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The Modern Greek Lament in the Twentieth Century: A Summary of Studies

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Abstract:

As the Greek lament has taken several types and forms throughout its historical and socio-cultural course, this article provides an overview of studies and scholarly approaches over the twentieth century under periodization, illustrating its significance on multidisciplinary grounds. By configuring a broader contextualization upon this question, the case-by-case study presentation documents the different lenses adopted to investigate it as a literary genre, musicological form, ethnological, cultural, social, religious and psychology-wise topic, as well as its presence in folklore studies, ethnomusicology, anthropology and ritual practices over the past century. This chronological arrangement, thus, enables a coherent structural understanding, foreshadows an amalgamation of angles into current research and sets the basis to appreciate lament's spectrum, which still has a lot more to unveil.

Keywords: Modern Greek Lament, Twentieth Century, Studies, Chronological Account, Folk Music, Folk Poetry

Introduction

According to Margaret Alexiou (1974, 14 and 2002, 16), the lament in Greece is classified among the oldest forms of singing and characterizes an entire category of songs, which carry a specific mental and emotional state in terms of mourning. More precisely, the Greek lament has taken several types and forms throughout its historical and socio-cultural course, which have been employed to depict the context that corresponds discretely to each occasion in detail. For example, the word *thrēnos* (lament) characterized the ancient lamentations that were composed and sung by professional weepers; by nature, they had an eloquent verbal and musical elaboration, which gave them a more structured form, while the strict criteria of their interpreters' professionalism could differentiate the *thrēnos* from *góos*, attributed to sobs of non-professional mourners during funeral ceremonies (Alexiou 2002, 103, 107 and Bertolín-Cebrián 2006, 51-52). This article, thus, provides a historiographic overview of studies and scholarly approaches towards the Greek lament, laying out its significance on multidisciplinary grounds, as a literary genre,

musicological form, ethnological, cultural, social, religious and psychology-wise case study, as well as its presence in folklore studies, ethnomusicology, anthropology and ritual practices during the last century. By creating such an account, the reader will have the opportunity to understand the kaleidoscopic nature of the Modern Greek dirge, trace its evolution through various lenses and paint a better picture on this question, which also informs current research and fosters new strands of inquiry, as the last section notes.

Early Studies and Perspectives: 1900-1950

The influence of the German-Austrian Ethnological School (*Kulturkreis*) towards the study of cultural phenomena as individual entities within a broader socio-cultural web was particularly strong at the beginning of the twentieth century, introducing cultural diffusionism in several fields (e.g. sociology, anthropology, geography) (Sylvain 1996, 483-485). By holding a significant role in the development of scholarly thought, German researchers as well as Greek philologists and folklorists had followed its principles in an attempt to start reconstructing history through the analysis of culture (Marchand 2003, 285-293).

As an element of cultural expression, the Greek lament took central place in these endeavors, where Schmitt's 1901 article raised the question on the etymological origin of the word *moiroloyi* (lament) and considered linguistic texture issues,[1] while Schmidt's 1926 studies presented the Greek folk culture as it had been shaped through specific social moments, especially death. Both attempts seem to pay homage towards the Greek civilization as the inheritor of antiquity, focusing their interest on the Greek vernacular language, as it was reflected in folk songs, proverbs and fairy tales. Apparently, von Herder's organic theory on how the mother language influences and shapes people's particular temperament combined with Grimm's systematic treaties on spoken and written languages had a great impact over these approaches, as, despite their addressed differentiation in perspectives, a latent interaction between them can emerge in terms of subject correlation (Mackridge 2009, 198-202).

Much influenced by these views and the romantic ethnological streams, Nikolaos Politis suggested a philological direction in folklore, which he introduced in Greece. In his 1914 work *Eklogai apo ta traghoudhia tou hellinikou laou*, he studied forty-nine laments and based his argument around their textual descriptions about the deceased. By applying a common thematic axis across them, he divided his material into two main categories: the laments of [his] choice and the laments that discuss the Other World and *Charos* (the personification of death). In the first category, the main theme focuses on the life of the deceased or the emptiness felt by their families (mother, wife and children), who tried to overcome this loss and absence. In the proposed subcategories for the laments *par excellence,* as he characterized them, he applied thematic criteria throughout and included laments, which referred to the last moments of the deceased and their last breath[2] as well as the widow, the death of the young men, the mother and her dead child,[3] the child's death and the mother who lost her daughter. The second

category was dedicated to folk laments, which described or referred to *Charos* and the prevailing conditions in the Other World. Among the listed ones, some of them had a clear title, others were titled by him, while there were also some laments without a title, where he quoted his own additions and interventions in the text. Thus, although Politis aimed to restore each song in its archetypal form (*urtext*) and examine them through oral and written parameters, his infelicities made his project easily challenged on scholarly grounds (Apostolakis 1929, 5, 10-11, 134-142 and Melachrinos 1946, xxix-xxx).

