. Since the subject is sensitive, the “Partially Agree” response could easily be considered as part of the affirmative responses, as individuals may refrain from expressing their situation. Therefore, the total percentage reaches to 43.8%, which is an alarming level. These data highlight that even in a society where the patriarchal norms are still dominant despite the modernization process, the positive moral values are actually associated not with the individual, but with the group, category, or social structure which the individual is part of. It also indicates that the single women may be perceived as immoral with a sexist and bigoted approach, which is quite striking.

Table 5: “I have been harassed by men because I am single and live alone”

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	1	1.7
Agree	2	3.3
Partially Agree	3	5
Disagree	12	20

Strongly Disagree	42	70
Total	60	100

According to the table, while 10% of the participants responded positively to this statement, when the cross-tabulations are examined, the same percentage rises to 25.1% among the single women who live alone. Considering the possibility of not expressing the harassment that the single women experience, it becomes clearer how alarming these rates are. This means that if a woman is single, one out of every ten, and if she also lives alone, one out of every four women, is subjected to physical, verbal, or emotional harassment by the opposite sex.

When looking at the rate of the women who declared that they were harassed by men due to being single and living alone, the rate appears as 15% in Zonguldak, and 10% both in Eskişehir and Gaziantep. Based on the sensitivity of the matter, it may be argued that the participants from the inland regions might have inclined towards concealing or hiding this issue due to their fear of stigma. In Zonguldak, however, where there is a cultural emphasis on individuality and autonomy, this issue might have been expressed more comfortably. Overall, it becomes apparent that harassment is a significant issue for women in general, but even a greater problem for the single women livingalone. This issue persists even in cities of a country like Turkey, which has been undergoing modernization for at least a century. The single women not only have to cope with various hindrances and difficulties imposed by the society but also have to deal with this issue. More importantly, due to societal norms, they may feel compelled to conceal it.

In Turkey, some studies conducted by the conservative sources (KADEM, 2014) report a harassment rate for women at 0.9%, while another source (MMO, 2021, 5) indicates this rate as 5%. However, this study found the same rate to be 10% for the single women and 25% for the single women living alone. Depending on the scope and detail of the research question, it is apparent that the single women in Turkey experience more instances of sexual harassment compared to women in general, and the single women living alone experience even higher rates of sexual harassment. The data obtained from this study is consistent with the existing literature, and particularly in rural areas, single women tend to conceal their experiences related to sexual harassment and abuse.

The literature includes data on unmarried women being harassed by the individuals in their social circles and being seen as easy sexual objects, but there are very limited studies on this topic. The unmarried women often refrain from reporting those incidents to the police or from participating in academic research due to fears of losing their jobs, prestige, social relationships, and friends, as well as facing social stigma. However, according to a study, 66% of the unmarried women experience verbal harassment, while the remainder face emotional abuse (cited by Raghu, 2019 from Giri, 2000).

Conclusion

This study is the first in Turkey conducted by collecting qualitative data on the unmarried women who have passed the age of marriage according to the general acceptance in the Turkish culture. It is acknowledged that this situation has various advantages and disadvantages. The most significant advantage is pioneering in this field, while the biggest disadvantage is the necessity to rely solely on its own resources. In other words, there is no opportunity to compare and contrast the data with other studies conducted previously in Turkey. However, to some extent this study will be able to provide an opportunity for future research related to Turkey.

As it happened in the rest of the world, the spread of modernity as a framework process in Turkey has brought about the opportunity for individual freedoms and particularly for women, the choice to live independently. In almost every society, the rate of the unmarried women is roughly around 10%. This rate tends to be slightly lower in rural areas and higher in urban areas. Similarly, in countries that are still in the process of modernization and development, this rate is somewhat lower, while it is slightly higher in modernized and developed countries.

The indirect studies and data suggest that the rate of never-married women in Turkey is also around 10%. While 10% of the society is unmarried, it seems that the remaining 90% is subjected to significant pressure. This is indicated by the responses provided by the participants in this study.

The first significant finding emerging from the data of the study is based on the comparison between the unmarried men and the unmarried women. Accordingly, more than two-thirds of the women participating in the study believe that it is much more difficult for the unmarried women to sustain their lives in Turkey compared to the

unmarried men. The participants must have experienced this difficulty in their daily lives, so that they expressed such an impression in this regard. This result is highly noteworthy as it demonstrates that the social sphere in Turkey remains predominantly masculine and patriarchal, leaving women, especially the unmarried women, with extremely limited space.

The second significant finding of the study pertains to the difficulty that the unmarried women face in finding rental housing. According to the data, while about 1 in 10 unmarried women living with their families experience this problem, more than one-third of the unmarried women living alone experienced the same problem. In other words, more than one out of every three unmarried women living alone experiences difficulty in finding rental housing. This difficulty is increasing among the unmarried women, but it peaks especially among those living alone. This data may be interpreted as indicating that the patriarchal social structure in the Turkish society does not wish to accept women as unmarried individuals, nor does it accept seeing them as independent actors in the social sphere. In this sense, the data may demonstrate that the Turkish society still predominantly maintains a conservative structure despite undergoing a transformation, and is reluctant to consider women as interlocutors in the public social sphere.

The third significant finding of the study is the high level of perception among the participants regarding the exclusion of the unmarried women from the Turkish society. According to the data, nearly two-thirds of the participants believe that the unmarried women in Turkey were excluded from the society and social spheres. These results vary slightly in the coastal city of Zonguldak but increase to a rate of 9/10 in the inland cities, which is a remarkably notable finding. These findings indicate that the unmarried women in Turkey, especially the unmarried women living alone, and particularly the unmarried lonely women in inland and more conservative regions, experience significant exclusion, isolation, and loneliness.

The fourth significant finding of the study is the perception among the participants, by 13.3%, believing that the unmarried individuals in the Turkish society are deemed immoral solely due to their single status. Moreover, this percentage nearly doubles among the unmarried women living alone. Approximately one-fourth of the unmarried women living alone in Turkey face societal treatment that leads them to believe that they are considered immoral simply because they are

single and they live alone. It is evident that in Turkey, some members of the society may label individuals as immoral based solely on their unmarried and solitary status, without requiring any other concrete evidence.

The fifth and most significant finding of the study relates to the issue of harassment. The data revealed that one out of every ten single women in Turkey experienced harassment due to being single and "vulnerable". This rate increases significantly among the single individuals living alone, surpassing one-fourth of them. Even if we set aside the possibility of those who do not report harassment, these rates are incredibly alarming. Under normal circumstances, this shameful situation should not occur or be experienced. However, it becomes a harsh reality for one out of every four single women living alone.

All these quantitative findings, probably similar to other countries and with varying rates, indicate that the single women face serious societal issues. In this study, the problems such as isolation, exclusion, deprivation, embargo, alienation, and even more severe forms such as counterattacks and harassment have been highlighted. While some studies in the literature have referred to those negative attitudes and behaviors towards the single women living alone as "singlism," it is deemed more appropriate and accurate to conceptualize this phenomenon as "anti-singlism". The notion of anti-singlism refers to the normalization, justification, and advocacy of the thought, attitude, and behavior that isolate, ostracize, deprive, embargo, marginalize, and even subject the single women, particularly the single women living alone to harassment in social life.

Beyond all the findings of this study, the most significant conclusion revealed by this study is the inference and determination that being single has ceased to be viewed as a "deviation", an exceptional circumstance, or a deficiency, and it has been moving towards institutionalization. The concept of social institution refers to the general acceptance, tolerance, implementation, continuity, stability, and the ability to reproduce itself or be given at least minimal recognition of an attitude, behavior, or practice in the society. Although singleness is still a subject of pressure and suppression, it has managed to gain acceptance by a significant portion of the society. Like all institutions, the institution of singleness is an innovation that emerges or is in the process of emerging from within an existing traditional and conservative structure and becomes accepted by it through a dialectical process. The notion of singleness is no longer the

rule of the rule-less world, the anomaly of the married world, the secular of the religious world, the family-less of the family-oriented world and finally, the unlucky situation, stance, and behavior of the lucky world; it has become or it is on the way to become a lifestyle in its own right. Nowadays, the women may exhibit lawful, legitimate, religious, family-oriented, and fortunate behavior by remaining single. Various factors, such as the spread of modern lifestyle, the dominance of individualism, the increase in the number of those who prefer to have a single life, and the termination of the significant portion of marriages in a short period, have made singleness acceptable, and allowed for its institutionalization.

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Enabling artificial intelligence in entrepreneurship: Implications for startup creation in higher education

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Abstract: The digital transformation has reshaped entrepreneurship, with the emergence of artificial intelligence (AI) as a powerful enabler of innovation and startup creation. However, higher education institutions face challenges integrating AI into entrepreneurship education curriculum, limiting students' ability to fully harness its potential. This study aimed to determine and explore entrepreneurship students' challenges in using AI for startup development, assess the competencies they gain in innovating business ideas, and analyze how these challenges affect competencies using structural equation modeling (SEM). Employing an convergent mixed-method design, the study surveyed 114 third- and fourth-year BS Entrepreneurship students and conducted interviews to faculty and business plan implementers. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and SEM, while qualitative data underwent thematic analysis for triangulation. Findings revealed that students face significant challenges in opportunity identification, decision-making, performance execution, education and learning, and research application. The key barriers highlight was market understanding, lack of AI literacy, limited mentorship, and insufficient curriculum integration. Despite these, students reported gaining competencies in opportunity recognition, customer targeting, data-informed decision-making, and entrepreneurial communication using AI tools. However, critical thinking, problem-solving, and prototyping skills remained underdeveloped. SEM results indicated that challenges in education, opportunity identification, and decision-making significantly constrained entrepreneurial competencies. The study implies the need for higher education to reform curricula by embedding AI-focused modules, case-based projects, mentorship opportunities, and innovation hubs. Strengthening AI-driven entrepreneurship education will equip students with the competencies required for sustainable startup creation in the digital economy.

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AGATHOS, Volume 17, Issue 2 (33-34): 671-694, DOI 10.5281/zenodo.23610477
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Keywords: AI integration, entrepreneurship education, competencies, startup creation, and structural equation modeling

Introduction

The social influence of the digital revolution, particularly digitalization and AI, has been profound and reflected in all walks of the daily life as well as work environment (Makridakis 2017). These technologies have become indispensable in society and economy, according to Peng and Tao (2022). Additionally, Cheng et al. (2021) asserted that technology is an essential instrument. Blanco-Gonzalez-Tejero et al. (2023) also emphasized that technology is particularly significant for businesses aiming to enhance operations and approaches.

The curriculum in higher education was put to the test by business-driven innovation in education. It starts by outlining the difficulties that innovation faces in the formal education sector, which has a limited knowledge ecology: basic administrative and instructional procedures are not greatly affected by research in the field. After that, it switches to a typical innovation indicator. Educational tools are usually covered by patents in the education sector. The number of extremely inventive startups that companies have commercialized appears to have increased over the last 20 years. The growing tool business now focuses on non-formal education rather than formal education, despite the fact that the increased innovation in education may open newfangled prospects for the sector of formal education (OECD 2023).

Development of educational technologies following a tremendous advancement in general-purpose technology

Since the information and communications technology (ICT) offers a wide range of novel tools and instruments, it is unquestionably a source of innovation in educational institutions that have the potential to significantly alter the institutional, organizational, and technological underpinnings of the field. The advancement of ICT in education offers chances to expand the range of instructional technologies. The process by which a new technology spreads throughout numerous industries and produces particular applications is known as "co-invention of applications," and it is not a trivial issue.

A general-purpose technology, like ICT, is characterized by its parallel spread across the economy and the synergy between application development and invention. According to economists, while application development modifies the role of manufacturing in a

certain industry, general-purpose technology expands the range of inventive potential for the economy as a whole. To put it another way, when primary inventions lead to co-inventions across various industries, they create dynamic feedback loops that expand the overall technology market and increase the returns on succeeding inventions.

Entrepreneurship

Value creation techniques have evolved as a result of the digital revolution (Yu and Guo 2023). As a result, in recent years, the number of scholarly studies on the impact of digital elements on company models has increased dramatically (Caputo et al. 2020). Their role in business sustainability and growth, as well as their market positioning, must be understood, as organizations become more and more digital (Dubey et al. 2020). Entrepreneurs must use cutting-edge technologies to obtain a competitive edge considering the market's rapid developments and intensifying rivalry brought on by globalization (Darwish et al. 2020). Therefore, people also need to learn more about the advantages and potential hazards associated with their use. In particular, Khalid (2020) noted that studying using AI in higher education institutions is pertinent to promoting entrepreneurial activity.

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Shoufu et al. (2022) claim that artificial intelligence is a major driver of technological and economic progress, and Arcega (2023) presents new opportunities for enterprises (Pfau and Rimpp 2021). Specifically, as researchers like Gupta and Dhawan (2018) noted, AI is a way to give a computer the ability to think intelligently, or like a human. Given the shift in paradigm that society is undergoing, digital tools promote development and growth, enabling changes in the character and extent of corporate activity, as noted by Nambisan (2017). Gupta et al. (2023) highlighted that examining how AI can impact global productivity and other aspects of life is therefore vital. Additionally, according to Pai et al. (2022), the production and management of knowledge depend on AI.

AI and entrepreneurship relationships

French et al. (2021) asserted that Revolution 4.0's recent developments have provided them with a platform to put these theoretical models into practice.

Oztemel and Gursev (2018) stated that artificial intelligence (AI) is considered a leading subject to be investigated in this revolution and

that its uses are anticipated to expand to any field requiring human intellect. The AI is a key to all Industry 4.0 technologies. Smart factories used it, which have completely integrated manufacturing platforms that mostly operate without human involvement, by generating, transporting, and evaluating the data required to perform the intrinsic production tasks, as highlighted by Lasi et al. (2014).

Azuma et al. (2001) highlight the use of AI in the augmented reality model, a human-computer interaction system that integrates natural and virtual 3D elements in real time. According to Sahu et al. (2020), AI improves image processing and associated tasks' accuracy and robustness. Treiblmaier (2018) emphasized that AI is connected with block chains, which are distributed ledgers that securely and transparently store digital assets. Dinh and Thai (2018) stated that because AI needs on data to learn and make decisions, this combination allows it to work with verified, digitally signed, and securely shared data in a decentralized ledger, resulting in more reliable and credible results.

The originality and value of this research contribute by systematizing disconnected studies on AI and entrepreneurship. It organizes contributions into managerial and entrepreneurial literature perspectives, providing a comprehensive understanding of AI's role in fostering entrepreneurial success. Hence, it was focused on enhancing young entrepreneurs' competencies. With the gaps identified, the primary purpose of the study is to determine the challenges encountered by the entrepreneurship students on Innovation using artificial intelligence in developing their startups, assess their competency skills in innovating business ideas, and come up with solutions to help the young entrepreneurs build and operationalize their startups.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following:

1. What challenges does the entrepreneurship student encounter in developing innovative startups using artificial intelligence related to opportunity, decision-making, performance, education, and research?
2. What competencies do entrepreneurship students gain in innovating their business ideas using artificial intelligence?
3. What challenges affect entrepreneurship students' competencies in innovating their business ideas using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)?
4. What insights into policy and program implementation can be drawn based on the results of the study?

Methodology

The study focuses on the pragmatist worldview. The purpose of this consideration is to look for a solution to the gaps by prioritizing practical outcomes and the effectiveness of the methods in order to address the respondents' concerns. The study utilized a convergent mixed-method approach with a cross-sectional survey research method and interview. The researcher used a researcher-made questionnaire for the challenges encountered by the entrepreneurship students in developing innovative startups using AI to determine the competencies they gained as entrepreneurship students in innovating their business ideas using AI. An interview was conducted with faculty teaching entrepreneurship subjects and business plan implementers to triangulate the results. The survey was validated and underwent a reliability test with a Cronbach's Alpha 0.845. At the same time, the unstructured interview guide was validated by experts.

In data gathering analysis, request letters were processed before gathering the data. Informed consent was provided before gathering the quantitative and qualitative data. The content of the informed consent was an invitation to participate voluntarily. Confidentiality and data privacy are treated with the strictest confidentiality.

The risks and benefits of participating in the conduct of the study are that there is no known physical, psychological, or legal risks associated with the study. The potential benefits include contributions to the improvements in entrepreneurship education, help shape AI training and startup support services for students, and raising awareness on AI's role in business innovation.

The survey instrument forwarded to the respondents using Google Form. The link was provided to their respective group chats. The duration of the data gathering is one month. After the duration of the survey, the researcher collated the data and transformed it into spreadsheets by coding all variables. It was a process using Jamovi with a version of 2.7.6. Descriptive statistics and structural equation modeling are used. This model extends factor analysis and multiple regression analysis and can be used to understand and identify the putative causal associations between latent and observed variables. A deductive thematic analysis was used to analyze the qualitative data during the interview.

Results and discussions

Profile of the respondents

Gender: The respondent profile provides a strong foundation for interpreting the study's findings. Most participants were women (81.4%), while men accounted for 18.6% and one respondent identified as non-binary. In line with worldwide trends indicating a rise in female participation in entrepreneurial training programs, this gender distribution emphasizes the expanding role of women in entrepreneurship education (Brush et al. 2019). The higher number of women respondents also suggests that there may be different perspectives based on gender regarding the challenges and skills needed for developing AI-driven startups. The demographic and competency profiles of respondents carry several implications. The respondents' demographic and competency characteristics have several ramifications. First, the gender distribution indicates that AI-integrated entrepreneurship programs should continue to promote diversity, especially in helping women in tech-driven businesses. Initiatives that boost underrepresented groups' self-esteem and technical proficiency could contribute to the equilibrium of entrepreneurial ecosystems.

The findings coincide with earlier research stressing how socioeconomic and experiential factors influence entrepreneurial skills. The larger proportion of female participants is consistent with the findings of Arcega et al. 2021; Brush et al. 2019, who discovered the growing influence of women entrepreneurs in technology-oriented environments. Prensky (2001) stated that younger children are more responsive to digital reinforcement, supporting the idea that age influences technology adoption.

Age: All respondents were between 18 and 25, reflecting a young, digital-native learner cohort. Participants in this age range appear to be in a developmental stage where they are highly adaptable to new technology. Young generations are more likely to embrace and experiment with developing technologies like artificial intelligence (AI) since they are "digital natives," according to Prensky's (2001) theory. The age range indicates strong potential for adaptability and innovation. As digital natives, these students are well-positioned to integrate AI tools into entrepreneurial processes, but structured training is necessary to convert adaptability into mastery.

Year level: The respondents' distribution of academic standing is nearly equal between third-year students (49.1%) and fourth-year students (50.9%). This balance offers insights into the effects of AI

exposure across various academic development phases by indicating a thorough representation of students approaching the end of their entrepreneurial program. The balance between 3rd- and 4th-year students implies that AI integration should be scaffolded across the entrepreneurship program. Third-year students can develop basic competencies through early exposure, while fourth-year students can assist venture creation and incubation through advanced integration.

Previous experience in operating a business / startup: Of those with prior entrepreneurial experience, 45.6% had launched or run a business, while 54.4% had no prior experience. This combination reflects a diverse pool, with about half providing practical experience and the other half providing fresh perspectives unaffected by direct business activities. It aligns with findings by Nabi et al. (2017), who noted that both prior experience and academic training influence entrepreneurial intentions and competencies in complementary ways.

Familiarity with AI: It varied significantly; most respondents reported basic familiarity (54.4%), while 28.9% claimed intermediate knowledge, 6.1% advanced familiarity, and 10.5% none. Since von Briel (2022) noted that entrepreneurs frequently use AI at the application level rather than the development level, this distribution implies that although AI is generally acknowledged, significant technical skill is uncommon among entrepreneurship students. Encouragingly, 94.7% reported using AI in academic or business work, highlighting the pervasive influence of AI tools such as chatbots, analytics systems, and recommendation engines in students' practical engagements. The distribution of prior entrepreneurial experience highlights the need for differentiated instructional strategies. Advanced application courses may be beneficial for those with existing business skills. At the same time, foundational classes contextualizing AI technologies in entrepreneurial practice may be necessary for students lacking such experience to improve business innovation.

ICT proficiency: Regarding ICT proficiency, more than half (52.6%) rated themselves as having average skills, with 17.5% above average and 11.4% very advanced. 11.4% of respondents claimed to have basic abilities, while just 7.1% said they did not utilize ICT. Since ICT literacy is relatively linked to the successful adoption of AI technologies in entrepreneurship, it suggests a strong ICT foundation, which is essential (Kraus et al. 2022). While most students had some level of AI familiarity and ICT proficiency, the scarcity of advanced expertise suggests that entrepreneurship programs should focus on

equipping students with practical, user-level competencies while fostering partnerships with computer science and engineering fields for technical collaboration. Similarly, integrating students with and without entrepreneurial experience supports (Nabi et al. 2017) claim that entrepreneurship education may develop competencies regardless of prior business involvement. Moreover, the respondents' AI knowledge levels are consistent with von Briel's (2022) study, which claims that entrepreneurs employ AI at an application level rather than a developmental one, underlining the need for targeted AI education in entrepreneurship. The findings on ICT proficiency back up (Kraus et al. (2022) contention that ICT competency is a key enabler of digital entrepreneurship.

Challenges in AI driven startup development

Opportunities identification

The study shows challenges that respondents face when using artificial intelligence (AI) for business ideation and opportunity recognition. These challenges, supported by mean scores, highlight the range of difficulty in this context.

First, the statement on "Lack of market understanding limits my ability to use AI for startup ideas" had a mean rating of 3.28 (somewhat challenging). It suggests that respondents' capacity to effectively use AI in entrepreneurial situations, particularly in opportunity discovery and innovation, is challenged by a lack of understanding of the real-market dynamics. Consistent with previous studies, market understanding is fundamental for transforming technological capabilities into viable business opportunities (Nambisan 2017).

Second, the challenge "I struggle to connect AI capabilities with real-world entrepreneurial problems" obtained a mean of 3.20 (somewhat challenging). It suggests that even while AI is a helpful tool, connecting its abstract qualities with real-world entrepreneurial needs remains difficult. The results of von Briel et al. (2018) - who pointed out that entrepreneurs usually encounter cognitive and experiential difficulties while transforming innovative ideas into commercial solutions - align with this.

Third, the statement on "AI helps me identify market opportunities that are sometimes overlooked" has a mean rating of 3.11 (somewhat challenging). While this demonstrates that AI can disclose new opportunities, the moderate mean indicates that respondents still have

difficulty capitalizing on this benefit. The findings are consistent with recent work emphasizing AI's dual role; it provides sophisticated analytics for opportunity discovery while requiring complementary entrepreneurial abilities to evaluate and apply insights (Cockburn et al. 2018).

Fourth, on the statement "AI enhances the accuracy of evaluating potential opportunities compared to traditional methods," the highest mean score was 3.92 (mostly challenging). It suggests that while respondents recognize AI's potential in improving evaluation accuracy, they perceive it as one of the most challenging aspects to influence. It implies that technical accuracy alone may not suffice without contextual business judgment, echoing prior findings that AI needs to be complemented by human intuition and domain expertise (Shrestha et al. 2019).

Finally, an item "AI enhances the accuracy of evaluating potential opportunities compared to traditional methods," produced a mean of (3.82, mostly challenging).

It highlights the business's robustness if AI is utilized in opportunity identification; hence, market understanding remains a recurring and significant barrier to AI-driven startup ideation. It has multiple consequences for entrepreneurial education and practice.

First, increasing market literacy among potential entrepreneurs is critical to maximizing AI's utility in opportunity identification. Second, it is necessary to have a tailored-fit training that connects the technical aspects of AI to the practical demands of entrepreneurship, guaranteeing that entrepreneurs can apply AI capabilities to actual-world situations or otherwise in the business operations. Third, while AI provides unique tools of analyzing and identifying opportunities, it cannot replace the firsthand knowledge and industry-specific experience of entrepreneurs and mentors. For startups, therefore, may invest in hybrid skill development—integrating technological proficiency with entrepreneurial judgment. Prior research has highlighted the important link between AI capabilities and entrepreneurial cognition, which supports the current findings. According to Nambisan (2017), market insights are required for entrepreneurial success rather than technology. Thus, von Briel et al. (2018) shown that entrepreneurs typically face a "translation gap" when applying new technologies to business challenges. Likewise, Cockburn et al. (2018) highlighted that AI's potential increased opportunity exploration; while emphasizing the requirements of

complementary human abilities for analyzing the opportunities, and lastly, Shrestha et al. (2019) stated that AI should complement, not replace, human decision-making in entrepreneurial processes.

The study's participants stressed that students frequently have difficulty spotting promising applications for AI. Students used to follow AI trends without seriously evaluating whether these ideas actually answer a business problem, according to Participant 1. Similarly, Participant 2 added that "the challenges lie in validation if the AI-driven concepts can actually be scaled or sustained in the real market." Participant 3 reinforced this view, noting that "students struggle with proper market research, so they cannot always confirm whether the AI application they propose will work in real business contexts."

These insights align with previous findings that opportunity recognition remains a critical yet underdeveloped competency among student entrepreneurs (Shane and Venkataraman 2000; Giones and Brem 2017). AI innovations risk being perceived as imitative rather than disruptive without proper validation.

Decision-making and performance

The statement "I lack the skills to use AI tools for making sound business decisions" recorded a mean score of 3.11 (somewhat challenging). It implies that although entrepreneurs acknowledge AI's importance in decision-making and performance, some feel inadequately skilled in utilizing these tools effectively. Previous research confirms that limited technical literacy creates barriers to fully leveraging AI for strategic choices (Jarrahi 2018).

The statement "I am uncertain about how to measure the performance of AI-integrated startups" obtained a mean score of 3.32 (somewhat challenging). It implies moderate difficulty in evaluating performance, most likely due to the lack of defined evaluation frameworks and the dynamic nature of AI-driven measures. According to Davenport and Ronanki (2018), incorporating AI into operations necessitates reconsidering performance metrics beyond conventional financial ones. In order to ensure that entrepreneurs can use these tools for decision-making, there is an urgent need for capacity-building initiatives that improve their AI literacy.

A mean score of 3.38 (mostly challenging) was recorded for the item "The complexity of AI tools affects my confidence in using them for startup success." It illustrates how technological complexity remains a significant obstacle, eroding entrepreneurs' assurance. It is

consistent with studies emphasizing AI systems' "black-box" nature as a significant obstacle to entrepreneurial adoption (Burrell 2016). To improve performance evaluation, governments and incubators should encourage the creation of standardized measures for assessing AI-integrated firms.

Meanwhile, "AI offers helpful data that helps startups make better decisions" had a mean score of 3.82 (mostly challenging). Although the respondents acknowledge that AI's potential enhances decision-making, there are still issues with gleaning valuable insights from AI-generated data. It aligns with Shrestha et al. 2019, who contend that although AI offers helpful input, human interpretation and contextualization are still necessary for effective decision-making. Startups should spend money on explainable AI solutions to boost user confidence and lessen apparent complexity. Fourth, before integrating AI outputs into strategic choices, businesses must set up strong validation procedures to guarantee consistency and dependability. When taken as a whole, these steps help balance the advantages of AI and the real-world difficulties of applying it in an entrepreneurial setting. Existing research validates these conclusions. According to Jarrahi (2018), entrepreneurs have difficulties due to a lack of expertise in using AI.

Lastly, the statement "Inconsistent AI outputs pose challenges in making sound business decisions" has a mean score of 3.53 (mostly challenging). It implies that data validity and reliability are important concerns for entrepreneurs relying on AI, as such inconsistencies may result from biases in datasets or algorithmic variability, validating prior work that warns of the risks of unreliable AI outputs in organizational contexts O'Neil (2016). The challenge of creating performance indicators for AI-driven organizations was validated by (Davenport and Ronanki 2018). The intricacy and opaqueness of AI systems are obstacles to user confidence, according to Burrell (2016). The idea that human judgment is still crucial for evaluating AI outputs for decision-making was backed by (Shrestha et al. 2019). O'Neil (2016) added credence to worries about biased or inconsistent AI results and cautioned about the possible dangers they pose for corporate decision-making.

Making decisions is a significant challenge, according to participants. Participants 3 and 4 elaborated that "decision-making becomes trial-and-error when students cannot connect AI insights with business strategies." Participants 3 and 5 echoed each other when they

said that "students hesitate to trust AI outputs because they do not have enough background to interpret data." Participants 5 concluded that "a major gap is the absence of structured frameworks in the curriculum for AI-supported decision-making."

This finding is consistent with research showing that novice entrepreneurs often lack the analytical orientation to leverage AI for informed decisions, defaulting to heuristics and intuition (Huang et al. 2022). The gaps encountered by the students suggest that integrating AI literacy into decision-making frameworks is vital in entrepreneurship education.

The challenges that students faced when transitioning from ideation to implementation were emphasized. Participant 4 also acknowledged that "most students failed when moving from paper-based plans to a working business plan as they proposed during business plan preparation." Participant 5 said that "students usually stop at the ideation stage because they lack technical know-how to develop prototypes."

Participant 3 highlighted, "Even with creative ideas, execution is the problem, because of lack financial resources and technical support." Likewise, Participant 6 added that "resource limitations—financial, tools, software, and even mentors with AI expertise—hold back students' performance." These findings corroborate earlier research showing that students' capacity to convert entrepreneurial ideas into profitable products is hampered by a lack of technical resources and mentorship (Neck and Corbett 2018; Malecki 2018). One major obstacle to AI-driven entrepreneurship education is the dearth of prototyping resources.

Education and learning

The statement "The curriculum does not give students options and opportunities to access AI for startup creation" received a mean score of 3.47 (mostly challenging). It shows that educational curricula remain limited in providing structured opportunities for students to apply AI in entrepreneurial contexts. This is align with the previous study of Maritz et al. (2021), emphasizes the gap between academic programs and the digital competencies required for innovation-driven entrepreneurship.

The item "I have trouble finding mentors or training in commercial AI applications" obtained a mean score of 3.28 (somewhat challenging) and a factor loading of 0.710. It implies the challenge of accessing mentorship and training opportunities specific to commercial

AI. Given that entrepreneurship thrives on experiential knowledge and role models, the lack of mentorship hinders students' ability to translate AI into viable ventures Liguori and Winkler 2020. A mean score of 3.39 (mostly challenging) was obtained for the task "Our education system is not yet fully equipped to integrate AI in startup creation." This highlights structural deficiencies in the institutional preparedness for integrating AI. The result is consistent with research showing structural delays in bringing educational systems up to speed with technology (Luckin 2017).

The statement "AI-based learning platforms help enhance entrepreneurial skills and knowledge" had a high mean score of 3.86 (mostly challenging), which is a positive indicator. Although respondents believe there is potential for enhancing entrepreneurial competencies through AI-enabled learning platforms, they also see difficulties in optimizing their efficacy. This reflects broader evidence that digital platforms can personalize learning and expand entrepreneurial capabilities if supported with appropriate guidance (Zawacki-Richter et al. 2019). Finally, "Education and training in AI are essential for overcoming challenges in startup development" scored 3.82 (mostly challenging). It highlights a widespread recognition of AI education and training as a important tool. It validates calls from researchers who argue that fostering AI literacy and entrepreneurial education together is critical to preparing graduates for technology-driven startup ecosystems (Chin et al. 2023).

The poor integration of AI in entrepreneurship curricula was a a primary concern of the public higher education. "The curriculum is still catching up with digital transformation." Participant 1 said, "Entrepreneurship courses are still heavy on traditional business planning; AI concepts are barely integrated." Participant 2 said, "Students are expected to innovate but lack foundational knowledge in AI tools and applications." Participant 3 said that "they often learn on their own through YouTube or short online courses." Participant 4 openly acknowledged that the students are expected to innovate. Although it is not yet fully implemented, we are working to integrate AI literacy.

The literature emphasizes the pressing need to update entrepreneurship courses to include digital and AI-related competencies, and this worry is consistent with that literature (Maritz et al. 2021; Ratten 2022). There is still a disconnection between

technical innovation and entrepreneurial activity if intentional curriculum reform is not implemented.

Research and application

The findings highlight systemic and instructional challenges in applying AI research to entrepreneurial practice, alongside recognition of AI's critical role in sustaining startup innovation. The statement "I have trouble looking into AI applications for new businesses" received a mean score of 3.32 (somewhat challenging). It implies that although respondents acknowledge the importance of AI, they have a moderate amount of trouble locating appropriate applications for entrepreneurial settings. According to earlier research, entrepreneurs frequently find it difficult to match AI skills with business model potential (Bughin et al. 2018).

Likewise, the statement "Access to data and AI tools for entrepreneurial research is limited" had a mean score of 3.32, which indicates that it is quite challenging. This suggests that access restrictions are major impediments to AI-enabled entrepreneurship, regardless of whether they are caused by infrastructure, cost, or availability. Consistent with this, Cockburn et al. (2018) highlighted that limited access to quality datasets and advanced AI tools often impedes entrepreneurial adoption. The item "I need more exposure to case studies on AI-driven entrepreneurship" recorded a higher mean of 3.76 (mostly challenging) with a factor loading of 0.672.

Respondents emphasize that practice-oriented examples and experiential insights are essential for understanding how AI translates into viable business strategies. Kolb (2015) experiential learning theory, which stresses that case-based and applied learning fosters deeper knowledge transfer in entrepreneurial education. The statement "The course facilitator effectively translated AI research findings into practical startup applications" had a mean of 3.60 (mostly challenging) with a factor loading of 0.648. While relatively positive, the result suggests that although facilitators are attempting to bridge theory and practice, challenges remain in contextualizing academic findings into entrepreneurial action. Research by Nambisan (2017) similarly highlights the need for educators to serve as mediators between digital technologies and entrepreneurial application.

Finally, "Continuous research and innovation in AI are necessary for startup sustainability" had the highest mean of 4.13 (mostly challenging) and an unusually high factor loading reported (2.802, likely a data entry anomaly). Regardless, the response indicates strong

consensus that ongoing research and innovation are critical for sustaining AI-driven startups. This finding is validated by Shrestha et al. (2019), who argue that AI must be continually updated and refined to remain effective in dynamic market environments.

The results underscore several implications. First, universities and startup ecosystems must expand access to AI tools and datasets to reduce barriers for aspiring entrepreneurs. Second, curricula should integrate real-world case studies and applied research, allowing students to contextualize AI's entrepreneurial value. Third, faculty training is necessary to enhance their ability to effectively translate AI research into practical applications. Finally, fostering a culture of continuous innovation in AI is essential for the sustainability of startup ventures, suggesting that entrepreneurship education should emphasize iterative learning and research-driven innovation.

These results are strongly validated by prior scholarship. Bughin et al. (2018) noted that entrepreneurs face challenges in identifying actionable AI applications. Cockburn et al. (2018) highlighted limited access to data and tools as critical barriers. Kolb (2015) emphasized the effectiveness of experiential learning and case-based education in entrepreneurship. Nambisan (2017) confirmed the importance of bridging digital research with entrepreneurial practice. Shrestha et al. (2019) reinforced the necessity of ongoing AI innovation to sustain startup competitiveness.

The research dimension is the last challenge of entrepreneurship students. The participants concluded that "their research does not provide enough evidence to justify the practicality of their AI innovations." Participant 4 observed that "students often generalize about AI's benefits in research papers without citing concrete business case samples and other references" Participant 5 noted that "their feasibility studies are weak because they lack benchmarks on AI-driven businesses." Participant 6 clarified that "literature reviews remain shallow, undermining their ability to support their business ideas."

These present results align with other studies that students frequently neglect to include solid data in feasibility studies for entrepreneurship, especially in cutting-edge domains like artificial intelligence (Ahsan 2020; Audretsch and Belitski 2021). Their entrepreneurial outputs become less credible and competitive due to this restriction.

Competencies gained in using AI for business innovation

The findings show that most items were rated as *very good*, indicating that respondents largely reported good competencies acquired by their exposure to AI in business innovation. With a mean score of 3.76 (very good) for the statement "I can use AI insights to find business prospects," respondents became more confident in using AI to identify opportunities. This lends credence to the expanding body of research demonstrating AI's capacity to spot untapped market potential and produce insights that go beyond conventional techniques (Chalmers et al. 2021).

Likewise, "I am aware of how AI may enhance customer customization and targeting." This shows a thorough understanding of how AI may help tailored marketing strategies, which is in line with research that indicates AI can enhance consumer engagement and support precision targeting (Davenport et al. 2020).

Both the statements "I am comfortable using AI tools like recommendation engines, analytics systems, and chatbots" and "I am capable of creating AI-based tools or prototypes to help commercial concepts" received 3.50 (very good) points. These findings imply that although students acquired technical familiarity, their confidence levels varied. Previous studies have demonstrated that developing working prototypes and using sophisticated tools call for a higher level of technical literacy, which may vary from learner to learner (Dwivedi et al. 2021). Prior research confirms that building functional prototypes and applying advanced tools require deeper technical literacy, which may differ among learners (Ibid.).

The mean score for "I can integrate AI applications into pitch presentations and company proposals" was 3.60 (very good). It emphasizes the ability to contextualize the use of AI applications in the entrepreneurial communication process and approaches, and supports the narratives that AI literacy enhances persuasiveness and competitiveness in entrepreneurial pitching of the aspiring entrepreneurs' (Chin et al. 2023).

Cognitive skills-related competencies were also strongly emphasized. "I have improved my ability to make decisions as a result of my exposure to AI technologies" scored 3.68 (very good), while "I developed analytical thinking and data literacy through AI-related projects" got 3.66 (very good). These results are consistent with research indicating that exposure to AI develops analytical skills,

empowering business owners to use data-driven insights for strategic objectives (Shrestha et al. 2019).

Lastly, "By employing AI, I have improved my critical thinking and problem-solving abilities" had the lowest mean (good). While still positive, this suggests that critical thinking and problem-solving—though enhanced—may require more intensive real-world application and iterative learning to fully mature. This observation is consistent with experiential learning theories that emphasize iterative practice in developing higher-order cognitive skills (Kolb 2015). Studies have validated the present findings. Chalmers et al. (2021) proved AI's role in identifying business prospects. Davenport et al. (2020) validated AI's dramatic impact on customer customization and engagement. Dwivedi et al. (2021) emphasize the importance of increasing technical literacy among entrepreneurial students in order to achieve successful AI deployment in firms. Chin et al. (2023) emphasized AI's usefulness in entrepreneurial education and pitching. Shrestha et al. (2019) proved AI's ability to improve decision-making processes. Finally, Kolb's (2015) experiential learning approach emphasized that skills such as critical thinking develop through applied practice and iterative learning.

Faculty members recognized students' increasing capacity to see opportunities despite obstacles. "Students are learning to link AI with real entrepreneurial opportunities, though not yet consistently," said Participant 1; "they can identify how AI can enhance marketing, particularly in customer targeting." "Students are becoming more aware of emerging AI-driven opportunities in industries like e-commerce and customer service," said Participant 2. This ability reflects opportunity recognition, one of the key pillars of entrepreneurial development (Baron 2006). Even at the most basic level, students' market-scanning abilities are enhanced by AI literacy.

Enhanced decision-making with data

An additional competency gained was improved decision-making of the respondents. By using AI-based tools for analysis, students are gradually transitioning from intuition to data-informed decisions, according to participant 3. Participant 4 said, "Even though they are still beginners in analytics, they now show more openness to interpreting insights." Participant 4 added, "This competency will grow as more AI-related activities are embedded into coursework." It aligns with findings that exposure to AI tools can enhance data-driven

decision-making among entrepreneurs (Brynjolfsson and McAfee 2017). Students' gradual transition suggests a positive trajectory toward evidence-based practices.

Innovation and prototyping skills

All participants acknowledged the creative development that the students had gained while taking entrepreneurship courses. "When entrepreneurship students propose AI-based prototypes through their product development" Also Participant 5 stressed, "their ability to combine entrepreneurship with AI ideas is a promising skill." Participant 2 added, "Although execution is limited, they demonstrate adaptability and creativity in conceptualizing immediate answers to the problems and new and doable innovative business ideas."

Researchers observe that even simple prototype activities increase the potential for creativity and entrepreneurial resilience (Neck et al. 2014). Moreover, the experiences gained by the students' strengthen self-efficacy in pursuing innovation despite limitations.

Collaborative and research-oriented mindset

Finally, collaboration and research orientation were highlighted. Participant 2 observed, "Students are learning through collaboration with Information Technology savvy in order to strengthen their developed business plan and other academic requirements." Participant 4 mentioned, "group projects encourage them to appreciate teamwork across various programs in the institution by asking support." They demonstrate a commitment to enhance their research methods, particularly when collaborating with peers in technical domains, said Participant 3. Participant 5 came to the conclusion that "these collaborative tendencies are essential for AI-driven entrepreneurship, where cross-disciplinary knowledge is the key." This is in line with research that emphasizes teamwork as a key component of AI-powered business ecosystems (Nambisan et al. 2019). Students are better prepared for the realities of digital entrepreneurship when they collaborate across disciplinary boundaries.

Challenges affect entrepreneurship students' competencies in innovating their business ideas using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)

The researcher utilized the structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis to examine the challenges affecting entrepreneurship students' competencies in innovating their business ideas. The model yielded

mixed fit indices, with an SRMR of 0.199 and RMSEA of 0.121 (90% CI = 0.111–0.130, $p < .001$). Hu and Bentler (1999) state that an SRMR below 0.08 and an RMSEA below 0.06 indicate a good model fit. The results suggest that while the hypothesized model provides some explanatory value, the fit indices indicate the need for refinement in the measurement of constructs or in the structural paths.

Despite the limitations in model fit, several significant paths highlight the key challenges influencing student competencies. The opportunity identification identified by the study are critical element, revealing that students frequently struggle to identify feasible AI-driven entrepreneurial prospects due to a lack of exposure to modern technology, weak market scanning abilities, and limited access to data. The results are in line with prior studies that highlight the difficulties in identifying opportunities in startups using AI technology (George et al. 2021; Shah and Murtaza 2020).

Problems with decision-making also significantly affected competencies, showing that students find them challenging to balance instinctive judgments with data-driven insights. The findings are in line with other research that highlighted the difficulty of identifying opportunities in AI-powered entrepreneurial settings (George et al. 2021; Shah and Murtaza 2020).

Decision-making challenges also significantly affected competencies, indicating that students struggle to balance data-driven insights with intuitive judgments. The inability to use AI technologies for strategic decision-making or cognitive overload could be the cause of this challenge. According to Dwivedi et al. (2021), who discovered similar findings, incorporating AI into entrepreneurship necessitates higher-order analytical thinking, which many students have not yet fully mastered.

Competencies were further limited by performance-related issues, especially when it came to converting creative concepts into workable business solutions. It supports the claim made by Maroufkhani et al. (2022) that technical expertise and entrepreneurial agility—two qualities that may be lacking in student populations—are essential for success in AI-enabled enterprises.

Educational and learning-related factors were also significant. Many students lacked sufficient training on AI applications, reflecting gaps in curriculum design and practical exposure. Literature supports this finding, as previous studies have argued that the absence of experiential and interdisciplinary learning environments hinders

entrepreneurship students' capacity to innovate with emerging technologies (Secundo et al. 2021; Li et al. 2022).

Research and application challenges also played a considerable role in shaping competencies. Due to a lack of resources, mentorship, and case-based projects, students frequently expressed difficulty connecting theoretical AI concepts to actual business challenges. Previous studies have confirmed that students are ill-prepared for AI-driven innovation since entrepreneurial education frequently lags behind industry improvements (Nambisan 2017; Kraus et al. 2022).

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions and recommendations are drawn.

AI holds promise for opportunity identification and evaluation; challenges continue in market understanding and aligning AI functionalities with the entrepreneurial needs of the BS Entrepreneurship students. The results call for integrative educational frameworks and entrepreneurial ecosystems that build technological and market competencies. It is also a valuable decision-support tool for aspiring entrepreneurs and BS Entrepreneurship students, but skill gaps, performance measurement, system complexity, and output consistency exist. With the identified challenges it can be addressed through contextualized-entrepreneurship education, system design improvements, and inclusive evaluation frameworks will be essential to fully harness AI's potential in entrepreneurial decision-making and performance management. Although public higher education students and instructors acknowledge the value of AI in business creation, they encounter major obstacles with regard to systemic readiness, mentorship access, and entrepreneurship curricula. Nonetheless, platforms powered by AI and focused educational initiatives offer encouraging avenues for overcoming these obstacles. For sustainable entrepreneurial growth, education systems must adopt a proactive approach in integrating AI into learning, ensuring that students are equipped with the competencies required for AI-driven startup ecosystems.

While entrepreneurs value AI for startup development, challenges remain in access, application, and the practical translation of research into business innovation. Incorporating AI into long-term entrepreneurial ecosystems will need addressing these issues through improved resource accessibility, case-based learning, faculty

development, and innovative tactics. AI significantly enhances entrepreneurial competencies, particularly in opportunity recognition, customer targeting, decision-making, and analytical thinking. Although communication and technical skills improved, additional in-depth, hands-on learning is required to improve problem-solving and prototype-building skills. These skills demonstrate how crucial AI is in developing entrepreneurs that are prepared for the future and can innovate in fast-paced, technologically advanced marketplaces.

The SEM results revealed that challenges in opportunity identification, decision-making, performance execution, education and learning, and research application significantly constrain entrepreneurship students' competencies in innovating their business ideas. Despite the model's lack of high fit indices, the main paths demonstrate persistent disparities in students' ability to integrate AI into entrepreneurial innovation. These findings show that while students are excited about technology-driven activities, their entrepreneurial competencies are nevertheless hindered by institutional, pedagogical, and practical limitations. The study underscores the need for universities and policymakers to strengthen AI-oriented entrepreneurship education to equip students for innovation in the digital economy.

Recommendations

AI-focused modules that stress both technical and entrepreneurial aspects may be incorporated into higher education entrepreneurship programs. Students may be exposed to real-world innovation challenges through case-based projects, hackathons, and interdisciplinary collaborations.

Simulations, AI-powered business modeling tools, and startup incubator programs are examples of more immersive techniques that higher education may use to give students real-world experience making decisions, solving problems, and coming up with ideas. Students can gain access to mentorship, up-to-date data resources, and new market trends through closer cooperation with AI specialists and industry practitioners. These collaborations will enhance the use of AI in business endeavors and the identification of opportunities.

Programs for faculty development on AI applications in business and entrepreneurship are crucial for ensuring that teachers are equipped to mentor students successfully. Higher education institutions may establish innovation hubs and accelerators that provide students

with resources, mentorship, and networking opportunities. These ecosystems can bridge the gap between classroom learning and market application. Policymakers should support entrepreneurship education reforms by funding research labs, incentivizing AI-integrated business curricula, and promoting public-private partnerships that foster innovation among students.

Output

- Conduct a series of capability-building activities on AI tools for faculty and students
- Acquisition of AI tools to be utilized by faculty and students (at least two AI tools)
- Integration of AI in business plan preparation and other academic-related activities
- Academic policy on the use of AI

Technology transfer activity conducted

- Knowledge transfer on AI to faculty and students (capability-building activities)
- Knowledge transfer on AI to be adopted and Department of Labor and Employment /Philippine National Police-assisted groups

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Participatory pedagogy and the professional identity of future art teachers

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Abstract: This article examines how participatory pedagogy shapes the professional identity of future art teachers. Although scholarship on teacher identity has shown that becoming a teacher is a dynamic, relational, and contextually mediated process, research on participatory pedagogy has more often emphasized engagement, innovation, and inclusion than professional becoming. This gap is especially important in art teacher education, where learning is inseparable from critique, interpretation, representation, and cultural mediation. The article argues that participatory pedagogy influences the professional identity of preservice art teachers not simply by increasing classroom activity, but by repositioning them as reflective, recognized, agentic, and ethically situated participants in educational practice. Drawing on literature in teacher identity, co-creation in higher education, arts-based reflection, and art teacher education, the discussion identifies four interrelated mechanisms through which this process occurs: reflective externalization, relational recognition, agentic authorship of practice, and ethical-cultural positioning. The article also argues that the formative potential of participation is never automatic. It depends on intentional facilitation, equitable structures of voice, and assessment models able to value collaborative and reflective learning. By bringing together these fields of scholarship, the article repositions professional identity formation as a central outcome of participatory pedagogy in art teacher education and offers a concise conceptual framework for future research and curriculum design.

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AGATHOS, Volume 17, Issue 2 (33-34): 695-706, DOI 10.5281/zenodo.23610517
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Keywords: participatory pedagogy, professional identity, art teacher education, co-creation, preservice teachers, arts-based reflection

Introduction

Professional identity is now widely understood as one of the central dimensions of teacher education because learning to teach cannot be reduced to the acquisition of techniques, knowledge, or competencies alone. To become a teacher is also to negotiate a sense of self in relation to practice, values, authority, and community. Research in teacher education has therefore repeatedly described professional identity as dynamic, relational, and continuously shaped through reflection, discourse, biography, and context rather than as a fixed professional attribute (Beijaard, Meijer, and Verloop 2004; Beauchamp and Thomas 2009; Rodrigues and Mogarro 2019). This perspective matters because it shifts attention from training teachers only to perform professional tasks toward understanding teacher education as a formative environment in which future professionals interpret who they are becoming.

This formation-oriented view also helps explain why pedagogy itself must be treated as constitutive rather than merely instrumental. Preservice teachers do not encounter teacher education as neutral recipients of information. They interpret institutional expectations, respond to feedback, test assumptions, and develop habits of participation within concrete learning environments. The structure of those environments influences not only what students know about teaching but also what kinds of professional selves they are able to imagine and enact. Research on preservice identity development has shown that reflective activities, learning communities, contextual conditions, and relationships with mentors all shape how student teachers understand their place in the profession (Izadinia 2015; Rodrigues and Mogarro 2019). How future teachers are taught is therefore inseparable from who they may become.

Within higher education, participatory pedagogy has gained prominence as part of a broader move away from transmissive models of teaching toward dialogue, collaboration, agency, and shared responsibility. Yet participation should not be reduced to student activity in pre-designed tasks. Work on co-creation in higher education argues that meaningful participation involves forms of partnership, voice, and shared authorship that allow students to influence the conditions of learning rather than merely perform within them (Bovill

2020; Omland et al. 2025). This distinction is crucial. If participation is understood only as visible engagement, it risks becoming rhetorical; if it involves dialogue, positioning, and negotiated responsibility, it can become formative.

Despite the growth of scholarship on participatory learning, its relationship to professional identity remains underdeveloped, particularly in discipline-specific fields of teacher education. This is a significant omission because participatory pedagogies create conditions in which future teachers do more than absorb professional norms. They interpret, test, and internalize those norms through collaborative practice. When students co-design tasks, lead peer discussion, critique ideas, or participate in shaping criteria for quality, they are not only learning about teaching. They are being positioned as emerging pedagogical subjects. Participation can therefore function as a mechanism of professional becoming rather than only as a method of enhancing engagement.

This question becomes especially compelling in art teacher education. Future art teachers often develop at the intersection of multiple professional identities: artist, educator, facilitator, interpreter, and cultural mediator. Thornton (2011) describes this artist-teacher nexus as both enabling and tension-filled, since artistic practice and pedagogical responsibility do not always align neatly. At the same time, arts-based educational experiences have been shown to shape values, self-understandings, and perspectives that matter directly for emerging professional identity (Kenny, Finneran, and Mitchell 2015). Art teacher education is therefore a particularly revealing site for examining how pedagogy contributes to professional becoming.

The field also possesses features that intensify the identity-forming significance of participation. Creative and visual practices can make beliefs, tensions, aspirations, and professional self-images more visible than purely procedural reflection allows (McKay 2021). Drawing and visual representation can serve as tools through which students articulate how they imagine teacherhood and their place within it (Shin and Alpern 2024). Moreover, art education is deeply connected to questions of inclusion, interpretation, representation, and cultural difference. Research on visual arts education suggests that such experiences can strengthen preservice teachers' cultural identity and expand their responsiveness to diverse educational contexts (Garcia-Lazo et al. 2024). In this context, participatory pedagogy is not merely

learner-centred technique; it is also a way of organizing reflection, authorship, recognition, and ethical positioning.

This article argues that participatory pedagogy shapes the professional identity of future art teachers not simply by increasing engagement, but by repositioning preservice teachers as reflective, recognized, agentic, and ethically situated participants in pedagogical practice. To develop this argument, the article first brings together scholarship on professional identity, co-creation, and art teacher education. It then proposes four interrelated mechanisms through which participatory pedagogy becomes formative in this field: reflective externalization, relational recognition, agentic authorship of practice, and ethical-cultural positioning. The article concludes by considering the limits of participation and the implications of this framework for curriculum design in art teacher education.

Professional identity, participation, and art teacher education

Scholarship on teacher identity has consistently emphasized that professional identity is both personal and social. It involves beliefs, aspirations, emotions, prior experiences, and self-understandings, but it is also shaped through interaction with institutions, disciplinary traditions, mentors, peers, and broader professional discourses (Beauchamp and Thomas 2009). This is why professional identity is better understood as a process than as a possession. Teachers do not simply acquire identity at the moment of qualification; they continually negotiate what counts as legitimate practice, what values guide their work, and how they position themselves in relation to others. In preservice education this process is especially visible because students occupy a transitional position between learner and teacher. Their prior experiences of schooling, their expectations of teaching, and the institutional structures of teacher preparation all meet in a period of intensified interpretation and revision (Rodrigues and Mogarro 2019).

A formation-oriented understanding of identity also clarifies why pedagogical environment matters so profoundly. If professional identity develops through participation, reflection, and social recognition, then the design of teacher education cannot be treated as a neutral container for content. Programs shape identity not only through what they teach but also through how students are invited to act, speak, reflect, and assume responsibility. Izadinia (2015) shows that identity formation is influenced by contexts of reflection and by the relational environments in which future teachers encounter mentoring, challenge,

and support. Such findings suggest that educational design affects the degree to which preservice teachers can move from peripheral participation toward more confident professional self-understanding.

This point opens directly onto participatory pedagogy. In many higher education contexts, participation is still interpreted in thin terms, such as discussion frequency, activity levels, or involvement in interactive tasks. Yet the literature on co-creation argues for a thicker account. Bovill (2020) proposes that co-creation involves students sharing responsibility in the design or enactment of learning, while Omland et al. (2025) identify dialogue, positioning, agency, and voice as core concepts describing co-creational interactions. In this sense, participatory pedagogy is not just an instructional strategy that makes classrooms livelier. It is an arrangement of relationships in which students may become contributors to meaning-making, decision-making, and academic practice. That difference matters greatly for identity because it changes how learners are positioned within the educational process.

If students are treated only as consumers of learning experiences, their participation remains bounded by pre-established authority structures. If they are invited to co-interpret, co-design, and assume responsibility, they begin to experience themselves differently. The significance of this shift for teacher education is obvious: future teachers are learning within the very kinds of relational arrangements they may later reproduce, resist, or transform in their own classrooms. Participatory pedagogy can therefore provide not only a method for learning but also a lived model of what professional practice feels like when voice, agency, and shared responsibility are taken seriously.

The relevance of this argument intensifies in art teacher education because the field itself is organised around forms of practice that are already dialogic, interpretive, and often collaborative. Thornton (2011) argues that art teachers frequently negotiate a liberating yet unstable identity in which artistry and pedagogy overlap without collapsing into one another. This duality matters because preservice art teachers are not simply learning curricular delivery. They are also learning how to inhabit a professional role that draws on aesthetic judgement, creative process, critique, and educational care. The artist-teacher nexus makes professional identity more layered than in many other domains, and it also makes pedagogical experience especially significant as a site where these layers are negotiated.

Arts-based educational practices further deepen this process because they offer modes of reflection that can externalize professional selfhood. McKay (2021) shows that arts-based reflection can help preservice teachers express tensions, emotions, and aspirations that may remain less accessible in conventional written reflection. Similarly, Shin and Alpern (2024) demonstrate that drawing can provide insight into how students imagine teacher identity and understand their own position within educational becoming. These studies are important because they show that in teacher education, especially in the arts, reflection need not be only verbal or analytic. It may also be symbolic, visual, performative, and materially expressive. Such forms of expression allow identity work to become visible, discussable, and revisable.

Art teacher education also carries an especially strong cultural and ethical dimension. Art is bound up with representation, interpretation, plurality, and the politics of visibility. Future art teachers must therefore negotiate not only classroom technique but also questions of whose perspectives are acknowledged, how difference is mediated, and what kinds of cultural narratives are privileged in educational spaces. Garcia-Lazo et al. (2024) show that visual arts education can contribute to the strengthening of preservice teachers' cultural identity. This finding is significant because it suggests that identity formation in art education is not simply professional in a narrow occupational sense. It is also cultural, relational, and ethical. Becoming an art teacher includes learning how to mediate meaning, support expression, and respond to difference in ways that matter pedagogically and socially.

Taken together, these lines of research suggest that art teacher education is a distinctive site for examining participatory pedagogy for at least three reasons. First, it involves a layered professional identity structured by the artist-teacher nexus. Second, it relies on reflective and representational practices that can render identity work unusually visible. Third, it is entangled with cultural and ethical questions that make participation more than a classroom management technique. In such a field, participatory pedagogy may shape not only how students learn, but also how they understand professional voice, authorship, legitimacy, and responsibility. The next section develops this claim by identifying four mechanisms through which participatory pedagogy becomes formative in the preparation of future art teachers.

Four mechanisms of identity formation

Participatory pedagogy shapes professional identity because it changes what preservice teachers do, how they are positioned, and what kinds of self-understandings become possible within teacher education. The claim of this article is not that participation produces identity in a simple linear fashion. Rather, participatory environments create recurring conditions under which future art teachers can externalize beliefs, experience recognition, exercise authorship, and negotiate values in practice. These conditions are especially powerful in art teacher education because critique, interpretation, co-creation, and cultural dialogue are already integral to the field. Four mechanisms help clarify this formative process.

The first mechanism is reflective externalization. Professional identity is partly formed through reflection, but reflection becomes more powerful when assumptions and aspirations are made visible in a sharable form. In participatory environments, students do not only think privately about their learning; they articulate, test, and revise professional meanings in response to others. This process is intensified in art teacher education, where reflective work can take visual, dialogic, and performative forms. McKay (2021) shows that arts-based reflection enables preservice teachers to express complex emotional and professional experiences that may remain muted in conventional academic discourse. Shin and Alpern (2024) similarly demonstrate that drawing can reveal how students imagine teacher identity and negotiate the shift from student to teacher. Participatory pedagogy turns these expressive acts into collaborative reflection because they invite discussion, critique, and reinterpretation. A studio critique, for example, does more than assess a product; it gives preservice teachers a setting in which they can externalize their educational commitments, hear how others read them, and revise their understanding of what kind of teacher they are trying to become.

The second mechanism is relational recognition. Teacher identity is not formed solely through introspection. It develops through being seen, heard, responded to, and positioned as a legitimate participant in a professional community. Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) emphasize the importance of narrative, emotion, discourse, and context in identity formation, all of which are relational rather than purely internal. Participatory pedagogy matters because it creates opportunities for this recognition to occur in ordinary educational practice. When preservice teachers are invited to facilitate part of a seminar, contribute to the

interpretation of artworks, or help shape discussion criteria, they experience themselves not only as students completing tasks but as participants whose judgement carries weight. Such experiences are especially significant in art teacher education, where critique and interpretation depend on reciprocal acknowledgement. Recognition in this context is not merely praise; it is the experience of being treated as someone whose perspective can influence shared understanding. Over time, such positioning can strengthen a sense of professional legitimacy.

The third mechanism is agentic authorship of practice. A strong line of research on co-creation argues that participation becomes meaningful when students have some degree of influence over the design or direction of learning (Bovill 2020; Omland et al. 2025). Agency here does not require full equality of power or the abandonment of pedagogical structure. It requires that students can make consequential contributions to shared educational work. This matters for future teachers because professional identity is closely tied to the perception that one can act purposefully, make judgements, and assume responsibility for educational decisions. In art teacher education, such authorship may emerge when preservice teachers co-design a visual inquiry task, negotiate criteria for critique, or develop collaborative projects that connect artistic process with pedagogical aims. Kenny, Finneran, and Mitchell (2015) show that arts-based educational experiences can contribute to emerging teachers' values and self-understandings. Read through the lens of participatory pedagogy, this suggests that identity deepens when students do not merely study art education but help author educational meaning through it. Participation becomes professionally formative because it gives students a practical experience of pedagogical agency.

The fourth mechanism is ethical-cultural positioning. Professional identity always includes values. Future teachers develop assumptions about authority, inclusion, responsibility, difference, and the purposes of education, whether or not these assumptions are made explicit. Participatory pedagogy brings such assumptions into view because collaborative work requires decisions about whose voice is heard, how disagreement is handled, and what counts as legitimate knowledge. These are not only procedural questions; they are ethical ones. In art teacher education, the relevance of this mechanism is even more pronounced because art is deeply implicated in representation, cultural memory, and plurality. Garcia-Lazo et al. (2024) show that visual arts

education can strengthen preservice teachers' cultural identity, indicating that art teacher preparation shapes how future teachers understand themselves in relation to culture and practice. When participatory pedagogy is embedded in such contexts, preservice art teachers are invited to negotiate not only meaning but also responsibility: how to create inclusive interpretive spaces, how to respond to diverse aesthetic positions, and how to mediate difference without erasing it. In this way, participation helps form a professional identity that is not only creative and reflective, but also culturally responsive and ethically alert.

These four mechanisms are analytically distinct but practically intertwined. Reflective externalization often depends on relational recognition, because what students express becomes formative partly through how others respond. Recognition can strengthen agentic authorship, since being treated as a legitimate contributor increases the likelihood that students will take responsibility for educational action. Ethical-cultural positioning cuts across the other three, because reflection, recognition, and authorship all occur within value-laden relations shaped by inclusion, power, and difference. Taken together, the mechanisms suggest that participatory pedagogy shapes professional identity not by adding a motivational layer to existing instruction, but by reorganising the conditions under which future art teachers learn to see, voice, and inhabit professional selfhood.

The value of this framework is that it preserves complexity without dissolving into abstraction. It avoids reducing participatory pedagogy to a generic innovation and avoids reducing identity formation to private self-reflection. Instead, it shows that professional becoming occurs through structured relations of expression, response, contribution, and value negotiation. In art teacher education these relations are especially visible because the field already involves critique, creation, interpretation, and cultural mediation. Participatory pedagogy does not create these dimensions from nothing, but it can intensify and reorganise them so that they become more explicitly formative.

Limits and implications

The argument developed here should not be read as a romantic endorsement of participation. A consistent theme in co-creation research is that participation is not automatically inclusive, democratic, or transformative (Bovill 2020; Omland et al. 2025). Voice can be

distributed unequally, collaboration can reproduce hierarchy, and students may be invited into symbolic forms of involvement that do not genuinely alter the conditions of learning. This matters especially in teacher education, where preservice teachers are simultaneously vulnerable learners and emerging professionals. If participatory pedagogy is poorly designed, it may generate ambiguity rather than agency and performance rather than recognition. For that reason, facilitation is central. Teacher educators must structure participation so that voice is not monopolised by the most confident students and so that critique remains intellectually demanding without becoming socially exclusionary. This is particularly important in art teacher education, where public interpretation and aesthetic judgement can make participation feel personally exposing. Multiple modes of contribution, clear norms for dialogue, and careful scaffolding of co-creative tasks are therefore not optional additions; they are conditions for the formative potential of participation to be realised.

Assessment is equally important. If students are asked to collaborate, reflect, and co-author learning, but are judged only through conventional individual products, the pedagogical message becomes contradictory. Participatory pedagogy needs assessment models that can recognise reflective process, peer response, collaborative inquiry, and justified decision-making alongside individual achievement. In teacher education this alignment is essential because students learn what the institution values through assessment as much as through instruction.

These limits also point to practical implications. Teacher education programs should treat participatory pedagogy not as generic innovation but as part of professional formation. In art teacher education this means designing experiences in which critique, co-interpretation, collaborative planning, and visual reflection are intentionally connected to questions of professional voice, responsibility, and cultural responsiveness. The point is not to dissolve teacher authority, but to organise learning so that preservice art teachers can rehearse meaningful forms of participation they may later cultivate in their own classrooms.

Conclusion

Participatory pedagogy matters in art teacher education because it shapes more than engagement. It shapes the conditions under which future teachers learn to understand themselves as professionals.

Drawing together research on teacher identity, co-creation, arts-based reflection, and visual arts education, this article has argued that participatory pedagogy contributes to the professional identity of future art teachers through four interrelated mechanisms: reflective externalization, relational recognition, agentic authorship of practice, and ethical-cultural positioning. The significance of these mechanisms lies in the fact that they connect pedagogical form with professional becoming.

This argument is especially consequential in art teacher education, where the artist-teacher nexus, visual forms of reflection, and the cultural politics of representation make identity work particularly visible and complex. In this field, participation is not simply a learner-centred technique. It is a way of organising reflective expression, shared authorship, and ethical dialogue around educational practice. When thoughtfully designed, participatory pedagogy can help future art teachers develop professional selves grounded in responsibility, interpretive openness, and responsiveness to difference.

The article therefore proposes that professional identity formation should be treated as a central outcome of participatory pedagogy in art teacher education rather than as a secondary by-product. Future research may test, refine, or contest the four mechanisms proposed here, but the conceptual point remains: how future art teachers participate in learning shapes what kinds of teachers they are becoming.

AI Statement: Artificial intelligence tools were used only for limited language support during the preparation of this manuscript. Specifically, DeepL was used for the translation of individual words and short phrases, and Grammarly was used for spelling and orthographic checking. No AI tools were used for generating the scientific content, analysis, arguments, interpretations, or conclusions of the article. The authors take full responsibility for the content of the manuscript.

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A sociolinguistic study of Osa-Ahia syndrome, linguistic nuances and honorifics in Igbo business interactions in selected markets in Calabar

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Abstract: The Igbo tribe constitutes one of the three largest ethnic groups in Nigeria, and they are mostly businessmen. Nigerians jokingly say that anywhere Igbos are not found, is not habitable. The Igbos conduct their businesses seamlessly, such that people wonder how they integrate easily with the locals. Their vendors use peculiar linguistic choices and honorifics to convince customers. In this study, we examine those peculiar linguistic choices adopted by the Osa-ahia. Data was elicited from interactions in three markets in Calabar: Marina Beach, Watt, and Marian. Twenty-one data points were generated from the three markets and analysed accordingly. The study is rooted in sociolinguistics due to its closeness to societal activities from a language perspective. The study reveals that linguistic creativity is a marketing tool and a form of advertisement for the survival of any business in an evolving world, using the Osa-ahia syndrome as a paradigm.

Keywords: sociolinguistics, Osa-Ahia, linguistic nuances, sales, Igbos, business interactions, Calabar

Background to the study

The market environment is highly competitive, and for well-established businessmen, advertisements are a key tool to attract higher

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AGATHOS, Volume 17, Issue 2 (33-34): 707-720, DOI 10.5281/zenodo.23610672
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sales. In contrast, petty traders who cannot afford advertisements rely on other strategies to ensure the sustainability of their businesses; even those who use advertisements in either the English language or Nigerian Pidgin English (NPE) prefer to adopt the English language which is the nation's lingua-franca, due to the multiplicity of languages in the country. In Nigeria, the markets are predominantly occupied by the Igbo people, who are known for their business-oriented nature. The Igbo tribe is spread throughout the world, and they are predominantly traders who engage in either petty trading or large-scale marketing, depending on their financial resources (Anyanwu 2019). They conduct their businesses seamlessly, so that one begins to wonder how they integrate so easily with the locals. This situation is similar to the research conducted by Ebim, Ene and Abioye (2021), where they opined that: "The garage boys offer services to travellers/passengers in Calabar, the capital of Cross River State. The financial reward of such people is based on commission, charges from passengers' loads and tips from well-wishers. Their businesses are privately owned, and there is a high level of competition and collaboration among the entrepreneurs. It is this competition that gives rise to toutism or garage boys who collaborate and compete to outsmart each other to give prominence to their benefactors". The ability of Osa-ahia, just like the Agberos in the above example, to strongly convince the customer to buy such goods by adding a particular amount to the real value of the price gives them an advantage because they are not paid for their services. Their money comes by means of an additional income to the original price to the market value and for them to convince their customers, they make use of expressions that often convey nuanced meanings that facilitate smooth transactions and build relationships. According to some scholars, such transactionary methods become a part of the business enterprise (see Inyang 2008; Madichie & Nkamnebe 2010; Imhonopi & Iruonagbe 2013; Oluwabamide 2015). The Igbos generally engage in trade activities as a way of life, which has been a long-time practice. The former boss checks up on him regularly to ensure that the business is going well. According to Alike (2019), Iwara, Amaechi, and Netshandama (2019), the aim is to lead the former apprentice in the right direction. The new "Oga" capitalises on his newfound position and grows the business to an enviable position. Agozino (2007), Orugun & Nafiu (2014), Iwara et al. (2019), and Ugoani (2014) view this process as a generational transfer of wealth in the Igbo heritage. The resilience and courage put into such a

business ensure that the Igbo lineage is preserved and the values are transferred to the next generation of businessmen. According to Ola (2016):

> Igbo people have a reputation in Nigeria and probably throughout Africa, as resilient, dogged traders who build viable small-to-medium enterprises which are completely independent of government. There are plenty of people from other ethnic groups who have just as much business savvy and resilience as an Igbo business person. But other areas of Nigeria have not imbibed the spirit of entrepreneurship into the fibre of their culture in the same way the Igbos have. We have little choice but to look to the East for inspiration. I have looked at just two lessons; we can all learn from the archetypal Igbo trader.

In spite of the resilience, some need a platform to stand and develop to a point where they can establish their businesses. This is a result of their lack of finances. Such a category of people falls within the Osa-ahia class. They go to business environments owned by their Igbo brothers and negotiate with them for permission to "assist" them in the marketing of their goods. Knowing fully well that the owner of such goods has already placed market values on such goods, the Osa-ahia first poses as though he is the owner of the business and, through that means, negotiates the price of the goods with the prospective buyer. At the end, whatever he can add to the initial price becomes his earnings for the day. The negotiated price is what appears on the receipt given to the customer, whereas the shop owner gives the marketer the additional amount of money.

A review of research works on domains of language use and theory

Different scholars have carried out studies on diverse domains of language use. Anam et al. (2025), carried out a sociolinguistic analysis of the linguistic choices in political discourse, and their finding reveals that communicative strategies and the deployment of appropriate linguistic choices can lead to a peaceful resolution of political logjams, especially in a politically tense environment. Also, Fatuase and Matthew (2022) revealed that the creative use of proverbs sustains the linguistic heritage of a people. This is because proverbial sayings help to pass the cultural beliefs of a people from one generation to another and also help to sustain the language of a people. Matthew (2021) focused on the sociolinguistic use of language in songs of musicians as a means of advocating the need for the sustainability of the environment. In Matthew (2017) examined a literary text by Chinua

Achebe from the perspective of ecolinguistics. He opines that the general belief that the major character in the novel, Okonkwo, was a successful man depended on his constant destruction of the ecosystem, which is injurious to the people of the universe. Finally, Matthew's (2016) paper focused on the effect of environmental despoliation on the Nier Delta environment as a result of the oil exploration by multinational corporations.

Theoretically, the study adopts a pragmatic approach to the analysis. The focus is on contextual use of language. Pragmatics determines how the communicative strategies of humans are carried out within a linguistic context and how such a context contributes to the realisation of meaning in language use. It helps to oscillate the relationship that exists between the interlocutors in a communicative event. The proponent of pragmatics is H. P. Grice (1967), who, in his lecture on the theory, opines in that conversation involving speakers and hearers is governed by certain conversant principles and maxims such as being truthful, relevant, brief, and clear to the point. J. L. Austin and H. P. Grice contributed to the concept of implicature. Through their efforts, pragmatics became recognised as a subfield of linguistics. Meaning is negotiated through conversations/interactions between the interactants. Through pragmatics, meaning is negotiated to understand the implication of speakers' utterances. As regards the linguistic negotiation, which is captured using deixis and honorifics, Levinson (1983) divided honorifics into a classification, according with which: for the referential column, the addressee is directly indexed in the interlocutors' relationship, not without recourse to the referenced (Brown and Levinson 1987, 276). These kinds of forms are used in addressing by referring to either person or thing referred to (see Brown and Levinson 1978; Levinson 1983, 90). In other words, form conveys respect for the person that is referred to (Sifianou 1992, 57). At the family level, according to Levinson (1983, 91) and Horn and Ward (2006, 120), family honorifics refer to the relationship between the speaker and possibly other participants, as well as the contextual placement of the setting, taking into consideration the social activities involved. The bystander, as observed by Levinson (1983) and Brown and Levinson (1978), is a type of honorific which means interactants and onlookers. In the words of Ward (2006, 120), this form of honorifics is used to show respect to a non-addressed but present party. Absolute, on the other hand, is divided into authorised speakers and authorised recipients.

Methodology

Altogether, twenty-one data were elicited from interactions with Osa-ahia in three different markets in the study area, which is Calabar. The markets are: Watt market, Marian market and Marina beach market. The data were categorised into three segments: general linguistic usages, social networking and power relations. The interlocutors negotiated power by means of discursive practice to gain access to their intended customers. The analytical framework followed Gracian's (1975) implicature principles and Levinson's (1987) politeness approach to understanding communication.

Data analysis

Table 1: Data, translations and contextual meanings

S/No	Osa-Ahia Expression	Translation
1	Biázutá m' áhiá (persuasive)	Come and buy goods from me
2	À gámérésigiofuma (persuasive)	I will sell well for you
3	Onyéwuonyénkém (persuasive)	This person is my person
4	You na my man, I go do you well (persuasive)	You are my favourite; I will sell well for you
5	Nwunye di ya, Ji á dikwa nu mman'onuáhia m nyérégi, were yaotu ahu (persuasive)	Her husband's wife, this yam is good at that price I gave to you, take it like that.
6	Onyénáeréahiá, otuámbiákwulérégi, ágághimébéọzọ (sweet talk)	Mr. Seller, I came to you without going elsewhere like this
7	Nwanyioma, n'eziokwu, oweghiebeọzọiga-ahu udi ji a n'onuahia m résirigin'ahianiilé a n'otutuoma a (persuasive)	Beautiful lady, sincerely, there is no other place that you will see this kind of yams at this price I just gave you in this whole market this early morning
8	Aga agbakwagiosoáhiá o (persuasive)	Dem go run you street o!
9	Ogbálá AA (persuasive)	It is so cheap now o!
10	Ahiáománéréonwéya, ahiáomaányin'érékáéjimáráányi (persuasive)	A good market sells itself; the quality goods we sell is what we are known for

Politeness strategies employed in Osa-ahia marketing strategies

Positive politeness strategies: Notice, Attend to Hearer (His interests, wants, needs, goods). This strategy suggests that the speaker should

notice all aspects of the condition of the hearer including remarkable possessions, noticeable changes and anything else that looks as though the hearer would want noticed by the speaker and approve of it (Brown and Levinson 1978). Text 1, which in Igbo expression is Biázutá m' áhiá is a persuasive strategy which means "Come and buy goods from me". In this expression, this phrase is used by vendors when they want the buyer's patronage by calling their attention whether they had the intention of buying such goods or not.

Include both speaker and hearer in the activity: This strategy involves the speaker using an inclusive 'we' or 'let's' forms when he means 'me' or 'you' thus involving him and the hearer in the activity and as a result redressing face threatening acts of imposition to the hearer. (Brown and Levinson 1978). In text 2, the expression "À gámérésigiofuma" is also a persuasive strategy of marketing, which means "I will sell well for you". Here, the Vendor tells the buyer that he or she will treat the buyer well when selling the goods to him or her by giving the goods at an affordable price".

Give or ask for reasons: This is another strategy of including the hearer in the activity by the speaker giving reasons as to why he wants whatever he wants. By the speaker including the hearer in his reasoning, the hearer is led to see how reasonable the speaker's FTA is. The speaker explains why the addressee needs to do or not to do a certain action (Brown and Levinson 1978). This strategy is mostly used by interlocutors when they want the intending buyers of wares to behave in a certain way or to do or not to do a certain thing which they may not be comfortable with or when the interractant wants them to buy his/ her ideas. Text3 "Onyéwuonyénkém" falls within the ambit of persuasion, translating to mean "This person is my person". At this point, the Vendor tries to make the buyer feel good and welcome through persuasion.

Intensify interest to hearer: Brown and Levinson (1978) aver that this strategy involves the speaker communicating to the hearer that he does share some of his wants by intensifying the interest of his (speaker's) contributions to the conversation to the hearer through 'making a good story'. This pulls the addressee into the middle of what is being talked about thus increasing the addressee's interest to it. By so doing, the threat that would have been caused by the act is warded off because the hearer will become interested in the story. Text 4 is a typical

sociolinguistic expression in Nigerian Pidgin English (NPE): "You na my man, I go do you well". It is a persuasive utterance meaning "You are my favourite; I will sell to you at a reduced amount". At this point, the seller uses this sentence to make the buyer feel special and make him or her buy more than what was planned.

Table 2: Data on social networking

S/No	Osa-Ahia Expression	Translation
1	Mummy leenu m, ano m ya.	Mummy see me, I am here.
2	Nwanyioma, I naagafezim? Okwaonyeahiagi o	Fine woman, are you passing me by? It is your favourite customer, oh!
3	Anu n'ejuonu ka m n'eren'ahia.	Meat that fills the mouth is what I'm selling in this market
4	Nnem, bia nu tunyere m, ahia m ono naakwukwogi?	My dear, come and buy from me. Is my name in your list?
5	Ah ányágikwá, bátá odiya	Ah, it's been long, come inside, I have it.

Negative politeness strategies

Hedges/ Questions: Brown and Levinson (1978) argue that in this strategy, a speaker uses noncommittal statements which make the hearer feel that he/she is not being coerced to do a certain thing. Speakers use words and phrases such as such as 'I think', 'perhaps', 'it seems', 'could you', 'I wonder, 'may be' to show that he/she is not imposing on the hearer but giving an opinion. Speakers therefore use hedges to reduce the weight of an FTA in an utterance. In text 1 "Mummy leenu m, ano m ya. Mummy see me, I am here", codes witching plays a prominent role in the conversation. Here, a seller is either talking to a frequent customer or a random lady, calling her attention to his shop. Male vendors who sell clothing normally use this phrase to pass information to ladies by pretending to be familiar with the prospective buyer.

Be indirect: According to Brown and Levinson (1978), this strategy involves use of phrases and sentences that have contextually unambiguous meanings which are different from their literal meanings. The speaker avoids impinging on the addressee's negative face by speaking in a way that avoids direct commands or requests thus making the hearer to feel not imposed on. Text 2, labelled as "Nwanyioma, I naagafezim? Okwaonyeahiagi o" portrays the seller calling the prospective buyer a "Fine woman" and rhetorically asking

her whether she is "passing me by him" and going further to say that the clothes are the buyer's "favourite customer oh!". The seller is trying to use emotional blackmail to bring the buyer to his or her shop in order to buy something from them.

Give deference: In this strategy, the speaker humbles and abases himself or raises the hearer. In both cases therefore, the hearer is of a higher social status than the speaker. Brown and Levinson (1978) claim that the speaker indicates that the hearer is respected and valued and is taken to be superior. The speaker reduces their importance by making the hearer look more important by praising or complimenting them. The marketer 'down scales' his importance by praising the friends of the deceased saying that they loved him so much that they will not fail to visit the family after the burial ceremony. Through this praise, the friends of the deceased feel good and thus satisfying their positive face wants of notice and attend to the hearer's wants. By so doing, they will feel valued and therefore will continue visiting the family without feeling that they are being coerced to do so. In text 3, "Anu n'ejuonu ka m n'eren'ahia" is a proverbial saying that "Meat that fills the mouth is what I'm selling in this market" meaning that the seller announces to the market by shouting this phrase so that people will come buy from him and pay less attention to others.

The use of general rule: Brown and Levinson (1978) aver that another way of disassociating the speaker and the hearer from a certain imposition in the FTA and thus communicating that the speaker does not wish to impinge on the hearer is by stating the FTA as a general rule, obligation or regulation. By so doing, the speaker avoids mentioning the hearer and so is not seen to be imposing on the hearer but rather drawing the hearer's attention to existence of a certain general rule that applies to everyone. In text 4 "Nnem, bia nu tunyere m, ahia m ono naakwukwogi?" the seller refers to the buyer as "My dear come and buy from me, is my name in your list?" The seller is talking to a buyer who is passing by his or her shop with a list in her hand, looking around, asking the customer if the name of what she sells is in the customer's list.

Table 3: Data on power dynamics

S/No	Osa-Ahia Expression	Translation
1	Zurunkéá, yákácházsimmáná-áhiá	Buy this one, it is the best in the market

	(convincing)	
2	Tinyérémmmézinnά, owurunάitinyéré m agaghi m abiaọzọ (compelling)	Put bonus for me daddy, if you don't put, I won't come again.
3	Ọ̀wuna I gaghietinyéré m mmezi? (compelling)	Won't you put bonus for me?
4	Nwoke m, a mam na I n'ereezigboahia, mana nye m mmezi (compelling).	My man, I know you sell quality goods but give me bonus.
5	Nwanyioma, n'eziokwu, oweghiebeọzọiga-ahu udi ji a n'onuahia m résirigin'ahianiilé a n'otutuoma a. (persuasive)	Beautiful lady, sincerely, there is no other place that you will see this kind of yam at this price I just gave you in this whole market this early morning
6	M gάewufurugiọnuάhiά.	I will reduce market price for you.

Bald-on record politeness strategies

The use of advice: In this strategy, the speaker gives advice to the hearer directly with no minimization of the FTA for it is for the benefit of the hearer (Brown and Levinson 1978). This utterance, in text 1, labelled "Zurunkéά, yάkάchásimmάnά-άhiά" is an imposition of linguistic power through a convincing means to ensure that the buyer purchases an item by all means. The expression means "Buy this one, it is the best in the market" The vendor tells the buyer to buy a particular ware, convincing him or her that the goods is the best in the market.

Maximum efficiency (being efficient): This strategy is used when the speaker wants to achieve maximum efficiency in stating the FTA. The speaker states the FTA directly and concisely with no attempt to lessen its threat to the addressee (Brown and Levinson 1978). In text 2 of table 3, the expression "Tinyérémmmézinnά, owurunάitinyéré m agaghi m abiaọzọ" is more of a compelling approach by the buyer who is negotiating a larger quantity for the goods at a lesser amount. He says, "Put a bonus for me, daddy, if you don't put, I won't come again". Here, the buyer says this so that the seller will put enough of what he is buying (rice/garri) from the seller. This expression is used to compel the seller to do more than he is supposed to, just so that the buyer will come again and this can create a healthy relationship between them.

Metaphorical expressions for emphasis: This strategy is used when there is urgency for emphasis (Brown and Levinson 1978). The

speaker does the face threatening act directly and concisely with the intention of achieving maximum effectiveness. The hearer therefore cannot interpret the message in any other way. In text 3 of table 3 "Ọwuna I gaghietinyéré m mmezi?" the buyer rhetorically and compellingly enquires whether the seller will not add more for a lesser amount "Won't you put bonus for me?" This is a question asked by the buyer to remind the seller that he or she needs to be treated well so that the buyer will come back.

The use of honorifics as a marketing strategy by the Osa-ahia

Honorifics have become a marketable tool for the Osa-ahia in a bit to persuade, convince and redirect their intended customers to patronize their wares. Instances of such honorifics are replete in the analysis below. The term "Nwunye di ya" can be translated to mean "Her husband's wife". The aim of giving such a title to a total stranger in a market setting is just to make the person feel comfortable, responsible and accommodated in such an environment. Another form of honorific is "Nwanyioma", which translates to "beautiful lady", whether the person is beautiful or ugly, it becomes immaterial where she has been addressed in such honorific terms, the tendency to purchase from the buyer is very high. Here the seller of the goods gives positive attributes the buyer with such a beautiful title. Another honorific used by the Osa-ahia is "Mama" or Nne". This means my mother. In African setting, the term Mama is symbolic. By calling the buyer "Nne" my mother, it touches on respect, cordiality and motherly affection. The seller uses such a motherly term to draw affection and by extension sympathy from the customer. The expression also carries emotional blackmail to bring the buyer to his or her shop for patronage. The next honorific form is "Nnem" meaning my dear. This again comes with affection but the language is mainly for business without any form of cordiality. The masculine version of that is "Nwoke m", and in the Nigerian parlance, it means "my man", which is a reference to one's close pal or pally but it is used here honorifically to cause affection, bring about close-ties and subsequently lead to a business transaction. The expression "Okwulu Ora" can be translated as "the one who speaks for the public", or "a public speaker" and it is intended as a praise for one's oratory skills. That is, one who speaks impeccably and with wisdom. "Aka egbuchịọnwa" could be translated as "Hands cannot shroud the moon". My father's younger brother was given the appellation because he became financially successful at a young age.

The praise name made his actual name, "Donatus", less known. "Ana agba agụmgba" is a praise name is in the form of a question: could a tiger be wrestled with? Being a rhetorical question, it leaves the bearer with the pride of being menacing to rivals and cannot be challenged without unwanted consequences.

Discussion of findings

This study is a sociolinguistic study of a market discourse that centres on the Osa-ahia communicative strategies adopted by the Igbo businessmen. We adopted three sociolinguistic concepts: Speech community, social networking, and power dynamics, to carry out the analysis in the speech community. In the analysis, we grouped the data into three segments: speech community, social networking, and power dynamics. We classify the data in the table below as falling within the sociolinguistic domain of the speech community. This is because the data describes the specific Igbo group's communicative strategies that they use in conducting their daily business activities. There is a mixture of slang, jargon that are peculiar to the Osa-ahia speech community. Their specialty in the slang and jargon they have developed helps to serve their marketing purpose. In this paper, examine the relationship that exists in their socialisation and identity construction in the marketing discourse of this group of people. There are linguistic choices adopted by the Osa-ahia group of marketers that fall within a sociolinguistic milieu such as persuasive discourses which play a dominant role in the speech community data constituting a major element in the discourse pattern of the interactions that control the business of marketing used by the Osa-ahia marketers.

Conclusion

This study falls within the sociolinguistic ambit of domains of language use, with a specific focus on the marketplace interaction or market discourse. This approach to language exposes how the use of language varies depending on the available social factors. By domains of language, we mean the specificity of linguistic choices that are adopted in a speech community depending on the social context, setting or the relationship between the interlocutors depending on their linguistic choices. The study was carried out within a speech community of Igbo market traders and their linguistic adaptations to attract customers to their wares. This was done by describing the choice of the language of the middlemen known as Osa-ahia, a group

of Igbos who have no businesses of their own but who play active roles in the marketing of goods in the marketing place. We anchored the study on sociolinguistics due to its closeness to societal activities from a language perspective. The study reveals that linguistic creativity is a marketing tool and a form of advertisement for the survival of any business in an evolving world, using the Osa-ahia syndrome as a paradigm. The study reveals that the ability of the Osa-ahia to convince the customer to buy such goods by adding a particular amount to the real value of the price gives them an advantage because they are not paid for their services. Their money comes by means of an infusion of a price to the market value. In a bid to convince their customers, they make use of expressions that often convey nuanced meanings that facilitate smooth transactions and build relationships.

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The human in the organization turning from a gear into the machine itself

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Abstract: Over historical time, what mythos and ethos created as "Homo Credo" has transformed into "Homo Rationalis." Rationalism, and as a result modernist approaches, requiring events to be explained by a rational method supported by independent observations-based on Newtonian physics. This view also shaped the mechanical worldview in social sciences. Activities within organizations followed a logical process within this mechanical worldview. Although this logical process did increase production, it caused humans, as a production factor, to be seen as parts of machines. With technological development, increased competition, accelerated innovations, and dynamics facilitating rapid dissemination of knowledge, this mechanical structure has transformed into an organic one. Because mechanical organizational structures and Newtonian paradigms cannot solve current problems. Attempts have been made to address current issues using quantum physics paradigms. Through quantum theory, one transcends pure reason, and within theory the rational-decision-making human in mechanical organizations has turned into an irrational human. From the perspective of Newtonian physics, the individual within a mechanical organization is viewed as a production factor, a gear in the machine focused on how to produce more. However, even a century later, it appears that the same problems persist for the irrational human shaped by quantum theory. Efforts to push the individual laborer to work more-through flexible work systems and the necessity of keeping up with technological advances-give rise to an objectified human who has literally become the machine itself. This objectified human is made dependent on technology-and therefore on the machine-and is alienated.

Keywords: Newtonian physics, mechanical organization, quantum physics, mechanized human, objectified human

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AGATHOS, Volume 17, Issue 2 (33-34): 721-735, DOI 10.5281/zenodo.23610833
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Introduction

Throughout the advancement of scientific and technical endeavors, questions that trouble the human being have been asked in every era. What makes something a "human"? What elevates something to "superhuman"? Which changes are acceptable from the perspective of humanity? Is it ethical to tamper with human life even via certain "corrective" means? In seeking answers to these questions, humans began to move from a passive observer role toward becoming the order itself (Brooks 2007, 214). Likewise, through these inquiries, the mythos and ethos ages embedded in Western thought gave rise to the primacy of reason-'logos'-after Auguste Comte's "Cours de Philosophie Positive." Thus, the faith-based "Homo Credo" evolved into the rational/scientific "Homo Rationalis." Humanity's problems were now sought to be solved through rational and scientific paradigms (Ulgen & Mirze 2010, 44). This rationality demanded a human prototype best suited to the mechanical organizational structure of business management-this human became a production factor alongside machines for maximum efficiency (Kalemci Tüzün 2012, 21; Eren 2013, 228; Kocel 2013, 227).

Within this rationality, Erich Fromm proposed that the fabric of reality can emerge not just from reason but from a combination of reason and emotion. Modern problems demand this combination, and businesses must adapt. Problems are evaluated within the context of rational and irrational approaches. For the issues of business and management regarding humans, pure reasoning isn't enough. While humans are production factors alongside machines, they also have souls, emotions, and are influenced by a socio-psychological environment. These elements must be managed. In this shift from rational to irrational mind, the result for the individual within the organization doesn't change. In the mechanical system, the person had to produce heavily under decisions made by others. In today's reflection, to achieve the same productivity result, individuals are faced with manipulations that subtly guide their will. These manipulations create a dependent human who acts outside their own volition. From another perspective, humans cannot always act rationally. According to Ulgen & Mirze (2010, 45), following Durkheim, modern humans sometimes must behave like primitive humans. Primitive people built sacred "totems." Contemporary societies erect monuments for their own martyrs. From this standpoint, both primitive and contemporary humans are worked toward the same

outcomes. Through marketing, communication, motivation, and leadership, humans-gears within machines-are made dependent on work. Thus, a rapid evolution toward the machine itself is foreseen.

Human as the gear of the machine

There have been successful management practices since the existence of mankind. The Sumerians managed the human communities they formed around their temples under the leadership of priests. The Egyptians managed irrigation systems and pyramids with a large workforce organization. Hammurabi still guides administrators and lawmakers to govern Babylon today (Eren 2013, 17). The current management process emerged with the Industrial Revolution, which was a result of technological changes, and continued until the mid-1700s and mid-1800s, and essentially with the change in the production relations of societies. In this change, it is noteworthy that production transformed from small and scattered units to large and centralized units-factories located in certain places (Kocel 2013, 46).

There have been major changes in the working routine and work environment of man from the Industrial Revolution to the present. Many of the jobs previously done by hand and with simple tools have become mechanized. This situation has eliminated the crafts done in small shops and the master-apprentice-journeyman relationships. Thus, many small production units were replaced by large factories. In about 100 years, the entire economy of Western Europe, the USA and Japan, based on agriculture and handicrafts, reached its current state (Eren 2014, 9). The transition to this state is addressed within an organizational framework. According to Usdiken and Leblebici (2001), this organization is nourished by three basic roots. One of these elements is the administrative root, which provides the infrastructure for effective and efficient management, and was theorized by Taylor (1911), Mooney and Reiley (1939), Fayol (1949) and Max Weber (1947). The other root is the sociological root, led by theorists such as Selznick (1949), Gouldner (1954) and Blau (1955). The third is the psychological origin, which deals with human relations and was theorized by researchers such as Roetlisberger and Dickson (1946) and Likert (1961) (Sargut and Özen 2010, 14).

Although three separate categories have been put forward for the periods that constitute the roots expressed for the organization, the answer to the questions about which one should be in the foreground, human or organization, has been focused on the organization, that is,

the business. A transformation from the entrepreneurs who know everything and act rationally within the framework of organizations and entrepreneurs to the assumption of people who are expected to have different purposes within the group began to be expressed with the 1960s. This period corresponds to the transformation from economic models of managerial behavior to models created with the ideas of psychologists and political scientists (Sıgrı 2012, 37).

There are also some approaches to describe the place of the person in the organization. According to Hatch (1997), the framework of these approaches is formed by the modernist, symbolist-interpretive and postmodern approaches. The modernist approach addresses events with an objective and rational mind. The symbolist-interpretive approach is based on the "Enactment Theory". Here, reality depends on people's experiences, ideas and assumptions. People define reality with the concepts they create and attribute meaning to. In the postmodern approach, all views are rejected. It is assumed that the structure and pattern of events should be addressed not in a rational way, but with paradigms directed by aesthetics and the heart (Ulgen & Mirze 2010, 40-41).

The dominant worldview of the organizational theories generally referred to as the classical period was designs based on the application of a single truth universally. In accordance with the mechanical understanding of this period, organizations were designed in a way that could realize predictable results (Ercil & Sener 2012, 349). The fundamental basis of the view that marked the classical period is rationality. Rationality refers to data that has been institutionalized with the advancement of science and technology. Here, the use of technology provides benefit, but it diminishes and interferes with the human characteristics of people. The use of machines dulls creativity. Machines are certainly very useful. However, they lead people to think in narrow patterns. The patterns imposed on people necessitate standardization (Bolay 2017, 13).

The place of the human being in the organization has been tried to be constructed according to the way decisions are made. Decisions made with an objective and rational mind have resulted in communities being seen as machine-like systems. According to Starbuck (2003), people act rationally and do not see value in making different choices. Systems that function like machines have limited the freedom of choice and control of humans. If there is a rational path,

that path does not contain many alternatives, it is unique. The universe is also seen as a whole of systems that work smoothly (Sıgrı 2012, 44).

According to Schwortz and Ogilug (1979), rational thinking is addressed within a systematic thought attributed to Newtonian physics. This thinking is based on the principles of objectivity, causality and mechanical universe. According to the principle of objectivity, events in the universe should be understood through reason. Here, the observed and observer boundaries are sharply separated. In causality, there is a causal relationship between the parts. According to the principle of mechanicalness, the entire functioning of the universe resembles a machine (Bakoglu Deliorman & Bahar 2009, 31). The Newtonian paradigm is summarized as predicting, explaining and controlling managerial behavior. Within this paradigm, human behavior is predicted and controlled (Yasar & Ozdemir 2015, 1).

According to Newtonian physics, the basis of social sciences is explained by the cosmology of classical mechanics. This situation is identified with the great machine. Every event that happens in the universe has a natural and predictable effective cause. The operation of this machine is specific. It is not affected by any human action or intervention and is objective for everyone (Eidlin 2015, 4). The relationship between Newtonian physics and the mechanicalness of organizations also stems from this. The best organizational structure, like a key that does not change from person to person but opens every door, exists within this system. The best organizational structures based on efficiency must be established (Değirmenci & Utku 2000, 78).

It is a possible necessity for businesses operating in a certain system to revise their management techniques and approaches in accordance with the evolving conditions of the day. Regardless of the developments and the type of business, the principle that it has to comply with is the principle of efficiency. All activities are designed in line with this principle, where the human being, a production factor, is the most important element (Kocel 2013, 210). Due to the nature of the business, it is necessary to be efficient. The focal point is the organization itself. In addition, all studies have been designed around the problem of how to create the best organizational structure. As a result, mechanical organizational structures have emerged. This organization has not given importance to humans and has not made them a part of the model (Ibid, 227). The human being here is rational and an extension of the machine (Kalemci Tuzun 2012, 22). In this

structure, it is expected to behave like a machine (robot). This robot should not reflect its personal problems on its work, and a sharp distinction is expected between its work and its other life (Kocel 2013, 227). In interpersonal relationships within the organization, personal friendship, camaraderie and the subjective and emotional relationships that arise from these should be avoided (Eren 2013, 29). According to Luthans (1981), based on the doctrines of Max Weber, an employee should work only in accordance with the principles of the level he is at, rationally, without showing any anger or excessive desire, and without developing an emotional bond (Kocel 213, 226).

The role of the human being, which is seen as a cog in the machine in classical organizational theories, has continued to evolve within the framework of paradigms related to production and even more production. Neoclassical approaches have revealed that the human being cannot act only like a machine, that he also has a soul, and that he is an individual who fulfills his responsibilities within an environment. It has been stated that it is necessary to address the physical environment with his emotions and environment. It is seen that the human being, who is the subject of paradigm changes in system, situationality and postmodern approaches, has transformed from a machine that physically produces to an object that buys and is desired to consume more (Urgan 2019, 335).

It can be stated that human-specific approaches have not changed much from classical organizational structures to post-modern organizational structures. In classical organizational structures, the structure referred to as modern organizations is focused on pressure and control. When it comes to today's post-modern structures, the practices applied seem to liberate employees, but on the contrary, they turn them into objects. In other words, liberation, humanization or empowerment is the objectification of the individual's body and mind and turning them into a commodity that can be manipulated. In addition, the power created on employees is carried out through personnel management and interdisciplinary organizational behavior information systems. Personnel management and organizational behavior provide discipline by developing objective, reliable and accurate measurement systems for individual performance evaluation, collecting and storing data. In this way, the individual self is objectified (Yıldırım 2010, 386-387).

The principle adopted by classical management is how to use the human element more effectively in addition to machines by dividing

the work into the smallest pieces with technical-detailed work design and performance evaluation systems and by performing specialized work (Donmez & Gokdemir 2023, 47). So much so that a hundred years ago, a furnace shovel was measured according to its coal-taking capacity. The movements of the individual who will use this shovel were modeled like a robot. Thus, it was objectified as a production factor. When we look at today's projection, there is an objectified human model whose movements are tried to be calculated as a body and brain, which is tried to be expressed with technological developments, changing working systems and related disciplines. This corresponds to the human who has turned into the machine itself.

Mechanized human

The object-subject problem arises in the human being who is exposed to the bombardment of advertisements that ideal happiness can be achieved through technological consumption. The subject must have an object and thus experience the pleasure of consumption. Technology prepares the ground for individual consumption and sometimes triggers it (Uylaş Aksu & Işıklı 2019, 65). In this context, the human being, reduced to positive ideologies within a rationality, becomes a mass. The subject of the human being disappears within this mass (Bolay 2017, 82). Starting from this point, Martin Heidegger draws attention to the problems of the connection between technology and the human being. According to Heidegger, technology generally distances the existence of the human being and, in particular, people from their own authentic existence. It objectifies and instrumentalizes (Uylas Aksu & Isıklı 2019, 57).

Problems that arise in the changes that occur with technology are tried to be solved with abstract reasoning skills. There are difficulties in solving today's multivariable problems. The problems that arise are tried to be solved by machines such as computers. Some theorems have been proven by computers. Since these proofs are based on numerous or complicated substructures, there is a situation that is out of human control. Therefore, a type of person emerges who cannot keep up with the machines he has built (Strogatz 2007, 140).

Although people are tried to be reduced to objectivity, their happiness is shaped by their expectations rather than objective conditions. Even if the conditions of people who are not satisfied with their conditions are corrected, the level of their expectations changes. Therefore, their satisfaction levels do not continue in the same way

(Harari 2018, 54). The change in their positions with the increase in expectations can create chaos in rapid changes. A person who has difficulty perceiving changes may feel like he/she is stuck in narrow patterns. Thus, an individual who cannot predict the long-term statistical behavior of complex systems does not know what to do. This problematic area is being tried to be solved by computers, and complex systems are being tried to be understood with reasonably intelligent computers (Strogatz 2007, 139).

It is seen that with the advancement of technology, it is not very successful in reducing the stress experienced by people. Many inventions that save people time have been developed and continue to be developed. These developments carry the expectations about the work to be done in a conventional way to another level. This level always continues to increase. New material luxuries are created. Then the base line of the understanding of gain is redefined. Many people live a life style full of free time, and they are engaged in endless activities about which breakfast cereal, plastic surgery, new model car or new model spouse will make people happy (Saposky 2007, 125). The reflection of the effort exerted to reach these changing demand levels is also seen in organizations. Competition, desire for growth and the drive to make profit are the main goals of a business. These goals confront the working individual with systems that will make them a little more difficult, which can cause problems in their work-life balance (Urgan & Cetindere Filiz 2023).

With technological changes, the necessity of adapting to the systems of virtual enterprises or hybrid working systems arises (Urgan & Erdogan 2023, 258; Urgan & Yalçın 2024, 102). These systems are also expressed with flexibility. Again, lean production systems are considered within the framework of flexibility. In these models, flexibility is basically achieved by combining work organization methods such as new technologies, subcontractors, informalization, increasing production speed, and extending working hours. In the models, the components of the production process need to be continuously reduced in rotation. More work is given to fewer employees. This reduction is primarily aimed at labor. It can be expressed as the current projection of the working systems of Taylor, the theorist of rational working systems from 100 years ago (Özoğlu 2002, 4). As a characteristic example, in Japan, there are people working 60 hours or more per week, which constitutes approximately 12% of the employees (Iwasaki et al. 2006, 537). These working

systems and sociocultural reasons require the gradual extension of daily shifts. This situation corresponds to a workload that is much more than a person can handle, and the work-life balance of the individual working in this system gradually deteriorates. Very serious diseases can be seen in employees who cannot keep up with the working systems physically and psychologically, and even deaths occur (Herbig & Palumbo 1994; Asgari et al. 2017; Iwasaki et al. 2006). Based on this, it is expected that an employee can evaluate the situations that may put his/her mental and physical health at risk and direct his/her own life accordingly. However, within the framework of technological changes, the problematic area in foreseeing and taking precautions for all the changes that the individual has to keep up with and working systems is growing.

From another perspective, according to Isıklı and Kücükvardar (2017, 29), the situation of technology affecting people in all areas of working life emerges in different dimensions. Electronic devices that contain a simple or complex algorithm are not passive levers, objects or tools in the hands of people. The device replaces the tool, technology replaces the technique, and in this case, the concept of human cannot be mentioned. Here, the person turns into a "user". Technology surrounds and penetrates life, and the person gains a virtual or permanent status at the basis of life. From this point on, a non-essential need is perceived as mandatory (Uylas Aksu & Isıklı 2019, 59).

The widespread technological work systems can create addictive technological behaviors. Just as the physical misuse of digital work devices causes posture disorders in the human body, addiction to technology leads to psychological disorders. This important problem arises due to the strong correlation between addiction to technology and psychiatric disorders. In this context, the fact that employees can be reached at all times and wherever they are in professional business life turns into a concern about encountering problems in organizations. Unlimited internet access on smartphones certainly offers solutions to many problems. However, it triggers addictive behaviors and can lead to psychological disorders such as attention deficit, anxiety and depression (Goncalves et al. 2022).

People's dependence on technology has been tried to be addressed with Moore's law, technological determinism and technological singularity approaches (Uylaş Aksu & Işıklı 2019, 60). According to Moore's law, the number of "transistors per chip", which constitutes

the minimum cost per transistor, increases approximately twofold. Thus, the number of technology uses increases exponentially (Ozmen & Gunay 2019, 1504). According to Vinge (2017), technological singularity occurs in response to technological developments becoming uncontrollable by human mental capacity (Çagatay 2019, 332). In technological determinism, developing processes occur outside the will of individuals and external technological conditions are binding (Berksun 2020, 74).

Based on all these, the controllability problem of the connection between humans and technology is becoming more and more apparent. With this interaction, people are constantly faced with disturbing questions. What makes a being "human" in the context of mechanization? What is being superhuman? What changes are acceptable for humanity? Is it ethical to play with human life through mechanization? Questions such as these gain importance (Brooks 2007, 214).

Technology isolates people from their bodies and social environments. A human typology has emerged that is constantly occupied with their smartphones and computers. Objects uploaded to social media platforms are severing people's connection with themselves. Individuals' experiences are constructed and interpreted based on how others perceive them. People who distance themselves from their bodies, emotions, and physical environments face confusion and alienation. It becomes difficult for people who live separately from their bodies and become alienated to be happy (Harari 2018, 94).

According to Seeman (1959), alienation is caused by social relationship problems between stakeholders in activities within the organization. Dissatisfactions arising from these relationships again alienate them from each other. Alienated labor triggers mass problems (Urgan et al. 2020, 18). The alienated individual feels powerless (Blauner 1964), believes that he lives a meaningless life (Yener, 2004), is unruly (Pars, 1982) and feels isolated (Tutar 2010). Then, he enters a process in which he is convinced that no value is attributed to him (Fettahlıoglu 2006).

Alienation can also occur with exposure to too much human interaction. It is assumed that an average person cannot be intimate with more than 150 people. One can be affiliated with different groups. However, getting close to one group results in losing another. Closeness is created by establishing online connections with individuals in different and remote corners of the world. This

connection cannot be shown to the immediate environment. Thus, the individual becomes alienated from the environment formed by the people he/she actually needs and will physically need (Harari 2018, 95).

Platforms created with online networks and social media perceive people as audiovisual animals consisting of ten fingers, a screen and a pair of eyes and a pair of ears connected to a credit card. The online algorithms here are forming in a way that knows no bounds with technology. Augmented reality is being created through devices and online-offline games. Deep biometric sensors and interfaces that are being created between the brain and the computer are aimed at overcoming the boundary between the electronic machine and the organic body and truly penetrating into the human being. Thus, the entire body of the human being can be directed (Ibid, 97).

Technological tools, with their personalized experiences and instant gratification features, allow individuals to stay on digital platforms longer. This process physiologically triggers dopamine secretion and puts people in a cycle. Thus, the connection with the physical world is broken. Negativities emerge with excessive attachment at an emotional or cognitive level (Tanhan et al. 2025, 237).

Conclusion

In this study, the place of the individual in the organization is considered as a production factor. Social sciences, which have been affected by the paradigms formed from Newtonian physics to today's quantum approaches, and therefore the situation of the person in the organization, have been tried to be revealed with a philosophical pattern. The situation in mechanical and organic organizational structures formed by the triggering of technological developments has been mentioned. The mechanical worldview, based on Newtonian physics, has shaped the paradigms in social sciences. Here, predictability is at the forefront. However, the dynamics of quantum and chaos theories, uncertainty, unpredictability and generally the situations where causality cannot be clearly revealed with the changing socio-economic, political, technological and environmental changes of the day have affected social sciences, especially organizations and therefore people (Senyılmaz 2012).