In 1916 and during the literature lectures of *Parnassistes* in Athens (Tragaki 2007, 8-9 and 14), he presented his study on the topography of the Modern Greek folklore, where he made a special mention to the lament of Mani (the south-western region of Peloponnese) and its practice by the 'naive and uneducated' mourners, who lamented their relatives (Politis 1916, 39-43). His comparative method presented some examples of mournful content in an attempt to highlight the historical and ethographic aspects that shape the Greek laments, as they were depicted through mourners' etiquette and rituals. By paying due regard to women's practice and their role throughout Greek history, he emphasized on the widespread tradition, which established a particular identity and socio-cultural context, especially across the countryside; besides, Lawson (1910:549) had already attributed some mystical characteristics to these simple and unsophisticated minds, which influenced that mentality (Jarett 1977, xx, 218).

On the other side of the spectrum, Kyriakides (1919) adopted the historical-geographical approach towards folklore and focused on women's laments origin, underlining their improvisational characteristics and versification. For him, the laments of Mani had an intense and dramatic background, which accentuated the dynamics of their octosyllabic verse and reflected the prevailing and 'particular psychological variances' of this region (Kyriakides 1990, 48-50). Basing his arguments on the conventional language of texts, as he called it (*ibid*: xxvii), he studied the laments through their morphological and poetic dimensions, contradicting Baud-Bovy's approach, who supported that this octosyllabic verse emanated from the Byzantine period and the folk songs of that time (Baud-Bovy 1958, 22-24).

In his 1935-1938 musical collection *Songs of the Dodecanese*, Volumes I and II, Baud-Bovy was the first ethnomusicologist who worked on the musical side of the Modern Greek laments (Beaton 2004, 114-115). These studies include twenty-one mourning songs, as part of his fieldwork across the islands. Following the phonographic recording method, he documented these laments by ear and categorized them by island into three different groups: the non-dancing laments, women's songs and the laments without instruments. By providing a combination of European and neumatic Byzantine musical notations, he was aiming at describing their non-tempered musical character in the most detailed way. In order to establish their accuracy, his studies provide information about the place and way these recordings were carried out, the rhythmic movements (if any) during the performances, the performers' names, the musical range each lament covered as well as the scales and intervals they employed. Although their

poetic text was not cited in the local dialects, it was precisely adapted to the oral singing, using special characters on any euphonic consonants and/or *tsakismata* (i.e. the syllabic or vocal embellishments), which were made during his *in situ* recordings.[4] As a result, by delineating each performer's emotional and psychological state through particular written representations, he managed to depict many different variations of the same poetic text.

Another study emphasizing on the philological and literary features of the Modern Greek laments was Joannidu's 1938 book, which was the outcome of her research at the Folklore Archives of the Academy of Athens. Through a comparative lens, she examined laments' different textual parts (i.e. preface, motifs, epilogue), their versification (meter, rhyme, stanzas) and their morphological structure in relationship with other folk songs of plaintive content; among them, the songs that referred to *xenitià* (exile), *Charos* and the Other World, religious laments – as for instance Virgin Mary's lamentations – and the lamentations dedicated to historic conquest of cities. She also emphasized on the quality, presence and coalescence of literary devices, such as the apostrophe and exclamation, the verse and chorus dualism, the response and/or rhetorical questions included in the poetic text as well as the interplay among the monologues, dialogues and preambles. Although their similarities prevented suggestions over a clear categorization, their contextual characteristics helped her indicate a thread over the funeral folk songs and mortuary laments since antiquity.

On the other hand, Reiner (1938) enriched such comparative approaches by examining laments through a trilateral lens, which comprised words, melody and movement. Supporting that the Modern Greek laments were descendants of the ancient burial threnodies, his views were primarily based on the structural resemblances between the contemporary laments and the ancient form of *góos* (Alexiou 2002, 177). His angle was mostly tailored towards folk beliefs about death and the way culture was shaped through and around them, paving thus the path for future research on this topic, which became more evident during the second half of the twentieth century, as indicated below.

However, given that the context in which mourning songs were performed was directly related to funeral rituals, Megas recognized women's leading role, upgrading Kyriakides' arguments. His descriptive analysis traces their social impact in particular mortuary circumstances across Greece and reflects his latent intentions to bring a sense of salvation and religious philosophy into this question (Megas 1939, 166-205). In his 1939 study, he discussed the particularities of *teleuti*, namely the end of life and death, and provided some well-informed commentaries on the ritual practices, deeds, words, expressions, thoughts and folk customs about death, as experienced in different areas of Greece. He also suggested three culminating stages around it: the pre-*teleuti*, *teleuti* and post-*teleuti* contexts, indicating the inherent qualities, which were interwoven with these last moments and bereavement, as Leming and Dickinson (1990, 186, 345-346, 476-477) discussed later.