Richard Feynman actually states that the human mind is at a level where it can understand the equations of the qualitative content in changes and produce a solution accordingly. However, it is seen that

this has not been fully achieved today. There is a problem of a human type that cannot keep up with the machines it has built. The progress of non-linear dynamics continues. In fact, multivariable problems reveal more chaotic situations (Strogatz 2007). Within the framework of the paradigms expressed, the role of the human, who is the cog of the machine, as a factor of production, is to be dependent on the motivation to keep up with systems such as flexible working systems and to transform into the machine itself. With the change in science and technology, the motivation of organizations to survive, make profit and keep up with competition triggers this situation and transforms it into a certain systematic. This systematic requires a dependent human type that will serve the organization with its brain, physique and all its cells.

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Commodified bodies and instrumentalized ecology: A new materialist ecofeminist reading of *The Good Earth*

Amee Teraiya and Anjana Prajapati*

Abstract: This research offers new materialist ecofeminist reading of Pearl S. Buck's *The Good Earth*. It posits that compassion and importance are conditional upon capitalism and patriarchal objectives, wherein women and earth are considered of any value only when they fulfil economic, reproductive and utilitarian needs. Although existing literature highlights ecocritical concerns, it often neglects the intertwined oppression of women and the environment within patriarchal structures. This study combines ecofeminist perspectives with the new materialist approach to examine how the novel, *The Good Earth* portrays human and non-human entities, highlighting a diffused agency that challenges patriarchal dominance. It contributes to a broader discourse on sustainability, gender justice, and socio-ecological equity. This study offers to researchers, activists, and educators, a critical perspective to understand how literature poses and critiques the intertwined oppression of women and nature within patriarchal systems.

Keywords: ecofeminism, new materialism, ecology, patriarchal capitalism, agency

Introduction

With the rise of environmental concerns and the ongoing debate on gender inequalities, literature has emerged as an influential platform, portraying the ways through which women and nature are exploited by the patriarchal and capitalist systems. Within this framework, women and nature are getting affected in multiple forms of exploitation and marginalisation. The search aims to study such a form of exploitation portrayed in Pearl S. Buck's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, *The Good Earth* ([1931] 2012).

This novel presents a clear picture of the Chinese rural life through the portrayal of a poor Chinese farmer, Wang Lung and his wife O-

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AGATHOS, Volume 17, Issue 2 (33-34): 737-748, DOI 10.5281/zenodo.23610922
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Lan. It portrays land, labor and gender roles within patriarchal-capitalist framework. It is centred on the issues of poverty, struggle to survive and farming. O-Lan, who labor tirelessly throughout the story without complains, can be compared to the land, fertile, and powerful, and ultimately exhausted in serving his family (Cao 2019).

With this novel, Pearl Buck (illustrates man and nature relationship, a recurrent theme across her work. It is the first book of the author's *House of Earth* trilogy followed by *Sons* (1932), and *A House Divided* (1935). Other novels, *The Mother* (1934), *Pavilion of Women* (1946), and *Peony* (1948) show Buck's thematic continuities align closely with ecofeminist philosophy, which emphasizes the analogues forms of control and commodification experienced by women and the environment (Phillips 2020, 157-160). New materialism extends this perspective by refusing the conventional human and non-human dichotomy (Fo and Alldred 2019, 1). It highlights the agency of matter, such as soil and bodies as active contributors to the formation of life.

By reading Buck's *The Good Earth* through this interconnected framework, the present study examines how value is constructed around productivity; care is conditional; and systems of domination obscure the mutual interdependence between humans and the material world. Ultimately, the novel functions as a tale of endurance, wherein land and women are considered only in the times of necessity and overlooked in the times of prosperity.

Background

Recent years, marked by the growing ecological concerns such as climate change, deforestation, rising water levels, and resource depletion, clearly indicate that our planet is under serious threat (Liu et al. 2025).This ecological catastrophe is not a standalone phenomenon; rather it is deeply connected with existing systems of social inequalities, such as patriarchy, capitalism, and colonialism, affecting both, the ecosystem and marginalised communities, particularly women.

For instance, In South Asia, despite women's significant contributions to agricultural labor in collaborative production systems, their productivity is consistently devalued and limited due to deep-rooted gender-based inequalities (Islam et al. 2024). Though collaborating on the same work, men and women adopt distinct gender specific roles influenced by socio-cultural conventions. Across culture and histories, women's bodies have been treated much like the land,

sources of labor, fertility, and reproduction, valued for their productivity and often disregarded when no longer usable.

Exploration of intersection between gender and ecological discourse has evolved from several viewpoints, particularly within ecofeminist and postcolonial environmental studies. Val Plumwood, Vandana Shiva, and Greta Gaard have argued on the patriarchal and capital system perpetuating gendered inequality and ecological destruction (Hulluru and Sebastian 2025). Their works have been used as a foundation to examine texts in which the suffering of women is interconnected with degradation of the environment.

Bathwal (2025) contributes to the discourse of ecofeminism since it places the ecological problem in the environment of rural Indian women. It shows with a clear demonstration of the symbolic and masterfully exploitative nature of land and female bodies in the institutions of patriarchal and economic oppression, but, however, much of the modern ontological standpoints are omitted by the studies, they are referenced metaphorically or in representations only.

Seiji's (1975) 'Nostalgia for Pearl Buck's *The Good Earth*' offers a valuable interpretation of western reception of the novel by Buck and how it influenced the perception of the Chinese rural life. It goes a long way in helping understand how literary stories may produce and reproduce cultural imaginaries. The article focuses on the socio-historical approach, neglecting the ecological and gendered dimension in the novel.

Moreover, Gamble et al. (2019) in 'What is new materialism' provide a theoretical base to understanding the phenomenon of new materialist ideas. Despite providing the theoretical groundwork to philosophical study, the article fails to apply these theoretical findings to the literary study, which leaves it lacking in understanding the way the new materialist concepts work within narrative frameworks, characters, or themes within fiction.

MacGregor (2020) contends that material practices have constantly been crucial to ecofeminist philosophy and cautions against the obliteration of fundamental feminist contributions. Although the study presents significant political and theoretical issues, it mostly resides within domain of environmental sociology and activism. Consequently, it does not examine how literature may facilitate or represent these material behaviours.

Thus, existing literature provides substantial insights that cover ecofeminist interpretations, materialist reinterpretations, and cultural

criticism. Nonetheless, most studies regard ecofeminism and new materialism as separated rather than synthesizing them into a unified analytical framework. These studies explore symbolic representation, gendered embodiment, or material agency independently. The interplay of gendered experiences, ecological influences, and non-human agency in the co-production of meaning and resistance remains insufficiently examined.

Theoretical framework

Ecofeminism arose in the late 20th century as a critical response to environmental degradation and gender inequality. (Nhanenge 2011) Francoise d'Eaubonne introduced the term in 1974, in her work *Le Féminisme ou la mort*. With Vandana Shiva, Val Plumwood, and Carolyn Merchant, the western philosophy's content has developed by favoring a set of binary oppositions, man/woman, reason/emotion, mind/body, culture/nature that have legitimized hierarchical social and ecological frameworks (Khalil and Abdelsabour 2018). These hierarchies have not only legitimized the oppression of women but also endorsed the domination of nature.

Ecofeminism asserts that these forms of oppression are not incidental but profoundly interconnected (Nhanenge 2011). It posits that every endeavour to rectify ecological problems must concurrently tackle gender inequality, and vice versa. This theory advocates for 'co-operation' over 'control', 'connection' over 'separation', and 'mutual gain' over 'hierarchical supremacy'. Power must be reconsidered as not an instrument of force or subjugation and hierarchy, but as relational force based on harmony and interdependence. This change of societal mentality is essential because it redefines how value is given to the women and also to nature, and how they have historically been marginalised and exploited.

With the growing global warming and the persistence of gender injustice, this reconceptualization is more and more urgent. Ecofeminism is therefore an indispensable framework where these related crises can be studied together as a whole instead of individual problems. Ecofeminism places environmental degradation and patriarchal oppression in a single due analytical context and thus, discovering the mutual roots and pushing towards extensive, inclusive solutions, it focused on justice, sustainability and collective good (Nhanenge 2011).

Historical connections

The systematic commodification and exploitation of nature are depicted by the historical oppression of women, who were excluded in the rights to property, political representation, and economic control (Lvova 2013). This kind of parallel can be observed in the examples of the Chipko movement in 1970s, when the women in rural India staged a movement to protect the forests against commercialisation, and it forms obvious that the exploitation of nature and marginalisation of women are the products of the same very structure of domination (Sharma 2025).

This interconnected history demonstrates that the marginalisation of women and environmental degradation are continually associated, forming the basis for the ecofeminist claim that both types of oppression stem from the same patriarchal viewpoint.

Symbolic connections

Women and nature are often represented through similar imagery in religion, literature, and common discourse. Terms such as 'mother earth', 'virgin land', 'fertile soil', and 'barren woman', figuratively associate female bodies with landscapes, implying that both are subject to domination, control and exploitation for growth.

Political connections

The political engagement of women, such as anti-nuclear demonstrations and organizing of seed-saving initiatives, exemplifies their dual dedication to social justice and ecological preservation. Mahor (2016, 18) emphasizes that these forms of activism demonstrate how women frequently find themselves at the intersection of environmental conservation and human rights advocacy.

For example, in a recent study, titled, 'A feminist community-based participatory action research approach to advance climate justice', researchers have used a feminist-informed community based participatory action research (f-CBPAR) framework to demonstrate how gendered, racialized, and class based power structures generate environmental injustice in a rural community of California (Cannon 2025). The study argues that feminist community participation exposes systemic disparities, such as the excessive environmental burdens to marginalised women, and assist in building community-based resistance toward climate justice. Furthermore, The Green Belt movement, established in Kenya in 1977, is a prominent worldwide

instance of women leading environmental advocacy (Kinoti 2022, 40-44). They integrate tree planting, women's economic empowerment and land rights, and also community based ecological governance. These initiatives underscore how women's contribution in environmental activism demands alternative models based on community autonomy, ecological sustenance and participatory governance.

Theoretical connections

The theoretical importance of ecofeminism is its ability to synthesize various critiques such as feminism, postcolonialism, environmental justice and modern materialism. These interdisciplinary relationships allow more detailed study of systemic oppression and have holistic alternatives.

Ecofeminism criticizes ideological and cultural systems, the new materialism goes further by focusing on the material world and its agency, activity and influence on human experience. New materialism does not only concentrate on the human relations with nature but on things like the body, landscape, objects, construct reality. Theorists like Karen Barad, Jane Bennett and Rosi Braidotti argue that matter is neither passive nor inactive, but instead active and related (Diener 2020).

New materialism is the result of an aversion to ideational conceptions of the world, especially those that see nature as background or metaphor. According to the new materialism, the material and symbolic world are closely linked and non-human agents like land, weather, and even the pull of the gravity should be taken into consideration.

Relating new materialism to ecofeminism offers a more detailed approach to power understatement, which is identity and resistance. Since ecofeminism argues against hierarchical and exploitative ideologies, new materialism focuses on the material circumstances and pressures that support such systems. As a whole, they offer a comprehensive approach to the interpretation of the participation of both human and non-human animals in the systems of control and even engagement in the process of resistance and rejuvenation.

Ecofeminism should be integrated with the new materialism at a time when social and ecological crisis need innovative thinking. Such a two-lens makes easier comprehensive interpretations. It helps us to transcend the symbolic interpretation of the natural world and gender,

as well as to appreciate the powerful role of environment and matter in making up narrative and meaning. Additionally, it acknowledges the intersection of ideology and physical realities in perpetuating oppression or facilitates resistance. In this way, the study aims to enhance the expanding of discourse that challenges hierarchical perspectives and advocates for a more relational, egalitarian comprehensive of human and non-human interconnections.

Discussion

Commodification of female body and ecofeminist materiality

In *The Good Earth*, O-Lan's character illustrates the material-discursive interconnection of women and nature within patriarchal capitalism. She is not only metaphorically connected to the land, her body, like the soil, is also cultivated, relied upon, and ultimately abandoned. Her labor, both agricultural and reproductive, is essential to Wang Lung's prosperity, yet her individuality remains suppressed. This reflects the commodification of nature and female bodies through analogous principle of instrumentalization. Her commodification begins before she even enters Wang Lung's family, as she is characterized by the House of Hwang in objectifying terms:

> 'Take her and use her well, she is a good slave, although somewhat slow and stupid, and had I not wished to acquire merit at the temple for my future existence by bringing more life in to the world. I should have kept her, for she is good enough for the kitchen.' (Buck 2012, 19)

Here, O-Lan is not given an agency; she is strictly a collection of utilitarian values, which can be reflected in the argument by Vandana Shiva (2014) who argues that development as a masculinist idea of extracting resources is an idea that sees land and women as a resource to produce but does not acknowledge them as partners in survival. Her pain and physical degradation are made to be normal and invisible. O-Lans silence is not structural only but individual as well, it is a construct that eliminates the voice of the ones who give life. According to Plumwood (2002), this tendency is called backgrounding where women and nature, which are the important contributors are lost in the view of normalities.

The substitution of O-Lan by Lotus, a prostitute, highlights the way capitalist patriarchy judges people mostly by their looks and output. O-Lan embodies the spirit of resistance, and the characters of Lotus are sexualized femininity, commodified femininity, an embodiment of an

image of beauty. This distinction depicts how the femininity is disrupted and instrumentalized, the progression of land in terms of fertility or economic output.

It is sociably better to have the ugly woman, than the hundredth the beauty. (Buck 2012, 11) The economy of utility is gendered and this is displayed in the above given line. The death of O-Lan and his sickness is the result of the material drain. Like overexploited soil, she is completely exhausted. The fact that she internalized the logic of patriarchy by agreeing to sell her daughter and yet she was sold herself is an example of the ecofeminist oppression mechanism, which does not only work forever but also serves as a system of assimilation.

The collapse of ethical and ecological bonds

The sons of Wang Lung represent a significant divergence from the values that once tied his family to the land. Unlike his father, whose relationship with the land, though ownership based, he still involved direct contact and dependence. His grandchildren are raised in wealth and urban environment, completely disengaged from manual labor and the concept of subsistence. For them, land is not more sacred, living or reciprocal. Their ideology is grounded in instrumental values, entities, encompassing land and individuals; it has significance solely to the extent that they fulfil personal ambition.

This detachment is not merely social or cultural, but ontological. From a new materialism ecofeminist standpoint, the son's perspectives illustrate a loss of relational ontology, that human and non-human existences are mutually constitutive. The land no longer occupies a role in their ethical or emotional framework. Their desire to sell the land signifies more than greed; it indicates a failure to acknowledge that matter possess agency, significance, and the capacity for life making. They acquire world affluence but lack ecological awareness, thus disconnecting themselves from the cycles that formerly sustained their ancestors.

> 'I am no longer young and it is not necessary for me to work anymore with my hands since I have men on my land and my sons and peace in my house.' (Ibid, 232)

The above line spoken by Wang Lung represents the beginning of ethical relaxation. Although throughout the novel, Wang Lung remains rooted in the land, this particular example signifies a circumstantial shift in his ethical involvement, his peace and prosperity now permit

him to disengage physically, suggesting that ethics may change with the economic comfort. The moral connection to the land weakens as material conditions is improved, paving the way for further ethical erosion in the next generation.

> 'This field we will sell and this one, and we will divide the money between us evenly. Your share I will borrow at good interest, for now with the railroad straight through I can ship rice to the sea and I . . .' (Ibid, 292)

Furthermore, the above spoken by sons of Wang Lung, highlights the commodification of the land. It underscores the total instrumentalization of nature. The land is no longer a living legacy but an asset to be converted into cash. The son's reasoning is stepped in capitalist rationality, assessing value solely based on return and profit. The mention of 'railroad', a symbol of industrial modernity, suggests the onset of a masculinist, extractive rationale that disrupts emotional and spiritual associations with the land. The role of land as co-actor is erased; it becomes a passive and silent asset.

Their values are shaped by the city, education and the pursuit of appearance and autonomy. In this context, tradition becomes burdensome and the land becomes dispensable. They signify the spread of patriarchy, capitalist modernity that demonstrate lack of affection towards nature or sustainability. The land has lost its status of a co-actor but become silent, an inert entity. This method is not merely a generational one, but also an ideological one. Cultural importance of land becomes a form of trade leading to collapse of relational fabric of both human and non-human life. This story can therefore be described as a tragedy since the land which was a bonding factor amongst the families is now left by those who were supposed to be the heirs.

Treatment of nature

The land is symbolically used as a backdrop, as well as it is a dynamic force, which is an inseparable part of human life, identity, and integrity. The dependability of Wang Lung on the land shows that it is valuable; however, his approach to the land is often dominated by an attitude of conquer as opposed to one of appreciation. His connection to the land is based on property and consumption, and this will be anthropocentric based on the ideas of dualism as holds by Val Plumwood (2002) that considers nature as dependent and instrumental.

However, the story as such contradicts this perception. The land is unyielding, it cultivates, responds, denies and punishes. The famine erases the distinction between human and non-human by making people eat the very stuff that has been supporting them all this time, showing the agency of matter and its power over human fate. Moreover, in novel, Wang Lung's reliance on land is imperative though his association lies in property as opposed to mutual gain. He takes out of the earth without acknowledging it as a living partner, which is similar to dualist domination that Val Plumwood (2002) presents where nature is considered non-equivalent and instrumental.

> 'It is the breaking-up of a family--when they start to sell the land, he said brokenly.' … 'Out of the land we came and into it we shall go--and, if you will keep thy land, no one can rob thee of land.' (Buck 2012, 292)

These were the lines which symbolized the strong bond between man and the earth. In this case the earth is not only depicted as a passive background but as a living object that is tightly connected with the existence, and existence of the society and its wellbeing. The land, much like the feminine body is presented as a place of permanence, nourishment and strength, which needs to be taken care of and pondered upon.

The new materialist lens states that the land is not a passive matter but dynamic matter, an active part of the creation of life. It responds, sustains, and punishes. It deconstructs the illusory distinction between human and non-human, reminding readers that matter, like soil, has influence over human destiny. When Wang Lung is showing positive response and care towards the land, humility and balance are present; but when he acquires wealth and becomes detached to it, moral decay ensues. The land, in this work, is not simply a setting but a co-actor and a moral agent. This relationality is fundamental to the new materialist ecofeminism, which posits that non-human matter is not passive but intra-active, affecting and being affected within relational ontologies.

Conclusion

The study demonstrates a pattern of instrumental value woven in *The Good Earth*, wherein appreciation is based not in inherent worth but in usefulness and productivity. Although Wang Lung demonstrates reverence for the land, his admiration is contingent. Land is valued because it nourishes his family, and enhances his fortune. Likewise, O-

Lan's importance is only recognized in terms of her labor, and reproduction. The moment either loses their capacity to serve, their significance fades. O-Lan and the land are both important to Wang Lung's survival and success, yet their contributions are normalised and forgotten. They are remembered during the times of hardship and overlooked during the times of affluence.

An ecofeminist perspective elucidates the common mechanism of commodification, demonstrating how patriarchal systems reduce both the feminine and the environment to mere resources that are exploited, owned and replaced. New materialism extends this argument by dismissing the subject-object dichotomy. It posits that bodies, soil, seasons, and other matters are not passive or inert; rather they are active and co-constitutive forces in the world.

Ultimately, *The Good Earth* serves as a literary example, critiquing extractive principles. It highlights the cost of dismissing reciprocity; when land and women are considered important only for their usefulness, both become the domains of exhaustion. This research advocates for revaluation of value, care, and agency, with an appeal for egalitarian, relational and sustainable framework that emphasizes interdependence rather than dominance.

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Mental readiness of high voltage electricity transmission system workers: The relationship with job insecurity

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Abstract: The aim of this study is to investigate the potential correlation between job insecurity (JIS) and mental readiness (MR) among high voltage electricity transmission system workers. Additionally, the study aims to determine the extent and level of MR influenced by JIS, and to examine the statistical differences in MR based on various demographic factors. Various analyses, including validity, reliability, normality, correlation, multiple regression, Independent Sample T Test, and One-Way ANOVA tests, were conducted on the collected data. The results of the analyses revealed a significant negative relationship between quantitative and qualitative JIS and MR, with quantitative JIS having the most prominent impact on reducing MR among employees. Furthermore, when examining the demographic factors, it was observed that MR among high voltage electricity transmission system workers significantly varied based on employment status (public/private sector), use of depression medication, occupational accident history, employee age, education level, monthly income level, and work experience.

Keywords: mental health, high voltage electricity transmission, job insecurity, mental readiness

Introduction

Due to the economic crises that have been continuing rapidly since the 1980s and increasing their impact in the global sense, and the neo-liberal policies put into practice, the needs of the employees in business life are constantly changing. Because of the economic crises in the world, the employment opportunities of the employees in many countries, especially in European countries and the USA, are decreasing and there are big increases in temporary employment

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AGATHOS, Volume 17, Issue 2 (33-34): 749-767, DOI 10.5281/zenodo.23610988
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contracts. Downsizing and restructuring patterns in working organizations, flexibility practices in business life, and rapid changes cause significant concern in terms of job security in employees. The reflection of these forms of change and transformation in business life on employees is realized in the form of increasing unemployment rates and fear of losing their jobs. This causes the non-standard employment of the employees, the risk related to their jobs and the perception of JIS in the employees. The concept of JIS, situated between unemployment and employment, and the perception of increasing workload bring along some negativities such as burnout on employees in business life.

The purposes of the research carried out in this context are to examine whether there is a significant relationship between JIS and MR in employees in the high-voltage electricity transmission system, and if there is a significant relationship, to determine in what direction and at what level JIS affects MR, and to reveal the statistical difference of MR according to demographic factors. For this purpose; a study has been carried out for employees of high-voltage electrical transmission system, which is an area of operation where psychological pressure and at the same time the probability of work accidents are high. Individuals working in this type of job must have a certain readiness mentally before and during the work period. The main reason for this need is the work accidents that can cause injury and even death that can occur in case of lack of MR. Therefore, it is necessary to examine the factors that may reduce or prevent MR in high-voltage electricity transmission system workers. For this purpose, this research has been carried out considering that the current job security in the sector may affect MR. The research is important in terms of increasing the focus on work in employees of high voltage electricity transmission systems and optimizing the energy management process by minimizing work accidents.

Literature review and hypothesis development

Job insecurity

Developing technology with changing management styles has caused transformations in every aspect of business life. On the one hand, increasing sectoral competition and cost increases due to global crises have led employers to take more careful steps, even to apply stricter rules as well as new techniques in human resources. Naturally, as a result of these practices, various psychological pressures and fears have developed on the working personnel, one of which being JIS. The

basis of this concept is based on job security, which has emerged with the concentration of employees in a perception opposite to job security. According to the literature, job security is described as a condition where an organization ensures a stable workplace and guarantees employment along with associated advantages such as seniority privileges, financial stability, retirement benefits, consistent income, and opportunities for personal growth and fulfillment (Herzberg 1968; Obrenovic et al. 2021). Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt (1984) were the first to examine and define the concept of JIS in a broad context and defined JIS as "perceived powerlessness to maintain desired continuity in a threatened job situation". Other definitions have also been included in the literature. Heaney et al. (1994, 1431) define it as "an employee's perception of a potential threat to continuity in his or her current job", Davy et al. as (1997, 323) "one's expectations about continuity in a job situation", Witte (1999, 156) as "an overall concern about the continued existence of the job in the future", Cuyper et al. (2008, 492) as "Employees' perceptions about potential involuntary job loss", and Chirkowska-Smolak and Chumak (2021, 647) as "a subjectively experienced anticipation of an important, undesirable event related to the work performed". According to Hellgren et al. (1999), there are two dimensions of JIS. These are quantitative JIS and qualitative JIS. Quantitative JIS includes concerns about whether the employee will exist in the future in the job in which s/he is currently employed. Qualitative JIS, on the other hand, includes concerns about the deteriorating quality of labour relations, such as deteriorating working conditions and the disappearance of career opportunities. Mohr (2000) has stated that there are four basic types of JIS. These are "JIS as a state of public awareness, JIS at the company level, acute JIS and anticipation of job loss".

Ongoing employment in organizations is an important assurance to employees about their future career prospects, income and non-monetary benefits, as well as the satisfaction of basic physiological needs (Obrenovic et al. 2021). In the face of strategies such as downsizing, mergers and acquisitions applied in modern enterprises today, the positions of the employees change significantly and the insecurity towards employment increases (Aybaş et al. 2015). However, individuals working in insecure types of work or in an unreliable institution are more likely to perceive JIS than those who work in a reliable type of employment or in an institution that is reliable in employment (Sverke et al. 2006). Negative emotions such

as anxiety that arise as a result of JIS cause individuals to focus more on uncertainties about the job. Factors such as performance, which will cause JIS to decrease, cause reduced focus. Thus, JIS increases neuroticism by self-reinforcement over time (Wu et al. 2020). The emotional increase towards JIS also leads to an increase in psychological problems and, in turn, to a deterioration of an individual's mental health and a decrease in well-being (Watson & Osberg 2018). When employees feel JIS, low and limited motivation can be mentioned due to decreased job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Zheng et al. 2014). The common psychological characteristics of employees with high feelings of JIS are lack of optimism and sense of control, low self-confidence, and negative self-evaluation (Knežević & Krstić 2019).

JIS is a completely different concept from job loss (Aybaş et al. 2015). Even when their employment situation is stable, employees may worry about this stability and not easily cope with the fear of losing a job (Kim et al. 2021). The level of anxiety that employees harbour is directly influenced by their belief that they have the necessary skills to find a new job if necessary as a result of a miserable employment process (Chirkowska-Smolak & Chumak 2021). There is no certainty that individuals who experience a sense of JIS will lose their jobs. This feeling is the result of a stressful event, such as the individual's perception that the structure of the work and the continuity of the work is at risk, rather than the loss of a job (Sverke & Hellgren 2002). In work psychology, JIS is cited as a strong factor that can lead to intense emotional disorders such as depression, anxiety, and stress (Cosma et al. 2021). The stress caused by the risk of unemployment in employees is partly due to JIS and partly due to the previous experience of job loss (Watson & Osberg 2018). Both quantitative and qualitative JIS are significant stressors in organizations. Because, even if the existence of a person's job is not directly threatened, stress is inevitable for the employee whose career opportunity is restricted in the event of an organizational change towards career opportunities (van Dam et al. 2020). The erosion of high-intensity and long-lasting stress on the physical and mental health of the employee is inevitable (Green, 2020; Chirkowska-Smolak & Chumak 2021). Because it is difficult to predict in advance and at the same time to control (Mahmoud et al. 2021). Therefore, employees take on less sympathetic and cooperative roles in the workplace, may receive less support from their co-workers, and the severity of JIS may increase with the deterioration of social interaction

(Wu et al. 2020). Experiencing chronic stress at work can negatively affect physical and mental health (Godin et al. 2005). The link between employees' experiences of unemployment and poor mental health has been repeatedly documented (Watson & Osberg 2018). Mental health is commonly defined as the absence of psychological distress, characterized by negative perceptions of oneself, others, and the surrounding environment. This construct can be assessed through self-reported emotions, reflecting feelings of nervousness, anxiety, worthlessness, and frustration experienced by individuals (Watson & Osberg 2018). Prior research has indicated that quantitative JIS, which involves the tangible risk of job loss, is likely to have a stronger impact on health-related outcomes and various health complaints. On the other hand, qualitative JIS, considered a less severe stressor, is expected to primarily influence job attitudes (Richter et al. 2013).

While employees strive for wages, recognition, and other outcomes of work, JIS leads to a decrease in these expectations, leading to a worsening of attitudes and behaviours (Mahmoud et al. 2021). JIS can become a very severe stressor, making it difficult to ignore threats to factors directly linked to individuals' employment, such as financial security (Richter et al. 2013). However, employees who lose motivation due to JIS also lose the opportunity and resources to perform at a high level (Wu et al. 2020). The anxieties triggered by JIS lead to lower performance outcomes in employees and, in turn, a sense of burnout that will lead to a decline in the overall success of the organization (Khan & Khan 2021). This is because employees without job security are more affected by internal practices as they are more vulnerable than others (Bazzoli et al. 2020). JIS, which causes chronic burnout, is a major source of job dissatisfaction and emerging health problems due to its long-term impact on employees (Green 2003). The feeling of JIS, which intensifies with the deterioration in mental health, can turn into harmful consequences for the working environment and co-workers (Angelis et al. 2021). In this regard, Witte (1999) states that the mental health levels of people with high levels of JIS are as low as those observed in unemployed people, and therefore JIS can be as harmful to individuals as being unemployed. It is stated that due to the emotional impact of JIS, it triggers unethical organizational behaviours that will help employees perceive themselves as more valuable to the organization and/or maintain their employment (Elshaer & Azazz 2022). Lack of communication for the organization,

perceived role ambiguities, role conflicts are important factors that drive employees to these behaviours (Richter et al. 2018).

Mental readiness

Employees who are under the influence of many individual and environmental factors in the work environment try to focus on work by passing all these factors through a mental filter. Especially in professions with a high risk of work accidents, the process of focusing on the work and the time of focusing on the work of the employees becomes quite stressful and requires individual performance. The most important factor necessary for the realization of the work demanded by the employer is the creation of MR. This concept is defined as being psyched, totally ready, or totally prepared (Orlick & Partington 1988; McDonald & Hale 2022). In the process of MR, pedagogical, psychological and physiological fundamentals need to be studied (Labeschenkov et al. 2020). In this context, in order for employees to work and perform for a long time under stress, the meaning they attach to their work should be high and they should be confident in their equipment and abilities (Sanden et al. 2014). Therefore, MR is not the ability of an individual alone, but an output that can be developed within the chain of individuals, organizations and colleagues. This output, which is very important in high-risk professions, is important not only in terms of completing tasks but also in terms of minimizing the work accident of employees due to mental health problems. In this regard, it is necessary to be at the desired level in mental health for MR. Factors such as long working hours, financial risks, critical decision-making and dilemmas need to be assessed and dealt with for mental health (McDonald & Paganelli 2021). Failure to protect mental health in employees also causes significant consequences for organizations, one of which being the economic burden. This burden is largely due to costs associated with reduced productivity due to absenteeism and absenteeism (Fikretoglu et al. 2019).

When assessing mental health, the motivation of employees is also a prominent issue. Intrinsically motivated individuals orient themselves to achieve success, make plans to achieve the desired goal, and try to implement the plan. In extrinsic motivation, the individual is motivated to compete with performance-dependent rewards and positive reinforcements (Yalçın et al. 2021). Employees' concerns about their families and family problems directly affect motivation (Sanden et al. 2014). Therefore, in the face of these external factors

that reduce motivation in employees, resilience as a factor that will support intrinsic motivation emerges. Resilience, which is expressed as the ability to recover after stressful events, is very important as it is both protective of the individual and therapeutic of stress (van Baarle & Molendijk 2021). Although mental resilience means increasing acceptance, reducing exposure to stress and mental health issues, it can also be more easily stated as "sucking it up" (Eidelson et al. 2011; van Baarle & Molendijk 2021). Therefore, psychological resilience is an important factor that positively supports the process of focusing on work by filtering toxic environmental effects in employees.

MR is achieved through learned mental practices that need to be continuously improved (McDonald & Hale 2021). Being mentally ready to compete requires at least two types of skills. The first of these skills consists of preparation, positive attitude and perception that will enable the individual to achieve long-term goals. The other skill consists of centring, concentration, and control that will ensure performance output in the short term (Mack 2002). If we evaluate MR within a team, it is necessary to examine other colleagues in addition to the individual perspective. Although the individual is mentally ready for the task personally, other colleagues should also be ready in this sense, so that the risk is minimized (Sanden et al. 2014). It should be noted that the balance between physical, technical and MR is crucial to achieving performance excellence (McDonald & Hale 2021). However, as with any other skill, good training and practice are required to become proficient in MR (Mack 2002).

MR skills are an important factor for ensuring high performance in employees (McDonald & Paganelli 2021). Seven elements of MR for high performance have been identified in the literature. These are (Marquardt et al. 2018; Filby et al. 1999; Crocker & Graham 1995; Hackfort & Munzert 2005; Valey 2001; Bandura 1986; Weinberg 2008): *Attentional control* is the ability to focus one's attention on the relevant task and combat distraction. Attentional control is an important MR strategy for the employee to direct to the right stimuli. *Goal setting* is a technique in which goals are set to guide the employee and increase his motivation. In the process of MR for high performance, concrete and realistic goals are of high importance. *Relaxation and activation* is a strategy for successfully coping with stressful events. *Activation* involves a state of planned response. *Self-efficacy* refers to the belief that an individual can do a job. *Self-confidence* is based on self-control. Inner talk is an important strategy

that both increases self-confidence and improves performance. *Imagery* is defined as "using all the senses to create or re-create an experience in the mind".

MR is generally the construction of an event as it is desired to be. Repeated practices in the right ways in the mind before starting to apply ensure success. With MR, self-confidence increases and success is focused. Thanks to MR, coordination skills are improved, concentration skills are enhanced, anxiety and stress are reduced, and team spirit and communication are improved. It is thought that the factor of JIS will affect this situation, which is important in terms of individual and organizational aspects. Based on this approach, H_{1a}, H_{1b} and H_{1c} have been created.

H_{1a}: There is a significant relationship between MR and JIS.

H_{1b}: As quantitative JIS increases, MR decreases.

H_{1c}: As qualitative JIS increases, MR decreases.

It is thought that the MR of the employees in the high-voltage electrical transmission system varies according to their gender due to the fact that men are more courageous and skilled than women in dangerous jobs and that the MR of men is higher than women in terms of the danger of the working area. Based on this approach, H_{1d1} has been created.

H_{1d1}: MR varies significantly according to gender.

In the demonstration of MR, there may also be differences between age groups. Older workers are thought to be more successful in MR than younger people. It is thought that the fact that employees in the older age group have more life experience and work-related knowledge will have a positive effect on MR. Accordingly, H_{1d2} has been created with the view that MR would increase as the age increased.

H_{1d2}: MR varies significantly according to age.

It is thought that it will be easier for employees to be mentally ready thanks to the fact that they are trained and equipped in the high voltage electricity transmission system. Based on this approach, H_{1d3} has been created.

$H1_{d3}$: MR varies significantly according to educational status.

Considering that financial gain is an important motivating tool, it is thought that the high-income level will be important for the employees working in a dangerous area such as high voltage electricity transmission system and accordingly the level of MR will be higher at the high-income level. Based on this, H_{1d4} has been created.

H_{1d4}: MR varies significantly according to monthly income level.

Work experience gained from the past is important in exhibiting MR behaviours. Those who have been working in organizations for a long time are considered to be more successful in demonstrating their MR. Based on this approach, H_{1d5} has been created.

H_{1d5}: MR varies significantly according to work experience.

Considering that the working hours in the public sector, where the public service is the basis, are more specific than in the private sector and that the anxiety of dismissal is less, it is thought that the MR of the employees in the public sector will be higher than those working in the private sector. Based on this, H_{1d6} has been created.

H_{1d6}: MR varies significantly by sector.

It is thought that among the personnel working under stress, employees who use depression medication will feel better mentally, their motivation will increase and they can control their emotions and in this way, MR will be higher. Based on this argument, H_{1d7} has been created.

H_{1d7}: MR varies significantly from the depression medication use.

In industrializing societies, the frequency of occupational accidents in business life is also increasing. Since employees who have had a work accident before are aware of the physical, social and psychological situation they have encountered, it is thought that their MR for work will be higher in order not to have a work accident again. Based on this, H_{1d8} has been created.

H_{1d8}: MR varies significantly according to the situation of having a work accident.

Methodology

The population and sample of the research

The population of the research consists of employees working in the high-voltage electricity transmission system in Turkey. The sample of the study consists of public and private sector employees working in high voltage electricity transmission system in Ankara, Istanbul, Izmir, Sakarya, Samsun, Şanlıurfa, Diyarbakır, Düzce, Zonguldak, Kocaeli, Bursa, Manisa, Malatya, Van, Mardin and Konya. Purposeful sampling and snowball sampling methods have been used in the study, survey feedback has been obtained from 555 employees within different enterprises, and these questionnaires have not been taken into consideration because there has been no integrity of the data in the survey of 37 respondents.

The data collection method of the research

The data for this research was collected through face-to-face surveys. The questionnaire used to gather data includes two scales, namely MR and JIS, both structured on a 5-point Likert scale. The MR scale employed in this study consists of 35 items, developed by Zekioğlu et al. (2017). On the other hand, the JIS scale, comprising 9 items, was originally developed by Hellgren et al. (1999) and adapted to Turkish by Şeker (2011).

The research model

In the research utilizing the screening model, the dependent variable was MR, while the independent variable was JIS. Furthermore, the sub-independent variables were quantitative JIS and qualitative JIS.

Data analysis of the research

The collected data in the research were subjected to analysis using the SPSS 20.0 and AMOS 24.0 software packages. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was employed to determine the structural validity of the utilized scales. Reliability analysis was conducted to assess internal consistency. Correlation analysis was performed to identify the direction and strength of relationships between variables. Multiple regression analysis was employed to examine the relationships between variables. Independent Sample T-Test and One-Way ANOVA Test were utilized to detect variations.

Findings

According to the descriptive statistics results, the male employees constitute the majority with a percentage of 94.2%, while the female employees make up 5.8% of the sample. Analyzing the age distribution of the employees reveals that the largest portion, accounting for 79.8%, falls within the age range of 21-40. Regarding educational attainment, it was found that 52.8% of the employees hold university degrees, while 45.8% have completed high school. Looking at the monthly income level, it can be observed that 58.3% of the employees earn at the minimum wage level. According to the descriptive statistic, when the duration of work experience is taken into consideration, it is determined that 74.1% of the sample has more than a year of work experience and the majority of 43.6% have 7 years or more of work experience. In terms of the sector, it has been found that 81.5% of the respondents worked in the private sector. As a result of other questions directed to the sampling; it has been determined that 2.9% of the

employees used depression medication and 8.9% had a previous work accident.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted to assess the structural validity of the scales utilized in the research. The fit indices resulting from the factor analysis carried out for the JIS scale, which consists of 2 dimensions and 9 items. Upon reviewing the fit values, it was found that the chi-square value is 152.009, the p-value is 17.091, the RMSEA value is 0.051, the GFI value is 0.990, the chi-square/degree of freedom is 2.442, the SRMR value is 0.034, the CFI value is 0.993, and the NFI value is 0.988.

During the CFA, 4 items have been removed from the scale and the reliability analysis results for the dimensions of the revised scale. As a result of the analyses performed; Cronbach's Alpha coefficient has been determined as 0.782 for the quantitative JIS dimension, 0.850 for the qualitative JIS dimension and 0.730 for the whole scale, and according to these values, the scale has been determined to have internal consistency. The fit values obtained from the application of CFA to the MR scale, which comprises 3 dimensions and 35 items, as used in the research.

Upon reviewing the fit values, it has been found that the chi-square value is 152.009, the p-value is 400.017, the RMSEA value is 0.054, the GFI value is 0.930, the chi-square/degree of freedom is 2.614, the SRMR value is 0.049, the CFI value is 0.940, and the NFI value is 0.907.

During the process of CFA, a total of 15 items, including the entire focus dimension, were eliminated from the scale. The results of the analyses reveal that the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for the MR dimension is 0.771, for the keeping composure dimension is 0.816, for the fear dimension is 0.789, for the motivation dimension is 0.616, and for the interest dimension is 0.531. Upon examination of these numerical findings, it was determined that all dimensions, except for motivation and interest, demonstrated acceptable internal consistency. The motivation and interest dimensions were excluded from the study due to their Cronbach's Alpha coefficients being below 0.700. The revised 16-item scale yielded a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.859.

The adaptation values of the JIS scale and the adaptation values of the MR scale were found to be consistent with the well-fit statistics reported by Schermelleh-Engel et al. (2003). These results indicate that the structural validity of both scales has reached an acceptable level. Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk values have been obtained

from the normality test applied to the data collected in the research. When considering the Shapiro-Wilk values in light of the sample size, it is observed that the data sets used in the initial stage of the research do not exhibit a normal distribution. Consequently, in the second stage, the skewness and kurtosis values of the data sets were examined. It can be observed that the skewness and kurtosis values of the data sets, which do not exhibit a normal distribution based on the Shapiro-Wilk test, fall within the range of -2 to +2. According to the classification by George and Mallery (2003), these data sets can be considered to have a normal distribution.

According to the results of Pearson correlation analysis; a statistically significant negative relationship has been determined between independent variables quantitative JIS (r=-0.367, p=0.000) and qualitative JIS (r=-0.212, p=0.000) and dependent variable MR.

According to the ANOVA results of multiple regression analysis for JIS dimensions and MR. Based on the results of the analysis performance, the p value of the model is than 0.05; therefore, it has been determined that the regression model is statistically significant.

According to the regression analysis are that 15.4% of the variance in MR (R2=0.154) can be explained by the changes in quantitative and qualitative JIS. Based on these findings, the possible values that MR can take are formulated as follows: “MR=45,146-(1,012xQuantitative JIS)-(0.406xQualitative JIS)”. According to the regression equation; it has been found that a 1-unit increase in quantitative JIS caused a decrease of 1,012 units on MR, while a 1-unit increase in qualitative JIS (β=-1.012) caused a decrease of 0.406 units on MR (β=-0.406).

When the relationship between MR and various factors such as gender, sector of employment, depression medication use, and history of occupational accidents among the study participants, it has been determined that the significance value obtained from the gender-related test is greater than 0.05, while the significance values obtained from the tests for other factors are less than 0.05. This indicates that MR exhibits a statistically significant difference based on the sector of employment, depression medication use, and history of occupational accidents. Specifically, it was found that MR is lower among employees in the private sector compared to those in the public sector. However, MR is higher among employees who use depression medication and among employees who have experienced previous work accidents.

When the relationship between MR and the age of employees, it has been determined that the significance value is less than 0.05, indicating a statistically significant difference in MR based on the age of employees. To further explore the specific age groups where the difference exists, post-hoc analysis was conducted. The results of the post-hoc analysis will provide insights into the specific age groups that show significant differences in MR. When the results of the homogeneity test conducted to determine the appropriate technique for the post-hoc analysis, it is observed that the variances are homogeneous. However, considering that the distributions in the groups are not equal, the Scheffe test has been chosen for the post-hoc analysis. When investigating the statistical difference of MR based on age in detail, it has been determined that there is a significant difference between employees in the 21-30 age range and employees in the 41-50 age range. Consequently, it has been found that employees in the 41-50 age range exhibit higher levels of MR compared to employees in the 21-30 age range.

When the relationship between MR and the educational status of employees, it has been determined that the significance value is less than 0.05, indicating a statistically significant difference in MR based on educational status. To further identify the specific educational situations that exhibit a difference, post-hoc analysis was conducted. The results of the post-hoc analysis will provide insights into the specific educational categories that show significant differences in MR. When the results of the homogeneity test, which was conducted to decide on the suitable technique for the post-hoc analysis, it is evident that the variances are not homogeneous. However, considering the unequal distributions among the groups, Tamhane's T2 test has been chosen as the preferred technique for the post-hoc analysis. When investigating the statistical difference of MR based on education status with a 5% error margin, it has been found that the significant difference exists only between undergraduate and high school/associate degree groups. Consequently, it has been determined that the level of MR among undergraduate employees is higher compared to employees with associate degrees and high school graduates.

When the relationship between monthly income level and MR, it has been found that the significance value is less than 0.05, indicating a statistically significant difference in MR based on the monthly income level. To determine the specific monthly income levels that

differ significantly, post-hoc analysis was conducted. The results of the post-hoc analysis will provide insights into the specific income levels that show significant differences in MR. When the results of the homogeneity test, it is evident that the variances are not homogeneous. Consequently, Tamhane's T2 test has been chosen as the preferred technique for the post-hoc analysis, considering the unequal distributions among the groups. When examining the difference in MR based on monthly income level, a statistically significant difference has been found only between employees with a monthly income between TRY 9001 - 15000 and employees with a monthly income between TRY 15001 - 21000. Therefore, it can be concluded that the MR level of employees with a monthly income between TRY 15001 - 21000 is higher compared to employees with a monthly income between TRY 9001 - 15000.

When the examines the relationship between MR and employees' work experience, it has been determined that the significance value is less than 0.05, indicating a statistically significant difference in the level of MR based on employees' work experience. To identify the specific periods of work experience that exhibit significant differences, a post-hoc analysis has been conducted. The results of the post-hoc analysis will provide insights into the specific work experience periods that show significant differences in the level of MR. When the homogeneity test results, it is observed that the variances are homogeneous. However, due to unequal distributions among the groups, the Scheffe test has been selected for the post-hoc analysis. The significance value for MR is found to be less than 0.05 for employees with less than 1 year of work experience and employees with 7 years or more of work experience. This indicates a statistically significant difference in the level of MR between these two groups. Specifically, employees with 7 years or more of work experience exhibit higher levels of MR compared to those with less than 1 year of work experience.

Conclusions and recommendations

This study examines the effect of the perception of JIS on MR in workers working in high-voltage electricity transmission system. As a result of the research carried out; both quantitative and qualitative JIS have been found to adversely affect MR. It has been found that the factor affecting MR the most has been quantitative JIS. Witte (1999) stated as a result of the research that quantitative JIS in employees is

more of a stressor than qualitative JIS. According to other results obtained from the research; employees in the 41-50 age range have higher MR compared to employees in the 21-30 age range, MR is lower in employees in the private sector compared to those working in the public sector, and the level of MR is higher in employees with monthly income between TRY 15001 and 21000 compared to employees with monthly income between TRY 9001 and 15000. It has also been determined that MR is greater in employees with 7 years and more of work experience compared to employees with less than 1 year of work experience. When examined in terms of demographic factors, it is observed that age, income level, sector and work experience are also factors that statistically differentiate the MR of employees in high-voltage electricity transmission system. However, it is understood that MR is significantly higher in employees who use depression medication and in employees who have previously been involved in work accidents.

It is thought that this research, which is based on the idea that the perception of JIS in workers working in high-voltage electricity transmission system affects MR because it increases constant anxiety, has an important place. Since the job performance of a high-voltage employee whose MR is reduced will also be adversely affected, public institutions or private electricity distribution companies need to intervene in the perception of JIS in their employees. Organization managers should pay more attention to the issue of justice by listening to employees, especially in times of organizational change and in times of crisis, ensuring that they participate in change processes, clearly explaining the objectives of change, thus reducing the concern of JIS (Wang et al. 2015); because employees who experience JIS intensely may turn to non-work social networks due to the decrease in socialization in the work environment (Sjöberg 2018). However, reducing JIS, increasing the level of employee engagement and demonstrating higher performance are important factors expected in the organization (Khan & Khan 2021).

In this context, the proposed intervention can also be carried out through regulations (reduction of working hours, increase of financial possibilities, etc.). First of all, it is necessary to work with death, injury and health concerns, which are the most important risk factors that can lead to the perception of JIS in employees working in high-voltage electricity transmission systems. It is possible that an employee who is at risk of death or injury may not be able to work in the same job again

or lose his job. Therefore, in this research, health anxiety that may occur as a result of accident risk is considered as a risk factor for losing a job. If companies are given opportunities to offer new options in the face of negative situations in order to control the risk factors that create stress such as the worry of making mistakes in high-voltage employees and lead to the perception of JIS, it can be ensured that employees minimize their perception of JIS and constant anxiety and increase their MR levels even more. This can have a positive impact on the private life of high-voltage employees personally and can also benefit companies as a result of positively affecting their work performance. It is thought that this study will be useful in terms of the positive effect of the findings obtained from the study on the individual and the suggestions that can be presented to high voltage electricity transmission and distribution companies.

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From body-data to narrative body: Reconfiguring the human body in medical discourse in the age of Artificial Intelligence

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Abstract: The rapid integration of artificial intelligence into biomedical research and clinical practice is transforming the ways in which the human body is conceptualized and represented in medical knowledge. Rather than functioning merely as descriptive tools, scientific vocabularies and research frameworks contribute to shaping epistemic models of the body. This study investigates how contemporary medical literature reproduces particular representations of the body in the context of digital medicine and artificial intelligence. Methodologically, the research combines bibliometric mapping with discourse analysis. A systematic search of the PubMed database identified 2,518 articles published between 1973 and 2025 that include references to the body and artificial intelligence. From these articles, 7,275 keywords were extracted and analysed, with 499 terms meeting the minimum occurrence threshold for co-occurrence mapping using VOSviewer. The bibliometric analysis reveals the centrality of technical concepts associated with computational modelling, including neural networks, image processing, and computational biology. Complementary discourse analysis of the articles indicates that the body is predominantly conceptualized as a biomechanical structure, an imaging object, a network of physiological sensors, or a dataset analysed through predictive algorithms. In contrast, experiential and narrative dimensions of embodiment appear significantly less visible within the dominant vocabulary of biomedical research. Based on these findings, the study proposes a conceptual model of the digital body, describing the transformation of the body from a clinically observed organism into a data-driven object embedded within technological infrastructures of monitoring, modelling, and prediction. The analysis suggests that while digital medicine expands the technological capacities of healthcare, it also risks narrowing the conceptual space in which the body is understood. In this context, the integration of perspectives from medical humanities becomes increasingly important for reconnecting biomedical innovation with the lived, ethical, and narrative dimensions of human embodiment.

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AGATHOS, Volume 17, Issue 2 (33-34): 769-796, DOI 10.5281/zenodo.23611121
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Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, digital body, embodiment, medical humanities, biomedical discourse, bibliometric analysis, digital medicine

Introduction

The increasing integration of artificial intelligence into biomedical research and clinical practice is reshaping the ways in which the human body is investigated, interpreted, and represented within contemporary medical knowledge. Machine learning algorithms, large biomedical datasets, and advanced imaging technologies enable the analysis of biological processes at an unprecedented scale, allowing researchers to identify patterns that would be difficult to detect through traditional clinical observation.

In this context, the body is increasingly represented in the medical literature as a system of biological data that can be modelled, classified, and predicted through computational methods. Recent research has explored the use of artificial intelligence for automatic classification of anatomical regions in CT or MRI images (Raffy et al. 2023; Najjar 2023), for systemic health assessment through retinal image analysis (J. H. Wu and Liu 2022), and for predicting medical risks using machine learning models (Alanazi et al. 2021). These developments illustrate a broader transformation in which the body becomes an object of algorithmic analysis within digital infrastructures of biomedical knowledge. At the same time, wearable technologies and sensor-based monitoring systems have introduced new forms of continuous data collection about the body. Systems designed to detect falls through wearable sensors (W. Wu et al. 2012) or smart textiles capable of monitoring movement and physiological signals (Oatley et al. 2021; Zahid et al. 2022; Ahmed et al. 2025) reflect a growing interest in representing the body as a dynamic network of measurable signals. Within these technological environments, bodily processes are increasingly translated into streams of data that can be analysed, visualized, and interpreted through computational models. These developments do not simply introduce new tools into medicine; they also reshape the epistemological frameworks through which the body is conceptualized in biomedical discourse. Scientific language plays a crucial role in this transformation. The concepts used to describe the body (model, image, sensor, dataset, or algorithmic prediction) reflect underlying assumptions about what the body is and how it can be known.

Scholars in science and technology studies and medical humanities have emphasized that scientific vocabularies do not merely describe biological reality but actively participate in constructing the objects of biomedical knowledge (Rose 2007; Lupton 2017). In the context of digital medicine, this observation raises an important question: how does contemporary medical literature reproduce particular representations of the body in the age of artificial intelligence?

Most existing studies on artificial intelligence in medicine focus on the technical performance of algorithms or on their clinical applications. Far less attention has been devoted to examining how biomedical research itself conceptualizes the body through its vocabulary and research frameworks. Understanding these representations is important because they shape how medicine approaches diagnosis, treatment, and the broader relationship between technology and human embodiment. To address this gap, the present study investigates how the body is represented in contemporary medical literature by combining bibliometric mapping of keywords with discourse analysis of articles indexed in PubMed. This approach allows the study to examine both the conceptual architecture of the literature and the discursive patterns through which the body is described. By analysing the vocabulary and thematic structures of biomedical research, the study aims to identify dominant representations of the body and to explore how these representations relate to broader debates about digital medicine, datafication, and embodiment. This study contributes to the field of medical humanities by combining bibliometric mapping with discourse analysis to examine how contemporary biomedical literature constructs the human body as a digital and data-driven entity in the context of artificial intelligence. To understand how these transformations relate to broader theoretical debates about medicine, technology, and embodiment, the following section reviews key perspectives from science and technology studies, posthuman theory, and medical humanities that have examined the changing relationship between the human body and digital technologies.

Theoretical framework: The body between biology, data, and experience

The body as an object of biomedical knowledge

Modern medicine has historically conceptualized the human body as the central object of clinical observation and scientific investigation.

Since the emergence of anatomical pathology in the nineteenth century, medical knowledge has increasingly relied on systematic observation of bodily structures and processes through diagnostic technologies, laboratory analysis, and imaging techniques. Within this framework, the body becomes a site of classification, measurement, and intervention.

During the twentieth century, the development of molecular biology and genetics expanded this biomedical perspective by framing the organism as a complex biological system composed of interconnected biochemical and genetic processes. As biomedical technologies evolved, medical knowledge increasingly relied on technological infrastructures capable of producing and analysing large volumes of biological data.

Nikolas Rose (2007) describes this transformation as part of a broader shift in the politics of life itself, in which biological processes become objects of technoscientific knowledge and governance. In contemporary biomedicine, life is increasingly understood through biological data and molecular processes that can be monitored, analysed, and manipulated through technological systems. As a result, the body becomes embedded within complex networks of biomedical knowledge production.

These developments have prepared the ground for a more recent transformation in which digital technologies and artificial intelligence play an increasingly central role in how the body is investigated and represented in medical research.

The digitalization of the body and the emergence of the "data body"

The expansion of digital infrastructures in healthcare has accelerated the transformation of the body into a source of measurable and analysable data. Across multiple domains of medicine (from medical imaging to physiological monitoring) biological processes are increasingly represented through datasets that can be processed by computational methods.

Deborah Lupton (2016) describes this phenomenon as the datafication of the body, referring to the growing tendency to translate bodily processes into digital data streams generated by sensors, health applications, and biomedical monitoring systems. Through wearable technologies and digital health platforms, the body becomes continuously tracked and quantified, producing what Lupton terms a "data body". Digital health technologies have expanded the ability to

monitor and analyse bodily processes through data infrastructures that integrate sensors, mobile applications, and artificial intelligence systems (Lupton 2017).

Similarly, Ruckenstein and Schüll (2017) argue that contemporary health technologies are transforming the relationship between individuals and their bodies by encouraging new forms of self-monitoring and data-driven health management. In these environments, bodily functions are increasingly interpreted through digital infrastructures that convert physiological signals into analysable data.

These theoretical perspectives resonate with developments in contemporary biomedical research. Studies using machine learning for the classification of anatomical structures in medical images or for predicting disease risk illustrate how the body is increasingly conceptualized as a dataset analysed through computational models (J. H. Wu and Liu 2022; Alanazi et al. 2021). Within this epistemological framework, the body becomes a data-driven entity embedded within technological systems of monitoring and prediction.

The posthuman body and human–technology relations

The transformation of the body into a digitally analysable object is closely related to broader debates about posthumanism and the relationship between humans and technology. In science and technology studies, several scholars have examined how technological systems reshape the boundaries between biological organisms and technological infrastructures.

Donna Haraway's influential concept of the cyborg highlights the hybrid nature of contemporary human–technology relationships. Haraway (1991/1985) argues that modern societies increasingly blur the boundaries between humans, machines, and information systems, producing new forms of technologically mediated embodiment.

Building on these ideas, Rosi Braidotti (2013) argues that contemporary societies are entering a posthuman condition, in which technological, biological, and cultural processes are deeply intertwined (Braidotti 2013a). Within this framework, the body can no longer be understood as a stable biological entity but rather as a dynamic assemblage shaped by interactions between biological processes and technological infrastructures.

Similarly, Katherine Hayles (1999) emphasizes the growing importance of information technologies in shaping how bodies are conceptualized. In her analysis of cybernetics and digital culture,

Hayles argues that the body is increasingly understood as an informational pattern, where biological processes are represented through data structures and computational models.

These perspectives provide an important theoretical lens for analysing how contemporary medical literature conceptualizes the body in the context of digital technologies and artificial intelligence.

The experiential body and perspectives from medical humanities

While digital technologies have expanded the analytical capacities of medicine, scholars in medical humanities have emphasized the importance of maintaining attention to the lived experience of the body. Medical humanities integrate insights from philosophy, literature, anthropology, and cultural studies in order to examine how medicine shapes human experiences of illness, health, and embodiment.

Recent work in critical medical humanities further emphasizes the importance of interdisciplinary approaches for understanding how medicine intersects with culture, technology, and social experience (Whitehead et al. 2016).

One influential approach within this field is narrative medicine, developed by Rita Charon (2006). Narrative medicine emphasizes the importance of listening to patients' stories and understanding illness as a lived experience rather than solely as a biological condition. From this perspective, the body is not only a biological object or a set of measurable parameters but also a site of meaning, identity, and narrative.

Phenomenological approaches to illness further highlight the experiential dimension of embodiment. Havi Carel (2016) argues that illness fundamentally alters an individual's experience of the body and the world, producing changes that cannot be fully captured through biomedical data alone.

Similarly, Alan Bleakley (2015) stresses the importance of integrating humanities perspectives into medical education and research. According to Bleakley, medical humanities can help expand the conceptual frameworks of medicine by reconnecting technological innovation with ethical reflection, empathy, and cultural understanding.

The growing field of health humanities has also expanded the scope of medical humanities by integrating perspectives from literature,

history, philosophy, and the arts in order to examine the cultural and social dimensions of health and illness (Crawford et al. 2015).

Together, these perspectives emphasize that the body should not be understood solely through technological representations but also through the lived experiences and narratives that shape human embodiment.

Medical language and the production of bodily representations

Within this broader theoretical context, analysing the language of biomedical research becomes an important way of understanding how contemporary medicine conceptualizes the body. Scientific vocabularies do not merely describe biological phenomena; they also shape how bodies become intelligible objects of knowledge.

When medical literature repeatedly describes the body through concepts such as models, images, sensors, or datasets, these terms contribute to stabilizing particular epistemic frameworks for understanding the body. Conversely, concepts related to experience, narrative, or embodiment highlight alternative ways of conceptualizing bodily processes.

Examining the vocabulary and conceptual structures of medical literature therefore provides insight into how different representations of the body coexist within biomedical discourse. In particular, such analysis can reveal whether technological representations of the body dominate the literature or whether experiential and narrative perspectives remain visible.

Building on these theoretical insights, the present study investigates how contemporary medical literature represents the body by combining bibliometric mapping with discourse analysis of articles indexed in the PubMed database. To explore these representations empirically, the following section presents the methodological framework used to analyse the conceptual structure of the literature and the discursive patterns through which the body is described in contemporary biomedical research.

Methodology

Research design

This study adopts a mixed methodological approach combining bibliometric mapping with qualitative discourse analysis. The purpose of this design is to examine how contemporary medical literature

represents the human body in the context of artificial intelligence and digital medicine.

Bibliometric analysis provides a macro-level perspective on the conceptual architecture of the literature by identifying patterns in the use and co-occurrence of keywords across a large corpus of publications. Through this approach, it becomes possible to map dominant thematic clusters and observe how different concepts related to the body and artificial intelligence are connected within biomedical research. At the same time, bibliometric mapping alone cannot fully capture the discursive ways in which the body is described in individual studies. For this reason, the present study complements the bibliometric analysis with a discourse-oriented examination of the articles included in the corpus. This second level of analysis focuses on how the body is conceptualized within the research topics, titles, and thematic orientations of the publications.

By combining these two methodological perspectives, the study aims to investigate both: the conceptual structure of contemporary medical literature and the discursive patterns through which the body is represented in biomedical research. This dual analytical framework makes it possible to connect large-scale patterns in the literature with more detailed observations about the language used to describe the body in the age of artificial intelligence.

Data source and corpus construction

The dataset used in this study was constructed using the PubMed database, one of the most widely used repositories for biomedical and clinical research. PubMed was selected because it provides standardized bibliographic metadata and keyword indexing for a large body of medical publications.

A systematic search was conducted on 1st August 2025 using the following Boolean query:

((“body representation” [Title/Abstract] OR “human body” [Title/Abstract] OR “embodiment” [Title/Abstract] OR “body image” [Title/Abstract]) AND (“artificial intelligence” [MeSH Terms] OR “artificial intelligence” [Title/Abstract] OR “AI” [Title/Abstract] OR “machine learning” [Title/Abstract] OR “algorithm*” Title/Abstract])).

This query was designed to identify publications that explicitly refer to the body or embodiment in relation to artificial intelligence or computational analysis. The search returned 2,518 articles published between 1973 and 2025. The temporal scope was intentionally broad in

order to capture the historical development of research connecting bodily representation and digital technologies. A preliminary examination of the dataset revealed a significant increase in publications in the last decade, reflecting the rapid expansion of research on artificial intelligence and digital health technologies.

Keyword extraction and preprocessing

From the 2,518 articles identified in the search, a total of 7,275 unique keywords were extracted. In order to reduce noise and ensure analytical clarity, a minimum occurrence threshold was applied. Only keywords appearing at least five times across the dataset were included in the bibliometric analysis. After applying this threshold, 499 keywords remained eligible for network mapping.

Before analysis, the keyword list was manually cleaned and normalized. This preprocessing step included: merging lexical variations of the same term, removing redundant expressions and overly generic descriptors, standardizing singular and plural forms where appropriate. The purpose of this step was to ensure that the resulting network accurately reflected meaningful conceptual relationships rather than purely lexical variation.

Bibliometric analysis

The bibliometric analysis was conducted using VOSviewer, a widely used software tool for constructing and visualizing bibliometric networks (van Eck and Waltman 2014). The analysis focused on keyword co-occurrence, which measures how frequently two terms appear together within the same publication. Co-occurrence analysis allows the identification of clusters of related concepts and helps reveal the thematic organization of the literature.

The main analytical parameters were: unit of analysis (author keywords), type of analysis (keyword co-occurrence), normalization method (association strength) and minimum occurrence threshold (5). The resulting bibliometric map represents keywords as nodes connected by links indicating their co-occurrence within the literature. In this visualization: the size of each node corresponds to the frequency of the keyword, the distance between nodes reflects the strength of their association, and the colour of nodes indicates cluster membership identified through the algorithm. Through this mapping process, it becomes possible to observe which conceptual areas

dominate the literature and how different research themes are interconnected.

Discourse analysis of the PubMed corpus

To complement the bibliometric mapping, the study includes a qualitative examination of the articles included in the dataset. This analysis focuses on how the body is described and conceptualized within the research topics and thematic orientations of the publications.

Particular attention was given to recurring patterns in how the body is framed within different types of research. For example, many studies conceptualize the body as a biomechanical structure modelled through computational simulations, as an imaging object analysed through digital imaging techniques, or as a set of physiological signals captured through wearable sensors.

Examples include research on biomechanical modelling of anatomical structures (Jones et al. 2015; Gao et al. 2021), studies on automated recognition of anatomical regions in medical images (Liu et al. 2019), and work on sensor-based monitoring of bodily movement or health status (F. Wu et al. 2015). These studies illustrate how contemporary biomedical research frequently approaches the body through technological frameworks of modelling, monitoring, and prediction. The discourse analysis therefore allows the study to move beyond abstract keyword patterns and examine how the body is concretely represented within biomedical research.

Limitations of the study

Several limitations should be acknowledged when interpreting the results of this study. First, the dataset is limited to literature indexed in the PubMed database, which primarily represents biomedical and clinical research. As a result, perspectives from other disciplines (such as anthropology, sociology, or cultural studies) may be underrepresented. Second, bibliometric analysis captures patterns in keyword usage but cannot fully account for the conceptual complexity of individual articles. While the co-occurrence of terms provides valuable insight into the structure of the literature, it does not replace close reading of individual studies. Finally, the search strategy focused on specific keywords related to the body and artificial intelligence. Although this approach ensured analytical coherence, it may have excluded studies discussing similar themes using different terminology.

Despite these limitations, the combined use of bibliometric mapping and discourse analysis offers a robust framework for examining how contemporary medical literature represents the body in the context of digital technologies. Bibliometric mapping should therefore be understood as an exploratory method that reveals conceptual patterns in the literature rather than providing a complete interpretation of individual studies.

Building on this methodological framework, the following section presents the results of the bibliometric analysis, focusing on the conceptual structure of the literature and the thematic clusters identified within the PubMed corpus.

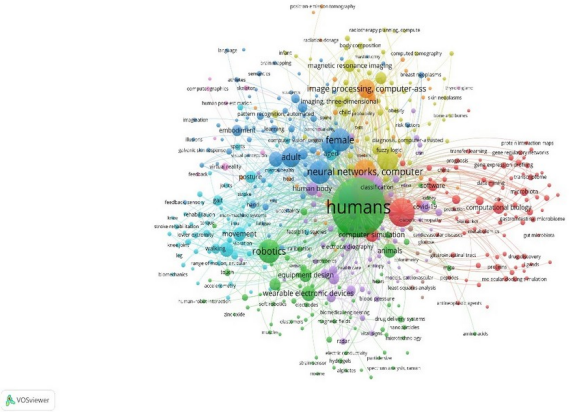
Results

Overview of the bibliometric network

The bibliometric analysis produced a conceptual map based on the co-occurrence of 499 keywords extracted from the 2,518 articles identified in the PubMed corpus. The resulting network reveals the thematic structure of the literature addressing the relationship between the human body and artificial intelligence.

In the visualization generated by VOSviewer (Figure 1), each keyword appears as a node whose size corresponds to its frequency of occurrence across the dataset. The links between nodes represent co-occurrence relationships, while the distance between nodes reflects the strength of their conceptual association. Colours indicate clusters identified through the network clustering algorithm.

Figure 1: Bibliometric map obtained using VOSviewer.
Representation of the body in medical language (PubMed)



Across the map, four major clusters emerge as dominant areas of research: computational and data-driven medicine, medical imaging and image analysis, biomedical engineering and technological augmentation, and embodiment and bodily movement. These clusters are interconnected through shared methodological approaches and technological infrastructures, forming a network in which different modes of investigating the body coexist.

Central concepts in the literature

The largest nodes in the network correspond to keywords that appear most frequently across the dataset and that maintain multiple connections with other terms. These central nodes indicate the dominant conceptual areas of the literature. Among the most prominent keywords in the network are terms related to computational analysis and digital technologies, including: "humans", "neural networks", "image processing", "computational biology", "classification" and "computer simulation".

The prominence of these terms suggests that much of the literature conceptualizes the body through computational frameworks that involve modelling, image analysis, and algorithmic classification. In particular, terms associated with neural networks and image processing appear as central nodes connecting several thematic clusters, highlighting the importance of artificial intelligence techniques in contemporary biomedical research.

Thematic clusters in the network

The clustering algorithm applied in VOSviewer identified several major thematic groupings within the dataset. These clusters represent areas of research where particular sets of keywords frequently co-occur.

- Computational and data-driven medicine

One of the largest clusters in the network (visualized in red in the VOSviewer map) is centred on terms associated with computational analysis and data-driven biomedical research. This cluster includes a dense group of interconnected keywords, among which the most prominent nodes are "machine learning", "neural networks", "data mining", "classification", and "computational biology".

The strong co-occurrence relationships between these terms indicate that contemporary biomedical research frequently relies on algorithmic methods capable of analysing large volumes of biomedical data.

Within the network, these keywords occupy relatively central positions and show numerous links with other clusters, particularly those associated with medical imaging and sensor-based technologies.

The prominence of computational concepts suggests that artificial intelligence has become a major methodological framework for analysing biological processes. Rather than focusing exclusively on direct clinical observation, many studies approach the body through datasets that can be processed by machine learning algorithms in order to detect patterns, support diagnosis, or generate predictive models of disease. Within the context of the theoretical framework discussed earlier, this cluster reflects the growing tendency in biomedical research to conceptualize the body as a data-generating system embedded within digital infrastructures of analysis and prediction.

- Medical imaging and image analysis

A second major cluster (displayed in yellow in the bibliometric map) is associated with the analysis of medical images and digital visual representations of the body. The cluster contains a set of closely related keywords including “image processing”, “computer-assisted diagnosis”, “medical imaging”, “tomography”, and “radiology”.

The nodes in this cluster are tightly connected, indicating a strong conceptual coherence within the literature focused on imaging technologies. Several of these terms also maintain strong links with keywords from the computational cluster, particularly those related to neural networks and classification algorithms.

This structure suggests that medical images increasingly function as datasets that can be analysed through computer vision techniques and deep learning models. In this context, digital imaging technologies enable the reconstruction of anatomical structures and physiological processes in visual form, which can then be interpreted through computational methods. From the perspective of the theoretical framework presented earlier, the research represented in this cluster contributes to the emergence of what can be described as an imaged body, where the body becomes accessible primarily through digital visualizations generated by imaging technologies and analysed through algorithmic systems.

- Biomedical engineering and technological augmentation

Another significant cluster in the network (represented in green) includes keywords associated with biomedical engineering and technological systems designed to interact with or augment bodily functions. Among the most prominent nodes in this cluster are

"wearable devices", "robotics", "biomedical engineering", "assistive technology", and "human–robot interaction".

The terms in this cluster are connected through research that investigates technological devices capable of monitoring, supporting, or extending bodily functions. Several keywords related to sensors and wearable technologies also show links with computational concepts from the data-driven cluster, suggesting that biomedical engineering research frequently integrates sensing technologies with machine learning techniques.

The presence of terms related to robotics and assistive technologies further indicates an area of research concerned with the development of technological systems that interact directly with the body. These systems include wearable health monitoring devices, rehabilitation technologies, and robotic interfaces designed to assist individuals with mobility or motor impairments.

Within the broader structure of the network, this cluster reflects the growing integration of biological and technological systems. As discussed in the theoretical framework, such developments contribute to hybrid forms of embodiment in which bodily functions are increasingly mediated by technological infrastructures.

- Embodiment and bodily movement

A smaller cluster (displayed in blue in the bibliometric map) includes keywords related to bodily movement and embodiment. The most frequent terms in this cluster include "embodiment", "movement", "posture", and "walking".

Compared with the computational and imaging clusters, the nodes in this group are smaller and fewer in number, indicating that these concepts appear less frequently across the dataset. Nevertheless, the cluster remains connected to the broader network through links with research on rehabilitation technologies, motion analysis, and sensor-based monitoring systems.

The presence of these keywords suggests that some areas of biomedical research continue to explore bodily experience and movement, particularly in fields such as rehabilitation medicine or human–machine interaction. However, the relatively peripheral position of this cluster indicates that such perspectives occupy a less central place within the broader literature dominated by computational and technological approaches. This observation resonates with discussions in medical humanities that highlight the relative

marginalization of experiential and phenomenological perspectives on embodiment within technologically oriented biomedical research.

Summary of bibliometric patterns

Although the clusters described above represent distinct thematic domains, the network map also reveals numerous connections between them. In particular, concepts related to machine learning and data analysis often function as bridges linking computational research with studies in medical imaging and biomedical engineering. Similarly, wearable technologies and sensor-based systems connect research on bodily movement with computational analysis of physiological signals. These interconnections suggest that contemporary biomedical research increasingly relies on integrated technological systems combining data collection, imaging, sensing, and algorithmic analysis.

The bibliometric analysis therefore reveals a conceptual landscape in which technological approaches to the body occupy a dominant position. Computational analysis, digital imaging, and sensor-based monitoring form the core methodological frameworks through which the body is investigated within the literature captured in the PubMed corpus.

At the same time, research focusing on experiential aspects of embodiment appears less prominent within the network. While present, such perspectives remain comparatively peripheral in relation to the larger clusters associated with artificial intelligence and digital technologies. The implications of these patterns for the conceptualization of the body in contemporary biomedical knowledge are discussed in the following section.

Peripheral concepts in the network

In addition to the dominant clusters described above, the network also includes several keywords that appear in more peripheral positions. These nodes typically have lower frequencies and fewer connections to other terms. Keywords associated with experiential aspects of embodiment (such as “embodiment”, “movement”, or “virtual reality”) appear within the network but remain comparatively smaller and less connected than the central technological concepts.

This distribution suggests that while research on bodily experience exists within the literature, it occupies a less prominent position relative to studies focused on computational analysis and technological systems.

Conceptual absences

Beyond the distribution of existing terms, the bibliometric map also reveals certain conceptual absences. Terms explicitly related to ethical, narrative, or experiential dimensions of medicine (such as "ethics", "narrative medicine", "patient experience", or "equity") do not appear as central nodes within the network. The relative absence of these concepts indicates that the literature captured in the dataset tends to prioritize technical and computational approaches to the study of the body. Ethical and narrative perspectives, while present in other areas of medical scholarship, are less visible in the vocabulary of the biomedical research examined in this study.

While bibliometric mapping provides an overview of the conceptual structure of the literature, examining individual articles allows for a closer understanding of how the body is described within biomedical research itself. The following section therefore analyses recurring discursive patterns in the PubMed corpus in order to identify the different ways in which the body is represented in contemporary medical literature.

Discursive analysis of the PubMed corpus

While the bibliometric mapping presented in the previous section reveals the conceptual structure of the literature, examining the articles included in the PubMed corpus allows a closer analysis of how the body is described within contemporary biomedical research. A qualitative examination of the titles, themes, and research objectives of the articles reveals several recurring discursive patterns through which the body is conceptualized. These patterns correspond to distinct technological frameworks through which the body is investigated in contemporary biomedical research.

Across the corpus, the body is most frequently represented through six overlapping modes: the structural body, the imaged body, the sensor body, the data body, the predictive body, and the augmented body. In contrast, the experiential body appears only sporadically within the literature.

The structural body

One of the most common representations of the body in the corpus conceptualizes it as a biomechanical structure that can be modelled mathematically. In this perspective, the body is analysed as a system of physical components whose behaviour can be simulated through

computational models. For example, research on finite element modelling of anatomical structures investigates the mechanical behaviour of the skull or thoracic structures under different experimental conditions (Jones et al. 2015; Schoell et al. 2015). Similar approaches appear in studies analysing seating biomechanics or prosthetic wear through computational simulations (Gao et al. 2021; Ashkanfar et al. 2024). Studies on human gait and posture analysis also reflect this perspective, using inertial sensors or kinematic modelling to estimate body movement and joint dynamics (Miripour Fard 2019; Abhayasinghe et al. 2019).

Within this framework, the body is conceptualized primarily through parameters such as force, motion, and mechanical interaction, emphasizing its structural and physical properties.

The imaged body

A second major discursive pattern conceptualizes the body as a visual object reconstructed and analysed through medical imaging technologies. Advances in digital imaging and image-processing algorithms have transformed the body into a dataset composed of visual information that can be analysed computationally. Numerous studies in the corpus examine automated recognition of anatomical structures in CT or MRI images. For example, research on automatic anatomy recognition in whole-body CT scans uses computational algorithms to identify and classify different anatomical regions (Liu et al. 2019). Similarly, studies on total-body photography and digital dermatology employ three-dimensional imaging to monitor skin lesions across the entire body surface (Korotkov et al. 2019; Ahmedt-Aristizabal et al. 2023). More recent work using deep learning for body-region classification in CT or MRI images further illustrates this trend toward algorithmic interpretation of visual medical data (Raffy et al. 2023).

In this discursive regime, the body is conceptualized as an imaged body, reconstructed through digital visualizations and interpreted through computational analysis.

The sensor body

A third mode of representation conceptualizes the body as a network of physiological signals captured through sensors and wearable technologies. In this perspective, bodily functions are monitored continuously through technological systems capable of collecting and

transmitting physiological data in real time. Studies on fall detection systems using wearable sensors illustrate this approach, employing accelerometers and other devices to monitor bodily movement and detect abnormal patterns (F. Wu et al. 2015). Other studies focus on wearable health technologies such as smart textiles or nanofiber sensors capable of detecting body movement and physiological activity (Horev et al. 2021; Meena et al. 2023). Machine learning models are also used to analyse sensor data and identify patterns related to fall risk or mobility changes in elderly populations (Zheng et al. 2022; Wang et al. 2023).

Within this framework, the body appears as a sensor body, defined through continuous streams of physiological data generated by technological monitoring systems.

The data body

A closely related representation conceptualizes the body as a dataset that can be analysed through machine learning algorithms. In this perspective, bodily processes are translated into structured datasets that enable computational modelling and classification. Studies applying machine learning to retinal imaging for systemic health assessment illustrate this approach, where images of the retina are analysed to detect patterns associated with cardiovascular or metabolic conditions (J. H. Wu and Liu 2022). Other research employs machine learning models to identify risk factors and predict the occurrence of medical events such as stroke (Zhi et al. 2024). Similarly, studies using data mining techniques to analyse clinical datasets reflect the increasing role of computational analysis in contemporary medicine (Fu et al. 2021; Sak and Suchodolska 2021).

In this discursive framework, the body is conceptualized as a data body, composed of measurable variables that can be processed through computational models.

The predictive body

Beyond the transformation of the body into datasets, many studies conceptualize the body as an object of predictive modelling. Machine learning algorithms are used not only to analyse current health data but also to anticipate future medical outcomes. Predictive models identifying the likelihood of stroke or other medical conditions illustrate this shift toward anticipatory medicine (Zhi et al. 2024). Similarly, studies using artificial intelligence to detect early signs of

disease in imaging data or physiological signals demonstrate how biomedical research increasingly focuses on forecasting potential health risks.

In this framework, the body becomes a predictive body, understood not only through its present biological state but also through statistical projections of future health trajectories.

The augmented body

Another emerging discursive pattern conceptualizes the body as a hybrid system integrating biological and technological components. Research on artificial muscles and soft robotic technologies illustrates how biomedical engineering seeks to replicate or enhance bodily functions through technological systems (Duduta et al. 2019). Similarly, studies exploring robotic interfaces or telepresence robots used by individuals with motor impairments demonstrate new forms of interaction between human bodies and technological devices (Huynh et al. 2019; Grice and Kemp 2019).

In these contexts, the body is conceptualized as an augmented body, where biological processes interact with technological systems that extend or support bodily capabilities.

The experiential body

In contrast to the technological representations described above, a smaller group of studies focuses on the experiential dimensions of embodiment. Research examining body representation in patients with neurological conditions explores how individuals perceive and experience their bodies under altered neurological conditions (Nuara et al. 2019). Other studies investigate the role of embodiment in learning processes or human–machine interaction (Clay et al. 2021; Gilbert et al. 2019).

Although these studies highlight the importance of subjective bodily experience, they remain relatively rare within the broader literature dominated by computational and technological approaches.

Toward a conceptual model of the digital body

Taken together, the discursive patterns identified in the PubMed corpus suggest that contemporary biomedical research increasingly conceptualizes the body through technological frameworks associated with modelling, imaging, sensing, and prediction.

These patterns can be summarized through a conceptual model (Figure 2) describing successive regimes of representation: structural

body - imaged body - sensor body - data body - predictive body - augmented body - experiential body (peripheral). This model suggests that the dominant trajectory in contemporary biomedical discourse moves from the observation of the biological body toward the construction of a digital body embedded within technological infrastructures of data collection, analysis, and prediction.

Figure 2: Conceptual regimes of the digital body in contemporary biomedical discourse



The emergence of these technological representations raises broader questions about how digital medicine reshapes the conceptualization of the body within biomedical knowledge. The following section discusses the implications of these findings in relation to debates in science and technology studies and medical humanities.

Discussion: The emergence of the digital body in contemporary medical discourse

The results of the bibliometric analysis and the examination of the PubMed corpus suggest a significant transformation in the ways contemporary biomedical research conceptualizes the human body. Rather than appearing primarily as a biological organism observed through clinical practice, the body increasingly emerges in medical literature as an object embedded within digital infrastructures of data generation, computational modelling, and algorithmic prediction.

This transformation becomes visible in both levels of analysis conducted in the present study. At the macro level, the bibliometric network reveals the centrality of concepts associated with computational analysis, including neural networks, image processing, computational biology, and classification algorithms. At the micro level, the discursive analysis of individual publications shows that the body is frequently described through technological frameworks involving biomechanical modelling, digital imaging, wearable sensing systems, and machine learning–based predictive models.

Taken together, these patterns suggest the emergence of what can be described as a digital body, a conceptual model of the body constructed through the integration of biological processes with digital infrastructures of data collection, analysis, and prediction. In this

article, the term digital body refers to the representation of the human body as a data-generating and computationally analysable entity embedded within digital infrastructures of sensing, imaging, modelling, and prediction.

From the biological body to the digital body

The transformation identified in the present study reflects broader changes in the epistemology of contemporary biomedicine. As Rose (2007) argues, modern biomedical knowledge increasingly operates through the production and management of biological data rather than through direct observation alone. Advances in digital technologies have expanded this process, enabling the body to be represented through large-scale datasets derived from imaging technologies, wearable sensors, and clinical databases. Artificial intelligence does not merely introduce new analytical tools into medicine; it also reshapes the epistemological framework through which the human body is understood, shifting attention from direct clinical observation toward computational modelling and predictive analytics.

Within this framework, the body becomes a system of biological information that can be processed and interpreted through computational models. Machine learning algorithms capable of identifying patterns in medical images or physiological signals exemplify how contemporary biomedical research increasingly treats the body as a data-generating system (J. H. Wu and Liu 2022; Zhi et al. 2024). This shift reflects what Lupton (2016) describes as the datafication of the body, in which bodily processes are translated into digital data streams that can be analysed, visualized, and interpreted through technological systems. Rather than replacing earlier biomedical models, this transformation extends them by integrating biological knowledge into digital infrastructures of analysis and prediction.

Data infrastructures and the reconfiguration of medical knowledge

The emergence of the digital body also reflects the growing importance of data infrastructures in contemporary healthcare. Biomedical knowledge is increasingly produced through systems capable of collecting, storing, and analysing large volumes of physiological and clinical data.

Wearable devices and sensor-based monitoring systems illustrate how bodily functions can be continuously recorded and analysed in

real time (F. Wu et al. 2015; Zheng et al. 2022). Similarly, imaging technologies combined with artificial intelligence allow researchers to reconstruct detailed representations of the body and identify patterns that may signal the presence of disease (Liu et al. 2019; Raffy et al. 2023). From this perspective, the body becomes embedded within complex technological systems that transform biological signals into analysable data. Ruckenstein and Schüll (2017) argue that such infrastructures reshape the relationship between individuals and their bodies by introducing new forms of data-driven health monitoring and decision-making. In the context of biomedical research, this transformation contributes to a shift toward predictive and data-intensive approaches to health and disease.

Posthuman perspectives and human–technology assemblages

The transformation of the body identified in this study resonates with broader debates in science and technology studies concerning the relationship between humans and technological systems.

Haraway's (1991/1985) concept of the cyborg emphasizes the increasingly hybrid nature of contemporary human existence, in which biological organisms and technological systems become deeply intertwined. Similarly, Braidotti (2013) argues that contemporary societies are entering a posthuman condition characterized by the integration of biological, technological, and informational processes. The representations of the body observed in the PubMed corpus reflect this hybridization. When the body is conceptualized as a system of sensors, datasets, or algorithmic predictions, it becomes inseparable from the technological infrastructures used to analyse it. In this sense, the digital body can be understood as a form of human–technology assemblage, where biological processes are interpreted through technological mediation.

Hayles (1999) further highlights how information technologies have encouraged the perception of the body as an informational pattern rather than solely as a material organism. This perspective aligns with the discursive patterns identified in the present study, where the body frequently appears as a set of data structures analysed through computational systems.

The marginalization of experiential embodiment

Despite the prominence of technological representations of the body in the corpus analysed, the study also reveals that experiential and

narrative dimensions of embodiment appear relatively rarely within the literature. Although some studies examine body representation in neurological conditions or explore embodiment in human–machine interaction (Nuara et al. 2019; Clay et al. 2021), these topics occupy peripheral positions within the broader network of biomedical research.

From the perspective of medical humanities, this imbalance raises important questions about the conceptual frameworks guiding contemporary medicine. Narrative medicine and phenomenological approaches emphasize that illness and health are lived experiences that cannot be fully captured through biomedical data alone (Charon 2006; Carel 2016). Similarly, Bleakley (2015) argues that integrating perspectives from the humanities into medical education and research can help maintain attention to the ethical and experiential dimensions of healthcare. As digital technologies continue to transform biomedical practice, the importance of these perspectives becomes increasingly evident.

Rebalancing technological and humanistic perspectives

The emergence of the digital body does not imply that technological approaches to medicine are problematic in themselves. On the contrary, artificial intelligence, medical imaging, and wearable technologies have contributed significantly to improvements in diagnosis, treatment, and preventive care. Recent research has also highlighted potential risks associated with algorithmic bias and unequal data representation in medical AI systems, which may affect clinical decision-making and healthcare equity (Obermeyer et al. 2019). These concerns further underline the importance of integrating ethical reflection and humanistic perspectives into the development and implementation of digital medical technologies.

However, the dominance of computational and data-driven representations of the body in biomedical literature suggests the need for a broader conceptual framework that can integrate technological innovation with humanistic perspectives on embodiment. Medical humanities offer one possible avenue for achieving this balance. By incorporating insights from philosophy, narrative studies, anthropology, and ethics, medical humanities can help reconnect biomedical knowledge with the lived experiences of patients and the social contexts of healthcare. In this sense, the expansion of digital medicine does not diminish the relevance of humanistic approaches to

medicine. Rather, it makes them increasingly necessary for understanding how technological transformations reshape the meanings of the body, health, and medical practice.

Building on these observations, the final section of this article summarizes the main findings of the study and reflects on their implications for future research on the relationship between digital medicine, artificial intelligence, and the representation of the human body.

Conclusions

This study examined how contemporary biomedical literature conceptualizes the human body in the context of artificial intelligence and digital medicine. By combining bibliometric mapping with discourse analysis of articles indexed in the PubMed database, the research aimed to investigate how scientific vocabulary and research frameworks shape representations of the body in medical knowledge.

The bibliometric analysis revealed a conceptual network dominated by keywords associated with computational analysis, medical imaging, and algorithmic classification. Concepts such as neural networks, image processing, computational biology, and classification algorithms occupy central positions in the network, indicating the growing importance of data-intensive approaches within biomedical research.

The discourse analysis of the PubMed corpus further demonstrated that the body is frequently conceptualized through technological frameworks associated with computational modelling, imaging systems, wearable sensors, and predictive machine learning models. Across the corpus, several recurring representations of the body could be identified, including the structural body, the imaged body, the sensor body, the data body, the predictive body, and the augmented body. Taken together, these patterns suggest the emergence of a conceptual model that can be described as the digital body. In this model, the body appears not only as a biological organism but also as a system of biological information embedded within technological infrastructures of monitoring, modelling, and prediction.

While these technological approaches have significantly expanded the analytical capacities of contemporary medicine, the analysis also revealed that experiential and narrative perspectives on embodiment remain relatively marginal within the biomedical literature examined in this study. Concepts related to lived bodily experience, narrative medicine, or ethical reflection appears far less frequently than those

associated with computational analysis. From the perspective of medical humanities, this imbalance highlights the importance of integrating humanistic perspectives into the evolving landscape of digital medicine. Technological innovation in healthcare does not eliminate the need for attention to the lived experiences of patients, the ethical dimensions of medical practice, and the cultural meanings attached to the body.

Rather than replacing humanistic perspectives on embodiment, the expansion of digital medicine makes them increasingly necessary. As artificial intelligence continues to reshape biomedical research and healthcare systems, interdisciplinary dialogue between biomedical sciences and the humanities will be essential for developing a more comprehensive understanding of the human body in the age of digital medicine. Future research could further explore how representations of the body differ across biomedical, social science, and humanities literature, as well as how AI-driven concepts of the body influence clinical decision-making, healthcare policy, and patient experience. Such interdisciplinary investigations would contribute to a deeper understanding of how technological transformations reshape not only medical practice but also the conceptual frameworks through which the human body itself is understood.

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Teaching in the shadow of AI: An autoethnography of motivation, competence, and learning in the first-year digital communication classroom

Cristian R. Negrea[*]

Abstract: This article presents an autoethnographic account of teaching first-year digital communication in an AI-saturated classroom. It examines how the widespread use of generative AI tools has transformed students' relationship to learning, leading to the progressive outsourcing of cognitive tasks such as writing, analysis, and argumentation. Drawing on classroom observations across multiple cohorts, the study identifies a pattern of declining student engagement, reduced motivation for skill development, and a widening gap between AI-assisted outputs and students' independent abilities. It conceptualizes this process as competence atrophy, reinforced by a feedback loop of dependency and by institutional structures that prioritize efficiency and output over learning processes. The article also reflects on the changing role of the teaching assistant, the challenges of assessing authentic competence, and the broader implications for higher education. It concludes by proposing pedagogical strategies centered on process-based assessment, intellectual ownership, and the revaluation of learning as an intrinsically meaningful activity.

Keywords: generative AI, higher education, autoethnography, student engagement, competence atrophy

Introduction

There is something profoundly disorienting about standing in front of a classroom full of first-year university students and realizing, mid-sentence, that the majority of them have already outsourced the very cognitive task you are trying to teach them. The rapid integration of generative artificial intelligence into higher education has not merely introduced a new tool into the pedagogical toolkit; it has fundamentally altered the social contract between instructor and

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AGATHOS, Volume 17, Issue 2 (33-34): 797-818, DOI 10.5281/zenodo.23611243
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student, between effort and outcome, between learning and the mere production of outputs (Vâlcea et al. 2024; Chow 2025). As a teaching assistant (TA) responsible for delivering an introductory course in digital communication to first-year students, I have occupied a peculiar vantage point over the past several years—one that has afforded me an intimate, ground-level view of how AI technologies have reshaped the texture of classroom life, the quality of student engagement, and the very meaning of competence in a digitally saturated educational environment. The present article draws on autoethnographic methods to explore these transformations, situating my personal observations and reflections within broader theoretical and empirical debates about AI, deskilling, motivation, and the future of higher education.

The course in question—Communicationin Digital Media—is designed to equip first-year students with foundational competencies in writing for digital platforms, understanding media ecologies, constructing arguments for online audiences, and critically analyzing digital texts. It is, by design, a course that demands active intellectual engagement: students must write, revise, think critically, and develop their own voices as communicators. Yet over the past several academic cycles, I have witnessed a progressive hollowing out of these activities, as students increasingly delegate core cognitive tasks to AI tools such as ChatGPT and similar large language models (LLMs). The problem is not simply one of academic dishonesty, though that is certainly part of the picture. It is something more insidious: a gradual erosion of the appetite to learn, a quiet surrender of intellectual agency, and a year-by-year decline in the baseline competencies that students bring to—and develop within—the classroom.

This article is animated by three interrelated research questions. First, how does the pervasive availability of AI tools affect students' engagement with learning tasks in a first-year digital communication course? Second, how do students perceive the relationship between effort, improvement, and AI-mediated output production? And third, what transformations occur in the role of the TA when the classroom becomes an AI-saturated environment? In pursuing these questions, I draw on field notes from seminars and labs, observations of student assignments and interactions, and informal conversations with students over multiple semesters. The aim is not to produce a generalizable theory but to offer a richly situated, reflexive account of what it feels like to teach—and to try to facilitate genuine learning—in an era when the very foundations of pedagogical practice are being quietly

dismantled by technologies that promise efficiency but may deliver something closer to intellectual atrophy.

Theoretical framework

Autoethnography as method

Autoethnography, as a qualitative research methodology, occupies a distinctive position at the intersection of autobiography and ethnography, enabling the researcher to use personal experience as a lens through which to examine broader cultural phenomena (Naghdipour 2025; Thao & Thuy 2024). It is a method that privileges reflexivity, situated knowledge, and the acknowledgment that the researcher is never a neutral observer but always already embedded within the social and institutional structures they seek to understand (Jagadale 2024). In the context of higher education research, autoethnography has been recognized as a powerful tool for examining the interplay between pedagogy, identity, and institutional culture, particularly in settings where the researcher occupies a dual role as both instructor and observer (Riva 2023; Kinchin & Wiley 2017). For the purposes of this study, autoethnography provides a means of capturing the affective, relational, and experiential dimensions of teaching in an AI-saturated classroom—dimensions that are often invisible in large-scale quantitative studies of educational technology adoption.

The choice of autoethnography is also a political one. In an academic landscape increasingly dominated by metrics, learning analytics, and algorithmic management systems, the subjective experience of the instructor—particularly the precarious, often invisible labor of the teaching assistant—is routinely marginalized (Ovetz 2020, 2022). Autoethnography, by contrast, insists on the validity of personal narrative as a source of knowledge, and it resists the reduction of teaching to a set of measurable outputs (Piercy 2022; Jagadale 2024). As Thao and Thuy (2024) have argued, autoethnography in educational contexts provides an avenue for exploring one's own experiences with pedagogy, culture, and institutional power, and for making visible the emotional labor that is inherent in teaching. Similarly, Jagadale (2024) has demonstrated that autoethnography can serve as a pedagogical strategy in its own right, legitimizing personal experience as a site of knowledge creation and enabling instructors to bridge the gap between their own lifeworlds and those of their students.

Motivation, effort, and the psychology of AI delegation

The theoretical literature on learning motivation provides a crucial framework for understanding the shifts I have observed in the classroom. Classical distinctions between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation—where intrinsic motivation refers to engagement driven by curiosity, interest, and the inherent satisfaction of mastering a skill, and extrinsic motivation refers to engagement driven by external rewards or pressures—are directly relevant to the dynamics of AI-mediated learning (Delcker et al. 2024). When students perceive that an AI tool can produce a higher-quality output than they can, and when the institutional reward structure (grades, completion, credentials) does not adequately distinguish between AI-generated and student-generated work, the rational calculus shifts decisively toward delegation rather than effort.

Kim (2025) has proposed a framework based on two orthogonal dimensions—Division of Cognitive Labor and Metacognitive Oversight—that yields four distinct patterns of human-AI interaction: Skilled Augmentation, Managed Automation, Unguided Effort, and Cognitive Surrender. Of particular relevance to the present study is the concept of "Cognitive Surrender," in which users delegate both cognitive execution and metacognitive control to AI systems, a drift accelerated by what Kim describes as "cognitive miserliness, effort aversion, and instant gratification dynamics" (Kim 2025). This framework resonates powerfully with my observations of first-year students who, confronted with the difficulty of learning to write for digital audiences, increasingly default to AI-generated text not merely as a starting point but as a finished product. The Expertise Paradox identified by Vâlcea and colleagues (2024) further illuminates this dynamic: AI's adequate performance at lower-level cognitive tasks may actively weaken students' development of higher-level thinking, creating a vicious cycle in which the more students rely on AI for basic tasks, the less capable they become of performing the complex cognitive operations that the course is designed to cultivate.

Deskilling, technological mediation, and the labor process

The concept of deskilling, originally theorized in the context of industrial labor, has acquired renewed urgency in the age of AI. In its classical formulation, deskilling refers to the process by which the introduction of new technologies or management practices reduces the

skill requirements of a given job, transferring control from workers to managers or machines and rendering labor cheaper and more easily replaceable (Ovetz 2015, 2020, 2022). In the context of higher education, deskilling has been applied both to the labor of teaching—where the unbundling of academic work, the rise of learning management systems, and the casualization of the professoriate have progressively eroded faculty autonomy and expertise (Ivancheva & Courtois 2024)—and, more recently, to the learning process itself, where students' increasing reliance on AI tools threatens to atrophy the very competencies that education is supposed to develop.

Ovetz (2020, 2022) has argued that learning management systems and online education technologies function as instruments of rationalization, fragmenting the labor of teaching into discrete tasks that can be automated, outsourced, or transferred to non-faculty technicians. This analysis, rooted in the labor process tradition, provides a structural context for understanding the AI-mediated classroom: just as the unbundling of teaching deskills the instructor, so too does the delegation of cognitive tasks to AI deskill the student (Watermeyer et al. 2024; Kheiche 2022). Watermeyer and colleagues (2024) have documented how academics themselves perceive AI tools as agents of deskilling and unauthentication, eroding professional identity and the capacity for prestige generation (Gopal 2025; Chow 2025). The parallel with student experience is striking: when students outsource writing, analysis, and argument construction to AI, they are not merely saving time—they are forfeiting the very processes through which competence is developed.

The concept of technological mediation further enriches this analysis. As Feenberg (2013) has argued, the relationship between technology and education is never neutral; technologies interact with local social contexts, consumer behavior, politics, and values, reinforcing certain norms and reifying certain structures while marginalizing others.

In the AI-saturated classroom, the mediation of learning by AI tools does not simply augment existing pedagogical practices (Schiff 2020; Poquet & Laat 2021); it fundamentally reconfigures the relationship between student, instructor, and knowledge, creating new forms of dependency and new patterns of cognitive labor.

Digital communication pedagogy and competency formation

The specific disciplinary context of digital communication pedagogy adds an additional layer of complexity. Courses in digital communication are designed not merely to transmit content knowledge but to cultivate a set of practical competencies—writing, critical analysis, audience awareness, multimodal composition—that can only be developed through sustained practice and iterative feedback (Kinchin & Wiley 2017). These competencies are, by their nature, process-oriented: they require students to struggle with difficult material, to make mistakes, to revise, and to gradually internalize the norms and conventions of effective digital communication. When AI tools short-circuit this process by generating polished outputs on demand, the developmental arc of competency formation is disrupted (Chow 2025; Vâlcea et al. 2024). As Chow (2025) has argued in the context of medical education, "if learners outsource core operations including problem solving, or clinical reasoning, then the mental muscles educators hope to strengthen may atrophy," a warning that applies with equal force to the domain of digital communication.

Methodology

Justification of autoethnography

The decision to employ autoethnography as the primary methodological approach for this study was driven by both epistemological and practical considerations. Autoethnography is particularly well suited to research contexts in which the researcher occupies a dual role—in this case, as both instructor and observer—and in which the phenomena under investigation are deeply embedded in the researcher's own lived experience (Naghdipour 2025; Thao & Thuy 2024; Jagadale 2024). Unlike survey-based or experimental methods, autoethnography does not seek to produce generalizable findings; rather, it aims to generate richly textured, reflexive accounts that illuminate the subjective dimensions of social and institutional life (Riva 2023; Piercy 2022). In the context of higher education, where the affective and relational dimensions of teaching are often rendered invisible by the dominance of quantitative metrics and learning analytics, autoethnography offers a means of recovering the human experience of pedagogy.

The methodological rigor of autoethnography depends on the researcher's commitment to reflexivity—the ongoing, critical examination of one's own assumptions, biases, and positionality (Thao

& Thuy 2024). In this study, reflexivity has been practiced through the systematic production of field notes, the regular interrogation of my own emotional responses to classroom events, and the deliberate effort to situate my personal observations within broader theoretical and empirical frameworks. As Thao and Thuy (2024) have emphasized, reflexivity in autoethnographic research involves the researcher's conscious recognition of their own biases and the influence these elements have on the research process and its outcomes. This commitment to reflexivity is not merely a methodological formality; it is a substantive ethical practice that guards against the temptation to universalize one's own experience or to conflate personal frustration with structural critique.

Positionality: The TA as instructor and observer

My positionality as a teaching assistant is central to the analysis that follows. The TA occupies a liminal position within the university hierarchy—neither fully faculty nor fully student, possessing pedagogical authority in the classroom but lacking institutional power over curriculum design, assessment policy, or technology adoption (Ovetz 2022; Ivancheva & Courtois 2024). This liminality is both a limitation and a resource: it constrains my ability to effect structural change, but it also affords a distinctive perspective on the micro-level dynamics of teaching and learning that are often invisible to those higher up the institutional ladder. As Ovetz (2020) has argued, the adjunctification and casualization of academic labor have produced a class of "just-in-time, deskilled, disempowered, contingent" workers whose experiences are rarely centered in educational research. Autoethnography provides a means of centering these experiences and of making visible the labor—intellectual, emotional, and relational—that TAs perform in the service of student learning.

Data sources and ethical considerations

The data for this study are drawn from multiple sources: field notes produced during and after seminars and lab sessions; observations of student assignments, drafts, and final submissions; informal conversations with students before, during, and after class; and my own reflective journal entries. All student data have been anonymized, and no individual student is identifiable in the account that follows. The ethical challenges of autoethnographic research in educational settings are well documented: the power differential between instructor

and student, the risk of surveillance or judgment, and the potential for students to feel exposed or misrepresented all require careful navigation. I have sought to mitigate these risks by focusing on patterns and tendencies rather than individual cases, by avoiding direct quotation of identifiable student speech, and by foregrounding my own experience and interpretation rather than claiming to represent the student perspective.

The AI-saturated classroom

The normalization of AI as default infrastructure

The first thing one notices, teaching Communication in Digital Media in the current moment, is the sheer ubiquity of AI tools in students' workflows. When I began teaching this course several years ago, the use of AI in assignment production was exceptional—a novelty, sometimes a source of curiosity, occasionally a source of anxiety. Today, it is the default. Students arrive in the classroom with ChatGPT or similar LLMs already integrated into their browsers, their note-taking apps, their writing processes (Vâlcea et al. 2024; Delcker et al. 2024). The normalization of AI as a default learning infrastructure has been remarkably swift, outpacing institutional policy, pedagogical adaptation, and even the capacity of instructors to fully comprehend the scope of its use.

This normalization is not merely a matter of individual student choice; it is structurally enabled by the broader digital ecosystem in which higher education now operates. Learning management systems, cloud-based document editors, and AI-powered writing assistants are all part of a seamless technological environment that encourages the delegation of cognitive tasks to machines (Ovetz 2022; Kheiche 2022). As Kheiche (2022) has argued, the modularity of contemporary educational technology platforms facilitates the fragmentation and deskilling of both teaching and learning, enabling the redistribution of cognitive labor in ways that are often invisible to the participants themselves. In my own classroom, I have observed students using AI tools not only for writing assignments but for generating discussion points, summarizing readings, producing outlines, and even formulating questions to ask in class. The boundary between student-generated and AI-generated intellectual activity has become, for many students, effectively meaningless.

What is particularly striking is the speed with which this normalization has occurred. In the space of just two or three academic

cycles, the use of AI has shifted from a marginal, somewhat furtive practice to an openly acknowledged and even celebrated aspect of student life. Students speak casually about "asking ChatGPT" in the same way they might speak about consulting a textbook or searching the internet—except that the AI tool does not merely provide information but produces finished text, complete arguments, and polished prose (Vâlcea et al. 2024; Kim 2025). The implications for a course in digital communication are profound: when the primary output of the course—written text for digital audiences—can be generated by a machine in seconds, the pedagogical rationale for the course itself comes under pressure.

Blurring of authorship and originality

One of the most disorienting aspects of teaching in the AI-saturated classroom is the progressive blurring of authorship and originality. In a course designed to help students develop their own voices as digital communicators, the question of who is actually writing has become increasingly difficult to answer. Assignments that were once windows into students' thinking—revealing their struggles, their misconceptions, their emerging competencies—have become opaque surfaces, polished and generic, bearing the unmistakable hallmarks of machine-generated text. The prose is fluent but lifeless; the arguments are coherent but unoriginal; the voice is competent but anonymous.

This blurring of authorship is not simply a technical problem to be solved by plagiarism detection software or AI-detection algorithms. It is a pedagogical and existential problem that strikes at the heart of what it means to learn. When students submit work that they have not written—or that they have written only in the most attenuated sense, by prompting an AI and lightly editing its output—the feedback loop that is essential to learning is broken. The instructor's comments, carefully crafted to address specific weaknesses and encourage specific improvements, land on terrain that the student has never actually occupied. The student receives a grade for work they did not do; the instructor evaluates a text that does not represent the student's actual abilities. The entire pedagogical transaction becomes, in a word, fictitious. Gendron and colleagues (2022) have argued that AI-driven deskilling in academic contexts relies on a powerful reconfiguration of the labor process into one that emphasizes "standardization, simplification, and speed, not diversity, complexity and interdependence." This observation, made in the context of academic

publishing, applies with equal force to the undergraduate classroom, where the pressure to produce outputs has increasingly displaced the imperative to engage in genuine learning.

AI as idea generator and cognitive crutch

Beyond the production of finished text, AI tools have become deeply embedded in the earlier stages of the intellectual process—idea generation, brainstorming, outlining, and even the formulation of research questions. In my seminars, I have observed a growing tendency among students to consult AI tools before engaging with course materials, using the AI's output as a substitute for their own reading and thinking rather than as a supplement to it. This pattern is particularly pronounced among first-year students, who arrive at university with limited experience of independent intellectual work and who are therefore especially vulnerable to the seductive efficiency of AI-mediated cognition. Gopal (2025) has argued that the pedagogical challenge posed by AI is not simply one of teaching students to critically evaluate AI outputs—the so-called "Use-First Critical Thinking" approach—but of equipping students with the metacognitive skills to recognize when delegation to AI is appropriate and when it is not. This distinction is crucial, and it is one that most first-year students are ill-equipped to make. In my experience, the default mode of AI use among first-year students is not critical or strategic but habitual and unreflective: the AI is consulted not because the student has made a deliberate decision to delegate a specific task, but because it is the path of least resistance. The result is a form of cognitive dependency that undermines the very capacities—curiosity, persistence, independent judgment—that the course is designed to cultivate.

Erosion of learning motivation

The decline of productive struggle

One of the most troubling patterns I have observed over the past several years is the declining willingness of students to engage in what educational theorists call "productive struggle"—the effortful, sometimes frustrating process of grappling with difficult material that is essential to deep learning (Chow 2025). In the pre-AI classroom, struggle was an expected and even valued part of the learning process: students understood that writing a good essay or constructing a persuasive argument required multiple drafts, false starts, and

sustained effort. Today, the availability of AI tools has fundamentally altered students' relationship to difficulty. When confronted with a challenging task, the instinctive response of many students is not to persist but to delegate—to hand the problem to the AI and accept whatever output it produces.

Chow (2025) has defined productive struggle as "purposeful, scaffolded difficulty that feels effortful yet achievable and that strengthens long-term learning," and has warned that AI risks undermining this process by enabling learners to bypass difficulty entirely. In my own classroom, I have seen this dynamic play out with increasing frequency: students who, in previous cohorts, would have spent hours wrestling with a writing assignment now produce submissions in minutes, having outsourced the cognitive labor to an AI tool. The resulting work is often superficially competent but lacks the depth, specificity, and personal engagement that characterize genuine learning. More importantly, the students themselves have been deprived of the developmental experience that the assignment was designed to provide. The paradox is stark: by making the task easier, the AI has made the learning harder—or, more precisely, has made the learning not happen at all.

This erosion of productive struggle is not confined to writing assignments. In seminar discussions, I have noticed a growing reluctance among students to venture opinions, take intellectual risks, or engage with ambiguity. When asked to analyze a digital text or evaluate a communication strategy, students increasingly defer to AI-generated summaries or pre-packaged analyses rather than developing their own interpretations. The classroom, which should be a space of intellectual exploration and debate, has become a space of performance and reproduction—a theater in which students recite AI-generated lines rather than speaking in their own voices.