More specifically, his pre-*teleuti* features introduced the signs and predictions of the Greek

folk culture about death, the forgiveness of sins, the *efcharisties* towards the near-to-death person (a process similar to the Viaticum), the agony of death and the call of death. In his *post-teleuti* elements, he included several widely used words, phrases and proverbs that were mostly employed in the folk laments *par excellence*, when describing family's care rituals towards the deceased, once the *aggelma* or *dialalima* was announced (i.e. when death was confirmed); among them, one finds the washing and covering of the dead body, the clothes, decorations, wreaths, flowers and the death ring, all of which were put forward during the funeral practices and the exposure of the corpse, while forgiveness prayers were addressed to the deceased. Before the burial, though, and at dusk, Megas highlighted the practices of *xenichtisma*, namely the overnight grieving activities, where laments were sung and employed as a means to explain and dissuade death through the use of magic or superstitious actions against evil. After *xenichtisma* and during the funeral rituals, the procession across the town or village was a solemn cortege, which usually led to religious blessings at the church. Bringing the whole rite to an end, the burial at the cemetery was followed by particular measures that would prevent tomb's violation. In some cases and by paying respect to family's last wishes, the cremation of the dead could also take place. However, when the dead body was eventually buried, the family was under an ethical (and probably spiritual) obligation to attend specific memorial services, which, although extending the process of grief, provided an opportunity to soothe pain and ask for salvation. Within this context, children's *teleuti* was a rather exceptional case of death, especially when they were not baptized, while priests' *teleuti* followed the religious path, as dictated by the Orthodox tradition. Bearing in mind the specificities of each *locus* under consideration and with the help of questionnaires and personal interviews, Megas' research also gave some useful information about the transfer of bones, the death in exile, the beliefs about the soul, the death as a means of cultural expression and how Hades was perceived as a place of an Other World. His insights fostered future interest in documenting folk events, expressions and ceremonial practices, which correlated 'the extent of folk knowledge with social variables', such as age and societal status (Heise 2010, 7).

The meaning and importance of *teleuti,* as emanated from John's Chrysostom writings was also discussed by Loukatos (1940, 30-117), where he presented his collected remarks on funeral rites over centuries. Since John Chrysostom lived at a time when the ancient Greek customs were still in use, his writings were vividly informed by their impact on folk culture, which contradicted the official Orthodox Church practices. By examining John's Chrysostom notes, Loukatos treated funeral rituals in a way similar to Megas' lens, characterizing the pro-*teleuti* context as *ustatai sigmai* or *psychorragima* (last moments, the agony of death), while keeping the post-*teleuti* framework, the funeral rites, the customs after burial and the memorial services as per Megas' approach. Thanks to his historical and archaeological evidence, he introduced an ethnographic approach to folklore and the study of laments, where John's Chrysostom remarks informed the dirge. Looking at family's and mourners' *kopetoi* (lamentations), he

underlined the element of exaggeration during such moments, where the emotional charge affects the mourning process (Siipola 2001, 1688). In his 'after the funeral' practices, he also included the *perideipna* or *nekrodeipna* (i.e. the dinner meals in memory of the deceased) and the memorial services on the third and fortieth days after death, which were associated with some folk and religious beliefs about the state of the soul (Georgitsoyanni 2019, 416-418). At these services, Loukatos referred to the boiled wheat and broth, which symbolized soul's eternality, the *psychocharti* or *meridocharti* or *anamotoloi* (a paper of forgiveness), the *Psychosavvata* (particular Saturdays during the year, dedicated to the dead) and the *psychokeri* or *nekrokeri* (i.e. candles for the dead). Connecting the folk etiquette with the ancient Greek culture, he also made particular reference to some collective visits to the graves in days of great feasts, as a way to honor the dead,[5] while the participation of the community and their support to the bereaved illustrated a common code of grief with 'interactional factors of attachment fractured by loss or by significant life changes engendered by a traumatic event' (Zinner, Williams and Ellis 1999, 9).

It seems, thus, that a wider folk cult of worship towards death had been gradually developed for years (Tzerpos 2004), where the laments, their interpreters and participants held a predominant place within the ritual context. Drawing further evidence from the Folklore Archives of the Academy of Athens, Boehm and Lüdecke enhanced this argument by interconnecting the Modern Greek folk beliefs about death with the relevant cosmological theories. In their 1947 study, they traced laments' origin through examples that could justify their relationship with the ancient dirge, while their cross-references to the poetic and religious motifs, encountered in some Asian and Slavic texts, revealed a vicinity of these genres. Women's presence was once again highlighted and the comparisons of death rituals among Orthodox Christians, Catholics and Protestants offered rich insights and confirmed threnody's translational and interreligious range, which still incites powerful critical thoughts among scholars (Tingle and Willis 2015).