Why try if AI does it better? The discourse of futility

Perhaps the most revealing indicator of the motivational crisis in the AI-saturated classroom is the discourse that students themselves use to justify their reliance on AI tools. In informal conversations before and after class, I have heard variations of the same refrain with increasing frequency: "Why should I spend hours writing something that ChatGPT can do in thirty seconds?" "The AI writes better than I ever could." "What's the point of learning to do something that a machine can do for me?" These statements are not expressions of laziness or

moral failure; they are rational responses to a perceived reality—a reality in which the value of human effort has been devalued by the superior efficiency of machine output.

The Expertise Paradox identified by Vâlcea and colleagues (2024) is directly relevant here: when AI performs adequately at lower-level cognitive tasks, students may conclude that there is no point in developing those skills themselves, not realizing that mastery of lower-level tasks is a prerequisite for the development of higher-level thinking. The Innovation Paradox further compounds the problem: AI's capacity to assist with creative tasks may actually stifle original thinking by providing ready-made solutions that foreclose the exploratory, generative process through which genuine creativity emerges (Vâlcea et al. 2024). In the context of a digital communication course, where students are expected to develop their own communicative voices and styles, this dynamic is particularly destructive. Students who rely on AI for idea generation and text production never develop the capacity to think independently about communication problems, and they never experience the satisfaction—or the frustration—of finding their own words.

The discourse of futility is also, I would argue, a symptom of a deeper malaise: a loss of faith in the value of learning itself. When students say "the AI does it better," they are implicitly accepting a framework in which the purpose of education is the production of outputs—essays, presentations, reports—rather than the development of capacities. This framework is, of course, not new; it is deeply embedded in the neoliberal logic of higher education, with its emphasis on measurable outcomes, employability, and credential production (Giroux 2013; McKay 2021; Poquet & Laat 2021). But the advent of AI has given this framework a new and devastating force: if the purpose of education is to produce outputs, and if AI can produce those outputs more efficiently than students, then the entire enterprise of teaching and learning becomes, from the student's perspective, an exercise in futility.

Minimum-effort optimization and the erosion of curiosity

Closely related to the discourse of futility is the emergence of what I have come to think of as "minimum-effort optimization"—a strategic orientation toward coursework in which the goal is not to learn but to achieve the required grade with the least possible expenditure of effort. This orientation is not unique to the AI era; students have always

sought to economize their effort. But the availability of AI tools has dramatically lowered the floor of effort required to produce passable work, enabling students to achieve acceptable grades with virtually no intellectual engagement. Kim (2025) has traced the psychological trajectory from rational efficiency-seeking through dependency to what they term "behavioral addiction to AI," arguing that the drift toward Cognitive Surrender is accelerated by cognitive miserliness and instant gratification dynamics. In my classroom, I have observed this trajectory in real time: students who begin the semester using AI as an occasional aid gradually come to rely on it for every aspect of their coursework, until the AI is doing not just the writing but the thinking. The erosion of curiosity is perhaps the most poignant casualty of this process. First-year students, who should be at the peak of their intellectual curiosity—encountering new ideas, new disciplines, new ways of thinking—instead approach their coursework with a weary pragmatism that is more appropriate to a factory floor than a university classroom. The question is no longer "What can I learn?" but "What is the minimum I need to do?"

Delegation and the loss of competence

The progressive outsourcing of cognitive tasks

The outsourcing of cognitive tasks to AI tools is not a binary phenomenon—it is a spectrum, and over the course of a semester, I have observed students moving steadily along it. At the beginning of the term, many students use AI tools selectively, perhaps to generate an outline or to check grammar. By mid-semester, the scope of delegation has expanded: students are using AI to draft entire paragraphs, to construct arguments, to summarize readings, and to generate discussion points. By the end of the semester, a significant proportion of students have effectively outsourced the entirety of their cognitive engagement with the course to AI tools, submitting work that bears no meaningful relationship to their own thinking or abilities.

This progressive outsourcing has direct consequences for competency development. Writing, critical analysis, and argument construction are not innate abilities; they are skills that must be developed through practice, feedback, and iteration. When students delegate these tasks to AI, they are not merely saving time—they are forfeiting the developmental process through which competence is acquired. As Gopal (2025) has argued, the pedagogical challenge is not simply to teach students to critically evaluate AI outputs but to help

them understand the importance of engaging in cognitive tasks themselves, even when—especially when—the AI can do those tasks more efficiently. The concept of "virtuous outsourcing" proposed by Gopalis instructive here: there are circumstances in which delegation to AI is appropriate and even beneficial, but these circumstances require a level of metacognitive awareness that most first-year students have not yet developed.

The consequences of this outsourcing are visible in the quality of student work. Assignments produced with heavy AI assistance tend to appear superficially confident but lacking in grounded knowledge, agency, and personality. They are, in a sense, too good—too polished, too generic, too devoid of the rough edges and idiosyncrasies that characterize genuine student writing. More importantly, when students are asked to perform tasks without AI assistance—in timed in-class exercises, for example, or in oral presentations—the gap between their AI-assisted and unassisted performance is often startling. Students who submit polished essays struggle to articulate a coherent argument in real time; students who produce sophisticated digital analyses cannot explain their reasoning when questioned. The competence, it turns out, was never theirs—it belonged to the machine.

Competence atrophy and the question of transformation

The phenomenon I have described might be characterized as competence atrophy—a gradual decline in students' ability to perform cognitive tasks independently, resulting from the chronic outsourcing of those tasks to AI tools. This concept has been widely discussed in the medical and professional literature, where concerns about deskilling due to AI automation have been raised in fields ranging from radiology to psychiatry (Monteith et al. 2022; Savardi et al. 2025; Aquino et al. 2023). Monteith and colleagues (2022) have warned that "a possible long-term consequence of the overreliance on technology is deskilling of the physician workforce, due to a loss of individual skills and a reduction in skill development," and have called for long-term efforts to reduce deskilling in professional contexts. The parallel with undergraduate education is direct: if medical professionals can be deskilled by overreliance on AI, how much more vulnerable are first-year students, who have not yet developed the baseline competencies that AI threatens to erode?

It is important, however, to resist the temptation to frame this issue in purely negative terms. Some scholars (Poquet & Laat 2021) have

argued that what appears to be deskilling may in fact be a transformation of skills—a shift from one set of competencies to another, as students develop new capacities for working with AI tools, evaluating AI outputs, and integrating AI into their workflows. Poquet and Laat (2021) have argued for a reconceptualization of lifelong learning that embraces technology at its foundation, shifting the telos of learning from human capital to human development and focusing on capabilities rather than fixed skill sets. This perspective has merit, and it would be intellectually dishonest to deny that some students are developing genuinely new competencies in the process of engaging with AI tools. But in my experience, these students are a minority. For the majority, the use of AI is not a strategic augmentation of their capabilities but a wholesale substitution for them—a substitution that leaves them less capable, not more, of performing the cognitive tasks that the course is designed to teach.

The feedback loop of dependency

One of the most insidious aspects of AI-mediated learning is the self-reinforcing nature of the dependency it creates. Students who delegate cognitive tasks to AI do not develop the skills that would enable them to perform those tasks independently; lacking those skills, they become even more dependent on AI; and this increased dependency further inhibits skill development. Kim (2025) has described this as a "natural drift toward Cognitive Surrender," in which the initial decision to delegate a task to AI sets in motion a cascade of further delegation that progressively erodes the user's cognitive autonomy. In my classroom, I have observed this feedback loop operating with alarming efficiency: students who begin the semester with some capacity for independent writing and analysis end the semester with less, having spent the intervening months outsourcing those capacities to machines.

This feedback loop is compounded by the institutional context in which it operates. When assessment systems reward outputs rather than processes, and when those outputs can be produced more efficiently by AI than by students, the incentive structure actively discourages the development of independent competence (Vâlcea et al. 2024; Ovetz 2022). The student who spends hours crafting an original essay receives the same grade—or a lower one—than the student who generates a polished submission in minutes using AI. The message is clear: effort is not rewarded; efficiency is. And in an educational environment that has already been thoroughly colonized by the logic of

efficiency and output production, this message is received loud and clear.

The changing role of the TA

From instructor to evaluator of AI-mediated outputs

The transformation of the student's relationship to learning has been accompanied by a parallel transformation of the TA's role. Where I once functioned primarily as an instructor—guiding students through difficult material, modeling analytical techniques, and providing formative feedback on works-in-progress—I now find myself functioning increasingly as an evaluator of AI-mediated outputs. The shift is subtle but profound: instead of engaging with students' thinking, I am engaging with the products of their delegation. Instead of diagnosing misconceptions and scaffolding understanding, I am assessing the quality of prompts and the plausibility of AI-generated text. The pedagogical relationship, which should be a relationship between minds, has become a relationship between an instructor and a machine, with the student as an increasingly peripheral intermediary.

This shift has been documented in other educational contexts. Watermeyer and colleagues (2024) describe how academics perceive AI tools as agents of "deskilling and unauthentication," eroding the authenticity of scholarly practice and the professional identity of the instructor. In my own experience, the sense of inauthenticity is pervasive: when I write detailed feedback on a student's essay, knowing that the essay was largely generated by AI, I am participating in a fiction—a performance of pedagogy emptied of substance. The feedback I provide is unlikely to be read, let alone internalized, because the student has no investment in the text to which it refers. The entire transaction—assignment, submission, feedback, grade—has become a ritual without meaning, a bureaucratic exercise that serves institutional documentation but does nothing to advance learning.

The difficulty of assessing authentic student ability

The proliferation of AI-generated work has made the assessment of authentic student ability extraordinarily difficult. Traditional assessment methods—essays, reports, digital portfolios—are all vulnerable to AI mediation, and the tools available for detecting AI-generated text are unreliable and easily circumvented. In-class assessments, such as timed writing exercises and oral presentations, provide a more accurate picture of students' actual abilities but are

logistically demanding and pedagogically limited. The result is a growing gap between the grades students receive and the competencies they actually possess—a gap that undermines the credibility of the assessment system and the value of the credential it confers. Gin and colleagues (2024) have proposed a framework for assessing the "trustworthiness" of AI tools in health professions education, drawing on the concept of entrustment to determine the appropriate level of AI involvement in educational tasks. While developed for a different context, its underlying logic is relevant to the undergraduate classroom: the question is not whether AI should be used, but how much cognitive labor can be safely delegated without compromising the development of essential competencies. In my experience, the answer for first-year students is "very little"—but the institutional and cultural pressures pushing in the opposite direction are formidable.

Emotional and pedagogical challenges

The emotional toll of teaching in the AI-saturated classroom should not be underestimated. The sense of futility that students express —"Why try if AI does it better?"—is mirrored by a corresponding sense of futility among instructors: "Why teach if students aren't learning?" The frustration of investing time and energy in pedagogical activities that are systematically undermined by AI tools is compounded by ambiguity: it is often impossible to know, with certainty, whether a given piece of student work is genuine or AI-generated, and the constant suspicion erodes the trust essential to the pedagogical relationship. Bozgöz and Gür (2022) document how lecturers who feel their ideas are "considered unimportant or ignored tend to lose their motivation to improve some professional skills," a finding that resonates with my experience. The sense of being rendered irrelevant—not by institutional policy but by the quiet, inexorable logic of technological substitution—is deeply demoralizing. It is compounded by awareness that the problem is structural, not individual: no amount of pedagogical innovation on the part of a single TA can counteract the systemic forces driving the deskilling of both teaching and learning.

Pedagogical implications

The most immediate pedagogical implication of this analysis is the need to fundamentally rethink assessment methods. Traditional output-based assessments—essays, reports, digital portfolios—are no longer

reliable indicators of student competence in an AI-saturated environment. Alternative assessment methods that foreground process rather than product—such as reflective journals, in-class writing exercises, oral examinations, and iterative drafting with documented revision histories—offer a more authentic picture of students' actual abilities and provide stronger incentives for genuine engagement. However, shifting to process-based assessment is not without challenges. It is more labor-intensive for instructors, harder to standardize, and resistant to the efficiencies of scale demanded by institutions. It also requires a cultural shift—among students, who must come to value the process of learning, and among institutions, which must invest in the pedagogical infrastructure to support it. As Chow (2025) argues, redesigning assessment must be accompanied by a broader redesign of pedagogy, culture, and institutional values to be effective.

A complementary strategy is designing assignments that are either resistant to AI mediation or that integrate AI in pedagogically productive ways. AI-resistant assignments require forms of engagement that AI cannot easily replicate: personal reflection, situated analysis of course-specific materials, collaborative projects requiring real-time interaction, and tasks that apply course concepts to novel contexts.AI-integrated assignments explicitly incorporate AI tools into the learning process—for example, asking students to critically evaluate AI-generated text, compare their own writing with AI output, or use AI as a starting point for revision. Both approaches have merit, and the most effective pedagogy will likely involve a combination. The key principle is that the assignment should promote learning rather than merely produce outputs—a principle that is deceptively difficult to implement within contemporary institutional constraints.

The most important pedagogical response to the AI-mediated classroom is cultivating “intellectual ownership”: the sense that one’s ideas, arguments, and communicative choices are genuinely one’s own and that the process of developing them is intrinsically valuable. This requires pedagogy that foregrounds process over product, rewards effort and improvement rather than polished outputs, and creates space for the productive struggle essential to deep learning. In my teaching, I have experimented with strategies to foster intellectual ownership: requiring annotated drafts documenting revision processes; incorporating in-class exercises immune to AI mediation; facilitating

peer review where students articulate and defend choices; and engaging students in reflective discussions about learning processes and AI use. These strategies are not panaceas—they are labor-intensive, imperfect, and easily undermined by institutional and cultural forces—but they are a necessary first step toward reclaiming a pedagogical space colonized by AI.

Rebuilding engagement requires more than pedagogical innovation; it requires reorienting the values underpinning education. Students must see that education's purpose is the development of capacities—thinking, communicating, analyzing, creating—that are valuable because they are human, not because they are efficient. This is challenging in an institutional context emphasizing efficiency, employability, and measurable outcomes. Yet it is the only message capable of sustaining genuine learning in the AI era. Delcker and colleagues (2024) argue that "educators in higher education must facilitate students' AI competencies and integrate AI tools into instructional designs." This is only half the story. The other half is cultivating intrinsic motivation, intellectual curiosity, and the capacity for sustained effort—qualities no AI tool can provide and no integration strategy can substitute for.

Conclusion

What I have described is not a crisis of technology but a crisis of meaning. AI tools in the first-year digital communication classroom are not, in themselves, the problem; the problem is the broader system of values, incentives, and institutional structures in which those tools operate—a system that has reduced education to output production, teaching to content delivery, and learning to credential acquisition. In this system, AI is not disruptive but a logical culmination: the final step in a long process of rationalization that has stripped education of its human substance.

The paradox of AI in education is that it simultaneously empowers and erodes. It empowers students with tools of extraordinary capability while eroding conditions for genuine competence development. It empowers instructors by automating routine tasks while eroding their expertise and visibility. It empowers institutions through efficiency and cost reduction while hollowing out the educational experience that defines their purpose.

As a TA, I am acutely aware of my powerlessness against these structural forces. I cannot single-handedly reverse the deskilling of

student learning, the casualization of academic labor, or the neoliberalization of the university. What I can do—what autoethnography enables—is bear witness, name the phenomenon, and insist that it matters. The students I teach are not lazy or incapable; they are rational actors responding to a system that has long taught them that efficiency outweighs understanding, outputs outweigh processes, and the goal of education is credential acquisition, not human development.

The task of education in the AI era is to challenge this lesson—to insist that learning is worth the effort, that struggle is a feature, and that developing one's own voice, thinking, and competence is a project no machine can undertake. Whether universities, as currently constituted, can rise to this challenge remains an open and urgent question.

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Intersections of identity, religion and patriarchy in psychological development: A psychoanalytic study of Nadeem Aslam's *The Wasted Vigil*

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Abstract: Identity formation, a crucial aspect of personality development, is influenced by social, historical, cultural and psychological factors. In Afghanistan, religion and patriarchy function as two of the most powerful ideological institutions that shape identity. Understanding the complexities of identity formation in countries facing political instability, religious extremism and gender oppression remains pertinent today. The primary objective of the study is to explore how religion and patriarchy influence the psychological development of the characters in Nadeem Aslam's *The Wasted Vigil*. This study argues that these ideological structures force characters into subjectivities affecting their autonomy and perception of self. Grounded in psychoanalytic theory, the research employs Louis Althusser's theory of ideological interpellation and Erik Erikson's theory of identity formation to understand the formation of identities. By the close reading and qualitative analysis of the text, the study analyses how the novel reflects the social and psychological realities of Afghanistan. The novel is a microcosmic reflection of Afghanistan's complex socio-political landscape and successfully captures both the social as well as the psychological dimensions that shape Afghan identity.

Keywords: patriarchy, identity, religion, identity formation, psychological development, Afghanistan

Introduction

Identity formation, a foundational concept in exploring the growth, behaviour and social interaction, remains relevant across various disciplines. The historical, social, cultural and psychological factors that shape identity are beyond one's control. Among these myriad

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AGATHOS, Volume 17, Issue 2 (33-34): 819-832, DOI 10.5281/zenodo.23611358
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factors, the intersection of religion and patriarchy in constructing identity remains significant especially in societies where they are not mere cultural aspects but are institutionalized. Religion is a personal choice as well as a collective institution that defines and regulates human behaviour with an emphasis on morality. Patriarchy primarily functions as a framework to analyse gender relations. It is also a system of social organization that intersects with other forms of power such as religion to fortify gender inequality and regulate autonomy. Religion and patriarchy dictate socially accepted behaviour, thereby influencing thoughts and behaviours and impacting identity development.

Identity formation becomes very complicated in the context of Afghanistan, a nation grounded in the principles of Islam and the tribal code of Pashtuns, known as the *Pashtunwali*. Donald Wilber describes Afghan society as patriarchal, family oriented with an emphasis on toughness, self-respect, religious devotion, conservatism, love for freedom, honour and prestige (Wilber 1962, 4). Central to this cultural framework is the Pashtunwali, a code of honour that highlights the significance of *badal* (revenge), *nanawati* (compromise), *milamastia* (hospitality) - all of which are traditionally associated with male authority (Amoss 1965, 5). The Pashtunwali is important for the Pashtuns in particular and Afghan society in general, as it defines the Pashtun identity and Afghan social interactions.

The strategic location of Afghanistan at the crossroads of Central Asia has made it the highway of commerce as well as conquest making the country vulnerable to repeated cycles of foreign interventions and internal conflict. This geographic reality, coupled with stringent patriarchal and religious systems, has created a unique backdrop for identity formation. The political turmoil and decades of war and strife have transformed the lives and altered the collective consciousness as well as the individual psychological states of Afghans. Literary works depicting Afghan reality also reflect the complex psychological underpinnings shaped by Afghanistan's historical, social and political developments.

Nadeem Aslam's *The Wasted Vigil*, published in 2008, offers an insight into the socio-political landscape of Afghanistan. Aslam classifies the novel as highly political: "From my viewpoint, all writing is political—even nonpolitical writing is political. Coming from Pakistan, and belonging to the Islamic world, I can't not be aware of how politics affects our daily lives, how it is not just dry legislations

and laws and statements. It's visceral" (Interview with Nadeem Aslam, Book Browse). The novel explores themes of war and violence, gender, religion, politics, geo political affairs, trauma and memory. The individual, regardless of the nationality, occupies a central role in the novel. The novel projects the plight of Afghanistan through its characters: Marcus Caldwell, an Englishman; David Town, an American; Lara, a Russian; and Casa, a Muslim fundamentalist who believes to be an Afghan but is, in fact, born to a Russian soldier and the daughter of an English man and an Afghan woman. People from otherwise distant parts of the world are brought together in Afghanistan and are connected by their common experiences. This reflects the strategic position of Afghanistan on the geopolitical map and draws attention to the competing interests of powers like Soviet Union and the US hold in its affairs. The studies done on *The Wasted Vigil* are often limited to understanding the postcolonial situation, religious extremism and patriarchy. There remains a significant gap in understanding the psychological burden imposed by religion and patriarchy.

Approaching the literary text as the representation of lived experiences, *The Wasted Vigil* becomes a location where the impact of religion and patriarchy on the psyche of the individual can be explored. Characters are victims of war and violence and the trauma experienced is rooted both in personal and cultural histories. External sociocultural factors penetrate deeply into the psyche of the characters fundamentally altering their self-perception. A thorough analysis of the novel enables to understand the intersections of religious ideologies and patriarchal institutions. Religion is central to the novel as it acts as a powerful oppressive tool inducing moral dilemmas and guilt. Religion, along with patriarchy, interpellates individuals into subjectivities by shaping the psychological responses and identity. Religion and patriarchy interfere with the healing process of the characters who are grappling with various personal loss.

This research paper argues that in *The Wasted Vigil*, religion and patriarchy, as dominant sociocultural forces, influence identity formation and psychological development of characters. The study situates the novel in the context of Afghanistan to examine the trauma generated by ideological structures that force characters into subjectivities compromising their autonomy and perception of the self. The study is grounded in psychoanalytic theory to understand characters' responses to internalized religious and cultural values.

Louis Althusser's theory of ideological interpellation provides the framework for understanding how dominant ideologies construct subjectivities and Erik Erikson's theory of identity formation helps to understand the growth and formation of identities. The soviet invasion, civil war, the Taliban reign and American interference provide the backdrop against which the individual's psychological development unfolds. *The Wasted Vigil* is a microcosm that reflects the macrocosmic reality of Afghanistan. Close reading and qualitative analysis of Nadeem Aslam's *The Wasted Vigil* facilitates comprehension of the intersection of identity, patriarchy and religion in the psychological struggles and responses of the characters.

Research methodology

This study combines Louis Althusser's theory of ideological interpellation with Erikson's developmental model to understand identity formation as a product of complex interplay between ideological structures and psychological processes. An integrated approach helps to identify dominant social structures and its impact on individuals by analysing psychological mechanisms through which the characters respond to ideological forces. Althusser's Ideological State Apparatuses encompasses institutions such as family, education and religion that force the subject into "submission to the rules of the established order" (Althusser 2006, 89). Interpellation is a concept integral to understanding subject-formation. It is the process by which subjects unintentionally internalize the ideologies or values playing within a system, thereby forging an imaginary relationship to other people and society. The relationship is 'imaginary' as the actions of the subject are defined not by freedom but by the Ideological State Apparatuses (Birdwell 2017). In *The Wasted Vigil*, the patriarchal structures and religious institutions are the apparatuses that interpellate characters into premeditated subjects by restricting their agency. Highlighting the formation of subjectivities, Althusser (2006, 117) argues that "all ideologies hails or interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects". Characters of the novel, especially Casa, are trapped within the web of religious and patriarchal control. They are transformed from autonomous individuals into subjects constrained by ideological expectations.

Erik Erikson's theory on identity formation helps to understand the psychological development of characters. He approaches identity as "a process and an outcome of human development – across the lifespan

but assuming centrality in the developmental stage of adolescence" (McLean and Syed 2015, 17). Personal identities are shaped by psychobiological as well as psychosocial factors (Erikson 1970, 732). Erikson situates identity formation in the context of psychosocial development and emphasizes the impact of physical, psychological, social and cultural factors on identity formation. Oppressive systems like patriarchy and fundamentalism significantly influence identity construction. Erikson proposed that personality is developed through eight systematic stages in life: trust versus mistrust, autonomy versus shame and doubt, initiative and guilt, industry versus inferiority, identity versus role confusion, intimacy versus isolation, generativity versus stagnation and ego vs integrity versus despair (Sigelman et al. 2019, 332). Each of these stages is distinguished by a positive attribute that enables to build strong personality. This study uses Erikson's fifth stage of development, identity versus role confusion that happens during adolescence to study Casa's psychological development. This stage marks the struggle to develop a coherent sense of self amidst societal pressures and expectations. Analysing Casa's character development stage reveals how the individuals steer through the conflict between personal desires and sociocultural demands.

Erikson identifies individual development as deeply intertwined with historical and social force. This makes his theory apt to analyse Afghanistan's context. As he notes "Youth, in particular, depends on the ideological coherence of the world it is meant to take over, and therefore is highly aware of whether the system is strong enough in its traditional form to be "confirmed" by the identity process, or sufficiently weakened to suggest renovation, reformation or revolution. Psychosocial identity, then, also has a psycho-historical side, and life histories are inextricably interwoven with history" (Erikson 1970, 732).

According to Erikson, adolescence is the time the youth experience identity crisis as they attempt to define themselves in terms of nationality, religion, gender etc. The psychological aspect of identity crisis is partly conscious and partly unconscious as the individual finds himself unified with the self and the choices provided by the society such as the values taught, relationships forged, sexuality explored. It is also marked by dynamic internal conflicts leading to a state of vulnerability but is grounded in the past and extends into the future (Ibid, 732). The social aspect of identity refers to the society or community in which one should belong by interacting, understanding,

assimilating, adapting and accepting the communal interactions and influences. In short, Erickson views identity as crucial to understand social and political change (Erikson 1968). The characters face a heightened identity crisis in Afghanistan's sociopolitical landscape dominated by religious and patriarchal ideologies.

Religion and construction of the self

This section argues that in *The Wasted Vigil* religion is not just a personal belief system but a force that influences the sense of self and characters' relationships with others. Religion does not remain in the background but serves as the central force that drives the development of individual subjectivity. It shapes the moral compass of characters while also functioning as a tool of ideological imposition and control. An exploration of Marcus, Qatrina, and Casa shows how religion manifests as a site of conflict and moulds identity through fear, submission, repression and forced compliance.

Psychoanalytic studies demonstrate the complex role of religion in identity formation. Religion's centrality in creating the sense of self and identity is theorized by psychoanalysts like Freud, Jung and Erikson. Each theorist throws light upon different dimensions of religious ideology's influence that shape subjectivity. Freud posits that religion stems from the biological and psychological need for meaning, protection and purpose (Freud 1928, 41). God embodies a protective father figure and moral authority. Freud compares religion to childhood neurosis, a temporary phase before going forth to rational and scientific understanding (Ibid, 76). This framework helps to understand characters that use religion as a psychological defense mechanism and not as a spiritual practice. Carl Jung's approach to religion is devoid of the intense skepticism of Freud. He associated religion and faith with reflections of archetypes from the collective unconscious which help the individual achieve self-realization through the process of individuation.

Efthimiadis-Keith, following Jungian theory, identifies five-stage model of individuation, and establishes a connection between religion and psychological growth. In the first stage, one's outlook to life, thoughts and values are determined by societal or community expectations. The second stage leads to self-exploration where the self begins to detach itself from collective identity and begins to create an identity. In the third stage, the individual tries to establish a moral code for oneself by critically examining established moral standards. The

fourth stage is when one begins to view the world more objectively, detached from predetermined and established standards leading to the fifth stage, where the conscious and unconscious selves merge leading the individual back into society with clear awareness of their identity (Efthimiades-Keith 2021, 56). Thus, the process of individuation leads to self-awareness and identity formation. The model of individuation is deeply tied to religion wherein in the first stage the individual identifies with the collective belief systems, rituals and doctrines which is then followed by doubt and questioning leading to the differentiation of personal moral responsibility from collective dogma and culminates in self-realization which parallels to mystical wholeness and salvation.

The process of individuation can be traced in the character development of Casa who grows up internalizing extremist doctrines and moral codes that define his sense of self. Later with his encounter with the Westerners, Marcus, David and Lara, forces him to confront the 'Other' making him witness the difference between the Taliban ideology and his own thoughts and emotions raising a tension between personal conscience and dogmatic law. Casa embodies the clash between the shadow and Self. Even though his psyche yearns for an integrated self, the religious dogma hinder his growth preventing him to reach the final stage of individuation.

Erik Erikson views religion as a psychosocial anchor that helps the adolescent to create a sense of self. The parental faith leads the child into organized religion which promotes healthy development through childlike surrender and trust. However, when religious ideologies become rigid or extremist in nature, it can hinder the psychological development. Schilbrack (2012, 98) approaches religion as an ideologically motivated social construction rooted in power and ideology. Aslam demonstrates this through his representation of clerics and warlords who use religious doctrine to justify violence and maintain patriarchal and political dominance.

The characters in *The Wasted Vigil* can be studied using these theories to understand the influence of religion on identity formation. Marcus, an Englishman who adopted Islam to eschew cultural objections against his decision to marry Qatrina, exemplifies the negotiation between faith, cultural belonging and identity. His conversion to Islam is a strategic adaptation to social expectations and not a demonstration of his faith. He adopted a religious persona as a response to external pressures, a temporary psychological

accommodation. After Qatrina's death, Marcus loses his purpose in life and becomes withdrawn. He stops the watches and clocks in the house and stills time. "In this way he removed the sense and measurement of time from his surroundings" (Aslam 2008, 40). His house becomes a psychological and spiritual space for mourning. Marcus represents a rational figure who navigates through his personal losses with dignity. His abandonment of Islamic practices after Qatrina's death shows that his act of religious conversion was always performative rather than transformative. It confirms Freud's analysis of religion as psychological necessity that can be abandoned when its protective function ends. Qatrina's life can be analysed through Jung's process of individuation where she moves from collective conformity towards creating an authentic selfhood through active resistance to religious orthodoxy. Her psychological development mirrors Jungian stages of development which begins with acute awareness of societal religious awareness, progresses through critical examination of established moral codes and ultimately achieving an objective worldview that prioritizes personal integrity. As a liberated woman in a patriarchal society, she is concerned about the political religious changes that were overtaking Afghanistan. Qatrina believes that "the cause of the destruction of Afghanistan… is the character and society of Afghans, of Islam" (Aslam 2008, 90). Unlike Marcus, Qatrina remains indifferent to the religious dogma. She challenges the collective expectation by officiating her marriage by a woman stating that the Quran does not mandate that only a man must conduct the wedding ceremony. Years later Qatrina is stoned to death by the Taliban for being an adulteress as they do not approve the wedding officiated by a woman. Her death reveals how religion facilitates male domination when spiritual practices become rigid ideological control. Qatrina is a strong female character who believes in her personal ideologies till her death. Her psychological disintegration in the novel can be interpreted as a psychological response to the repression and alienation imposed by the society and as a resistance against the dominating ideological structures. Her madness represents the psyche's resistance to the collective unconscious that prevents the completion of the natural process of individuation.

Casa's character can be analysed using the fifth stage of development in Erikson's theory of psychosocial development: Identity versus Role Confusion to understand the catastrophic impact of extremist religious indoctrination on adolescent development.

During this stage of development, adolescents explore values, relationships and seek to understand their role in society through self-introspection and internalization of values. The successful resolution of this stage should align identity with the positive attribute – fidelity, a coherent sense of self and commitment to personal values. However, Casa's rigorous jihadi training has severely compromised his ability to understand his role within society. His failure to achieve resolution of the fifth stage explains his inability to forge and sustain relationships.

Experimentation and exploration during adolescence are crucial in identity formation. Casa loses his parents at a young age and is trained in madrassas and jihadi training centres. The freedom to explore is denied to him as he is indoctrinated with extremist Islamic principles which focus not on the individual but Islam and the greater cause of Jihad. Casa's faith drives him forward and obscures the way he views reality. He struggles to find his true self within the chaotic thoughts that plague him. His training does not allow him to be open to others' ideas, opinions or way of life. The inner turmoil and confusion Casa experiences indicate his unresolved identity crisis. Casa's religious identity is threatened when he encounters Marcus and David. He does not know how to respond to the kindness of these westerners and fails to process the affection he feels for Duniya. Casa does not know how to confront true emotions. He is unable to process and integrate these emotions into his understanding of the self and hence blames himself for being weak and Duniya for not wearing a veil and distracting him. He ends up suppressing his true self and natural emotions. This situation demonstrates what Erikson identifies as the failure to achieve healthy identity integration. Instead of developing fidelity to authentic values Casa succumbs to external pressures. The developmental failure leads to ongoing psychological difficulties for Casa.

Casa's identity is further destabilized by the constant fear of surveillance. Erikson argues that unresolved identity crisis can result in over identification with other's expectations and external authorities (Erikson 1968, 18). Casa lives his life in fear - the fear of retribution. He feels that he is constantly watched by God and the handmen of God, the clerics and warlord for whom he works. Casa is powerless under the gaze of all of them. He is trained to hate women and Americans and has internalized the belief that even an act of kindness could threaten his life. Casa fails to understand who he really is. The only place he has felt safe is the house of Marcus. However, being there threatens his loyalty to jihad. His failure to construct a coherent

self demonstrates how extremist religious indoctrination can permanently damage the natural process of identity formation.

Interpellation and ideological control

Religious extremism in *The Wasted Vigil* shows how religion is manipulated as an ideological state apparatus to control and regulate individuals through ideological mechanisms that shape actions, affects the psyche, transform individuals into ideological subjects. Louis Althusser's concept of 'hailing' helps to understand the process by which individuals are 'hailed' into specific roles designed by dominant fundamentalist religious ideologies (Althusser 2006, 118). The focus on jihadi training camps exposes how individuals are manipulated and instrumentalized to assist in ideological control, as demonstrated though Casa's character, which reveals the impact of such ideological control on individual subjectivity. Religious indoctrination and militant training are used to erase individuality and conform to jihadist ideologies. Casa, as a young boy, is subjected to intense religious indoctrination in madrassas, institutions that function as primary sites of interpellation. Clerics systematically indoctrinated into children a meticulously orchestrated system of belief which instills guilt and fear. They deliver emotionally charged sermons, effectively combining weeping, threats and lamentations about the lost glory of Islam highlighting the decadence of men and disobedience of women as the reason for the fall of Islam (Aslam 2008, 219). Casa is trained to hate, kill and to suppress his emotions in the name of religious duty.

Casa is conditioned to believe that everything that he does is sanctioned by Islam. His callousness towards violence is sacralized through Quranic verses, transforming the sacred text into an ideological weapon. While he caresses his Kalashnikov, he remembers the verses from Koran "Allah sent down iron, so He in the unseen world may know who supports Him and His messengers" (Aslam 2008, 136). This instance demonstrates interpellation in action, the Holy Quran 'hails' Casa as a holy warrior and transforms his weapon into an instrument to justify violence as his spiritual duty. Casa and his comrades paste the Shabnama, threatening night letters, and justify their action by believing that "the Koran calls upon the Muslims to create alarm among non-believers" (Ibid.). Like madrassas, jihadi training camps too become Althusser's Ideological State Apparatuses. At the jihadi training centers, it is taught that jihad is not "about one country – it is about the glory and aspirations of Islam" and "no true

Muslim should shrink from killing in cold blood" (Ibid, 123). Violence is normalized, sanctioned and sacralized and young children are trained to overcome fear and slit the throats of sheep and horses while reciting the verses from the Holy Quran. Casa's internalized learning legitimizes massacre of prisoners of war: "it is not for the prophet to have captives until he had spread the fear of slaughter in the land" (Ibid.). Casa, though the training in madrassas and jihadi camps, is interpellated into subject position where brutality is projected as divine service. The training erodes Casa's capacity for human connection. He is taught not to trust anyone as anyone could become the enemy according to the laws of the jihad. The resentment Casa feels within him when he sees an American or a woman is not organic but is programmed into him by ideological conditioning. When David helps Casa and Marcus welcomes him into his home, Casa does not know how to respond to these acts of compassion. Natural human response to compassion and kindness is overwritten by ideological ingraining that categorized all outsiders as enemies. His prejudices are a result of the imposed ideologies that has become an integral part of his outlook. He believes that he is not perpetrating terror but is following divine commandment. Thus, Casa's self becomes a perfect example of total subjugation to interpellation by extremist ideology.

The novel, though a historical comparison, highlights the ideological shift in Afghan society due to the apparatuses like jihad training. In 1980, when the Americans wanted to blow up the Salang Tunnel, no Afghan volunteered for the suicide mission as suicide was considered a sin. The Afghans did not believe that "the path would not fork at the moment of the explosion, sending the bomber to Paradise, the infidels to Hell. No, the Afghans told the Americans then, it would deliver both parties to Allah's Inferno" (Aslam 2008, 77). This represents the traditional Afghan Islamic understanding of the consequences of suicide. However, by the time of Casa, this original principle was distorted and replaced by the extremists who manipulated the scripture to serve political ends. Aslam uses this instance to exemplify the transformation of cultural understandings through the systematic deployment of Ideological state apparatuses to create compliant subjects for political agendas.

Patriarchy and gendered subjectivity

If religious interpellation conscripts Casa into a violent masculine subject, patriarchy exerts a similar hold over the female characters of

the novel, shaping their subjectivity through comparable mechanisms of fear and control. Identity formation is entwined with the sociocultural system of patriarchy.

Radical feminists look at all forms of exploitation and oppression as an extension of patriarchal subjugation of women. As American anthropologist Gayle Rubin (1997, 29) argues, "sex/gender system is a set of arrangements by which a society transforms biological sexuality into products of human activity and in which these transformed sexual needs are met". Society creates and standardizes the masculine and feminine identities that serve patriarchal power structures. As Kate Millett argues in Sexual Politics, men have standardized power over women through systematic control of social, political and economic structures. In a society like Afghanistan, by enforcing religious values into cultural values, a new hierarchy of power relation is constructed. The Taliban and its strict laws restrict the freedom and movement of women, whereby religious doctrines are transformed into mechanism of gendered oppression. Political implications attached to the oppression of women are "not only hopelessly tainted but the very prototype of institutionalized inequality" (Millett 1977, 20). In the Afghan context, patriarchy acts as an ideological apparatus that has seeped into religion, family, society, the legal system and politics. Applying the concept of symbolic order propagated by Jacques Lacan allows to understanding the function of Afghan patriarchal structures as the "law of the Father". The religious leaders, warlords and oppressive cultural traditions embody the law of the Father that regulate the freedom of women. Patriarchal and religious structures of Afghanistan, like Althusser's ideological state apparatus, regulate identity formation through coercion, fear and shame. The women characters in the novel, Qatrina, Lara and Duniya are victims of patriarchal system. They are forced to internalize values enforced by patriarchy, thereby compromising the opportunity to construct an autonomous identity. Duniya is a 22-year-old woman who runs a small school in Usha. When she does not consent to be the third wife of the cleric, her school is closed down and she is accused of immoral behaviour. She continues to teach children, ignoring the warning issued. Duniya is forced to negotiate her identity as a teacher under the gaze of the patriarchal structure of power like the mosque and clergy. Duniya is subjected to dishonour and humiliation for asserting the right to education and rejecting forced marriage. Lara despite being an outsider becomes a victim of the Afghan patriarchal force. She is

brutally beaten by a young boy for lying down with her feet pointing toward the city of Mecca. In Afghanistan, everyone has "the right to make an example of an unwise Afghan woman, even a boy young enough to be her son" (Aslam 2008, 8). This serves as an instance of constrained female subjectivity in Afghanistan, where women's bodies become sites of collective surveillance and punishment. Resistance is also an essential aspect of identity formation for Afghan women facing difficult circumstances. Afghan women choose to end their lives in water instead of using a knife or a noose. "It is the final assertion of dignity, one last proclamation of their humanity. Why choose ropes or blades, the things used by men to overpower and kill animals?" (Aslam 2008, 132) They refuse to use weapons yielded by man as these represent man's power over others in a brutal manner. The symbolic choice becomes the final act of agency rejecting tools of masculine violence and choosing water, symbolic of life and rebirth. Qatrina's resistance demonstrates the most powerful challenge to Afghanistan's patriarchal symbolic order. Her intellectual capabilities, professional excellence and utter disregard to the man-made systems and rejection of traditional gender roles positions her as a threat to the patriarchal system and the religious doctrines. Qatrina's insistence on having a woman to officiate her marriage was a move that defied patriarchal religious hierarchy. She treats patients irrespective of the gender, advises young women against frequent pregnancies and saves books by nailing them to the ceiling to save them from being destroyed by the Taliban. Her actions offer a direct challenge to the Law of the father. Her execution by stoning by the Taliban shows how patriarchal structures resort to the interpellation of women into subject positions through violence to maintain control. The novel highlights Casa's identity formation to demonstrate how societal forces create male subjectivities just like female subjectivities. While women are interpellated into submissiveness, men like Casa are interpellated into roles that require suppression of emotions and violence. The jihadi training represents an extreme form of masculine identity formation that eliminates vulnerability and display of emotions. Casa's inability to understand the care of Marcus and gentleness of Duniya displays a masculinity damaged by ideological apparatuses.

Conclusion

This study has examined the intersections of dominant ideological structures, patriarchy and religion, in shaping the psychological

development and identity formation of characters. Aslam's representation of Afghanistan has great significance in contemporary scenario as Afghanistan still suffers under these dominant structures. They force characters into subjectivities by limiting their autonomy and distorting the sense of self. The oppressive systems sustain through social conditioning and internalization of ideologies. Religion and patriarchy forge the development of subjectivities through fear, submission and allegiance. *The Wasted Vigil* serves as a reflection of Afghanistan's struggle with oppressive ideological structures and offers hope through the characters that resist complete subjugation, retaining the capacity for agency and selfhood.

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The role of the Catholic Church in the healthcare-seeking behaviour: A qualitative enquiry from Karnataka, India

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Abstract: By supporting socio-economic determinants of health, easing access to care, and advancing moral principles that direct patient-centred practice, religious communities have long been essential partners in health systems. Particularly in areas without institutional health infrastructure, faith-based organisations frequently mobilise resources, provide culturally sensitive care, and reach out to marginalised communities. The Catholic Church in the southern region of South India, with a focus on various parts of Urban Karnataka, has made full use of Sunday Mass services as a strategic opportunity to organise enrollment drives and camps for state-specific social health insurance schemes. This study aims to understand and explore the role of the Catholic Church across various parts of Karnataka, India, in relation to enrolment behaviour under the Ayushman Bharat Arogya Karnataka Scheme. This study qualitatively enquires from fellow believers on the role the church plays in their healthcare-seeking behaviour. It was observed that households enrolled in the AB-Ark scheme without encountering operational challenges at the ground level, such as delays or procedural ambiguity, due to the support of the churches.It was observed that through such interventions, healthcare is uplifted, and, along with it, the Catholic Church-led hospitals extend their reach beyond their Christian community; everyone benefits, thus creating an overall climate of well-being. The concept of health cannot be studied in isolation.

Keywords: social health Insurance, Catholic church, religions, enrollment behaviour

Introduction

Religious institutions and faith-based organisations often serve as critical intermediaries in the dissemination and utilisation of social welfare programs. Many religious institutions have extensive networks of congregations, charitable organisations, and community groups that

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AGATHOS, Volume 17, Issue 2 (33-34): 833-844, DOI 10.5281/zenodo.23611469
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serve disadvantaged populations and are essential for building trust and shaping social norms around seeking help. By drawing on moral discourses, collective identity, and social capital, religious actors can reduce information disparities, overcome access barriers such as transportation, documentation, and literacy, and offer specialised support that aligns with the cultural and spiritual environment. The literature reports that, since Independence, Catholic Institutions in India have fulfilled their role in social upbringing by educating the underprivileged (Toppo 2007). Furthermore, the role of Catholic Missionaries cannot be overstated in providing care facilities to the fishing community in Tamil Nadu. Compassion towards the lower tier of the population has been evident throughout history, as evidenced by the Portuguese Jesuits' construction of their centres and shelters (Dhanalakshmi 1997). As a country always struggling with its population as a construct, protecting children from socio-economic warfare has been significantly challenging for most households; thus, religious support from the church in lending them a better quality of life and protecting them from immoral activities has been actively provided by the Catholic church (Prasad Phillips 2015).

By supporting socioeconomic determinants of health, easing access to care, and advancing moral principles that direct patient-centred practice, religious communities have long been essential partners in health systems. Particularly in areas with no institutional health infrastructure, faith-based organizations frequently mobilize resources, provide culturally sensitive care, and reach out to marginalized communities. Through dependable community leadership, their networks may promote preventative behaviours, lower the stigma associated with sickness, and improve health literacy. Partnerships between religious organizations and public health officials have improved vaccination rates, maternal and child health outcomes, and emergency response capabilities in numerous low- and middle-income nations, highlighting the critical role that faith communities play in promoting holistic health.

The Catholic Church in the southern region of South India, with a focus on various parts of Urban Karnataka, has made full use of Sunday Mass services as a strategic opportunity to organise enrollment drives and camps for state-specific social health insurance schemes. This information was gathered through members of various Catholic churches across Bangalore as part of a study on the Ayushman Bharat Arogya Karnataka Scheme (AB-Ark). AB-Ark is the state-governed

public health insurance coverage provided to the economically weaker sections. Participants are provided with a coverage of 5 lakh rupees ($5512) annually on a family floater basis for hospitalisation needs.

By aligning enrollment activities with the rhythms of Sunday worship, churches create a natural, community-centred flow that reduces barriers to engagement and invites parishioners and potential members to learn more in a familiar, reverent setting. It emphasises hospitality, clearly communicates about church programs, and provides practical assistance by explaining enrollment steps, including form submissions, catechetical information, and membership expectations.

This inclusive posture further acknowledges the region's social and cultural realities, where religious identity often intersects with daily life and neighbourhood networks. Consequently, inviting non-Catholics to participate in enrollment drives and camps helps the church nurture dialogue, mutual understanding, a sense of welcome, and clear information about the steps to affiliate or become meaningfully engaged in parish life. In this way, the post-Mass outreach functions not only as an administrative mechanism for enrollment but as a bridge-building exercise, strengthening local spiritual communities, fostering informed participation, and improving fellowship among diverse members of the neighbourhood.

Theoretical underpinning

Emile Durkheim's theory of religious functionalism serves as the primary structural backbone of this study. His idea of religion as above and beyond the spiritual and the sacred has been a significant ideology in sociology. He explained that, through symbolic interactionism and the creation of totems, society generates in-groups. He believed that religion accounts for social cohesion, better interpersonal relationships, morals, and overall societal well-being. He pointed out that religions create a sense of meaning and purpose in life and are associated with better psychological well-being. According to his philosophy, religion motivates and creates an environment to drive positive social change (Pressbooks 2016). This theoretical standpoint contributes to this study by viewing religion as a platform for creating better opportunities and access for people to achieve a higher quality of life.

Max Weber's philosophy of religion and social action holds that religion serves as a cultural norm and is the core driving force of society, with its ties to ethics. His ideology was criticised for its over-reliance on certain religions, its narrow focus on subgroups, and its

emphasis on capitalism. Weber's work has been channelled into understanding the major religions and how they have shaped the economic and trade stances of the countries in which they are practised over the years. Societal development, social order, and religion are interconnected forms (Bhadauria 2012).

These two theories have been considered a theoretical backdrop for this study because societal well-being, through stable health and healthcare access, contributes to population well-being and a strong workforce. Religions serve as cultural groupings that encourage devotees or members of churches to participate and contribute to society's upliftment.

Existing literature

By demonstrating that religious participation in morality-based social services is influenced by both opportunity structures (which determine the degree of involvement) and moral doctrines (which determine the type of engagement), the paper contributes to the body of research on faith-based welfare. By demonstrating how Protestant religious organisations frequently align with state goals while Catholic religious organisations frequently display incongruent, unconnected engagement, particularly in abortion and sex-work policy, it connects welfare-state research with religion and morality policy. In a secular welfare regime, this offers a nuanced, within-country comparative perspective on how doctrinal differences translate into implementation strategies (Mettang and Euchner 2023). To achieve long-term poverty reduction in Igbo communities, this study examines how state and Catholic Church welfare programs can work together or separately, evaluating opportunities for integration, gaps, and synergies. microfinance programs run by the Catholic Church that give women and young people small loans to launch or grow small businesses, encouraging independence and lowering reliance on aid. addresses a significant aspect of poverty related to health costs and access by focusing on Church-run clinics and hospitals that offer free or low-cost medical care, immunisations, and health education (Nwafenna and Ayika 2025). Abraham et al. 2024 argue that when its values, principles, and practices are applied to promote social welfare, economic growth, and environmental stewardship, religion can be a powerful force for sustainable development in Nigeria. It also examines the ways in which religious values can both support and undermine sustainability, highlights the critical role that religious

organisations play in development initiatives, and suggests inclusive, dialogue-rich strategies, as well as further research, to maximise the potential of religion while resolving conflicts and implementation issues. A theoretical review of Islamic social welfare is presented in this study, with an emphasis on the contribution of Islamic generosity and zakat to family resilience. By focusing on fair wealth distribution, poverty relief, and social justice through a well-organised zakat system, Islam provides a middle ground between capitalism and socialism. Zakat can be administered by the government or specialisedorganisations, although people are encouraged to give priority to their immediate family while allocating their income to the larger community. To illustrate zakat's capacity to address poverty, unemployment, debt, disasters, and income inequality within an Islamic framework, the study examines historical and contemporary perspectives on zakat, its goals, nisab criteria, and the relationship between zakat, charity (sadaqah), and infaq (Kakar et al. 2022).

Aim of the study

To understand and explore the role of the Catholic Church across various parts of Karnataka, India, in relation to enrolment behaviour under the Ayushman Bharat Arogya Karnataka Scheme. This study qualitatively enquires from fellow believers on the role the church plays in their healthcare-seeking behaviour. India has had a slow rate of health insurance coverage across all populations, which has improved over the years through the implementation of Universal Health Coverage and social health insurance schemes, such as Ayushman Bharat (Kavita Bajeli-Datt 2025). This observation is supported by the finding that health insurance enrollments are significantly influenced by social and cultural norms that shape their trust and belief systems (Deb & Urfat Anjem Mir 2023). Hence, this study aims to investigate the role of the church in improving enrollment ratios and healthcare opportunities in Karnataka, South India.

Methodology

Research Paradigm

The researcher has adopted a constructivist research philosophy to initiate this study. As established and curated by Creswell and Creswell (2023), this research paradigm emphasises multiple interpretations of data through the lens of both respondents and

researchers. This philosophy prioritises the participants' setting, their perspective on the topic, and the researcher's reflexivity. As researchers, understanding the nuances of participants across multiple social settings, regional groupings, and socio-economic dynamics, guided by the philosophy of social constructivism, will yield valuable, in-depth results. This study employs a phenomenological approach to conduct this qualitative research.

Research design

Elaborating further, this study has followed a qualitative research design. As proposed by Lim (2024), qualitative studies extend beyond methodologies to encompass a deep motivation to delve into participants' lives and experiences in their social settings. The researcher has adopted this approach to gain a deeper understanding of the reasons behind individuals' behaviours towards a social health insurance scheme. These further answer the 'why' element of this study. As stated by Pyo et al. (2023), qualitative research is relevant for policymakers to break down socio-psychological issues and understand human perceptions.

Research approach

This study employs a phenomenological approach to conduct this qualitative research. This design was adopted because this study aims to explore individuals' perceptual stances and understanding of a social health scheme. Furthermore, Edmund Husserl, the founder of phenomenology, understood that this approach considers humans beyond their scientific being and also their perceptual being (Damsgaard 2020). JanneDamsgaard writes deeply about the importance and relevance of incorporating phenomenology and hermeneutics among healthcare professionals to understand and map the subtle acts of individuals, and to comprehend the interhuman dynamics for a better quality of life.

Study population

This study aims to explore the factors that influence enrollment and the claims experiences of individuals participating in the Ayushman Bharat Arogya Karnataka Scheme. Therefore, for this research, the population is the group of households that hold a valid Ration Card or Food Card of Karnataka and fall under the economic classification of Below Poverty Line (BPL) or are defined as the 'Eligible Household' under the National Food Security Act, 2013 (Government of Karnataka

2025). As this scheme is released for both BPL and APL populations, the researcher wishes to clarify that the objectives of this study are limited to the BPL population only.

Sampling and data collection

To extract the most appropriate sample from the above-mentioned population, the researcher has combined two sampling techniques: Purposive (Campbell et al. 2020) and Snowball (Parker et al. 2025). As this study required households enrolled in and participating in a social health insurance scheme, the researcher observed that it is essential to identify families through contacts or routes based on trust and long-standing relationships. These interviews collect information on their vulnerabilities, previous hospital admissions, social status, and health outcomes. The researcher wanted to approach households that would be comfortable and willing to respond without feeling judged or offended, and who would be willing to be interviewed without any financial compensation.

Sampling size

Establishing an optimal sample size remains a challenging aspect of qualitative enquiry (Bouncken et al. 2025). The researcher has attempted to achieve a sample size in accordance with Creswell and Poth's (2016) recommendations. They have suggested a range of 5 to 25 interviews for a phenomenological study. To further clarify the sample sizes for qualitative enquiry, this study has also referred to the work of Wutich et al. (2024), which suggests that studies employing reflexive thematic analysis do not require a minimum sample size. The saturation is based on the researcher's capacity for data collection and the availability of resources, aligning with the study's objectives. This study has followed the PRICE model of data and theme saturation, proposed by Naeem et al. (2024), as it has been analysed using Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA).

Ethical consideration

The Ethical clearance for this study was obtained from CHRIST (Deemed to be) University's Research Conduct and Ethics Committee on 26 August 2024. The form was verified and approved by the RCEC. The Informed consent form was created in accordance with the WHO template for qualitative studies (Research Ethics and Review Committee (ERC), 2025).

Informed consent

Informed consent was obtained from all the participants. The informed consent form clarified that participants could withdraw from the study at any time. The informed consent stipulated that none of the data would be shared externally or used in a way that would compromise participants' security. The consent form was provided to the participants before the interview recording began, translated into their preferred language, and read aloud to non-English-speaking participants.

Findings

During the interviews, it was observed that Households have enrolled in the AB-Ark scheme without encountering operational challenges at the ground level, such as delays or procedural ambiguity. Therefore, these excerpts explain the pattern of how individuals got enrolled through the church enrollment drives at various parts of Bangalore.

LSP says that, "He had announced in the church the parish priest during mass…. He announced after all the mass in the church. That this Ayushman card is to be made for hospital admission, it will be useful….. They will come on so and so date on Sunday after mass. It was really good because everyone can get free on Sunday after their job…. So he announced two weeks before so all of us had gone with the ration card and Aadhar Card, me, my son, and my mummy. We took her in the auto. Father also asked us to inform other people, not just church people, to come. I informed my neighbours, but they feel it's only for Christian people and make faces at that time. … But I informed cause God should keep all people well right, not just us. We made the card for all in the house and we got it after few days."

This interview excerpt above explains how families trust the faith they follow and how disseminating information across various mass times in a large parish will lead to a significantly higher participation rate in the scheme. The belief system of offering care to all individuals directly reflects from the preachings and the faith they follow.

AST recollects that "They had announced in the church for my mummy, she stays with my brother, they had announced about Health card …. But we didn't know about it or what is it for nothing we knew. My mummy was not going for it to make. They said only 50 rupees or something we have to pay they will give the card. Then my neighbours and other members of the church forced my mummy to make it and took her to the church one sunday. By the Lord's grace that time we

made it and kept the card… because when my brother had his third surgery at St. Johns hospital last year … they said if you have Ayushman we can claim it under that and no need to pay whole amount… the staff who knew us asked us to bring it and use it. Thankfully by the approval we got the authorization for his surgery and that happened, only few medicines we had to pay something extra."

This interview had been significantly important in this study as the family had been pushed to a catastrophic health expenditure in the past due to multiple ailments affecting the brother of the participant. This scheme's coverage had saved them from a total of five lakh rupees during the entire hospitalisation duration.

MML said that, "That Infant Jesus Church you know…. We were asked to go there… its near only. We went there stood in line long back time… and then got the card there. The church people had told us to go there with the Ration card … or will come and get the card … we had the health card then that time… My son has a hearing problem … one ear is slightly deaf … like mine … I had tried to use the Health card at hospital but it was not used they said, because no admitted only daily check-up. They told us if he needs surgery later this health card we can use here". The participant's son had recurring hearing disability and hence wished to be treated at a nearby hospital, but as there was no hospitalization involved in the treatment, they could not derive the benefit of it at that point in time, but are aware of the actual scheme modality.

Beyond the participants who informed about their enrollment status through the church, others mentioned the referrals they have received from the church or the monetary support extended during a health crisis. The following excerpts will explain this further.

"Before my husband passed away, he was there in the hospital, but all of them were full ... Because corona was high, peak time, but uncle was in a serious condition", they told me. I called our church father, and he said, "Don't worry, I will arrange a bed in St. John's hospital. I will call the nun there and ask. Just because of that, he got bed and then was admitted in the ICU after his pneumonia they helped a lot at that time" says PAL.

"His new kidney after transplant stopped working after five years now, then there was so much problem, we had spend 15 lakhs before to get the new kidney but no use. Now monthly five dialysis we have to do for my husband, each time some 35000 Rs. so it was so difficult so,

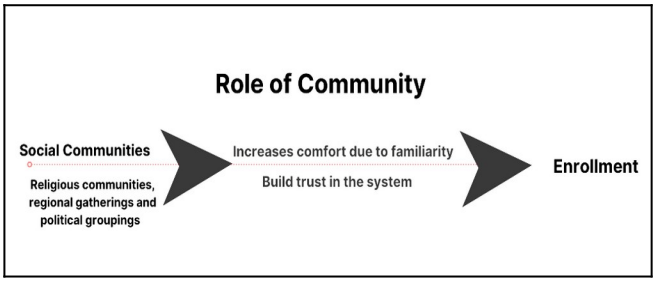
from church father gave one letter to give one dialysis free every month" explains ASM.

In both the excerpts mentioned above, the breadwinning members of the family had been severely hit by terminal illness or either deceased later died. Under both circumstances, it was understood that the church's support had been pivotal in their lives. During the last leg of the interviews, it became apparent to us that the scheme had been upgraded for senior citizens over 70 years of age, and this was communicated at the churches (Kurian 2025). The following excerpt shall explain this, "During mass yesterday at the time of announcement, they said that Ayushman is now available for old people … above 70, and that they will help people to register into it from the church itself if we want to enrol or help us through WhatsApp … It was really good to know because I did not have insurance for my father."

Discussion

Faith and religion play significant roles in the lives of individuals regarding health and healing. The primary philosophy that guides people towards their healthcare-seeking patterns stems from vulnerabilities and acting on them. Otherwise, accept and believe in the concept of religious fatalism. According to this study's findings, it can be stated that religions and the messages conveyed through those belief systems build trust or distrust in the relevant matter. To support, Organisational trust acts as a strong force in designing healthcare-seeking behaviours (Schoorman et al. 2007). The intervention of priests or clergy is often considered to lead the devotees into a better future and better life choices. Thus, most suggestions or support received from religious organisations, in this case the Catholic Church, often build trust, foster a sense of acceptance, and reduce hesitation.

The effect of religious community on enrollment behaviour (Note: Compiled by the author)



Conclusion

It was observed that through such interventions, healthcare is uplifted, and, along with it, the Catholic Church-led hospitals extend their reach beyond their Christian community; everyone benefits, thus creating an overall climate of well-being. The concept of health cannot be studied in isolation. The roles of faith and culture cannot be undermined in the daily discourse of a functioning society.

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The influences of political posters on Gen Z voting preferences

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Abstract: This study investigates the influences of political posters on the voting preferences of Gen Z, who are believed to have the highest percentage of the voting population in the Philippines. The current study seeks to know if political posters still appeal to this group of the population. This study employs a quantitative research design using the survey method. Survey questionnaires were distributed via Google Form to 58 Gen Z registered voters in Dipolog City. Data were analyzed using summary statistics and frequency. Findings of the study revealed that the Gen Z population prefers political posters that have witty and humorous content. This group of voters also revealed that they have extremely understood the importance of good visual design and wit of content in political posters. Thus, the visual design and wit of the content of political posters have a very influential effect on the voting preferences of Gen Z. The recent study proves that political posters are indeed still powerful campaign tools to promote political candidates with the goal of increasing awareness leading to an increase in votes; hence, political strategists should seriously consider how to enhance political posters during political campaigns.

Keywords: political posters, Gen Z voters, political campaign, election

Introduction

Posters are print media that are composed of catchy slogans with striking visual images designed to convey a message to its readers or audience. These are powerful media to communicate the intended message to the intended audience. Posters are intended to be short, catchy and to appeal to emotions in order to attract the audience.

In politics, posters are an important part in all political campaigns across all nations in the world. These are even useful in the various public and social movements in most societies. Political posters convey meanings to convince the audience to favor a political

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AGATHOS, Volume 17, Issue 2 (33-34): 845-855, DOI 10.5281/zenodo.23611567
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candidate. Political campaign posters will aid in bringing campaigns to the streets to gain more views, stay relevant, and generate interest in the campaign (Patel 2022). These posters are aimed at persuading people to vote for their candidates. Political posters are a distinct type of communication that includes both language signals and signs from other semiotic systems. They are integrated in a social and cultural environment, allowing for certain cultural characteristics to be represented both vocally and aesthetically (Nikolskaya and Pavlina 2021).

The 2022 Philippine National Elections became exciting because of the creativity of political supporters in producing posters that are shared on social media. Social media has played an important role in political campaigns during the campaign period. Gone are the days when we see lots of political posters being hung or stuck on our walls. In the recent elections, posters were used and handheld by supporters during political rallies, which were shared on social media allowing these to reach millions of Filipino voters across the world. The advent of technology and social media ushered in new models of campaigning during the 2022 Elections.

Political posters created by supporters to be brought during campaign rallies became viral on social media. Every group of political supporters creatively designed slogans showing support to their Presidential bets, with the intention of recruiting more people to go with them. The social media platforms in the Philippines were bombarded with shared posts of photos of creative posters. These creative political posters were being shared and re-shared across various platforms. To many, these became social media fun and entertainment. It seems like supporters show off to the public who among them create the wittiest political poster. However, there is a need to understand if these were indeed effective and served its purpose - that is, to increase the number of votes for the political candidate.

It is the interest of this study to find out how these creative political posters influence the voting preferences particularly among Gen Z who are mostly first-time voters during the 2022 Philippine National Elections. Specifically, this study answers the type of poster presentations which appealed to the Gen Z population, their understanding of political posters in terms of its visual design and wit of content, and the influence of these posters to their voting preferences in terms of visual design, and wit of content.

The study provides basic data to help political strategists in developing future political campaign designs in the preparation of creative materials that have the greatest appeal to the masses. This will offer deeper understanding on the role of creative approaches in campaign materials. As we slowly move political campaigns in the digital world, the findings will also provide data to political parties on how to approach Gen Z, which is considered the largest voting population in the country. Their high visibility on social media can greatly influence other voters, thus, the necessity to understand their preferences.

This research study is supported by the Meaning Theory of Media Portrayal. The theory discusses how media shape messages and what this signifies for social behavior. According to this theory, communication is a method for processing meanings. Individuals construct, interpret, and keep meaning using media information. Meaning exists inside humans, and we link it with media information. Messages are used to generate media contents, which are then interpreted within the context of those messages. Whatever material is presented through media should be accurately perceived by the audience (Communication Theory 2014). In communication terminology, meaning refers to the connection between readers/viewers/listeners and the message. Human behavior, according to this notion, is the result of inner understanding. That understanding is established based on how a person develops meanings for the symbols, pictures, or events they see in media, which occurs only when their society provides shared interpretations of that media material. Our meanings are molded, altered, and maintained as we participate in various communication processes. The media's content may influence meaning and develop comparable meanings across huge audiences.

This study examines the types of political posters that appeal to Gen Z voters, evaluating them in terms of understanding of the posters and the influences on voting preferences, particularly regarding visual design and the wit of content. The posters are further analyzed through the lens of Media Theory of Media Portrayal to explore how political posters shape Gen Z voting preferences.

Review of related literature

Political posters are multimodal writings that contain both verbal and nonverbal features. Every text has references to previous texts.

Campaign posters are no exception as multimodal narratives. Each method may be symbolic, allowing certain relationships to be established with various codes relating to social and cultural settings (Nikolskaya and Pavlina 2021).

The functions of posters are either to acclaim a political candidate or to attack them. These posters are a significant tool for creating a good picture of leaders, defining their character and views, as well as criticizing political opponents (Ibidem). Posters display a good synergy between verbal, iconic, graphics and color. It is said that posters have information impacts on candidate/party leader identity and reputation, agenda-setting effects, and an influence on candidate/party effectiveness and stability. Furthermore, posters have the potential to excite the people and create positive media attention (Holtz-Bacha and Johansson 2017). Empirical evidence suggests that posters, in addition to their attention-seeking and mobilization impacts, assist politicians and parties in gaining attention, improving name recognition and issue opinions, and shaping political images. They also inform voters about candidates or political stances.

In Europe, political posters are studied based on iconographic and visual dimension, and verbal/discursive dimension (Novelli 2017). Iconographic and visual dimensions refer to the visuals that provide an illustrative purpose by depicting the candidates, the poster's message, or the intended audience. As we have seen, the primary motifs of photographic posters, which comprise the majority, are the candidate or the political leader, generally portrayed alone or, less often, with voters or members of the public. Thus, rather than exhibiting the parties' ideas, initiatives, or policy programs, photographic posters limit themselves to showcasing the officials' faces and images. On other hand, verbal/discursive dimension deals with content. The posters refer to Europe primarily as a geographical/political entity but not as a social community; as a result, the European people, i.e., citizens, voters, or residents, are completely missing from the election campaign.

A study of the campaign posters during the 2019 Mayoralty Election in Bogota, Colombia found out that visual features associated with candidates' physical features had a little impact on voters' choice making in Colombia (Nadal et al. 2021). The findings revealed that superficial attributes in political campaign materials had less effect on Colombian participants' voting selections. A slight tendency to associate smiling expressions with more pleasant feelings and

seriousness as a negative attribute could be proven. Moreover, the German election survey data showed that most voters choose candidates based on their party affiliation rather than their appearance, as seen by the high impacts of the party in each of our studies (Herrmann and Shikano 2020).

Political posters are designed to represent a party's campaign strength. The research conducted in France and Belgium reveals the strategic usage of posters by party status: whereas large parties use them to show their authority, lesser parties use them to give extra information with the shared goal of increasing their voting base (Dumitrescu 2010). In a similar study, political advertising almost surely has a role in influencing the electorate. This impact, however, is mild and might be a conscious or subconscious effect. This implies that political marketing campaigns have minimal influence on voting behavior. Furthermore, political ad campaigns continue to be prevalent, which implies they are still important in the election campaign process; radio and television continue to be the most effective mediums of advertising (Ojekwe 2016).

Methodology

This study employs quantitative research design using survey. A Survey is designed to collect data from a diverse audience. The Survey Design contributes to the objective of evaluating frequencies and discovering trends in survey answers. The purpose of this data is to determine the degree to which distinct scenarios may be established among these respondents (Form plus 2020).

The research was conducted in Dipolog City, Zamboanga del Norte. Respondents of the study were the 58 students who were selected based on specified criteria. The main inclusion criteria in the selection of respondents were the following: born between 1997 and 2004, and officially registered as a voter by Commission on Election. The respondents belong to the Gen Z generation; however, this does not attempt to generalize the voting preferences of the whole Gen Z population. The results of this study can only shed some light of understanding to this group of voters.

A researcher-made questionnaire was used in conducting this study. The questionnaire was validated by an expert, and was pilot tested for reliability and validity. After validation and pilot testing, the questionnaire was administered to the selected respondents using Google Form. A letter of consent to participate in the study was sent to

the respondents prior to administering the online survey. The letter included the purpose of the study and its potential significance. The research respondents were free to opt out of the study at any time. The personal identities of the respondents were kept confidential.

After the respondents completed answering the questionnaire, the data were analyzed using summary statistics (mean) and frequency. The study ensures that it is free of plagiarism and the results are accurately presented in this study.

Results and discussion

This section presents, analyzes, and interprets the data. This includes the type of political posters that appealed to Gen Z, the level of understanding of political posters in terms of visual design and wit of content, and the level of influence of political posters to voting preferences in terms of visual design and wit of content.

Type of political posters that appealed to Gen Z

Political posters are classified into several types: (a) those that contain witty or humorous content, (b) those that are visually attractive and/or highly colorful, (c) those that rely more on visuals with minimal text, (d) those that emphasize text with fewer visual elements, (e) those produced in large formats, and (f) those designed in smaller sizes.

Study shows that Gen Z population prefers political posters that contain witty or humorous content (rank 1 with 43.1 percent). This is closely followed by political posters that are visually attractive and/or highly colorful (rank 2 with 36.21 percent). Political posters that rely more on visuals with minimal text ranked next (rank 3 with 17.25 percent). From the top three choices, this finding reveals that political posters that have witty or humorous content appealed most to the Gen Z population.

The findings revealed that young generation reads the content of political posters rather than just be enticed with colorful posters. This can be attributed to the fact that Gen Z are ‘mobile-phone-users’ group. Information for them shall be handy and right on their fingertips. Since most of them have mobile gadgets, they can easily browse and read witty posts, and cross post these when they like the contents. The affirmation of ‘likes’ on their social media accounts encourages them to read and choose witty posts, which they share to their friends on social media, which relatively somehow become a source of online social interaction. This online exchange, particularly

on political posters, becomes channels in persuading other people to like and vote for the political candidate.

Wells (2016) stated that the objective of campaign posters is to persuade individuals who are indecisive to vote for whoever seems to be the most popular candidate. With wittier and visually attractive posters, the more that candidate appears to be promoted. Political posters and their distinct forms of art remain an important means of expression. Hence, posters must resonate with the crowd through the wit of its content. The nice thing about political posters is that they can be made by anybody. In a discussion-interview between Jakab and Wert posted on *Gagosian Quarterly*, they agreed that posters needed context to be relevant. Its impact can change people's apathy into fun and excitement (Jakab & Wert 2020). Similarly, campaign experts claim that clever and witty phrases on political posters have the tendencies to work best, especially for political candidates who are not well-known (Nelson 2017). This implies that witty contents can attract more attention from people, hence, enhancing the popularity of the political candidate. In today's generation of high social media usage, popularizing political candidates is no longer a problem. It will only take a witty message for the campaign poster to be widely promoted and disseminated, especially in this age of social media.

Understanding of political posters

The understanding of political posters among the Gen Z population is classified in terms of visual design and wit of content. Visual design refers to the effective use of striking colors, clear and readable font styles and sizes, proper mounting for mobility, and an appropriate poster size that ensures visibility and attracts attention from the crowd, especially in political campaigns. In terms of wit of content, political poster captions should be short, sweet, and easy to remember, with catchy and trendy text that highlights the candidates' positive characteristics, avoids attacking rival opponents, and presents messages that are both fun and verifiably true.

Findings of the study revealed that Gen Z population have extremely understood the importance of good visual design, and wit of content in political posters. With an average mean of 4.49, the data showed that visual design and wit of content have great impact to people. In terms of visual design, the study showed that political posters must have good visual, use of striking colors, use of clear font sizes and styles, enough size to stand out in the crowd, and properly

mounted for easy mobility. In terms of wit of content, the texts and captions on political posters must be easy to remember, catchy and trendy, should not be attacking rival candidates, but rather highlight the characteristics of the candidates. The posters must be fun but can be easily verified and fact-checked.

Kuttig (2020) cited that posters are very necessary to fully understand how local politicians communicate with their communities, as well as how intra-party connections are constructed and power is shared. This importance is crucial to building the image of politicians through good visual and wit in their political posters which can be largely seen in public. In the case of Bangladesh for example, she maintained that posters are important aspect of hypervisibility of politics that can define political culture of the country. The collection of political posters creates the spectacle of a political performance during election campaigns. *ACE Encyclopedia* (n.d.) cited that the intended meaning is lost when the appearance of posters overpowers function. In this case, these political posters become a waste of paper, and public nuisance. Thus, there is a need for good balance between aesthetic and content of posters to serve its purpose of promoting the political candidate. BU School of Theology (2019) contended that posters do have an influence. Election posters influence voting behavior by promoting name familiarity, emphasizing competitiveness, and encouraging engagement.

Influence of political posters to voting preferences

The political posters are very influential to the voting preferences of Gen Z in terms of visual design and wit of content. In terms of visual design, color combinations and patterns in political posters increase my interest in supporting the candidate, shapes and sizes influence my liking toward them, integrated images and photos encourage my support, font styles and text types strengthen my desire to support the candidate, and overall visual balance enhances my willingness to follow the candidate. In terms of wit of content, the content of the message reflects the political ideology of the candidate, the captions are fun and highly entertaining, the poster content is trendy and "hashtagable," the messages are socially relatable, and the statements written on the posters carry deep meanings.

Findings of this study revealed that visual design and wit of content of political posters have very influential effect to the voting preferences of Gen Z (with an average mean of 4.14).

Data showed that visual design of political posters in terms of color combinations and patterns, shapes and sizes, integration of images and photos of candidates, readable font styles and text-types, and incorporation of good visual balance are very influential to the voting preferences among Gen Z. These are the qualities of good political posters that can have appeal to the audience especially the Gen Z population. In the same way, wit of content of political posters in terms of the reflection on posters about the candidate's political ideology, fun and highly entertaining poster captions, trendy and "hashtagable" contents, socially-relatable messages, and impactful with deeper meaning are extremely influential to the voting preferences of Gen Z. Witty captions are the trend these days because people can easily relate with especially when these go viral when posted and shared on social media.

This supports the findings of Nadal et al. (2021) on the case of campaign posters during the Mayoralty race in Bogota, Colombia in 2019. Their study revealed that slogan on posters was an important deciding factor on voting choices. This is in consonance to the findings of this study where posters that have socially-relatable messages with deeper meanings have great influence on voting preferences.

In a similar study, Martinez (2016) found out that political posters interact with the audience by the interplay of various visual and linguistic choices. Messages that can be read in the posters are explicit because these are short, catchy and consciously chosen with the intention of influencing audience to vote for the political candidate. She found out that written messages on posters reveal the characteristics and the discourses of the political candidate. The slogans or captions and the visual representation of politicians suggest what type of politicians they are.

Steven Heller, as cited by Smith (2017), stated that political posters give the opportunity to look at things ironically. He further stated though that the importance of political posters is situational, because these are direct response to the event which is portable and easily displayable. Hence, during this period of shareability and online visibility, political posters' contribution to the candidate's success cannot be ignored.

Conclusion and recommendation

In conclusion, political posters are indeed powerful campaign tools to promote political candidates with the goal of increasing votes. Since

these can highly influence voting choices, it is important to pay attention to the preparation and presentation of visual (visual design) and linguistic (content) characteristics of posters. Political strategies shall not underestimate what posters can do to the political parties. Hence, they have to be creative in presenting their candidates through these political posters by paying attention to what type of posters that appeal most to the Gen Z voting population.

Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended to political parties, candidates and their strategists to study what the people want and wish for their leaders to be. The media shape the content of the message and how should people receive such information. Through political posters, the political party will be able to share to the voters what type of government they will expect once they vote and elect the leaders.

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Indian-Romanian Solidarities during the Cold War: Indira Gandhi and Nicolae Ceauşescu

Maria-Sabina Draga Alexandru[*]

Abstract: In the years following the fall of state socialism in the Eastern bloc, there have been numerous theoretical attempts at forging a critical discourse about communism by drawing inspiration from other cognate theoretical spheres, most notably the postcolonial one. Studies by theorists such as Bogdan Ştefănescu (2012) and by Cristina Şandru (2012) are examples of this effort of theretical repositioning. This article proposes a comparison between the Romanian communist periodical *Scînteia* and the post-independence, internationally attuned Indian periodical *The Times of India*, with a view to examining some of the ways in which the political friendship between Romanian communist president Nicolae Ceauşescu and Indian prime minister Indira Gandhi illustrates a possible theoretical dialogue between postcolonialism and postcommunism. Whilst this alleged political friendship was also fuelled by the motivation behind two very ambitious personal trajectories, the details of the accounts of political encounters between the two leaders, as discussed in the two periodicals, reveal important similarities, but also call for caution with respect to the many faceted historical roles played by Marxist ideologies.

Keywords: Cold War, postcolonialism, postcommunism, state socialism, totalitarianism

Introduction: Postcolonialism-Postcommunism Connections

Much has been written in recent decades about the possible dialogues between (post)communist and (post)colonial theories and cultural and political practices. Comparisons between the two discourses particularly flourished in East/Central European academia after 2000, aiming to identify a valid theoretical approach to the experience of postcommunism. There had been little in the form of a viable discourse fit to theorise the realities in postcommunist Europe before the turn of

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AGATHOS, Volume 17, Issue 2 (33-34): 857-870, DOI 10.5281/zenodo.23611654
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the millennium, and the postcolonial inspiration came as a necessary revitalization to what so far has been locked in the dead-end of transitology or other discourses of modernisation. For instance, in his 2012 book *Postcommunism/Postcolonialism: Siblings of Subalternity*, Bogdan Ștefănescu relies on postcolonial critics such as Edward Said, Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak to encourage such a comparison, starting from a theoretical explanation of coloniality that focuses on the discourse of cultural trauma. He places discourse at the center of colonial identity formation (Ștefănescu 2012, 83-85) and argues against West-centric accounts which make Western modern (usually capitalist) powers the only instances of colonialism, by also establishing the Soviet as a valid type of colonialism in the modern age, and linking them through similar historical circumstances. Such circumstances include the fading of colonial powers from domination to a more subtle predominance, the emancipation of marginalized groups, the relaxation of the repressive state apparatus and the adoption of the poststructuralist critical paradigms:

> Postcommunism and postcolonialism are not rigorously coeval. Because historically unsynchronized, postcommunism and postcolonialism have often been declared unrelated phenomena. However, if we shift our focus from chronology and the valorization of historical dates to kairology as the assessment of successive stages in a process (...), then postcommunism and postcolonialism are consistent with each other in terms of the structure of their transformation. (Ștefănescu 2012, 128-151)

A similar view is maintained by Cristina Șandru, who, in her book *Worlds Apart? A Postcolonial Reading of post-1945 East-Central European Culture*, points out the different directions taken by the different, even though equally committed, applications of Marxism-Leninism in postcolonial and communist countries after 1945. This happened to the point where the very understanding of the term "liberation" was different, with a post-imperial, "capitalist globalising flavour" in Third World countries and "applied Marxism-Leninism" in Eastern Europe (Șandru 2012, 7).

The dialogue between postcolonial and communist views of progress between India and Romania in the sixties and seventies is worth examining, more than it is in the case of other postcolonial and East European countries, where the left developed forms of resistance to totalitarianism. To a certain extent, the two countries shared a socialist political orientation, with similar aspirations of freedom, self-

determination and an independent, industry-based economy. But they also created similar conditions for totalitarian practices.

In this paper I will compare two totalitarian figures coming from the postcolonial and the communist spaces and their episodic collaboration: Indira Gandhi and Nicolae Ceaușescu. Even though praised by many as a symbol of India and a revolutionary figure, Gandhi was a controversial personality, who did make herself guilty of power abuse, especially during the dark Emergency period (1975-1977). I will analyse political media rhetorics in the Romanian press of the time on the basis of a close reading of some issues of *Scînteia*, the official periodical of the Romanian Communist Party, approached in conjunction with the English-language Indian periodical *The Times of India*, which, though privately owned and republishing many articles from Western press, dates back to 1838 and is considered one of the most active press tribunes of India after independence. *The Times of India* is also an interesting case because, while drawing on the international popularity that comes from the similarity in name with other famous English-language periodicals such as *The Times* or *The New York Times*, *The Times of India*[1] is owned by India's Times Group. Since 1947, it has also served the interests of the Indian English-reading middle class, on whose support Indira Gandhi counted, the more so as the newspaper was faithful to the official government line, as *Scînteia* was in Romania.

Despite alleged objectivity, neither can be deemed to be entirely unbiased, since one was the political voice of Romania's unique ruling party and the other started as a colonial newspaper and became the official mouthpiece of progressive India after 1947[2]. The reason I have chosen to rely on information from *TOI* as a reliable source for Indian political views to posit against the communist newspaper *Scînteia*, despite the existence of a vast plethora of English-language Indian newspapers after 1947, is that this is one of the most prestigious post-

[1] From now on abbreviated as *TOI*.

[2] On the website of its own media studies school, the Times Group describes itself in the following terms: "Tracing its roots to 1838, the Times Group is India's largest media house with a dominant presence across all media platforms and a footprint spanning the whole of Indian sub-continent. The flagship daily of the group – *The Times of India* – is today the largest English newspaper in the world with its sister publication – *The Economic Times* – being world's second-largest English business daily." 2011. http://www.timesmediastudies.com/aboutus.html [accessed: 01.09.2017].

independence Indian publications, but also one that struggles to maintain a constant synchronicity with the western press and a certain claim to balanced, objective news, despite the big business drive characterising Indian press as a whole. Despite its claim to independent journalism, however, *TOI*'s constant practice of reprinting articles from Western periodicals makes it susceptible to some neocolonial tones. But, on the other hand, as Deeptanil Ray shows in an article dedicated to the changes in Indian press during and after the collapse of the British Raj, these changes are not so much about "the missionary zeal of a unitary pan-Indian 'nationalism'", but rather about "the Indian big bourgeoisie and other newspaper proprietors speculating on a 'national presence' for their newspapers, and their desire to secure prestige and profit under a sympathetic post-colonial state and its new leaders" (Ray 2013-2014, 1). Thus, with few exceptions (such as Samar Sen's leftist journal *Frontier*, 1968-1975), whether a newspaper was Indian-owned or still preserved economic ties with its British owner was not relevant to its political allegiances, nor did it guarantee a faithful rendering of political realities from a "genuine" Indian perspective. Apart from this commercial bias, the English-language Indian press of the time tended to praise Indira Gandhi's politics as progressive and to celebrate her international relations (as suggested for instance by quotes from Indian periodicals such as the *National Herald*, the *Indian Express* and the *Hindustan Times* in *Scînteia* with reference to Ceaușescu's visit to India in 1969). The only Indian English-language newspapers that were hostile to Indira Gandhi were the *Indian Express* and the *Statesman*, whose views inclined away from her mostly left-wing politics.[3] Despite its broad international outlook, *TOI* maintained a consistently pro-government attitude, going as far as to celebrate the various stages of Indira Gandhi's Emergency (1975-1977), including the controversial sterilisation campaign run by her son Sanjay Gandhi. Therefore, in a different way from *Scînteia* (the straightforward mouthpiece of a unique party in power), *TOI* performed a similar political function of supporting a dictatorial regime, but it did so in a way that maintained connection with the

[3] Many thanks to Deeptanil Ray for offering me an insight into the Indian press around and immediately after 1947 and to Anupama Mohan for putting me in touch with him. Also, thanks to Dorota Kołodziejczyk and Siegfried Huigen for some very useful comments on this issue.

international media scene and mimicked a commitment to accuracy that *Scînteia*, with its more politically committed orientation, lacked.

Nicolae Ceaușescu-Indira Gandhi exchanges in *Scînteia* and *The Times of India*

The cultural and diplomatic relations between India and Romania go back to the early decades of the twentieth century, based on a tradition of interest in each other's culture. As Cristina Păiușan (2011) shows, in November 1926 Rabindranath Tagore visited Romania and gave talks on Indian art, culture and philosophy. In 1931, three Romanian aviators (Valentin Bibescu, Traian Burduloiu and Radu Constantin Beller) tried to fly around the world and got to India, later on describing its beauty and their fascination with it. Constantin Brâncuşi, Mircea Eliade and Mihai Ralea visited India, studied its traditions and drew a lot of inspiration from them. Romanian-Indian economic relations took off successfully at the beginning of the 1950s and in 1959 a Romanian-Indian Commercial Agreement was signed, stipulating that Romania exported to India mainly industrial machinery and imported goods such as tea, coffee, rice, textile, leather products etc.

According to historians such as Păiușan, the relations between Gandhi and Ceaușescu on behalf of their countries came in the wake of this solid cultural tradition based on pursued intellectual affinities, which were also highly praised at the time. On the other hand, however, this represents a relevant example of the relations between a communist country and a formerly colonial one, favoured by the circumstances in which their countries found themselves at the time. The shared Marxist foundation of their political lines created a common ground for dialogue, despite certain differences between the ways Marxism was being understood in each of their countries. There were several diplomatic visits between India and Romania, with an important one in 1967, when Indira Gandhi visited Romania and Nicolae Ceaușescu returned the visit in 1969. As India oriented itself politically more towards the Soviet Union and the satellite members and Gandhi's socialist politics became steadier in India, bilateral agreements increased, with several refineries built by Romanian teams being an important achievement. More economic agreements followed. Gandhi and Ceaușescu met at United Nations events in New York and projected an image as rather strong allies in the Non-Alignment Movement, relaxing the Soviet hold upon Eastern Europe and

influence on the postcolonial world. On May 30, 1978 Nicolae Ceaușescu returned to India between Indira Gandhi's terms, and saw the Indian prime minister Morarji Desai in Delhi. An important event was Indira Ghandi's visit to Bucharest in October 1981, which crowned the political friendship between the two leaders and was highly mediatised. After her assassination in 1984, Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu visited India once more, at the invitation of president Giani Zail Singh and of prime minister Rajiv Gandhi. On the occasion, a very important point was made of paying homage to Indira Gandhi's memory at her grave. Almost on every occasion, an Indo-Romanian economic agreement was signed or updated, but important talks on international political issues were also conducted.

There seems to have been a real affinity between the two originally charismatic political figures who turned into stern dictators at later stages in their careers and had similarly tragic ends in revenge for their power abuses that defied human rights. Indira Gandhi made her first visit to Romania between 16 and 19 October 1967. An Indo-Romanian treatise was signed, on the basis of already existing economic relations between the two countries. They were mainly based on Romania's intentions to extend the benefits of its industrial development to the third-world country freed from colonial rule, which, like Romania, aimed to acquire economic freedom by developing an independent industrial activity. *Scînteia*, which at the time had not yet forged its famous wooden language of the last socialist years, covered the visit thoroughly, as it tended to do on the occasion of the most official "high-level" visits. The issue features an editorial entitled "Crossing the Threshold of India" by Dumitru Tinu, who describes the country as a touching mixture of tradition and progressive aspirations, despite the difficulties which are, in pure Marxist spirit, blamed on the former colonial regime. India is pictured as a young democracy recently freed from the manacles of a capitalist system against which its communist commentator sets himself: "India aspires to progress. The effort towards renewal made by this talented people aims at overcoming the stubbornness of century-old traditions and the dark memory of the colonial rule" (*Scînteia* Oct. 16, 1967, 5). We recognize here the tone of Marxist-Leninist press, with clear intimations that communism is the one and only key to progress. In the next days' issues, Indira Gandhi's visit is documented in detail, including reports on the official meetings and cocktails with Ceaușescu himself, with Ion Gheorghe Maurer (Chairman of the Ministers' Council, as the prime minister

function was called in socialist Romania) and Chivu Stoica (Chairman of the State Council).

In her toast speech, also published in the periodical, Indira Gandhi insists on the fact that the Indian-Romanian collaboration has already played a part in the building of oil refineries in India (*Scînteia* Oct. 17, 1967, 3). Following up on the interest expressed in Romania's industrial progress and the socialist spirit of "work visits", the next day Indira Gandhi visited the Brazi oil refinery near Ploiești and finished the day with a ballet show at the Romanian National Opera House in Bucharest. We recognize here the shared postcolonial and communist interest in building a modern industry-based economy (as opposed to an agriculture-oriented one, marked by the sad tradition of colonial exploitation), as well as Romania's self-flattery with regard to the communist mission to help third world countries in need. In a recent history of post-1945 Romania, Florin Abraham points out that "Romania's foreign trade during the communist period was at first mainly oriented towards socialist countries", but then, in the late 60s and especially in the 70s exports were oriented primarily towards developing countries in Africa, the Middle East, South East Asia and Latin America, where there was less competition than on Western or East European markets and where trade was "politically supported by Ceaușescu through several visits to those countries" (Abraham 2017, 101). India was among the first to benefit from this programme.

The same visit is documented a lot more frugally in *TOI*, arguably due to the periodical's worry regarding the difficulty to adopt the right position with respect to the international situation created around Vietnam. However, the Indian periodical does make it clear that the official Romanian and Indian positions are against the United States' intervention in Vietnam and insists on being against the proliferation of nuclear weapons (an official position that was going to be maintained steadily in the press of years to come, even though, as it became obvious after 1990, India was developing its own nuclear programme, with nuclear tests run since the mid-1970s). The visit to Romania is described within the context of Gandhi's wider East European tour (which also included Bulgaria and Poland and was part of a plan to connect India to several left-wing democracies and thus position it favourably with respect to the USSR and China). While the real possibilities of collaboration between India and these socialist countries are highlighted, the *TOI* report from Bucharest insists on the importance of the "Indo-Romanian accord on world issues" and

concludes by announcing Indira Gandhi's invitation that the visit should be returned.

It is on the second occasion that the views expressed by the two periodicals coincide most harmoniously. Ceaușescu did return Gandhi's visit by making an extensive tour visit into India with Romania's prime minister (or Chairman of the Council of Ministers), Ion Gheorghe Maurer, and their wives, between 13 and 18 October 1969. The visit was given a lot of importance in both countries and it seemed to confirm an already established, successful friendship. It included several cities of India and a number of official meetings, being an event widely documented in both the Indian and the Romanian press. *TOI* announces the Romanian high officials' visit in very celebratory terms: "We are honoured to welcome Madame & His Excellency Mr Nicolae Ceausescu, President of the State Council of the Socialist Republic of Romania and Madame & His Excellency Mr Ion Gheorghe Maurer, Chairman of Council of Ministers of the Socialist Republic of Romania" (*TOI* Oct 18, 1969, 4).

However, even though *Scînteia* and *TOI* mostly agree in describing Ceaușescu's visit to India as a highly successful and timely one, comments in the two periodicals differ with respect to the extent to which the official political views expressed were on the same wavelength. While *Scînteia*, by now well-launched on its way to becoming an instrument of communist demagoguery, is mostly celebratory, insisting on the warmth of the Indian people as they welcomed the Romanian guests and the similarity in the two countries' official political views, *TOI* sounds somewhat less enthusiastic as to the extent to which the two countries will manage to cooperate in the current political climate. An unsigned news report, significantly entitled "Purposeful", expresses worry with respect to what a wise foreign policy line would be and hope that the Romanian visit might help:

> It is perhaps fortuitous that President Ceausescu's visit to this country has come at a time when there is a widespread demand for an agonising reappraisal of foreign policy here. This makes it all the more significant. India's foreign policy problems and requirements are vastly different from those of Rumania and it is no use pretending that the two governments share a common world view. In fact on the key issues of relations with the Soviet Union, China and West Asia they follow divergent paths. While Rumania still lives in fear of Soviet intervention in spite of all its membership of the Warsaw Pact and the Comecon, India depends on the latter for the supply of all its sophisticated military equipment to meet any possible threat from

> China or Pakistan. Similarly, while Bucharest looks upon China almost as an ally in its continuing struggle against Russia, New Delhi has not fully got over the shock of the 1962 invasion and Peking's threats and ultimatums at the time of the brief war with Pakistan in 1965. (…) But it is precisely because the two governments have been following different policies that the present exchange between them at the highest level becomes meaningful. (*TOI* Oct. 16, 1969, 10)

This chunky quote gives a good view of the international political situation and of India's concerns, especially with respect to China, at the time of Ceaușescu's 1969 visit to India. It also voices some of the concerns India was then facing. The idea that strengthening ties with Romania might be ideal at this point works along the same lines as Romania's own ambitions to cast itself in the saviour role, as the progressive socialist country ready to support a Third World country still recently freed from the colonial rule. Ceaușescu was clearly interested in showing off his relations to India in order to prove to the world that Romania could be an important non-Soviet centre of communist alliances, whereas India's interest in political relations with Romania had a lot to do with its delicate positioning between China and the USSR on the international political stage. However, *Scînteia* often mentions the supportive role played by Romania in building a successful Indian economy and even quotes Indian newspapers such as the *National Herald* on the gratitude expressed by the Indian people with respect to the oil refineries built with Romanian support (*Scînteia* Oct. 13, 1969, 1).

The economic and political discrepancies between the two countries were not very accurately expressed publicly, since a lot of the truth about Romania's economic situation was being hidden by the steadily tightening communist demagogy. Yet this is a point in the Indian-Romanian relations when the international interests of the two countries seem to converge, despite their coming from entirely different directions. In the current political climate, Ceaușescu appears as "one possible channel of communication" between Peking and New Delhi, since "no other Head of State with friendly relations with China is as well disposed towards China as President Ceaușescu". Ceaușescu's saviour role is one that *TOI* truly seems to believe in, not only as concerns India's petroleum industry (*TOI* Oct. 14, 1969, 1), but, more importantly, its position within the international political context: "All in all cooperation between India and Rumania can extend far beyond trade and aid. President Ceaușescu's current visit should be

seen in this context. He has not come all this distance and brought his Prime Minister with him merely to sign a couple of trade deals" (*TOI* Oct. 16, 1969, 10). The belief that "Indo-Rumanian friendship will benefit peace" (*TOI* Oct. 15, 1969, 1), stated on the periodical's front page, casts a very positive light on the whole visit and on the encounter between the various parts involved.

India's worries with respect to China are repeatedly stated: while insisting on the importance of the visit, in which Romania invested a 24-member delegation, *TOI* stresses (and even prints in bold letters) the fact that "The inclusion of the Prime Minister in the delegation is of particular interest because less than a month ago he had had high-level talks with the Chinese leaders in Peking" (*TOI* Oct. 14, 1969, 1). While the following *TOI* issues covering Ceaușescu's 1969 visit to India follow up on the idea that one of India's expectations was to be able to find together a way towards "Asian security" in the context of "China's changing mood" (Ibid.), the message delivered by *Scînteia* is formulated very much around literally celebrating the 1969 encounter between Romania and India. "The Indian people await the Romanian leaders' visit with feelings of respect and friendship" (*Scînteia* Oct. 13, 1969, 1). The contemporary reader, used to the many lies that dominated the Romanian public discourse in the last years of communism, is pleasantly surprised to notice that this rings true also in the Indian press and also that, in the late sixties, the president's wife was not yet part of the official public discourse the way we find her to be in the eighties.

As if to strengthen its credibility by quoting from Indian sources as well as reporting directly on the events, *Scînteia* cites coverages of the visit from the *National Herald*, the *Indian Express* and the *Hindustan Times* in sections entitled "Echoes from the Indian press" (such as *Scînteia* Oct. 14, 1969, 3) and states that "All the important periodicals in the capital of India are thoroughly informing their readers as to the schedule of the Romanian leaders' visit, present the biographical data of comrades Nicolae Ceaușescu and Ion Gheorghe Maurer, dedicate special articles to the visit, pointing out its particular importance in the continuous development of relations between the two countries" (*Scînteia* Oct. 13, 1969, 7; translation mine). While we recognise in the newspaper's language some of the clichés that were going to invade repetitively the Romanian press less than a decade later (of which one recalls "feelings of respect and friendship", "continuous development of relations between the two countries", "prolonged chants",

"longstanding friendship between countries and nations", "an atmosphere of warm friendship, respect and reciprocal understanding", etc.), the official Romanian periodical reflects views similar to the Indian one's and presents its readers with an objective, truthful account of the visit.

This was no longer the case in October 1981, when Indira Gandhi came back to Romania, soon after a period of being out of office (1977-1980) as a result of the decrease in her popularilty caused by the Emergency. On the occasion, *TOI* provides merely an objective account of what, at this stage, are the advanced economic exchanges between the two countries and their position on the international stage. But in Romania the visit was highly mediatised and was considered one more step forward in the two countries' cooperation, being considered as almost emblematic for the two countries' relations and reflected on beyond the boundaries of news reports. It is significant that, at the time, Gandhi was returning to Romania – a country of old friends – in her second term, after her own political career had been in crisis and she had been betrayed by many other political friends, but not by Romania. This is in tune with the, by now, self-sufficient, repetitive, empty communist rhetoric that invades all periodicals in Romania, of which the international press is fully aware.

Around this time, *TOI* is significantly less enthusiastic about Romania, as it is beginning to reflect on what, about a year after Gandhi's visit, comes to be reported, in an analytical article taken over from the *New York Times* news service and signed by Paul Lewis, as "Economic troubles in Eastern Europe". These troubles are due to the efforts to maintain a centralised economic planning which leads to significant economic debt: "Many East European countries tried to maintain economic growth in the 1970s by importing Western technology paid for with money borrowed in the West". But, in conditions of a world economic crisis, the strategy failed to the point where, *TOI* declares, "Poland and Romania are, for all practical purposes, bankrupt" (*TOI* Dec. 30, 1982, 8).

Scînteia, however, celebrates the visit by publishing a heroic front page portrait of Indira Gandhi, projected as a heroine of the Indian independence movement and a steady builder of progress in her country, and salutes her use of socialist economic strategies that Romania used as well, such as five-year plans (*Scînteia* Oct. 18, 1981, 1). At a time of economic difficulty and political isolation, the extreme result to which Ceaușescu's maverick non-alignment policy led in the

long run, the friendship of a third-world country liberated from colonial rule, which Romania had helped make economic progress and be successful in its "offensive of industrialisation" (Neagu Udroiu, *Scînteia* Oct. 18, 1981, 5), weighed significantly in Romania's own view of its international relations. This self-flattering view also supported Romania's systematic denial of the spectacular decay of Ceaușescu's positive international image, as his abuses of power and personality cult became known abroad. In a country that was by now practically closed for the average citizen, which received accurate news from the West only through media such as Radio Free Europe and Voice of America, Indira Gandhi's image and the history of economic cooperation between the two countries were being used as one foreign confirmation of Ceaușescu's greatness, in which, in fact, nobody – and, least of all, the Romanian people – believed any longer.

Conclusion: Which Marxism?

The Gandhi-Ceaușescu dialogue represents an instance of manipulation of official discourse by the communist leader, to which the dialogue established with a postcolonial partner contributed by providing an alternative version of left-wing progressivism. In reality, the two leaders shared a much stronger interest in building leadership cults and personal dictatorships which, in both cases, ended in massive popular discontent and assassination. The positions represented by each of them betray a similar manipulation of left-wing rhetorical strategies, in support of two very similar versions of totalitarian control.

Two examples of the failure of socialism to maintain true democracy and its all too proven tendency to end in totalitarianism, Gandhi and Ceaușescu were nevertheless excellent actors of the Cold War era, managing to function within discursive systems whose rhetorical architecture – deeply flawed in content, yet structurally faultless – did not give in for years. And yet, the ways posterity remembers them are not at all similar: whereas Indira Gandhi's legacy is fully acknowledged and her many biographies, even the more critical ones, agree in acknowledging, both during her lifetime and after her death, her undeniable "call to greatness" (Desai 1966), things are different in Ceaușescu's case. His cult of personality, rampant during his life, led to endless lists of shamelessly praising biographies, autobiographies and a bulky so-called personal oeuvre (famously ghostwritten by other people, yet signed by Ceaușescu). Yet after his

death, his memory is relegated to that of the promoter of a "criminal regime" (Brucan 2002, quoted by Orescu 2006, 5) and he is most often described in terms like Șerban Orescu's in his book dedicated to him and his political doctrine: "of peasant origin, arrogant, hyperactive, cynical and vulgar, Ceaușescu was a good illustration of the 'new man' of a society forcefully homogenised by the party" (Orescu 2006, 6; translation mine). An impostor who made it up the social hierarchy due to favourable historical circumstances and with his equally diabolical wife Elena's complicity, Ceaușescu is reserved an exclusively villain part in the game of post-war Romanian and international history, despite his spectacularly promising beginnings.

Apart from an individual political destiny and dynamic of personal development that divides public figures into winners and losers, this may also be due to the fine line between various possible understandings of the progressive potential of left-wing ideologies. Marxism played an important part in the independence struggle of postcolonial nations, but it did not prove sustainable as a unique ideological line in either communism or postcolonialism. It did, however, create grounds for building totalitarian regimes in both spaces, and it led to similarly negative outcomes.

Acknowledgment: The researching and writing of this article benefited from support within the project *Aquatic Imaginaries: Re-charting Indoceanic and Atlantic Literary Productions*, PID2022-141118NB, principal investigator: Dr Esther Pujolràs-Noguer (University of Lleida), financed by the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation.

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A case study of AI adoption in Pakistan's media sector: Opportunities, challenges, and contextual realities

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Abstract: This research examines the application of artificial intelligence (AI) in Pakistan's media industry, filling a notable void in academic literature regarding AI implementation in non-Western settings, especially South Asia. We adopt a qualitative case study method, examining chosen Pakistani media sources by conducting interviews with journalists, content producers, and administrators, alongside reviewing organizational documents and press reports. Our results identify three primary artificial intelligence implementations: automated content generation for standard news reports, analytics for audience engagement to refine content distribution, and emerging verification mechanisms to address false information. However, adoption remains uneven due to structural constraints such as financial limitations, insufficient training, and regulatory ambiguity. Furthermore, doubts rooted in culture among those working in media hinder the adoption of artificial intelligence, as they worry about preserving journalistic independence and potential moral consequences. The research underscores how AI's capacity to drive change is shaped by Pakistan's distinct socio-political and institutional conditions, such as inequalities in technology and influences from political spheres. Through the placement of AI within these contextual factors, we contribute empirical insights into the opportunities and challenges of AI adoption in media ecosystems with limited resources. The study highlights the necessity for customized approaches that harmonize productivity improvements with regional organizational contexts, presenting a structure for policymakers and media professionals addressing AI's changing influence in the Global South.

Keywords: AI, Pakistan, media industry, institutional conditions

Introduction

The Pakistani media industry runs in a complex socio-political space characterized by rapid technological changes, ambiguous policies and

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AGATHOS, Volume 17, Issue 2 (33-34): 871-887, DOI 10.5281/zenodo.23611764
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evolving consumer expectations (Ashraf 2014). With the digital transformation reorganizing the global media systems, artificial intelligence (AI) has become an agent of disruption, which provides the means of automated creation of content, engagement with viewers, and elimination of misinformation (N. Hussain 2012). Nevertheless, although the use of AI in Western media has been widely reported, its progression in emerging economies, especially South Asia, has not been fully researched (Yusuf and Schoemaker 2013). This study can address this gap by exploring the way media organizations in Pakistan are addressing opportunity and challenges of artificial intelligence adoption in their unique institutional and cultural context.

Since the liberalization in 2002, the media industry in Pakistan has grown significantly, including over 100 privately-owned TV channels, a robust digital news sphere (Safdar et al. 2019). But still, such systemic constraints as lack of resources, political interference and disparity in technological advancement are still observed (Mezzera & Sial 2010). These are factors that contribute to the non-adoption of nascent technologies like artificial intelligence that offers a prospect of addressing inefficiency but also raise concerns about job loss and ethical issues (Gul et al. 2017). As an example, even though AI tools can be used to automate report routine processes, their behavior reflects such subtle local realities as regional accents or politically sensitive stories is debated (Yusuf et al. 2013).

The paper is organized around four main questions namely: (1) What are the current uses of artificial intelligence in media organizations in Pakistan? (2) How will AI create a chance to produce news, engage audiences and digital channels? (3) What are some of the obstacles that inhibit the use of AI by journalists and media houses? (4) What influence is cultural and regulatory in the role of AI in the Pakistan media sphere? By answering these questions, we contribute to the limited scholarly literature on AI in non-Western media, providing empirical evidence to refute universalist concepts of technology dissemination (Hafeez and Nauman 2020).

The preceding literature on AI in Pakistani media has narrowed down to technical feasibility or journalists' attitudes (Amna 2023). By way of contrast, we approach the subject matter in a holistic manner that looks at how macro-level factors, such as political economy and regulatory guidelines, intersect with micro-level practices within newsrooms (Rasul and McDowell 2011). As an example, analytical tools based on artificial intelligence can help to target the audience

better, but their application is often restricted by the unequal distribution of internet access in Pakistan and poor digital literacy (Khan et al. 2013). Likewise, artificial fact-checking robots are not very adept at navigating cultural peculiarities of the media landscape in which false information often borders ethnic and religious sensibilities (Raza et al. 2025).

This work is also relevant, as it is well established against its background. Placing the adoption of AI in the context of media-political economy in Pakistan reveals the way the global trends in technology are appropriated through institutional logics and cultural practices (S. Hussain et al. 2025). As an illustration, the domination of media conglomerates by families influences investment choices, often leading to an immediate search for financial benefits instead of a slow implementation of artificial intelligence (Ahmed et al. 2024). Additionally, this military has been historically involved in regulation of media, which makes AI governance even more complex, especially in content management and surveillance (Mezzera and Sial 2010). Such lessons can be important to policymakers and other stakeholders in the industry who aim at promoting responsible AI deployment in such situations.

Literature review

The presence of artificial intelligence in media ecosystems has been extensively studied in the context of the West, with most focus put on automated journalism, algorithmic news selection, and audience analytics (Latar 2014). However, the literature on the adoption of artificial intelligence in developing countries, especially in South Asia, is extremely limited, an aspect that creates a big gap in the understanding of how technology and regional institutions and cultures interact (Arakpogun et al. 2021). It is now in the scholarly literature that the role of AI in non-Western media settings has been investigated, both to reveal individual adoption patterns that are shaped by the infrastructural constraints, regulatory frameworks, and professional norms (Broussard et al. 2019).

Several studies have explored the concept of artificial intelligence in the context of Pakistani media, but most of them focus specifically on technical and not systemic barriers to its usage. As an example, the research focused on the use of AI to create content in Pakistani media houses refers to the use of AI to generate standard meteorological bulletins and economic highlights, whereas the studies also indicate

persistent difficulties in accommodating regional dialects and contextual peculiarities (Moroojo et al. 2025). Similarly, the research on the tools of audience analytics shows that Pakistani media companies struggle with the low quality of data and a lack of technical ability, which limits the benefits of AI-driven personalization (Khattak et al. 2025).

The broader literature on the adoption of technology in the Pakistani media sector offers the necessary background insights. Research in digital transformation in Pakistani newsrooms underlines the structural forces that influence technological investment, i.e., concentrated media ownership and political interference (Mezzera and Sial 2010). As an example, family-owned media conglomerates often prioritize short-term gain instead of investing into future-oriented technology which can support the implementation of artificial intelligence (Safdar et al. 2019). This trend follows other studies on the adoption of technology in other developing economies, where resource limitations and path dependencies of institutions often mediate the effect of innovation (Stanislavska et al. 2020).

The other theme, shown in the existing research, is the cultural and professional resistance to AI among Pakistani journalists. Various reports report the fear of displacing jobs and editorial authority, the loss of ethical standards in algorithmic content playing (Jamil 2021). Such fears reflect international discussions of AI in journalism but have a specific sense of urgency in the Pakistani media sector, where editorial freedom is already limited by political influences (Jamil 2023). Research suggests that such cultural resistance can often be explained by the lack of awareness of the potential of AI, which is why special educational programs are needed (Nawaz and Ali 2025).

The cross-national studies of AI application in other developing countries provide informative data in the media sector of Pakistan. Indicatively, in a case study of Kenyan media houses, collaborative efforts between the news houses and technology firms can aid in the integration of artificial intelligence despite resource constraints (Kioko 2022). Likewise, the research on AI implementation in the banking industry of Pakistan also signifies the significance of regulatory clarity and institutional backing of the banking industry to rise above the obstacle of implementing AI (Ahmed et al. 2024). These findings suggest that the analogous interdisciplinary knowledge sharing in Pakistan may be beneficial to the media industry, and in particular, governance frameworks and schemes targeted at developing skills.

The legal and regulatory context of AI in Pakistan has not been discussed in detail so far, but the existing research presents several major gaps. Media regulation Surveys of media legislation point to the absence of clear rules governing AI applications in news coverage, which leads to confusion concerning the responsibility of errors and biases in the algorithmic output (Raza et al. 2025). This policy vacuum contrasts with more advanced regulatory frameworks in other Muslim majority nations, like Malaysia and the UAE who have started enacting AI governance frameworks depending on local cultural and legal customs (Mohsin 2025). New scholarly literature that discusses the impact of AI on society in Pakistan also has added points of view that are relevant in the context of media-related applications. Research articles about AI in government operations point out the possibility of efficiency improvement and the threat of increasing the level of inequalities, especially the urban-rural ones (Sumra et al. 2021). Similarly, research conducted on the deployment of artificial intelligence in the agriculture sector of Pakistan demonstrates the fact that local realities, such as education levels and the condition of physical systems, have a pivotal role in the determination of the consequences of technology-based interventions (Ali et al. 2024). These conclusions highlight the need to place the media-oriented AI studies in the framework of wider socio-technical systems.

Even though the existing studies offer valuable insights into the independent aspects of the AI implementation in Pakistani media, there are still significant gaps. Most studies are focused on either technical uses or professional approach and overlook the complexity of interrelations between technological, organizational, and cultural factors. Moreover, research often presupposes a deterministic view of the effect of AI, not taking into consideration how local actors respond to changes in technology and how they resist them. Our study addresses these limitations by using a comprehensive approach of case study by examining AI adoption as a situational practice affecting Pakistan unique media-political environment. This perspective aids us to go beyond simplistic explanations of technological optimism or pessimism but rather, discover the contingent and controversial nature of AI use in the media context with limited resources.

Methods

The study is a qualitative case study that was conducted to explore the implementation of artificial intelligence in the media sector in

Pakistan, focusing specifically on how institutional, cultural, and technological factors affect the trends of its implementation. The research design focuses on depth, as opposed to breadth, allowing having a closer study of the contextual factors, which quantitative research might not address. The method has been selected as it aligns well with our aim of capturing the first-person field notes of the media practitioners as they interact with the AI adoption in the unique socio-political setting of Pakistan.

Case selection

The study employs the sample of six Pakistan-based media organizations, which include the different spheres of the industry, i.e., two nationwide television stations, two online-based news sources, a radio station, and a local newspaper group of publications. These organizations were chosen purposely to capture differences in the nature of the organizations in terms of size, technological capacity and geographic coverage. As an illustration, the introduction of a local newspaper in Khyber Pakhtunkhaw is a way to illuminate the challenges to AI implementation that media organizations outside urban areas may meet, as infrastructure limitations are worse.

The process of choice was based on the criteria of organizations that adopted AI tools or were currently testing it. We provided preliminary fieldwork consisting of snowball sampling to find potential cases, and industry reports. The last sample balances between the traditional media and the digital pioneers, which allow conducting a comparative analysis of adoption trends based on the various forms of organizations. This is based on the recognition of the heterogeneity of the media ecosystem in Pakistan, where both traditional and digital media exist and have different operating logics.

Data collection

Primary data was gathered in the form of semi-structured interviews with twenty-four media professionals working in the chosen organizations from January to June 2023. The sample included journalists (n=10), editors (n=6), technology managers (n=5), and corporate executives (n=3), which was balanced in terms of reporters and technical representatives. The interviews were 45-90 minutes long and were conducted following a protocol that explored three thematic areas, such as AI implementation processes, perceived benefits and challenges, and contextual barriers.

All the interviews were either in English or Urdu, depending on the participants and the Urdu recorded were professionally transcribed and

translated. The dual-language approach ensured consistency in the data analysis as it covered the multilingual situation in Pakistan. Organizational materials, including internal documents about AI pilot projects and publicly available plans of technology adoption, were added to interview transcripts.

The sources of secondary data considered 18 months of media reporting (January 2022-June 2023) on AI in the Pakistani press, obtained in the database and by hand observation of the industry publications. This source provided a contextual understanding of what people were talking about regarding adoption of AI, and this contributed to the ability to match the results of the interviews with the larger industry discourses.

Analytical approach

Thematic analysis was performed based on the six stages model provided by Braun and Clarke, with deductive code being based on the research questions and inductive identification of the emerging themes. NVivo 12 software helped to organize data that allowed carrying out comparisons of cases and respondent groups methodically. Initial coding focused on manifest content (e.g., direct mentions of AI tools), and thereafter, latent analysis of implicit assumptions and institutional arrangements affecting adoption decisions.

The analytical process adopted continuous comparative methods to show trends and anomalies among the various categories of organizations. To give an example, to compare the discussion on the use of AI in audience engagement between the television network and online platforms, one has performed an analysis that revealed contrasting strategic priorities based on the specifics of the functioning of the media. The elevated levels of analytical accuracy were kept through frequent team debriefings whereby the emergent results were conceptually checked against original datasets through refining codes in successive cycles.

Ethical considerations

The research through the institutional review board approved the research and all the participants provided informed consent after the detailed explanations of the research purpose and data handling policies. Since the situation with Pakistan is sensitive in terms of media, we took added precautionary steps: we removed institutional markers of published texts and offered the participants to review their quoted sentences. These were done to address the issues of

professional consequences within an industry where a perception of a criticism of technological projects by the masses could have career consequences.

The protection of the data was based on the storage with the use of passwords and strict control over access, which is particularly important considering that some participants discussed politically sensitive AI applications, including content moderation. The research group completed training in working with the at-risk population, understanding that in Pakistan, journalists often work under structurally unstable conditions that can have an impact on their contribution.

Methodological limitations

Even though the case study technique is effective in providing a clear contextual analysis, its findings are not applicable in statistical analysis to the entire media industry in Pakistan. The purposive sampling approach, though theoretically informed, might be insensitive to the views of smaller-smaller or technologically ahead organizations. In addition, the year (2022-2023) of the research is associated with a specific period in the rapidly developing media landscape in Pakistan, where the economy is stilluncertain, yet policy changes are constant due to which the possibilities of AI use constantly change.

These limitations are in part resolved by research design because methodological triangulation involves interview data and documentary analysis. Future research can extend the scope of time by conducting longitudinal follow-up of AI implementation processes since the media policy landscape in Pakistan is changing, responding to domestic factors as well as international technological shifts.

Findings and discussion

The findings show that the phenomenon of technological possibilities and situational constraints in the Pakistani media field is complex, and the implementation of artificial intelligence follows its own peculiarities based on the specifics of the organizational environment and occupational etiquette. In this section, dynamics are examined in two perspectives: the areas of operation where the effects of AI are quantifiable, and the structural barriers limiting their broader uptake.

AI applications in the media

The integration of artificial intelligence in the media industry of Pakistan is present in three functional areas with distinct implementation and impact trends. These applications are indicative of

universal trends in technology as well as local adaptation to the Pakistani media ecosystems where resource scarcity and cultural influences mediate these applications.

Content automation

The most advanced form of artificial intelligence application, particularly in the production of standard news in fields like sport summary, stock market and weather forecasting, is Content Automation. Natural language generators (NLG) in media houses are used to generate content templates, standardized and therefore requiring significantly less time to produce high-volume, low-complexity stories. As an illustration, a national broadcaster automated about 40 percent of its reporting on financial news using artificial intelligence systems, releasing journalists to focus on in-depth analysis. But such systems do not cope with the contextual peculiarities of Urdu and regional languages and can often need a lot of human editing to be idiomatically exact. Streamlining routine is in line with the global tendencies recorded in (Latar, 2014), but the multi-lingual nature of Pakistan suggests that localization challenges are unique to each country and the existing NLG systems do not address every area fully.

Audience analytics

This another critical area of application refers to media companies that embrace AI-based applications to track the activities of viewers on online platforms. The systems will look at metrics of social media and proprietary apps, which will help content teams improve the timing of publishing and formats. One news source targeted at online users recorded an increase in the retention rate of readers by a quarter after the introduction of a recommendation system that narrows down the sequence of articles to specific interests. However, there are still issues in data quality due to the fragmented digital systems of Pakistan, inconsistency in internet connectivity, and limitations of devices, which generate noisy datasets and complicate algorithmic analysis. These limitations are consistent with findings of (Khattak et al., 2025), which depict that technological solutions developed in mature markets require a meaningful change of environment where resources are limited.

Fact checking and moderation

These tools are a growing area of practice, supported by growing concerns about the misinformation in the highly fragmented information environment in Pakistan. Several media companies have

been experimenting with artificial intelligence that can be used to detect potentially false claims in social media posts by using natural language processing to match statements with authoritative databases. Even though these tools promise, as one investigative team reduced the number of manual verifications performed by 30 percent, they are limited by the challenges in dealing with local dialects and culturally specific disinformation tactics. The systems are also grappling with the complicated situation in the media ownership of Pakistan, where in some cases the political associations color what is mischievous information. Those issues are in line with ethical questions identified in (Jamil, 2021), namely the tension between algorithmic efficiency and editorial judgment.

The trends in the areas mentioned in the applications point to one thing, the application of AI in Pakistani media follows the model of a hybrid one, in which the technological solutions do not substitute human skills but support them. This contrasts with its more radical automation discourses prevalent in the West (Latar 2014), which are attributed to both the pragmatic constraint and cultural resistance to the decline of journalistic competence. As an example, even with automated weather reports, the production time will be lower, but the editors often neglect the algorithmic proposals in the case of severe weather events in favor of local ability and homogeneous results. As depicted by these practices, media professionals in Pakistan are proactively adopting the role of AI to shape the workflows to create a balance between efficiency and contextual awareness.

The regional differences also shape the AI applications to the media, whereby urban-centered media like newsrooms in Karachi are more advanced in their use over the other regional ones. One of the television stations based in Lahore used computer vision to measure the response of the audience when political debates were on, a radio station in Peshawar struggled with basic automation of transcription due to the Pashto language compatibility. The urban to rural gap shows the overall technological disparities in Pakistan (Sumra et al. 2021) meaning that AI effects on media are still going to be unequal until efforts to invest in infrastructure are undertaken.

There are also sector-specific adoption trends, whereby digital-native platforms are at the forefront in innovative applications in comparison with the traditional broadcasters. A news organization that is independent developed a computer-generated AI tool to track the commitment made by politicians to their promises through legislative

documents and that does not require the same institutional pushback that more traditional media houses. These variations bring out the mediating nature of organization culture in technological change which is consistent with assertions in (Mezzera and Sial 2010) about the diverse nature of Pakistan media that produces unique developmental trends on innovation.

The overall picture of the findings provides evidence that the role of AI in Pakistani media is not associated with a total reconstruction but, on the contrary, with more specific operational issues to address. This is the real-world approach which is in line with the resource limitation of the industry where the spending must yield a fast payoff given financial pressure. However, it also comes with questions of long-term ability building, as fragmented execution would slow down the creation of enterprise wisdom needed to support high-level artificial intelligence usage. These systemic issues are discussed in the ensuing subsection and the structural and cultural hurdles that constrain the potential of AI in these potentially promising areas investigated.

Challenges in AI adoption

The application of AI in the media industry in Pakistan faces various challenges, which are not regulated by the technical factors, but they are structural, financial, and cultural. All these limitations combine to create a complicated adoption environment in which technological possibilities continue to be constrained by situational facts.

Financial and infrastructural constraints

These are the biggest barriers because the media organizations incur massive costs to get and support AI systems. Unlike global technological companies that develop proprietary AI platforms, Pakistani ones are forced to rely on outsourcing, and often they pay a lot of money to get solutions that are hardly applicable to the needs of the region. According to one TV network executive, the cost of a basic kind of natural language processing software, when licensed, cost them 15 percent of their annual technology expenses, thus forced to make trade-offs elsewhere in their digital infrastructure upgrade. These economic stresses collide with the broader technological inequalities in Pakistan, the uneven electricity access and inadequate access to cloud computing in rural territories make even successfully implemented AI initiatives unsustainable on the scale. These difficulties are reflected in (Ahmed et al. 2024), in which infrastructural gaps also limited the implementation of AI in the banking sector of Pakistan.

Human capital deficits

These also act to impede adoption since they are caused by dire lack of talented people who will be able to design, implement and manage AI systems. Most of the media companies lack dedicated data science teams and instead rely on overworked IT staff to manage complex machine learning systems in addition to the usual technical support duties. The skills gap is indicative of the educational constraints in Pakistan overall, and universities have appeared with AI programs, limited numbers of programs explicitly focus on media applications, or fill technical-journalistic gaps. A digital editor showed that existing training schemes often focus too much on how tools work rather than helping journalists to develop the ability to critically evaluate the output of algorithms and as a result leads to journalists having a weak understanding of how to identify potential biases. These findings are consistent with (Nawaz & Ali 2025) which had recorded the same disparities between academic training and industry requirements.

Regulatory ambiguity

The uncertainty of regulations further complicates the matter because there are no detailed legal systems regulating AI applications in media in Pakistan. Absence of defined procedures of algorithmic responsibility, data confidentiality, and rights to intellectual property about AI generated content discourages long-term investment. As an illustration, several media outlets reported the delay of the projects to mechanize the financial reporting due to the remaining uncertainty about legal liability in the case of any errors in artificial intelligence-generated earnings valuations. This lack of regulation is unlike other structured approaches in a similar market like India where policymaking has begun attempts at addressing the gaps in AI legislation. This situation corresponds to the problems that are outlined in (Raza et al. 2025), and how legal uncertainties increase the perceived adoption risks.

Cultural resistance

Another significant challenge is cultural resistance of media practitioners, which is based on the fears of the influence of AI on the working independence and the identity of journalists. Many reporters view algorithmic tools as threats to editorial judgment, particularly in sensitive fields like political journalism, where functionality is of less significance than clarity of context. An old-time investigative reporter described why they were resistant to the managerial requests that they consider artificial intelligence-based fact-checking practices, and

argued that these mechanized systems were incapable of understanding the complex factual environment in Pakistan, which is often characterized by hidden historical and ethnic dynamics. This skepticism is a manifestation of general fears outlined in (Jamil 2021) where journalists feared deskilling and losing creative control.

Organizational inertia

According to organizational inertia of the media establishments in Pakistan, it is exceedingly difficult to adopt artificial intelligence, particularly in the old style of organization with well set operations. Technological decisions are often centralized through decision-making hierarchies that are quite distant from the operational processes, and in this case, there is a mismatch between the purchased AI systems and the demands of newsrooms. A good example is a newspaper conglomerate that invested a lot in content distribution systems, which were automated and did not consider more pressing transcription and translation requirements. Such trends reflect on (Mezzera & Sial 2010), which showed that the centralized nature of media ownership in Pakistan can cause a change in priorities in innovation.

These issues combine to create a vicious circle of adoption barriers: financial constraints make high-quality tools less accessible, which do not perform well due to their inadequate infrastructure and human capital, which in turn increases the culture resistance and discourages further investment. To break this loop, both technical and systemic factors need to be addressed, which is manifested in both the different results of digital-native startups and the traditional media companies. Newer companies that are less hierarchical and have leaders who are more technologically savvy performed better in the implementation of narrow AI based strategies, which suggests that organizational culture has as much of an impact on success of adoption as resource access.

Such findings stress the deterministic explanations of the inevitable role of AI in global media organization by proving how regional institutional factors mediate and restructure technological changes. Despite the Pakistani media specialists admitting the possible benefits of AI, their decision-making process is based on pragmatism, where the tools with immediate, direct, and quantifiable results are applied, and they do not rely on unproven technologies. This conservative stance is not only ignorance of resources, but also a hard-learned lesson of past transitions in technology as most outlets continue to bear the bruises of badly thought-out digital transformations throughout the 2010s social media boom. The ensuing apprehension influences the

current trends in the adoption of AI and forms a distinctly Pakistani vision of technological assimilation that balances the growth with the protection of institutions.

The issues listed here have a wider implication than just in Pakistan and produce some useful lessons to other developing media markets as they embrace AI. They claim successful implementation requires not only technical solutions but also concomitant investments on human capital, demystifying regulations, and reorganizing organizations. Most importantly, these findings prove the importance of developing AI tools and strategies that consider the peculiarities of cultural and political economies of the local media ecosystem rather than trying to directly apply models that were created in different contexts.

Conclusion

This study has been able to examine artificial intelligence integration in the media sector in Pakistan, issues surrounding its usage, opportunities, and challenges. The findings show that AI implementation follows the hybrid model when technological systems do not replace human skills, but support them, and content automation, audience analytics, and fact-checking tools are the main services. Nevertheless, the applications are not spread evenly because of the lack of financial resources, gaps in infrastructures, and cultural distrust towards the media professionals. This research contributes to broader discussions on AI in non-Western media settings because it demonstrates that regional institutional factors, such as ambiguous policies to organized forms of power, influence the way technology is adopted, thus challenging internationalized conceptions of digital modernity.

The paper highlights the importance of context-sensitive strategies to the adoption of AI in resource-limited settings. Despite the ingenuity of the Pakistani media outlets in adapting global technologies to locality, structural factors such as lack of ability, political factors lead to adoption pattern other than that experienced in the developed media market. These lessons are not restricted to Pakistan alone and provide a conceptual framework of how emerging economies can cope with the rise of technology in the existing structural constraints. Future research should examine continued appraisals of AI undergoing shifts, particularly with the evolving regulatory environments and news media accumulating knowledge through recurrent methods of application. The further investigation of regional trends in the impact

of institutional settings on the process of technological use could be supported by comparative studies in South Asia.

The paper concludes that artificial intelligence can be valuable to the media industry in Pakistan, but not by mimicking western experiences with automation, but by developing solutions that consider the unique challenges at the workplace and meet the professional standards of the Pakistani workforce. These findings endorse moderate innovation strategies involving combination of technological enhancement and human resources and institutional transformation, which is relevant to policymakers and media practitioners in the Global South that are meeting similar evolutions. With the higher introduction of artificial intelligence to the media apparatuses of the world, this study recognizes the need to understand and guide its power within the parameters of the contexts of situations.

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State-building and economic reforms in medieval Azerbaijan: The legal function of the "Qanunname"

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Abstract: The period of Aq Qoyunluis considered an important stage in the history of Middle East, as well asAzerbaijani statehood. Political and economic strengthening was one of the main tasks in the Aq Qoyunlu state, and for this purpose a special Book of Legislation – "Qanunname" was drafted. Ensuring the development of the country's economy was one of the main issues in the "Qanunname".The article studies the economic life of the country during this period, especially during the reign of Hasan Padishah, the economic revival of the people liberated from the Mongol invasions, and the development of trade within the framework of the political-economic relations established between other countries. As for the research methods used in the article, a number of factors that play an important role in the economic development of Aq Qoyunlu state have been studied by preserving the principle of historicity, a comparative analysis of economic-commercial relations through historical-excursion method is given.

Keywords: medieval trade, "Qanunname", Aq Qoyunlu, Azerbaijan

Introduction

The Aq Qoyunlu Empire occupies a very leading place in the history of Azerbaijan's statehood. According to the claims of the Aq Qoyunlu (White Sheep Turkomans) sultans, the origin of the Bayandurlu dynasty, which is part of this tribal union, goes back to the Bayandur Khan, who was mentioned in the *Book of Dede Korkut* (Lewis 1974, 19). Aq Qoyunlu tribes settled in a very wide area including

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AGATHOS, Volume 17, Issue 2 (33-34): 889-900, DOI 10.5281/zenodo.23611880
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Azerbaijan, Eastern Anatolia, South Caucasus, Iran, Tigris and Euphrates valleys. As a result of the weakening of the Great Seljuk state, the Aq Qoyunlu became stronger in Eastern Anatolia and Azerbaijan. Aq Qoyunlu tribes became the leading political force in Eastern Anatolia at the end of the 14th century and the beginning of the 15th century.

The head of the political unity of Aq Qoyunlu tribes was Tur Ali Bey (1388-1392) from the Bayandur tribe, and his successors were the hereditary owners of Diyarbakir province. The foundation of this dynasty was laid by Pahlavan Bey (1370-1388). Alaeddin and Fakhreddin (1392-1394), who came to power after his death, failed to strengthen the tribal alliances. Qara Yulug Osman bey led the battle organized against Qara Qoyunlu. He won the battles with the Qara Qoyunlu and established the power of the Aq Qoyunlu tribal union (Mammadov 1981, 17). Aq Qoyunlu, who became stronger in the fight against the Jalairis and the Qara Qoyunlu, founded the Amid principality, the center of which was Diyarbakir, under the leadership of Qara Yulug Osman Bey.

The establishment of the Aq Qoyunlu principality with its center in Diyarbakir in Eastern Anatolia, and the development path of this state at the beginning of the 15th century under the leadership of Qara Osman in the period before Aq Qoyunlu gained political power in Azerbaijan, has been extensively studied in the scientific studies of Turkic historians. After the death of Qara Osman in 1435, a prolonged struggle between his heirs for the Aq Qoyunlu throne began, and it ended in 1453 with the victory of Uzun Hasan. During the initial phase of Uzun Hasan's rise to power in Aq Qoyunlu principality, feudal disputes did not stop, but Aq Qoyunlu feudal lords had to reckon with Uzun Hasan's great influence. Uzun Hasan, trying to put an end to the internal strife, began to take measures to further strengthen the Aq Qoyunlu principality and expand the territory of this state at the expense of the central territories of Azerbaijan. He managed to unite his nobles closely by giving great privileges and promises (Najafli 2000, 28). Thus, the Aq Qoyunlu principality became an empire during the time of Uzun Hasan (1453-1478) and experienced its most powerful era. Uzun Hasan returned victoriously from his trip to Rum and he took the title "Padishah" (a title of nobility meaning "emperor" in Persian languages) and raised the flag of power on the throne of Azerbaijan (Jannatov 2021, 249). Therefore, he established a powerful empire covering the lands of Azerbaijan, Eastern Anatolia, Iraq, Iran,

and Eastern Georgia. With this, the reign of the Bayandurlu dynasty, which belongs to the Aq Qoyunlu tribe, began in Azerbaijan. In order to ensure the revival of the country's economy, the "Qanunname" (Legislation) drawn up by Uzun Hasan was one of the important conditions for regulating not only the tax system, but also all the internal affairs of the state. The "Qanunname" had a great role in subordinating military nobles, feudal lords and nomadic tribes to the central government. The importance of this document was so great that it remained in force throughout the 16th century. It later became known as the "Laws of Hasan Padishah".

Literature review

Important information about the economic history of Azerbaijan in the 15th century is reflected in a number of sources. To study this period, one can refer to the 15th century oriental sources, the works of Azerbaijani, Western European, and Russian travelers. The mentioned sources reflect the political situation and socio-economic life of Azerbaijan at that time.

In this regard, the most reliable sources are Hasan Beg Rumlu's work (2017) "Ahsan al-Tawarikh", "Kitab-i Diyarbakriya" by Abu Bakr Tehrani, the court historian of Uzun Hasan, "Tarikh-i alamara-yi Amini" by Fazlullah ibn Ruzbihan Khunji (1992), the court historian of Aq Qoyunlu ruler, Sultan Yaqub, "Bazm and Razm" by Aziz ibn Ardashir Astrabadi can be mentioned (Shukurova 2006, 4).One of the other sources on the history of Azerbaijan in the 15th century is the manuscript "Lubb-et-tavarikh" written by Yahya Ghazvini in 1541. Part III of the work, which consists of 4 parts, provides detailed information about the events that took place starting from the 7th century. Here, the history of the Aq Qoyunlu dynasty can be considered important, especially from the point of view of economic history. The work "Kitab talkhis al-asar va ajaib al-malik al-gahhar" by Abdurrashid Ibn Saleh al-Bakuvi, a famous Azerbaijani geographer who lived in the 15th century, provides information about the socio-economic situation of Azerbaijani cities. Sharafkhan Bidlisi's work "Sharafname" deals with the internal life of the Aq Qoyunlu state, the state of the masses, and socio-economic issues (Ibrahimov 1958, 11-15).

In the 15th century, Russian traveler Afanasy Nikitin visited India and spent some time in Azerbaijan. He gave detailed information about the economic situation of Azerbaijan. European travelers Caterino

Zeno (1471), Giosafat Barbaro (1474), Ambrogio Contarini (1475), German traveler Johann Schiltberger, who visited Azerbaijan in the 70s of the 15th century, visited different cities of Azerbaijan and gave valuable information about the socio-economic situation of the city. Ambrogio Contarini's work entitled "A Book of Travel" attracts more attention. In this work, Contarini wrote about the centralization policy implemented during the reign of Aq Qoyunlu state and Uzun Hasan, sharp feudal struggles, and how these struggles affected the economic life of the country. "Rovzat us-safa" ("Garden of Purity") by Mirkhond Muhammad ibn Khavandshah of Bukhara is one of the valuable sources, which was first published in Paris in 1843 and in Mumbai in 1853. M. Israfilov, M. Kazimbey, B. Dorn, N. Khanikov and others studied the inscriptions and epigraphic monuments of Azerbaijan and obtained substantial results (Ibrahimov 1958, 9-13).

The sources of the 1920-1930s are the general and superficial works on the history of Azerbaijan in the 15th century by E. A. Pakhomov, V. M. Sisoev (Ibrahimov 1958, 11). "Essays on the history of Azerbaijan" published in 1940-50s, I.P.Petrushevski's works "Azerbaijani states in the 15th century" can be shown as the examples. In addition, the studies related to the Azerbaijani history in the 15th century conducted by S. Mustafayev, Y. Mahmudov, M. Heydarov, A. Rahmani, D. Azimli, S. Farzaliyev, M. Ibrahimov, T. Najafli, T. Jafiyev, J. Ismayil and a number of such outstanding scientists attract attention.

Methodology

Thequalitative historical-analytical methodology used in the research that integrates the principles of historicism, comparative analysis, and the historical-excursion method. Primary sources such as *Ahsan al-Tawarikh* by Hasan Beg Rumlu, *Kitab-i Diyarbakriya* by Abu Bakr Tehrani, and *Tarikh-i Alam-ara-yi Amini* by Fazlullah ibn Ruzbihan Khunji were analyzed to reconstruct the political, economic, and legal dimensions of the Aq Qoyunlu state. In addition, travel notes of European diplomats and merchants, particularly Contarini, Zeno, and Barbaro were used to provide an external perspective on Azerbaijan's economic life and international trade relations during the reign of Uzun Hasan. The research paper applies content and comparative analysis to identify recurring patterns in governance, taxation, and trade regulation across different sources. Emphasis was placed on correlating legal texts and historical chronicles to evaluate the socio-economic role of the "Qanunname." The integration of narrative interpretation with

structural analysis allows a comprehensive understanding of how state-building and economic reforms under Uzun Hasan contributed to the emergence of centralized administration and sustainable fiscal order in medieval Azerbaijan.

Contribution of "Qanunname" in the economic revival of medieval Azerbaijan

The 13th and 14th centuries were the period of Mongol invasions in Azerbaijan. During such a period, Azerbaijan's economy declined. As a result, the productive forces of the country were undermined, most of the arable lands were turned into pastures, the producers were deprived of the means of production, and the irrigation systems were destroyed. The invasion of foreign invaders had a negative impact on the socio-economic life of the country. Mongol rulers robbed and plundered the population. During the years when Uzun Hasan came to power, the taxes and duties imposed on the townspeople and peasants were very heavy. The amount of various taxes collected here was increasing. This not only aggravates the situation of the masses of the people, but also causes a decrease in the country's income and weakens its economic base.

In such a period, the political and economic strengthening of the country was very important among the measures implemented by the Aq Qoyunlu rulers. During the reign of Uzun Hasan (1453-1478), the borders of the Azerbaijani – Aq Qoyunlu state covered a large area stretching from the Caucasus Mountains to the Persian Gulf, from Khorasan to Central Anatolia. The political and economic strengthening of the state was one of the main tasks for him, and he drafted the "Qanunname" in order to ensure the revival of the country's economy. Although the text of the "Qanunname" has not reached our days, it is possible to make an opinion about it according to the information obtained from historical sources.

Uzun Hasan's laws became famous in Eastern Anatolia under the name "Laws of Hasan Padishah", and the Ottomans, who captured the area, applied those laws there much later. This fact is clearly stated in the notes made in the editorial notebooks of those provinces (Farzalibeyli 2003, 65). Ensuring the development of the country's economy was one of the main issues in the "Qanunname". For this purpose, Uzun Hasan established diplomatic relations with neighboring countries, including the Ottoman Empire, the Republic of Venice, and the Grand Duchy of Moscow, the Golden Horde, Poland,

Austria, India, Germany, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Egypt and other states.

The adopted "Qanunname" determined the amount of taxes to be collected from the peasants, put an end to the arbitrariness of the officials and ensured that the taxes collected from the population go directly to the treasury. The chronicler Khandemir wrote that as a result of the implemented tax reform, the condition of farmers improved significantly. Arran, Azerbaijan, Persia, Kirman, Ajam and Arab Iraq began to prosper from Uzun Hasan's ever-increasing justice (Konyalı 1964, 71-72). Defending these views, F. Sumer (1992) writes that Uzun Hasan's "Qanunname" intended to regulate the taxes collected from peasants, artisans and merchants. He even tried to abolish all military taxes, but met with opposition from civil and military administrators. The laws of Hasan Padishah were used by the Ottomans for a while and by the Safavids for a long time. F. Sumer evaluates this document as an important contribution of the Aq Qoyunlu state to the financial history of the Islamic world (Najafli 2000, 30).

This narrative source called "Qanunname" from the same period describes this legislative effort as commercial, civil, criminal and tax laws. Moreover, from both narrative and documentary materials, it is understood that these regulations, some of them, were in force in Diyar-ı Bakır, Azerbaijan, Arab and Persian Iraq and Persia until the 18th century. Examination of Uzun Hasan's comprehensive commercial regulations, preserved in 16th century Ottoman laws on Eastern Anatolia, aimed to freeze the sales tax rate and regulate the collection of patronage duties and tolls, to prevent arbitrary practices by regional officials, while encouraging trade and increasing state revenues. At the same time, their efforts to prevent local privileges are clearly felt. The rules governing the silk trade are very significant in this context. Finally, Uzun Hasan's taxation model on land and products, cattle and sheep herds, mills and irrigation systems were used for a while by the Ottomans, with some changes, as equitable models for peasants, nomads and urbanites. According to J. Woods (1993), laws of Hasan Padishah were commercial, cultural, and penalty and tax laws.

Apparently, the results of the law-giving activity of this ruler far outlived his military deeds in the memory of the peoples of the Near East, such that some Persian historians in the 16th century pointed out that regulations in financial and fiscal matters (*der estefa-ye mal-o-hoquq-e divani qanun est*) established by Uzun Hasan and remained in

force for a long time after death. Even in the early 18th century, distribution of taxes to replenish the treasury of the Safavid court in Isfahan complied with Uzun Hasan's laws. In fact, the Ottoman government kept on applying his directions for some time in the eastern provincesof Asia Minor (Mustafayev 2016, 130).

One of the important places in the central government offices belonged to the prime vizier, who controlled the state's revenues and managed the financial apparatus. He also dealt with the country's foreign affairs and headed civil-administrative departments. As the prime vizier headed the Supreme Court, he was also called "Sahib Diwan". The seal of the divan was entrusted to him. The sultan's name and nickname were printed on the title of the decree or verdict issued by the rulers, and their seals were printed at the end. At the end of a decree issued by Aq Qoyunlu ruler Uzun Hasan in 1470 (on the left side), the seal of the ruler was stamped, on the back of the decree (on the right side) the seal of the divan was stamped in two places, and below it was the seals of the viziers (Najafli 2000, 32).

The historical role of Azerbaijani - Aq Qoyunlu state in the medieval trade

Trade is one of the few important economic activities necessary to maintain the power of the state. Since ancient times, people have realized the importance of trade and thanks to trade, they have made progress in the fields of science, education, culture, and art. The farsighted ruler Uzun Hasan understood the importance of international economic relations and developed trade by establishing relations with other countries to revive the country economically. With the creation of a centralized state by Uzun Hasan, this process was accelerated. At the same time, new changes and reforms were made in the customs duties obtained from the caravan routes passing through Aq Qoyunlu territory. This had a positive effect on the country's economic well-being.

The large number of irrigation ditches and canals, the restoration of the damaged ones and their return to use opened the way for the development of agriculture, sericulture, cotton growing, viticulture, gardens and melons in the lands of Azerbaijan. Azerbaijani sericulture closely connected it not only with the cities of the Near and Middle East, but also with the countries of Southern Europe. The silk produced here was sold in Venice, Bursa, Damascus and a number of other cities, where beautiful fabrics and velvet were woven from it. At that

time, silk was a means of connecting Azerbaijan to the "Great Silk Road" and was the main indicator of the country's exports. Azerbaijani silk is also sold in Russia; it occupied a prominent place among the goods exported to the territory of this state. Azerbaijan's silk industry has become an important economic factor in international trade and international labor division (Ganiyev 2019, 134).

In the 15th century, cities such as Shirvan, Shamakhi, Baku, Tabriz, Ardabil, Ganja, Maragha, and Nakhchivan played an important role in the economic life of Azerbaijan. Baku was an important port city on the Caspian coast. Oil, silk, saffron and other goods were exported from here to Astrakhan, Central Asia and Iran. That's why they called the Caspian Sea the Baku Sea at that time. Abdurrashid al-Bakuvi (1992) reported that at the beginning of the 15th century, daily oil production in Baku was 200 khalvar (one khalvar - about 400 kg) (Mammadov 1981, 23).

The 15th century in Azerbaijan is characterized by the development of crafts, trade and cities. So, as a result of the economic and political relations of the Azerbaijan - Aq Qoyunlu state with the European states during the reign of Uzun Hasan, the city of Tabriz reached a high level of development. Aq Qoyunlu state has established wider diplomatic relations with European countries. There were always delegations and consuls of various European states in the palace of Aq Qoyunlu ruler Uzun Hasan in Tabriz. In the 70s of the 15th century, even Venice, one of the Italian cities, had an embassy in the Aq Qoyunlu Palace. This proves that the diplomatic relations of the Aq Qoyunlu state with other western countries had deep economic roots. The expansion of mutual relations with Europe was also closely related to Aq Qoyunlu - Ottoman relations. These relations arose primarily from trade relations. Trade caravans passing through Tabriz, Aq Qoyunlu capital, went to Trabzon, Bursa, Aleppo, Beirut, Damascus, Tripoli, Konya, etc. as it was associated with the famous shopping centers of the time. In these trading centers where Asian and European merchants met, the merchants of the western countries participating in the Black Sea and Mediterranean trade bought various oriental goods, rare dyes, spices, precious stones, raw silk and various silk fabrics.

As in the past centuries, Tabriz kept its economic place in the life of the entire Middle East. According to historians, the destruction of Astrakhan in 1395 and Baghdad in 1400 by Timur's troops made the value of Tabriz even greater. As medieval Azerbaijani scholar Abdurrashid al-Bakuvi (1992) mentioned: "Tabriz has strong walls and

amazing buildings. It is the capital of the country of Azerbaijan. There are many rivers, the city is surrounded by gardens".

The Venetian merchant and diplomat Contarini also mentionedthe greatness of the medieval Azerbaijani city of Tabriz. Contarini (1873) wrote: "There are all kinds of food here. There are several markets in the city. A lot of silk is brought here. Later, the silk is taken to the city of Aleppo through a caravan." In addition to silk and sericulture, cotton and wool woven fabrics, shawls, jewelry, weapons and ornaments were produced in Tabriz. The four-colored piece of Tabriz silk called "Derai-yi kassab" was considered an indicator of all Azerbaijani craftsmanship at that time (Ganiyev 2019, 134).

The establishment of diplomatic relations was a result of the economic development system of Azerbaijan. The relations between Europe and Azerbaijan formed the basis of the East-West system. Azerbaijan had an important role both economically and strategically. Uzun Hasan's foreign policy is also commendable. Thus, Uzun Hasan established relations with rulers from Europe and met with foreign representatives.

In 1472, Italian politician and diplomat, Uzun Hasan's ambassador, Caterino Zeno met Polish and Hungarian ambassadors, Marco Russo, the ambassador of Grand Duke Ivan III of Moscow, and Italian Catholic monk Ludovic in Uzun Hasan's palace (Petrushevski 1951, 71). Caterino Zeno talks about the development of trade here in the 15th century, especially mentioning Tabriz as a trade center (Grey Charles 1873, 166). Venetian merchant and diplomat Ambrosio Contarini writes in the title "Description of Uzun Hasan's state" that Uzun Hasan's state was equipped with everything (Barbaro & Contarino 1873, 172). The fact that both diplomats speak well of trade indicates that economic prosperity is good here, that trade continues freely and that the process of export and import is complete.

Aq Qoyunlu's relations with Christian countries begin with their relations with the Greek state of Trabzon. The emperors of Trabzon maintained extensive contacts with Western countries against the Ottomans, and they also mediated the relations of their dynastic relatives, the Aq Qoyunlu, with European countries. After the conquest of Constantinople, when Trabzon's relations with the western countries expanded, the Aq Qoyunlu state was also involved in these relations. The relations of the Aq Qoyunlu state with Western countries were expanding. In the 50s and 60s of the 15th century, Uzun Hasan established diplomatic relations with the Greek state of Trabzon, the

Papacy and the Republic of Venice, as well as with Cyprus, Rhodes, Hungary, Albania and other states through their mediation (Mahmudov 1996, 81).

In the second half of the 15th century, Azerbaijani silk played an important role in providing raw materials for the rapidly developing textile manufactures in Italy. It should be noted that Uzun Hasan's special importance to foreign trade shows that he devoted a lot of work to the economic development of the country. During this period, the main place in Azerbaijan's foreign trade was occupied by raw silk. Azerbaijani merchants had the opportunity to trade here not only with merchants from Eastern countries, but also with European merchants. This had an impact on the economic development of the country in general.

In the 15th century, the caravan routes passing through Azerbaijan were of great importance in the trade between Europe and Asia. Therefore, the cities of Tabriz, Maragha and Ardabil were important trade centers. In the 15th century, the main intermediaries in trade with Europe were Italian merchants. A Venetian consul was also appointed to Tabriz. In the second half of the 15th century, due to the conclusion of a military alliance between the Aq Qoyunlu state and Venice, the role of Venetian merchants increased even more (Petrushevski 1951, 93).

Conclusion

Thus, the Aq Qoyunlu tribal alliance, which won the fight against the Jalairis and the Qara Qoyunlu, became a leading political force in Eastern Anatolia and the territory of Azerbaijan in the 15th century. During the reign of Uzun Hasan, the Aq Qoyunlu people began to play an important role in both the political and economic life of Azerbaijan. Aq Qoyunlu ruler Uzun Hasan carried out a number of reforms in order to eliminate economic stagnation in the country, put an end to official arbitrariness, establish justice in tax collection and improve the level of welfare of the population. Among these reforms, the "Qanunname" adopted by Uzun Hasan and later known as "Laws of Hasan Padishah" occupies a very important place. Even this Law, which was used by the Ottomans and the Safavids, remained in force throughout the 16th century.

As it can be seen, the years of rule of Aq Qoyunlu, especially Uzun Hasan, are observed with economic growth. Undoubtedly, the "Qanunname" issued by Uzun Hasan played an important role in

ensuring this economic growth. Thus, according to the "Qanunname", the taxes to be collected from the peasants were determined, their amount was specified, and the tax system was relatively relaxed. These reforms almost eliminated the irresponsibility of tax collectors. As a result of this, the situation of peasants and artisans was alleviated, albeit temporarily. As a result, Laws of Hasan Padishah revived productive forces in the country to a certain extent, ensured that the taxes collected from peasants and artisans went directly to the treasury, and the state became economically stronger.

Among the reforms carried out by Uzun Hasan in the field of foreign policy, expansion of diplomatic relations and trade relations with neighboring countries, including European states, was very important. Actually, the expansion of diplomatic relations between the countries led to the development of trade relations. The development of trade had a positive effect on the revival of crafts and productive forces in the country, as well as the economy in general. Thus, the alliance of the Aq Qoyunlu people with the European states against the Ottomans made Azerbaijan one of the leading countries in international trade at that time.

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Political cartoons depicting realities of multilateral economic relations between leaders from China and countries from the Horn of Africa

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Abstract: Political cartoons, though hugely humorous and entertaining, are in many ways an effective tool that cartoonists utilize in highlighting social realities, either to expose anomalies or to encourage prevailing realities. Studies have variously affirmed that the efficacy of a cartoon as a meaningful communication medium for the purposive sharing of perspectives and inclinations is largely dependent on the quality of creative vision each cartoon embodies. Thus, this study interpretively examines the following: the creative vision dynamics in the selected cartoons by Gado and Zapiro, focusing primarily on the aesthetics and the artists' inclination intersections in their portrayals of behaviours and pertinent realities of multilateral economic relations between political leaders from China and countries in the Horn of Africa. The study also examines the cartoonists' attempts to situate their narratives within specific contexts, utilizing distinctive symbolic images as variables that distinguish the cartoons as political cartoons. The study also looks at the nuances of subtlety and aggressiveness in the cartoons, the metaphorical polemics in the symbols in the cartoons, and the comparatives in Gado's and Zapiro's authorial point-of-view(s). Lastly, we observe that the selected cartoons reflect different perspectives, inclinations, worldviews, and creative visions regarding public opinions on the behaviours of political leaders concerning economic multilateral engagements between countries in the Horn of Africa and China.

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AGATHOS, Volume 17, Issue 2 (33-34): 901-915, DOI 10.5281/zenodo.23612067
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Keywords: China, economic relations, Horn of Africa, politicians, political cartoons

Introduction

Political cartoons are pro-humour and purposefully distorted drawings or paintings that serve as an artistic medium for authorial expressions of perspectives, reflections, debates, worldviews, inclinations, and suppositions on human realities from differing points of view. Its manifestations, aesthetics, styles, agenda, messages, and ideological bents usually vary from one cartoonist to another; nevertheless, humour is a commonality in all kinds of cartoons. Daniel Hammett (2010, 4) observes that cartoons "provide fruitful avenues through which to engage with the realities of social injustice, exploitation and inequality". Hence, cartoon is a medium and a platform for presenting pertinent social topics in different political landscapes through their provocative, satirical, and subjective illustrations (Hammett & Mather 2011, 104). Cartoons present interpretations of events as well as ideological framings and illumination on worldviews; thus, Nic S. Terblanche (2011, 157) describes political cartoons as "barometers of a nation's consciousness" and not just "comedy for entertainment". The interpretations of political cartoons by different scholars situate them as 'socially engaged arts', which, as Onwuasoanya et al. (2023, 110) articulate, is:

> An umbrella term encompassing all forms of arts (fine and applied arts, literary arts, and performance) that present various forms of public-oriented advocacy, criticism, or protestation, on topical concerns that are widely acknowledged as socially relevant. While all arts are communication channels, not all are socially engaged, because only some are metaphorical mirrors, reflecting complexities of societal concerns, manifestations, and realities.

Onwuasoanya et al. (Ibid, 113) observe that "political cartoons as a trajectory of political art include all forms of cartoons, which appear in newspapers and magazines as pictorial rhetoric and commentary on any topical social matter". Further, they state that "although political cartoons are often than not perceived as a form of amusement because they are comical, they are nevertheless a powerful medium of political discourse" (Ibidem). According to Anjali Suniti Bal et al. (2009, 230), "one of the earliest forms of political satire is the political cartoon" and "in the 18th century, political cartoons were known simply as 'satires' and widely used in the colonies to criticize English rule". They opine

that political cartoons "strive to exploit the most obvious or grotesque features of a leader (a subject) and put them on display, and in so doing, go directly to highlight or attack political image" (Ibidem).

Francisca Onwuasoanya et al. (2023, 113-114) observe that "cartoons are not legally, true copies of what they mimic, even though the images may appear distinctively telling" however, "a critical commonality of cartoons is the creative utilization of satire and hyperbole to present compositions that enhance amusement, which draws and holds the attention of beholders, even though the thematic preoccupation essentially may be a serious matter". A cartoon is a caricature, and it is describable as "a picture or description, ludicrously exaggerating peculiarities or defects in persons or things" (Bal et al. 2009, 231). Caricature can be classified as "a subset of satire, designed to elicit mirth through the exaggeration of difference" (Ibidem). Meanwhile, satire essentially is "the use of ridicule, irony or sarcasm to lampoon something or someone" or "an artistic composition designed to generate laughter" (Ibidem).

This paper utilizes a concept 'a model of caricature' by Bal et al. (2009), which elucidates the centrality of satire in creating an effective caricature (cartoon), to discuss the creative vision in selected cartoons by Gado and Zapiro, which are attempts at lampooning the ineffectual in the socio-economic realities subsisting between China and leaders of countries from the Horn of Africa. In their 'model of caricature', Bal et al. (2009, 231) observe that cartoons are satirical art and they are "a highly emotive genre that appeals to all and sundry, including the illiterate". A 'model of caricature' by Bal et al projects the following two questions as fundamentals in interpreting the value of satire in a political cartoon: 1. What are the necessary conditions for someone or something to be caricatured? 2. What is the mechanism for caricature, and how does it relate to the necessary conditions? The two questions suggest that it is through creative vision that a cartoonist should strive to subsume the following variables (sympathy, gap, or differentiation) in his or her cartoons, for efficacy elevation. Bal et el observe that 'sympathy' connotes an 'affective bond' a cartoon creates between the viewer and the object of satire, that "there must be a perceived gap, disparity or dissonance between image and reality" and that 'the undifferentiated cannot be caricatured' (Ibid, 232). The notion here is that the deliberate creative alteration, distortion, or exaggeration of features, forms, or physicality of an object of satire, which distances it from its exact natural appearance, is required to elicit humour.

To generate a plausible explanation regarding the layers of meaning symbols in cartoons, this study adopts Clifford Geertz's 'thick description', an interpretive approach, which stipulates diligent and dependable insider knowledge as major requirements for a plausible interpretation of items and symbols. 'Thick description' advocates proper situating of an analysis within a specific interpretive community before finding extended attribution(s). The expression interpretive theory refers to "a relatively large umbrella category that includes analytical perspectives and theories spanning the fields of communication, sociology, anthropology, education, cultural studies, political science, history, and the humanities" (Vannini 2009, 557).

'Thick Description' falls within 'interpretive study methodology' and a category describable as ontological and epistemological research approaches, which rely on "the ways communities, cultures, or individuals, create meaning from their own actions, rituals, interactions, and experiences" in providing deductions (Ibidem). The conceptual notion of interpretive approaches highlights the need for researchers to pay attention to the history and origin of the texts under study before extending their suppositions to connote and intersect with other broader historical, geographical, political, linguistic, ideological, economic, and cultural milieus, because meaning in texts is first localized before they are deemed interconnected.

In establishing meanings in symbols, Victor Turner's (1967, 50) idea of three levels or fields of meaning, namely, "indigenous interpretation (the exegetical meaning); the operational meaning; and the positional meaning," is an approach, viewed as relevant in this study. Turner explains that it is from native commentary that the exegetical meanings are derived and there are three classifications of it – the nominal (which is derived from the meanings associated with the name of the symbol), the substantial (which is derived from natural and material properties of objects used as symbols) and the artifactual (which are generated from the result of purposive activity) (Turner 1975, 152). In addition, Turner notes that 'operational' meaning(s) of a symbol are equivalent to its description of action and the effective qualities linked to the action, such as aggressive, sad, penitent, joyful, despair, and so on, and 'positional' meaning emanates from structural relationships that symbols have among themselves (Turner 1967, 51). According to Ekenechukwu Anipke et al. (2021, 6):

> Symbolism can be described as the creative incorporation of specific symbols in the arts to communicate specific or intended message(s) to the beholder(s). However, in some cases, such as in performance arts, symbolism may appear to be unrecognizable, incongruent, or abstruse to varying degrees depending on who the beholder is.

Conscious application of items as symbols in art is symbolism, an expression coined in 1886 by French critic Jean Moréas primarily to describe Stéphane Mallarmé and Paul Verlaine's poetry as a representation of ideas beyond the supposed literal connotations, and the study of symbolism is called symbology. We learn from art history that symbolism is a late nineteenth-century French, Russian, and Belgian art movement relating specifically to poetry and other arts. However, it is plausible to observe that human beings have exhibited the use of symbols to communicate before the late nineteen century, rather what happened at that period was the increased momentum in art related imaginative representations, driven by symbols that embed intended metaphorical attributions and the effervescent study of the shades of symbols in arts (see Hyland and Bateman 2011; Müller-Brockmann 1971). As Raymond Firth (1973, 77) observes, symbols are "instruments of expression, of communication, of knowledge and of control" and their utility extends to artistic creation of abstractions and ambiguity.

This study examines the artistic utilization of symbols as metaphors, representing public opinions and pertinent realities of multilateral economic relations between leaders from China and countries in the Horn of Africa, as subsumed in selected cartoons by Gado and Zapiro. Rodwell Makombe (2018, 56) observes that "many agree that cartoons are a powerful means of expressing dissent and/or challenging political power" however, political cartoonists usually incur the anger of politicians for their temerity to speak truth to power, for instance, "in December 2010, South African cartoonist, Jonathan Shapiro (Zapiro) was sued for portraying former President Zuma as a rapist" and "in February 2018, his contract of over ten years with *The Sunday Times* was abruptly terminated". Jonathan Shapiro, widely known as Zapiro, is a cartoonist from South Africa, born on 27 October 1958. His works have appeared in numerous South African publications, and they have been exhibited internationally on many occasions. According to Eileen M. Angelini (2020, 18), "it is in part thanks to the efforts and courage of political and editorial cartoonists that we are better-informed world-citizens" and "one of such cartoonists is Tanzanian Godfrey

Mwampembwa, born in Kenya in 1969, who bears the pen name Gado". Angelini notes that Gado is "the most syndicated political and editorial cartoonist in East and Central Africa" and that "the sophisticated manner in which he depicts and exposes corrupt dictators is unequalled and unrivalled" (Ibidem). In addition, Angelini adds that Gado's "political cartoons have been able to accelerate change in the media and perhaps for this one reason alone, he is considered by many to be the most important cartoonist in all of Africa" (Ibid, 20). In addition, Angelini notes that Gado's "work has stood the test of time, though he has been fired from jobs for expressing his opinion, as he was from the Daily Nation in March 2016 for mocking the Kenyan president" (Ibid, 21). According to Sammy G. Gachigua (2016, 196), "of all the cartoonists in Kenya, Gado's cartoons have received the most scholarly attention" and "Gado's works have been categorized by Musila as employing humour that 'tends to highbrow laughter,' which is marshalled for social criticism with the intention of creating a positive change in society". The notion here is that the poignant creative vision and provocative propensity of Gado's cartoons have brought him a significant amount of upheavals, particularly from the corridors of power; however, "Gado is deeply admired for how, for over twenty years, he has utilized his talent to draw much-needed attention to the political unrest in several African countries" (Angelini 2020, 21). Gado and Zapiro are widely viewed as cartoonists who apply creative vision in their cartoons to interrogate the prevalent economic and political upheavals in parts of Africa, particularly the paradox and polemics of leadership crisis that have continued to undermine African people's dreams of an uplifting renaissance. Creative vision in the sense applied above "represents an ingenious deployment of functional sublime imagination and skills for the purpose of creating art that is effectively aesthetic and exceptional" (Anikpe et al. 2021, 3).

Political cartoons by Gado and Zapiro: Views and contexts

In the four political cartoons selected for interpretation in this paper, we shall be looking at the quality of clarity projected in the cartoons in attempts to connect to the beholders, bearing in mind that "cartoons provide creative latitude for cartoonists to be significantly exact and at the same time inexact" (Onwuasoanya et al. 2023, 113). The notion here is that "the description of a cartoon as an inexact depiction literally highlights the deliberate creative distortion of the images in

the cartoon to allow for plausible pictorial resemblances of the target subjects. This creative outcome allows a beholder to achieve sufficient recognition and attribution, even though "the photo-alike and exact features of the represented subjects are artistically diminished deliberately" (Ibidem). In our interpretation, we are guided by the understanding that "art is creative thinking, in other words, it is thinking through images" (Potebnya 1990, 163). Therefore, we are aligning with the position that "the way and manner the relevant symbolic items are brought together in the process of making an art, defines an artist's creative vision," which will aid in finding proper attribution (Anikpe et al. 2021, 3).

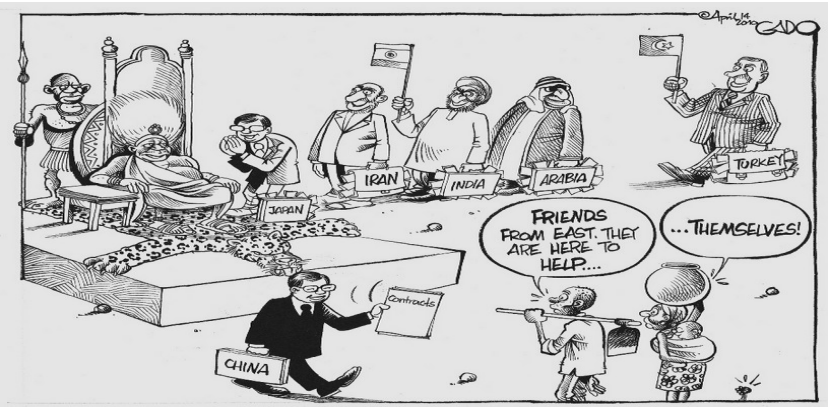


Figure 1 by Gado presents Asian leaders courting Africa Leader's acceptance of multilateral and bilateral relations

In Figure 1, the cartoonist Gado, through his pictorial narration, presents some prominent Asian country leaders as seekers of commercial bilateral arrangements for contracts and trade deals, as they lined up to have a meeting with an African leader. The narrative indicates that China has secured heart-warming contracts, which is suggested by the demeanour of the individual who represents China in the drawing. In addition, the narrative suggests that China is gladly and proudly showing off its accomplishments, so that other countries will know it is the new preferred business partner. The cartoon indicates that other countries are not relenting; rather, they are advertising their interest and desire to get a chunk of the business deals. The queuing by the Asian major economies mirrored the pattern of their quests, thus highlighting the notion that in the narrative, some of the depicted countries have covered more ground than the others. Meanwhile, some

countries are still in the queue while China has accomplished its mission and is gladly showcasing its conquest.

Also, in the narrative, there are two individuals, a male and a female, who are apparently bystanders but are in proximity to the elites (the leaders), which in reality cannot be, because deliberations of international bilateral agreements are usually closed-door events. Gado's style of utilizing unrealism, such as placing the two peasants in proximate space with the elite leaders whose actions and behaviours directly affect their well-being, is figuratively and aesthetically interesting. The placing of the peasants in that proximity with the elites is a deep metaphor that suggests, among other things, that the actions of the African leaders and their foreign collaborators have propelled specific points of view to the masses, who lament the unending maladministration. The comments made by the two bystanders are so poignant and unequivocal in projecting the above notion. Their comments indicate that the bilateral and multilateral relations existing between these countries (placed as seekers) and the countries in the Horn of Africa have not significantly propelled major economic advancement for the masses, which the two peasants represent in the narrative. The male individual is designated as a farmer, and the woman is designated as a local housewife. Both individuals are symbolic in a number of ways. Literally, as a farmer, which we deduce because of the hoe he is bearing on his shoulder, we say he is a peasant, just as the woman who strenuously has a baby on her back while a pot rests on her head. The hoe on the man's shoulder, the pot on the woman's head, and the baby on the woman's back are symbols that designate low-level peasantry. The symbolic items situate the individuals as those (the masses) who have to go through routine drudgery to make a living and survive.

The depiction of the African leader in Figure 1 can be viewed as metaphoric and symbolic. The African leader is presented as a monarch, who subsumes the connotation designating the individual as an authoritarian leader, and is a symbolic and metaphorical representation of all African leaders that are widely classified as despots, dictators, or totalitarians. Reading the African leader depicted in Figure 1 from a literal, suggestive point-of-view, our mind goes to the possibility of uncanny resemblance, which points us towards reading the image as a caricature of a one-time maximum leader of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mobutu Sese Seko, born Joseph-Désiré Mobutu. Mobutu adopted an image of absolute monarchy and a

traditional authority, typified through continuous iconic images of him sitting on an ornate, elevated throne, often adorned with a leopard skin and other items that suggest African cultural heritage. Metaphorically, we can say that the presentation is a narrative that lampoons the posturing of some African leaders as authoritarian monarchs, who claim that they are born to rule regardless of their abysmal leadership record.



Figure 2. 'Chinese Takeaway' by Zapiro (2015) presents Africa as an acquisition of China

In Figure 2, a picture narrative by Zapiro shows the caricature of the Chinese premier who gladly wheels along the African map in 3D form in his shopping cart. The African map in 3D form is tied with a rope as an item from a supermarket, with the price tag affixed to one end of the rope. The demeanour of the Chinese leader suggests that China has acquired a massive favourable deal that presents Africa as its current acquisition in economic terms. The supposition that the drawing projects indicate that, in many ways, in line with the text, China holds significant political leverage in global politics in matters that concern Africa. The tied 3D map of Africa with a rope and its placement in a cart metaphorically suggests a firm grip, and the tag attached to the rope indicates that China acquired Africa at a price. More so, the image can be read as China being in a firm grip of Africa economically, indicating that Africa's colonial 'masters' are technically edged out by China. Zapiro, through this cartoon, validates the narrative by Gado in Figure 1. The cartoon also suggests that China did not 'acquire Africa' through the barrel of a gun like the colonial masters of Africa, rather the acquisitions come from bilateral deals, which include 'loans, grants and debts' as suggested by Gado in Figure 3 below.

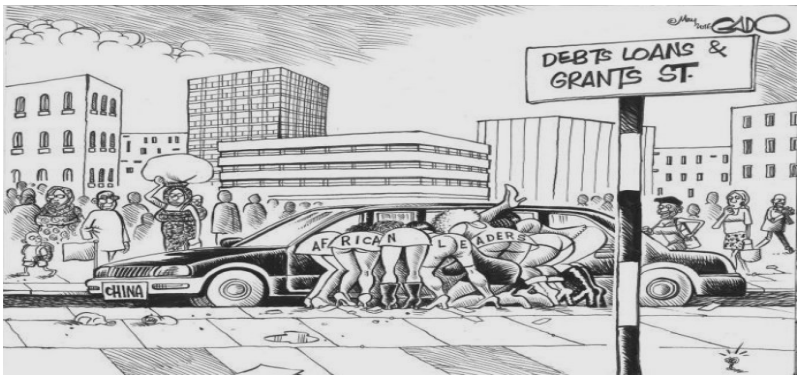


Figure 3, by Gado, presents African leaders soliciting loans and grants from China

Figure 3, by the cartoonist Gado, depicts African leaders as 'prostitutes' who are hustling for money from China. In reality, the cartoonist uses this cartoon to draw attention to the shameful manner in which some African leaders have embraced the multilateral economic relations with China. African leaders have been taking huge loans from China, and a great percentage of the loans are stolen through deceitful white-elephant projects. These projects, in most cases, do not impact positively on the masses if they are completed in the end because they are either elitist or are they become moribund just a few years after due to poor quality and gross mismanagement. Again, in Figure 3, Gado appropriates his creative vision by utilizing the 'unrealism' technique of bringing together into proximate space, individuals and things that are usually not found in such vicinity in real-life contexts. Hence, the cartoon places evidently poor and suffering, such as the woman having a child on her back and bearing a massive load on her head, beside the flamboyant prostitute hustling for money from a rich benefactor in China. Gado, through this cartoon, exhibits quality creative vision in the utilization of symbolism, which is loaded with metaphors and attributions. The black sedan car is new and in good condition, with the identification plate on the front bumper boldly written China, which is both metaphoric and symbolic. An attribution from the cartoon is the suggestion that China is an affluent patron of African leaders. The prostitutes' chaotic engagement with their affluent and accommodating patron suggests that many African leaders are engaged

in seeking loans and grants from China, as indicated by the signpost. The cartoonist applies realism in encoding the truism about prostitutions in most places which usually happens in popular streets in various metropolitan cities which is significantly indicated with the sign post with the inscription Debts, Loans & Grants St. The metaphor we appreciate through the cartoonist's representation of African leaders as women in micro-miniskirt is that African leaders approach to their multilateral economic relations with China is describable as akin to the image 'prostitutes and their patrons' engagement', in which case the prostitutes pursue their endeavour without decorum. The dressing of prostitutes, who usually are scantily dressed, exposing delicate contours for lascivious eyes, suggests a lack of shame. The African political leaders, through this cartoon, are indicative that they lack shame because their behaviours and conduct in the multilateral economic relations with China point in that direction.

Meanwhile, the background of the cartoon is creatively complicated, which in many ways is, in part, a shade of Gado's creative vision. For instance, the high-rise building in the background suggests affluence, whereas the bystanders who appear to be witnessing the shamelessness of the prostitutes are masses, among them is evidence of economic pain and impoverishment. So, the signpost suggests the prostitutes are in the loan domain, which arguably should be in China; therefore, one would ask, are the bystanders (the Africans) in China or are they in Nigeria? In addition, is the cartoonist applying his authorial licence to create a picture in a picture?

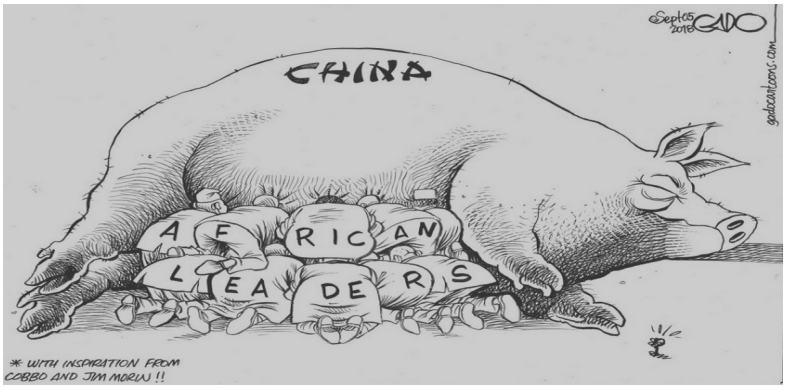


Figure 4, by Gado, presents African leaders as piglets suckling from the mother China

The cartoon tagged Figure 4 presents metaphorically a picture of a very fat pig and ten piglets, which is a caricature of China and some African leaders. The pig is depicted as a mother (China) who is breastfeeding the piglets (the children), which metaphorically connotes that the African leaders depend on China (the mother pig) for their survival. The way and manner the piglets (African leaders) are all over each other, suggests the frenzy and depth of depravity and 'survival dependency complex' they have developed towards the mother pig (China). This frame, in a number of ways, corresponds with the attributions and suppositions in Figure 3. First, in Figure 3, the prostitutes shamelessly seek 'money' from 'patrons', which projects their vulnerability and desperation. In Figure 4, the context of vulnerability and desperation is accentuated, to drive home the notion that African leaders are apparently 'helpless' as piglets, who cannot depend on themselves and be autonomous; they depend on the women's gift (her milk) for their survival. The picture relays an idea of desperation on the part of African leaders, who are all over each other, as they strive for the mother's milk (life-line). Poignantly, through Figure 4, Gado relays his authorial view that African leaders are not only independent but are fragile as 'piglets' that cannot fend for themselves. The way and manner in which the piglets (African leaders) are kneeling can be symbolic and metaphorical in many ways. To kneel suggests 'total submission' and 'weakness', whereas the entity they are kneeling for represents 'dominance' and 'greater strength'. Furthermore, kneeling connotes allegiance to a stronger entity. Another way of looking at the picture is the notion that the pig appears relaxed and healthy, which connotes the idea that China, which the pig represents, is healthy regardless of her assumed frame as a 'mother', the benefactress.

Conclusion: Perspectives on nuances of communication through political cartoons

The paper looked at the depiction-inclinations in the cartoons to appreciate how the cartoons represent an efficacious means of engaging people's attention with pertinent social realities concerning the masses' well-being and the shades of corruption in governance that regress economic development in Africa generally and the Horn of Africa in particular. The paper interpretively explored the shades of artistic techniques evident in the selected cartoons that situate the cartoons as political cartoons, which establish the nuances of the

aesthetics of ambiguity and how these techniques aid in establishing curiosity, obscurity, subtlety, aggressiveness, authorial inclinations, and narrative extension. The paper also explored the instances of similarities and dissimilarities in their projection of thematic ideas in the selected cartoons.

The paper indicated that reliably in studies discussing communication through art media, "there are plausible explanations illustrating how the utility of art extends beyond leisure and amusement" (Anikpe et al. 2021, 1). This is because "artistic symbols in many ways, act as complimentary narrative tools that elevate and define the message from the artist, which can help to generate efficacious consciousness and mood aggregation in the beholders" (Ibidem). Affirming the above view, Chijioke Onuora et al. (2021, 2) observe that scholarly descriptions of art, are in accord that "art is an efficacious medium of communication through which artists encode ideas, emotions, information, worldviews and knowledge for viewers' interpretation, reflection, appreciation, fulfilment and enrichment". The notion here is that art (such as the cartoons of Gado and Zapiro which we discussed) variously possess varying propensity to propel ideas, rouse or dowse mood intensity, thus these cartoons can infuriate, please, displease, motivate, heal, reinvigorate and among other things consistently remind us of the past and the present, and sometimes propel us to think about future. Our submission is that the utilities and functions of the cartoons studied, just like other art forms, "go way beyond the presentation of an aesthetic presence alone, but include projection of strong and efficacious ambiance, which encodes emotions, multiple layers and shades of information and knowledge, didacticism, and political realities" (Onuora et al. 2021, 4). Thus, reading a cartoon as a plausible web of deep metaphors and attributions places a cartoon as a text, essentially embodying authorial trajectories propelling inevitably multiple points of view on the side of the beholders, therefore, the selected cartoons by Gado and Zapiro, "extend the thread of recognition and understanding beyond what previously was seen and known" (Elderfield 2006, 44). On the effectiveness of the studied cartoons as efficacious channels of information dissemination, we summarize by aligning our observation with the conceptualization of Francisca C. Onwuasoanya et al. (2023, 109) that "the efficacy, messages and aesthetic value in a socially-engaged art depend on several variables such as the artist's creative vision, skill, inclination, worldview, emotional disposition, and

agenda". We also observe that the selected cartoons we studied are socially engaged because in accord with Onwuasoanya et al. (2023, 112-113) "when art is utilized as a channel of portraying nuances of disenchantment emanating from perceived incompetence, retrogression, aberration, double standards, and injustice in human realities such as politics, international relations, and religion, it is an example of political art, protest art and a socially engaged art".

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Holding and unholding the wound: Trauma and the feminine ethics of endurance in *Brick Lane*

Aafia Shereen, Shantanu Ghosh and Sutapa Dutta*

Abstract: In contemporary times, migration extends beyond its literal meaning of a change in location. It becomes a source of gender discrimination where the experiences of men and those of women differ significantly. Women endure not just the trauma of displacement but also resentment from a restrictive community abroad. This paper investigates Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* (2003) as a literary record showing the ways in which trauma is inflicted upon migrant women and how they ultimately come out of its shackles. Drawing on trauma theory and feminist scholarship, this paper probes the insidious nature of trauma that consumes Nazneen, the protagonist of the novel. The analysis extends the discussion by showing how communal judgement and enforced domesticity fracture migrant women's identity. It traces how trauma manifests through cognitive processes like dreams and somatic experiences like a sudden collapse. Ultimately, the paper argues for a redemptive arc by discussing how *Brick Lane* portrays migrant women not as passive victims, but as resilient figures who achieve autonomy and healing through acts of resistance.

Keywords: diasporic subjectivity, migrant women, patriarchy, recovery, resistance, trauma

Introduction

The process of migration, besides being a matter of geographical relocation, is also a journey accompanied by rupture and reconstruction of the self. While trying to form a balance in the host country, experiences such as discrimination, violence, detention, or family separation cause migrants to encounter stress and trauma, which lead to a higher likelihood of developing mental health disorders, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and, in

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AGATHOS, Volume 17, Issue 2 (33-34): 917-931, DOI 10.5281/zenodo.23612197
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severe cases, suicidal behaviour (Bustamante et al. 2018, 220). These experiences, however, cannot be generalised, as migration is a gendered process where men and women experience it differently. Migrant women, compared to men, suffer more oppression, which makes their existence precarious (Kawar 2004, 73). Their bodies are subjected to constant scrutiny, and entrenched gender hierarchies intensify their marginalisation.

Writing in this context, Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* (2003) centres on the trauma that migrant women experience. The novel shows migration as both a physical journey and a source of psychic wounds caused by confinement, exclusion and fragmented identity. In the host society, women endure the pressure of cultural scrutiny and patriarchal demands. This paper analyses *Brick Lane* as a record of how migrant women endure trauma, live with it, and search for agency in exile. A work of realist diasporic fiction, *Brick Lane* follows the life of its protagonist, Nazneen, as she moves from Gouripur in Bangladesh to Tower Hamlets in East London. Within this setting, Nazneen's experiences are shaped by familial authority, community surveillance, and intimate relationships, all of which contribute to the formation and persistence of her trauma.

The analysis draws on trauma theory, particularly Cathy Caruth's conceptualisation of trauma as a wound that resists immediate comprehension, alongside Judith Herman's model of recovery, which traces the gradual movement from helplessness toward the reconstruction of the self. Feminist trauma scholarship, especially the work of Laura Brown and Jennifer Griffiths, further informs the discussion by foregrounding the role of gender and power in shaping traumatic experience. Through close attention to Nazneen's psychological and bodily responses that are manifested in dreams, breakdowns, and moments of dissociation, the paper explores how trauma inhabits both mind and body. At the same time, it argues that *Brick Lane* resists a narrative of pure victimhood, presenting migrant women as figures capable of resistance, negotiation, and the reclamation of autonomy through small but significant acts of defiance.

Methodology and theoretical framework

This paper focuses on analysing the trauma strand in the novel Brick Lane by Monica Ali. Using a qualitative approach, the paper probes into the character of Nazneen to understand the everyday traumas of

migrant women, which often go unnoticed. The analysis does not, however, aim to generalise the experiences of all migrant women as traumatic. Instead, it uses Nazneen's story as a case study to explore how and why migration becomes traumatic for many migrant women.

Theoretically, this paper focuses on understanding trauma and aligns it with the feminist perspective. To ground this understanding, a critical consideration of the origins of the term 'trauma' is helpful. As Caruth (1996, 3) notes, the term 'trauma' originates from the Greek word meaning 'wound', initially designating a physical injury, but in later psychological usage, "the term trauma is understood as a wound inflicted not upon the body but upon the mind". This understanding of trauma becomes our starting point in tracing the mental wounds of the protagonist, Nazneen, who, after marrying Chanu, a man much older than her, moves to London with him, only to find her sense of self dissolving into invisibility. This psychic wounding is immediately visible in Nazneen's early experience of marriage and migration. The narrator captures her isolation with the observation:

> In all her eighteen years, she could scarcely remember a moment that she had spent alone. Until she married. And came to London to sit day after day in this large box with the furniture to dust, and the muffled sound of private lives sealed away above, below and around her. (Ali 2004, 26)

Caruth (1996, 4) further suggests that trauma exceeds a simple pathology, describing it as "the story of a wound that cries out" and attempts to articulate a truth that remains partially inaccessible. This emphasis on the unarticulated dimensions of trauma helps explain Nazneen's contradictory responses to her circumstances. While she appears outwardly compliant within her marriage, she simultaneously engages in small, quiet acts of resistance like taking secret walks through London, deliberately spilling chillies into Chanu's food, and misplacing his papers.

The theory of trauma helps explain why Nazneen's unconscious so often revisits her sister, Hasina, left behind in Bangladesh, and her mother, who died young. As Caruth (1996, 3–4, 11, 59) notes, Freud understood trauma not as a wound that could simply heal, but as an overwhelming breach in the mind's experience of time and self, one that remains inaccessible to consciousness until it forces itself back in the form of nightmares, flashbacks, and repetitive intrusions. This revisiting of the past is embodied in Nazneen's recurrent dreams of Hasina and her mother, which show how her mind retraces what is

hard to express. Furthermore, trauma is frequently somatic alongside being psychological. Women are especially prone to manifesting trauma through bodily symptoms, reporting physical pain, exhaustion, and other somatic complaints more frequently than men (Banner 2016, 52). Nazneen's sudden bodily collapses and faintness can thus be read as the physical inscription of her trauma, her body expressing what her voice cannot articulate.

While Caruth gives a powerful way to understand trauma, her work does not look closely at how it affects women in particular. She does not place trauma within a feminist view or consider how patriarchy shapes women's experiences of suffering. To read *Brick Lane* through a feminist lens, it becomes necessary to turn to scholars such as Laura Brown and Jennifer Griffiths, who foreground the gendered nature of trauma.

Trauma theory is framed in a way that risks universalising experience while erasing the specifically gendered contexts in which women encounter psychic wounds. Traditional definitions of trauma as an event "outside the range of human experience" are shaped by male, dominant class experiences—war, natural disasters, violent accidents—while excluding the private, everyday, and repetitive traumas that structure women's lives, such as silencing, domestic subjugation, and personal violence (Brown 1991, 119–22). A feminist perspective, therefore, insists on recognising these insidious but normalised traumas as central to women's psychic suffering.

Building on this, Griffiths (2018, 181–84) shows that feminist thinkers link trauma to power. In her view, trauma is not only a private wound but also a tool through which dominance is maintained over women, reducing them to second-class citizens. Recovery, then, is more than just healing the mind; it is also an act of speaking out and resisting the social rules that demand women's compliance and silence. Situating *Brick Lane* within this feminist approach allows us to read Nazneen's rebellions not as isolated acts of survival but as ways of challenging the structures that seek to define and contain her.

Drawing on Judith Herman's work, this paper looks at the possibility of recovery from trauma. It assesses the three-stage model of recovery as proposed by Herman, which includes establishing a safe zone, remembering and mourning by talking about the trauma, and reconstructing the self. This framework allows for the possibility of redemption and explains Nazneen's evolution from a dependent and traumatised migrant to an independent and liberated woman.

The gendered genesis of trauma

From the very beginning of Nazneen's life, a shadow of trauma follows her. She arrives prematurely, much to her father's disappointment, at the birth of a girl. Her fatalist mother refuses any medical help for the baby and leaves Nazneen to divine will. This primal act of neglect and abandonment becomes Nazneen's first psychic wound, foreshadowing the gendered oppression that would shape her existence ahead. The mantra impressed upon her —"What could not be changed must be borne. And, since nothing could be changed, everything had to be borne" (Ali 2004, 18)—becomes the template through which she endures the traumas of her later life. Nazneen's physical and mental development is shadowed from the beginning by this act of being "left to her fate" by her own family (Nasrin 2020, 86). Trauma here is not only an individual wound but also a structural one, rooted in patriarchal devaluation and maternal abandonment, which continues to reverberate throughout Nazneen's story. Read through Brown's (1991, 119–22) feminist lens, Nazneen's abandonment exemplifies how everyday normalised acts of neglect toward women and girls must also be recognised as trauma, even if they fall outside the dominant male-defined categories of catastrophic events.

Nazneen's first psychic wound begins with her birth, and later deepens through the experience of migration. Married to Chanu at the fragile age of eighteen, she is uprooted from her familiar world in Bangladesh and placed within the unfamiliar landscape of London's Tower Hamlets. Her migration to London comes as an outcome of patriarchal decision-making, where her father decides upon the marriage without considering her opinion. Migration here operates within a gendered framework, where men are positioned as active subjects while women are reduced to passive objects whose lives are directed by others. Nazneen, after migrating, finds herself alone in a small apartment, cut off from the familiar culture she grew up in and from the community ties that once gave her a sense of belonging. The narrator captures her condition with stark clarity: "She looked and she saw that she was trapped inside this body, inside this room, inside this flat, inside this concrete slab of entombed humanity" (Ali 2004, 78). Migration here becomes a wound that unsettles her identity and compounds her earlier experience of abandonment. The invisibility and silence she faces in London test her endurance, forcing her to bear the

unbearable. In this new setting, her psychic pain deepens due to loneliness, showing that trauma is not only about the first wound but also about how it returns and repeats itself (Caruth 1996, 4). In Nazneen's story, migration reactivates her earlier wounds and reinforces a cycle of emotional vulnerability that is distinctly gendered. Both her husband, Chanu, and her illicit lover, Karim, describe Nazneen as "unspoiled" (Ali 2004, 25) or "the real thing" (Ibid, 387), reducing her identity to a narrow idea of traditional femininity. For them, a woman's worth lies in her passivity and domestic usefulness. As Chanu remarks, "What's more, she is a good worker. Cleaning and cooking and all that" (Ibid, 25). Such remarks reflect how patriarchal cultures render women's identity static, valuing them only as compliant caretakers rather than evolving individuals. Many South Asian women, especially those who have limited education and are poor, are deprived of a real sense of identity and independence. Their existence revolves around their household duties and conventional social expectations (Akter and Popy 2025, 85).

This burden grows heavier when a woman also becomes a migrant. In diasporic communities, women are often turned into symbols of cultural authenticity and judged for how they dress, speak, or behave. Das Dasgupta states:

> The main casualty of our communities' efforts to reformulate homogeneous 'authenticity' are women. In their efforts to immortalize the traditional 'culture', South Asians have placed an inordinate burden on community women. (Das Dasgupta 1998, 5)

Nazneen's suffering cannot be read only as a matter of personal distress but as a trauma constructed by cultural and communal expectations. Her identity as a migrant woman is disciplined by the demand to remain unspoiled, modest, and the custodian of tradition—roles imposed upon her by her husband, her lover, and the wider diasporic community. In this sense, her trauma reflects what Wertheimer and Casper described as the framing of trauma:

> Not only as a condition of broken bodies and shattered minds, but also and primarily as a cultural object. …a product of history and politics subject to reinterpretation, contestation, and intervention. (Wertheimer and Casper 2016, 3)

Nazneen's psychic wounds are therefore inseparable from the political and cultural history of migration and patriarchy that defines her life, making her trauma both individual and collective.

Furthermore, the disciplining of Nazneen's ambitions demonstrates how trauma is extended through patriarchal authority within the migrant household. When she expresses her wish to attend college and learn English, Chanu responds, "You're going to be a mother. …Will that not keep you busy enough?" (Ali 2004, 79) His dismissal reduces her existence to the role of reproduction, denying her any scope for self-advancement and revealing how migrant women's aspirations to assimilate are frequently curtailed under the guise of duty. Later, his remark "Why should you go out? …I will look like a fool." (Ibid, 47) shows how her freedom, even to move, is subject to a man's permission. His tendency to regulate Nazneen's behaviour stems from his desire to preserve Bangladeshi customs, and, for him, his wife becomes a cultural object rather than a person. He restricts Nazneen from socialising on her own terms, leading to a gradual erosion of her sense of self. Under such conditions, Nazneen's trauma is intensified not only by her dislocation but also because of the mechanisms of patriarchy that regulate a woman's autonomy and confine her to domesticity. As Gerasimos Kakoliris (2025, 61) argues, gender identity is produced through the reiteration of acts that dictate what a man or a woman is permitted to do. Nazneen's submission thus reflects the performative nature of gender, where behaviour, choice, and even aspirations are scripted by social norms rather than personal will.

Griffiths (2018, 181) observes that trauma can act as a tool of dominance that is maintained through hierarchies where men are given precedence over women and women are thrust into being recognised as secondary to men. This gendered subordination, where trauma is systematically produced and reproduced to sustain patriarchy, can be understood as a part of the wider structure of gendered subordination, which explains the passivity and silencing of women like Nazneen.

The most pervasive post-traumatic disorders are not those of men in war but of women in civilian life, where violence is a routine part of their domestic existence. The cultural sanctity of privacy conceals these conditions, and attempts to speak out often invite ridicule. This enforced silence, born of fear and shame, permits continuing exploitation, showing how patriarchal control thrives in the very sphere that is imagined as intimate and protective (Herman 1992, 28).

Karim similarly works within a patriarchal structure to exacerbate Nazneen's trauma. The trauma associated here also stems from Nazneen's guilt of being involved in an illicit relationship. Nazneen's relationship with Karim, often read as a break from the restrictions of her marriage, does not ultimately free her from systems of domination. Instead, it situates her within another pattern of control, where her emotional and bodily choices remain constrained. During a moment of physical weakness —"sick" and "shaking"—she does not seek intimacy, yet acquiesces when Karim instructs her to "get undressed" (Ali 2004, 290). This episode highlights the power dynamics of an apparently transgressive relationship that ultimately turns coercive. For women like Nazneen, trauma is not tied to a single structure of oppression, but is perpetuated through repeated cycles of gendered control. The wound is not public, like war, but private, secret, lodged in the realm of intimacy, precisely the kind of experience that Brown urges us to acknowledge when she writes:

> A feminist analysis calls us to look beyond the public and male experiences of trauma to the private, secret experiences that women encounter in the interpersonal realm and at the hands of those we love and depend upon. (Brown 1991, 122)

Mrs Islam, an authoritative older migrant woman, also contributes to the conditions that produce psychological distress among migrant women. She exerts her panoptic presence over all women in her community. She keeps a vigilant eye on everyone, asserting control by extracting personal information and using it as a weapon through gossip. The narrator says, "Mrs Islam knew everything about everybody. She had been in London for nearly thirty years and if you were a Bangladeshi here, what could you keep secret from her?" (Ali 2004, 30) This remark reflects the omniscient presence of Mrs Islam within the community. By knowing everything about everybody, she exerts control by making secrecy impossible, thus amplifying the vulnerability of women around her. For migrant women like Nazneen, this panoptic gaze translates into a form of psychological trauma, as even the most intimate details of their lives could be weaponised through gossip or public shaming.

Jorina, another Bangladeshi migrant woman living in Tower Hamlets, begins working because her husband's wages are insufficient to support the family. Her necessity is cast by Mrs Islam as cultural betrayal. She claims, "Mixing with all sorts: Turkish, English, Jewish.

All sorts…if you mix with all these people…you have to give up your culture to accept theirs" (Ibid, 31). Here, she constructs cultural purity as fragile and makes it women's responsibility to guard it. Any step away from what is considered normal is seen as betrayal, creating a sense of fear that makes women monitor their own behaviour. Mrs Islam's remark that Jorina has "brought shame on them all" (Ibid, 99), for working outside the home, reveals how women are always held responsible, even when their actions are motivated by need. Here, rather than overt violence, it is the mechanism of rumours, exclusion, and shame that is used to inflict trauma. These incidents show how migrant women bear the burden of a double-edged sword. They are expected to survive in a foreign land, assimilate according to its needs, and at the same time carry the weight of cultural preservation. Shame and fear, often confused with obligation, govern their lives.

Dreams and the bodily manifestation of trauma

Trauma does not end when the event causing it ends. It resurfaces through nightmares, flashbacks, and hallucinations (Kumari and Banerjee 2024, 123). Traumatic dreams, unlike neurotic ones, return the event literally rather than symbolically, showing the mind's inability to give it meaning. Caruth (1996, 59–63) notes that Freud saw this compulsive repetition as the core of trauma, later theorised as the death drive. Modern trauma theory confirms that such dreams and flashbacks are themselves retraumatising, disrupting the brain and sometimes driving survivors to despair even after safety. Thus, the traumatic dream exemplifies how trauma inscribes itself through destructive cycles of repetition rather than healing memory. For many migrants, dreams become a way in which the trauma of exile replays itself, trapping the mind in memories, dislocation, and distance. In *Brick Lane*, Nazneen's dreams often carry her back to Gouripur, where she finds herself with her mother or sister. These dreams hold her to the past, making it harder for her to assimilate.

In one such nightmare, she sees Hasina "in the garment factory, ironing collars in place…ironing her own hand…ironing her face" (Ali 2004, 117). The violent imagery embodies trauma's literal return. Nazneen's fear for her sister's exploitation emerges as self-destruction, where labour effaces body and identity. The nightmare reflects how trauma and displacement collapse care, guilt, and helplessness into haunting repetitions that Nazneen cannot escape.

Nazneen's nightmare of Gouripur, in which her mother plaits her hair before accusing her of killing her son, shows what Caruth (1996, 3–4) calls trauma's belated knowledge, an experience "too unexpectedly, to be fully known and is therefore not available to consciousness until it imposes itself again, repeatedly, in the nightmares and repetitive actions of the survivor". Although Raqib, Nazneen's son, dies from illness, Nazneen cannot let go of the feeling that she is to blame. The fault, in her belief, is that she trusted doctors rather than letting fate handle things, as her mother had always taught her. This guilt resurfaces in her dream when Amma's voice accuses her aloud, saying, "Say it out loud, I killed my son" (Ali 2004, 434). Breathlessness and guilt are mixed in the dream as it presses against her chest. It reveals how her grief is connected to both the death of her child and the fatalism she was raised with. The dream turns into a place where her loss and her exile meet again, circling back like a wound that would not heal. Cormack (2006, 716) argues that when Nazneen sees her mother in dreams or visions, the novel briefly departs from everyday realism. These apparitions give the text a gothic or uncanny quality, as if the realist surface is being disturbed. But importantly, the novel does not fully abandon realism; the dreamlike or ghostly scene scratches its surface without breaking it.

Beyond the subconscious process of dreaming, trauma also manifests itself through physical symptoms. Women's embodiment of trauma may not only be discursive but also literal, with women more likely to report somatic symptoms (Banner 2016, 52). This aligns with Herman's (1992, 86) views that trauma is carried not just in memory but in the body, surfacing through nervous exhaustion, fainting, and psychosomatic distress. Nazneen's sudden collapse dramatises this process. Sleepless, restless, and plagued by indistinct clamouring thoughts, she moves compulsively through household tasks, as if trying to master their turmoil through repetitive bodily action. Her vomiting over the freshly washed clothes externalises the way psychic horror forces itself into the body, echoing Herman's (Ibid, 86) insight that survivors "perceive their bodies as having turned against them". The hallucinatory presence of Amma, with her admonitions to "endure" (Ali 2004, 325), further underscores the intergenerational weight of female suffering that Nazneen literally carries in her body.

Her collapse onto the kitchen floor, "eyes open and unseeing" (Ibid), belongs to the repertoire of psycho-physiological responses to overwhelming trauma: fainting, dissociation, and physical shutdown.

For days, she "clung to her collapse" (Ibid, 326), descending into a state that can be described as a dead space beyond the body, where sensations fragment like a smashed mirror.

This episode is not just a narrative flashpoint, but it also reveals trauma's dual nature as both psychic and somatic. When Nazneen cannot fully understand or express inner conflict, her body reacts, carrying what she cannot put into words.

Recovery and resistance in the aftermath of trauma

Oftentimes, trauma arrives so suddenly that a person cannot fully understand it or respond to it. While trauma has many effects, there is also the possibility of resistance that grows alongside it. The trauma associated with migration can gradually build resilience and reshape identity, creating space for a better life (Lijtmaer 2022, 306). For Nazneen, migration also gradually becomes a marker of agency, allowing for adaptability. Through her, we witness how healing follows trauma. To understand this better, we examine Herman's (1992, 155–156) work, which explains the process of recovery from a psychic wound. Her model unfolds in three stages. The first stage is safety, where the survivor must feel safe in their own body, in the place they live, and with the people around them. The second stage is remembrance and mourning, which helps the survivor realise that the trauma is a part of life, not a definition of it. The final stage is reconnection, which involves building healthy networks around oneself. Nazneen, in her journey towards resistance, moves through all these stages and emerges with greater confidence.

The first stage of Nazneen's recovery begins when she leaves her apartment without informing Chanu and wanders the streets of London with no clear direction or aim. She manages to find her way back home, making her feel independent after years of depending on others. What could have been a moment of fear becomes one of awakening as the narrator says, "Anything is possible. She wanted to shout it" (Ali 2004, 64). This marks her growing control over her surroundings and her own body, allowing her to feel a sense of safety for the first time. Khan and Umar-Ud-Din (2025, 691) note that when the sense of safety returns, the person can gradually face and accept the memories that were once too painful to handle.

Similarly, she keeps building a sense of safety through her sewing work, which makes her independent, both financially and emotionally. The money she earns lets her make her own choices. She helps Hasina

and supports Karim financially. These small decisions show her growing safety and control, and remind us that healing often happens through quiet, everyday acts rather than dramatic rebellion.

The second stage of recovery, as Herman describes, is remembrance and mourning. She writes that "the descent into mourning is at once the most necessary and the most dreaded task of this stage of recovery" (Herman 1992, 188). This phase finds a clear presence in Nazneen's journey of awakening, where long-buried memories and feelings begin to rise, forcing her to face the confusion inside her that reflects the disorder around her. The narrator notes,

> When the dreams would not let her go, would not let her go back under, she began to come out of her delirium. …She took in the disorder of the bedroom, trays and plates stacked on the dressing table, clothes hanging over the wardrobe door, tissues, books and newspapers coating the floor… (Ali 2004, 326–27)

Nazneen's return from delirium here is not just about the body healing; it is the moment she starts to move through grief towards self-recognition. By confronting the chaos around her, she begins to recognise and negotiate with her trauma. For Herman, this stage is the real work of mourning, where the survivor gradually regains a sense of balance.

In the final stage of recovery, which Herman (1992, 197) calls reconnection, the survivor begins to face her own experience of victimisation and the mark it has left on her life. With this recognition comes a gradual effort to weave the past into a new sense of self and to use it as ground for growth. At this point, the survivor works to reclaim the power, set boundaries that protect her from further harm, and rebuild relationships based on trust and respect. Small acts of defiance throughout the novel set Nazneen up for this moment, when she can finally take back her life and return to the world with a more stable sense of who she is. This change is indicated by her refusal to rely on Karim or Chanu. She liberates herself from the systems that formerly influenced her life by rejecting both emotional reliance and patriarchal control. When she tells Karim, "I wasn't me and you weren't you. From the very beginning to the very end, we didn't see things. What we did—we made each other up" (Ali 2004, 456–57), it becomes a moment of clarity, a recognition that illusion has given way to reality. Further, when Chanu announces that the family will return to Bangladesh, Nazneen has already transformed from the hesitant young

bride she once was, and she asserts, "I can't go with you" (Ibid, 480). Her words are not an act of defiance but a firm declaration of choice.

Gradually, Nazneen's recovery grows beyond the personal and becomes a shared experience. Alongside Razia, another migrant from Bangladesh, she turns sewing into both a livelihood and a bond of friendship. This shared work reflects what Herman (1992, 155) describes as the survivor's "reconnection with ordinary life", where healing takes shape through community, creativity, and purposeful action. Financial independence releases Nazneen from the shackles of patriarchal control, and she gains the space where she can live on her own terms. Her growing confidence is evident in moments where she skates in a sari and dances to Western music, gestures that signify a state of balance and contentment (Ali 2004, 491–94). By the end of the novel, her life is no longer governed by control or obedience but by choice, reflecting Herman's idea of recovery as the restoration of autonomy, connection and inner calm. True recovery, then, lies in reclaiming one's agency rather than remaining bound to the wounds of the past (Schwab 2010, 105).

Conclusion

In *Brick Lane*, Ali explores a space of partial understanding and delayed awareness. Through Nazneen's journey from oppression to emancipation, the novel presents trauma as both hidden and slowly uncovered, before it starts healing. The story becomes a psychoanalytic witnessing, where what has been repressed finds its way back through dreams, memories, and bodily pain until it can finally be faced and reshaped.

We see trauma becoming a trap that confines people and limits their agency. At the same time, we also witness how healing begins when traumatic memories are acknowledged. Much of Nazneen's life is marked by the repetition of haunting memories of her mother and son, and also by the separation from her sister. Her days unfold in cycles of endurance, reflecting the way trauma confines survivors within familiar patterns of pain. However, Nazneen releases herself from the captivity of her mind. She begins to confront her memories and accepts her past as a part of her life rather than allowing it to rule her entirely.

The novel *Brick Lane* follows a typical story pattern often found in fiction, a redemptive arc, where the main character goes through suffering but ultimately finds healing or freedom. This pattern can make the story feel more hopeful or resolved than real life usually is,

since real experiences of trauma or migration rarely end so neatly. However, the novel, as a genre, is uniquely capable of revealing the truth of personal, everyday life and of how people actually think, feel, and act. It is a genre that comes closest to representing reality. The novel explores the daily realities of ordinary people. To conclude, this analysis shows that *Brick Lane* moves beyond the boundaries of fiction and becomes a realistic psychological map of trauma and recovery. Ali uses the details of daily life to reveal how migrant women are traumatised by both patriarchy and communal expectations. These wounds are often carried in silence and hidden within routine. Even within these limits, women find ways to endure. The strength of *Brick Lane* lies in its portrayal of trauma not as dramatic, but lived often through repetitive patterns. Nazneen's transformation allows Ali to recast the narrative as one of resilience, showing that healing involves living beyond pain rather than suppressing it.

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BOOK REVIEW



De l'amour éthique, de la *paideia* et de la reverticalisation de la conscience au sein de la communauté académique. Résonances herméneutiques (On ethical love, on *paideia*, and the re-verticalization of consciousness within the academic community: Hermeneutic resonances)

Frăguţa Zaharia[*]

Carmen Cozma. 2025. *Prolegomene la o etică aplicată cercetării ştiinţifice socio-umane în vremuri mozaicate haotic* / *Prolégomènes à une éthique appliquée à la recherche en sciences humaines et sociales en des temps de mosaïque chaotique*. Bucarest: Éditions Paideia. Pp. 430.

C'est sous le haut signe de l'excellence (ἀρετή / *àreté*) et de la rigueur déontologique entendue au sens le plus profond du *deon* / δέον grec et de l'impératif moral kantien, naturellement intégré dans l'ordre

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AGATHOS, Volume 17, Issue 2 (33-34): 935-941, DOI 10.5281/zenodo.23612295
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axiologique de l'univers spirituel que s'inscrit l'ouvrage de Carmen Cozma, *Prolegomene la o etică aplicată cercetării științifice socio-umane în vremuri mozaicate haotic / Prolégomènes à une éthique appliquée à la recherche en sciences humaines et sociales en des temps de mosaïque chaotique*.

Orienté par une intentionnalité assumée qui vise à «partager des connaissances et des réflexions en marge de ce que nous considérons comme le noyau de la formation morale et éthique des professionnels de la recherche socio-humaine», l'ensemble du corpus de l'ouvrage se structure comme une réplique épistémique, méthodologique et axiologique d'une densité exceptionnelle aux dérèglements de la contemporanéité académique. D'une part, l'auteure sanctionne fermement les tentatives de détourner la réflexion éthique en la «vidant de son essence même: la morale et la moralité»; d'autre part, elle conteste de manière véhémente la présence de plus en plus aggresive et sonore dans l'espace public-académique de faux experts, qualifiés de «"professeurs" d'EIA [Éthique et Intégrité Académique] auxquels manquent les connaissances et la compréhension philosophiquement fondée», incapables d'articuler une vision organique, mais particulièrement exercés dans l'hyperbolisation destructive des aspects négatifs du monde universitaire.

En contrepoint à ces dérives de la modernité tardive, la présente démarche justifie la nécessité organique de la discipline Éthique et Intégrité Académique dans l'architecture de la formation rigoureuse et du profil spirituel du chercheur contemporain, en réactualisant les principes directeurs fondamentaux – la compétence professionnelle, l'honnêteté intellectuelle, l'intégrité morale inconditionnelle et la «règle d'or» de la réciprocité – imposés comme un impératif catégorique pour les «enseignants qui s'engagent dans l'enseignement et l'évaluation de l'EIA» (Cozma. 2025, pp. 361-362).

Avec la finesse du philosophe de vocation qui décante l'univers conceptuel des grands paradigmes historiques des idées, Carmen Cozma opère une lecture interprétative et explicative profonde sous le signe de l'axio-éthique, où la langue roumaine elle-même s'articule avec une grâce particulière dans la matrice de l'universalité philosophique. En parfait accord avec la célèbre méthode du phénomène originel (*Urphänomen*) proposée par Goethe, la nature humaine s'objective dans une polyphonie dynamique de manifestations vitales, où le rapport constant au sacré, à la transcendance et à l'ordre

cosmique devient une déterminante stylistique qui s'engendre des visions profondes de la vie et du monde.

L'un des enjeux fondamentaux et d'une aigüe actualité de l'ouvrage réside dans la délimitation radicale vis-à-vis de la permissivité éthique, du relativisme moral et de l'irresponsable insistance sur le dérisoire et le destructif – attitude paralysante qui ne fait que catalyser l'expansion insidieuse du «mal», comme on l'observe bien dans le paysage médiatique et dans l'espace public contemporains. Face à ce dangereux «pendulation du néant» et à une crise éthique généralisée, l'auteure se resitue fermement dans l'horizon kantien du «ciel étoilé au-dessus de moi et de la loi morale en moi». Les impératifs normatifs qui traversent dynamiquement l'ensemble de son exposé équivalent au fond à la présence du *daïmon* (δαίμων) socratique – cette voix pure de la conscience, ou le «murmure intérieur de l'éthique», assumé comme un guidage spirituel sans lequel tout discours sur les valeurs demeure opaque, stérile et strictement dénotatif.

Le caractère central de la démarche s'appuie sur le concept intégrateur d'*amour éthique*, perçu dans son sens le plus élevé comme un «amour de la bonté». Au sein de la phénoménologie de la vie configurée par la pensatrice Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, l'évaluation morale introduit le point de vue éthique essentiel dans l'interprétation de toutes les actions et les interrelations humaines, en fondant la signification ultime de l'existence sur le principe de *bienveillance* (Ibid, p. 74). Sous le signe d'un Nouvel Humanisme et du dessin «ontopoïétique» de l'existence, le sujet humain est invité à cultiver le respect, la sollicitude, la responsabilité transindividuelle et l'amour éthique, mettant en lumière la conscience de ce qui «dépend de nous» – pour reprendre la mémorable formule aristotélicienne. Cette dynamique intérieure exige d'elle-même une *paideia éthiqué* (παιδεία ήθική), une éducation solidement fondée qui récupère et revalorise les anciens sens helléniques de *storgē* / στοργή (l'affection naturelle, l'empathie ontologique) et de *philia* / φιλία (l'amitié pure, la fidélité et la joie de la co-présence). Sous l'égide de la phénoménologie de Max Scheler, l'amour éthique trouve son origine dans la disposition morale fondamentale (*Gesinnung*) de la personne, liant intimement l'état affectif aux valeurs morales supérieures et agissant comme un catalyseur essentiel de la vertu. De même, dans la perspective nuancée de Vladimir Jankélévitch, l'amour représente la voie royale par laquelle l'homme accomplit sa vocation ontologique. Dans son *Traité des vertus*, le philosophe affirme que «c'est dans l'acte d'aimer que

nous devenons le plus nous-mêmes», dans une dynamique paradoxale où plus nous offrons d'amour et de bonté, plus nous possédons de richesse intérieure.

Une *paideia* authentique et viable implique nécessairement la primauté absolue de la conscience morale comme condition préalable fondatrice de toute démarche cognitive ou scientifique. L'avertissement rabelaisian intemporel («science sans conscience n'est que ruine de l'âme», Ibid, p. 148) devient extrêmement impérieux à l'ère de la digitalisation accélérée et de l'essor sans précédent de l'intelligence artificielle. Face à la tentation fascinante de glisser dans l'illusion d'un «kitsch technologique» (concept emprunté au spécialiste Erik J. Larson, dans son livre intitulé *The Myth of Artificial Intelligence: Why Computers Can't Think the Way We Do*, 2021), le chercheur contemporain doit opposer un ancrage moral inébranlable et une vigilance critique lucide. Dans un paysage global caractérisé par la fluidification dangereuse des repères (Cozma. 2025, p. 346), le renouvellement éthique trouve son expression profonde dans la thèse de Vasile Morar, selon laquelle «la possibilité de la régénération morale est la chance que le temps retrouvé, inoculé dans l'histoire, se donne à lui-même par la reverticalisation simultanée de millions de consciences».

Cette architecture morale reconfigure aussi, fondamentalement, le concept de *citoyenneté académique* (*civitas academica*). Confronté directement aux tendances de plus en plus agressives de contrôle managérial «du haut vers le bas» et à la pression concurrentielle dynamique post-2000, qui oppose souvent les discours élitistes aux réalités quotidiennes opaques (selon Hanne Leth Andersen. Ibid, p. 349), l'espace universitaire a besoin urgemment d'un véritable «pacte social» fondé sur la réciprocité authentique des droits et des obligations (comme le met en évidence Adrian Muraru). Selon la vision de l'expert en éthique académique Bruce Macfarlane, le développement du *caractère* et la formation des *vertus* constituent le noyau de l'éthique universitaire (Ibid, p. 345). Si le parcours prescriptif standard est souvent perçu des principes abstraits vers la vertu, la viabilité réelle de la communauté implique un itinéraire inverse: des vertus vécues vers les principes, ces derniers ne devenant opérants que par l'intériorisation intégrale des traits de caractère (Ibid, p. 346). Car, comme le rappelle avec une amère lucidité Vasile Morar, «ayant une conscience morale, donc le daïmon qui dit ce qu'il ne faut pas faire, l'homme moral apparaît désavantagé, découvert, menacé dans les

situations troubles. Ce n'est que dans les situations claires que l'avantage est de son côté. La clarté demande du temps. C'est pourquoi la seule solution sociale est le décryptage, la connaissance, la communication, la démocratisation de la vie» (Ibid, p. 346).

Ainsi, «le bon professeur» se définit indiscutablement comme un chercheur «vertueux», dont les qualités morales résonnent parfaitement avec la définition de la vertu donnée par Christine Swanton: «une bonne qualité du caractère, plus précisément une disposition à répondre ou à confirmer des éléments dans son propre domaine d'une manière excellente ou du moins suffisamment bonne». De plus, aux côtés de l'amour et du respect, la créativité est revalorisée en tant que vertu essentielle de la connaissance (Ibid, pp. 352-353), une «sage créativité» médiatisée en permanence par la sagesse pratique, *phrónēsis* / φρόνησις (Ibidem).

La rigueur éthique de l'auteure est étayée de manière remarquable par les ouvertures interdisciplinaires vers le domaine des neurosciences (la neuroéthique, esquissée de manière visionnaire par Anneliese Alma Pontius dès 1973). Le passage du «cerveau éthique» (Michael S. Gazzaniga) et de «l'esprit moraliste» (Jonathan Haidt) à la vision profonde de William Safire relative au cerveau conçu comme «organe de notre individualité» valide l'unicité morale inestimable de la personne humaine (Ibid, pp. 71-72). En outre, l'exploration neuro-cardiaque de la plasticité du «cerveau du cœur» (Rollin McCraty) démontre que l'état de cohérence électromagnétique et énergétique entre le cœur et le cerveau favorise la rectitude du jugement, la paix intérieure et le discernement moral, ouvrant l'être humain à l'harmonie absolue avec l'Univers entier, *kósmos* / κόσμος (Ibid, p. 73).

En consonance avec la perspective transdisciplinaire formulée par Basarab Nicolescu, il nous est rappelé que «nous faisons partie intégrante du mouvement de la Réalité»: une Réalité transrationnelle et participative, où le Tiers Caché alimente en permanence la respiration cosmique qui nous inclut tous (Ibid, p. 29).

L'ouvrage de la professeure Carmen Cozma ne se réduit pas à un simple traité normatif ou à un guide formel, mais se constitue en un véritable *organon* méthodologique, un plaidoyer pour la dignité de l'esprit et un acte de grande générosité intellectuelle. Il nous invite instamment à une topologie de la transparence par la rencontre authentique avec l'Autre, nous rappelant que, dans un monde fragilisé par les crises, le destin créateur de l'homme se forge – comme dans la

géniale intuition de Lucian Blaga – par les hautes créations de l'esprit et par l'assomption inébranlable du devoir moral.

En guise de conclusion: Une herméneutique de la restauration morale et de l'ethos académique

La lecture analytique des *Prolégomènes à une éthique appliquée à la recherche en sciences humaines et sociales en des temps de mosaïque chaotique* signés par Carmen Cozma ouvre une voie sagace d'approfondissement ontologique et axiologique, resituant la recherche scientifique socio-humaine dans sa matrice morale originelle. À partir de l'interrogation initiale – *À quoi bon, l'éthique dans la recherche scientifique?* –, l'ensemble de l'itinéraire conceptuel, structuré par huit sections majeures, trace une architecture paidéique destinée à ramener le chercheur à son statut d'acteur social et moral authentique.

Une herméneutique de la table des matières de cette œuvre révèle l'articulation rigoureuse de chaque chapitre et sous-chapitre dans un ethos paidéique unitaire:

Incipit: À quoi bon, l'éthique dans la recherche scientifique? – Commence par tracer un *Repertōrium conceptātorum* fidèle au principe *Semper ad essentiam*. En saisissant le sens des concepts-clés, l'auteure formule une exigence cardinale de notre temps: la restauration de l'éthique dans son noyau moral et l'affirmation de l'unité indestructible «éthique-morale».

Entre l'éthique philosophique et l'éthique appliquée à la recherche scientifique – Argumente la nécessité indiscutable que l'éthique académique soit présente dans le cursus universitaire, en réévaluant le statut moral d'acteur social du chercheur, à la lumière des doctrines éthiques pertinentes et de la clarification de l'objet d'étude Éthique et Intégrité Académique.

Le domaine de l'éthique appliquée dans la recherche socio-humaine – Analyse les particularités du domaine socio-humain, en plaidant pour une éducation dans l'horizon de la culture philosophique-morale et en fixant des repères de bonnes pratiques dans la recherche sous l'égide du principe classique *ēthikē kai paideiā* / ηθική και παιδεία, l'éducation de la moralité et du caractère.

Science et éthique: un binôme crucial dans la recherche socio-humaine – Explore l'ethos de la recherche par un plaidoyer pour la sagesse, en questionnant de manière critique les pressions du capitalisme académique, de l'évaluation scientométrique et des technologies de l'information, afin de positionner l'éthique

académique face aux défis de l'intelligence artificielle et de la sauvegarde de «l'horizon de la sagesse».

L'adoption et l'encouragement d'une culture de l'intégrité: une urgence du présent chaotique – Reprend l'intégrité comme valeur et impératif de référence, en approfondissant la catégorie de *l'intégrité morale* dans le contexte spécifique du milieu académique contemporain.

Éthique et non-éthique dans la recherche scientifique – Aborde ouvertement les grands défis pour l'éducation, en proposant la réactualisation de *la vertu* dans un chaos généralisé et en déconstruisant les figures de la faute professionnelle, de la fraude scientifique et des dérives de conduite.

Éléments de l'infrastructure éthique du milieu académique – Détaille les repères pragmatiques: le Code d'éthique universitaire, les rigueurs de la paternité scientifique dans les sciences socio-humaines et la relance du noble concept de citoyenneté académique (*civitas academica*).

Gloses sur une «fin ouverte». Excipit – S'achève par l'assomption et la proposition d'une attitude de grande générosité spirituelle: l'adhésion à une éthique positive, constructive, d'affirmations raisonnables.

En assumant le risque de la redondance, l'œuvre de l'auteure se révèle comme une véritable herméneutique de la transparence et du dialogue authentique, un véritable instrument formatif et heuristique par lequel la recherche socio-humaine retrouve sa noblesse, en reverticalisant la conscience académique dans l'horizon de *l'excellence* (*àreté* / ἀρετή) et du *dévouement moral inconditionnel*.