Such a study was Spyridakis' 1950 article, where he characterized the lament as 'the funeral dirge of honor' (1950:74), which is expressed through 'wailing and mournful cries', closely associated with the qualities of *anakalima* (i.e. a lamenting poem or a lament addressing the dead in general).[6] By overarching the first scholarly perspectives on the question, Spyridakis adopted Loukatos' research direction and in an attempt to look into laments' ethnic background, he created a centralized system around the funeral practices, as they derived from the works of the Fathers of the Orthodox Church and the hagiological texts as well as the Greek and Roman writings. By paying due regard to the ritual importance of burial customs throughout the centuries and by addressing their sense of 'Greekness', as he called it, his main argument tried to mitigate the controversy raised by the Fathers of the Orthodox Church, who were opposed to such practices, and the people involved. As a result, he signposted the challenges of this question, summarized its main points and laid the ground to find an

equilibrium across the scholarly and non-scholarly approaches (Varvounis 1998, 19-20, 40-41).

Having, thus, been half-way through the intentions of the present article, one starts gaining a better understanding over the complexities the Modern Greek lament entails and the interdisciplinarity it asks to be thoroughly examined. Since its study started to take shape over the first half of the twentieth century as a comprehensive and comparative examination of several disperse features, it also confirmed its integral presence within the Greek culture, offering dynamic grounds of social and cultural reconsideration, as the *Kulturkreis* had initially suggested.

Systematization and Multidisciplinarity: 1950-2000

Politis' and Spyridakis' attempts towards systemization had already sown the seeds for more coordinated methods of analysis upon the Greek laments. As this section is going to indicate, the study of this topic gradually embraced a more detailed, careful and inductive examination through diverse angles over the second half of the previous century, which informed its understanding as a case study of multidisciplinarity in research and beyond (Nicolescu in Dutu 2016, 45).

Petropoulos' contribution came to fill in the gap towards an accurate systematic categorization of laments with his 1958 and 1959 studies, which contained 655 songs and provided a more attentive classification than Politis' one. Among them, nearly one hundred of pieces discuss topics related to death and are found in his *Charos* songs and laments' category. For Petropoulos, the lament is 'the articulated dirge for the deceased' and refers to any form of sad singing that narrates death, where he also includes the *odurmoi nekrou* (moans of the deceased, namely the prolonged low sounds of suffering from the person who is about to die) (Petropoulos 1959, 167). The four distinct parts of his classification encompass: (a) the laments for the dead and any plaintive dialogues, (b) the laments that are addressed to specific people (for example the host – i.e. the man of a house –, the hostess – i.e. the woman of a house –, the young women and young men), (c) the groans or death rattles of a dying person, who mourns their separation from the terrestrial world and is drawn into the sorrow of Hades and (d) the allegories and comparisons. A separate category belongs to the songs of *Charos* and contains laments in narrative style, which describe the suffering it causes to humans. At the end of his works, Petropoulos provides a last distinct category, which includes the laments of Mani, where he emphasizes on their particular poetic composition, echoing and challenging Politis' and Kyriakides' preceding perspectives on this topic.

Following the same direction and based on thematic criteria of versification, Romaios also elaborated on these laments and through a chronological classification with historical references, he concluded that this genre seemed to coincide with the fifteen syllables poetic tradition spread across the Peloponnese (Romaios 1963, 103-128). His points, though, contradicted Baud-Bovy's findings in his studies on the *kleftiko* song (Baud-Bovy 1958) and Kyriakides' arguments, who supported that only the laments of Mani lacked poetically

(Kyriakides 1919, 1926, 1934 and later 1990, 48, 98). For Romaios, Kyriakides did not seem to have realized their dramatic potential, as his merely literary approach was employed to only confirm the homogeneity, continuity and probably superiority of the Greek nation, as derived from specific longstanding cultural phenomena, a particularly acclaimed practice of the philologists and folklorists of that time.[7]

Economides (1967) on the other hand, embraced Politis' comparative method and refocused the interest on their ritual context. Going beyond any limited chronological framework, he presented an overview of funeral rituals and described how emotions have an impact over the range of expression of dirge. Drawing evidence from poetic and historical texts of ancient Greece, Roman and Byzantine literature, he intended to demonstrate the continuing presence of mourning practices in Greece from antiquity to modern times. What is noteworthy about his comparisons, though, is his concentration on the form of lament in the Balkans (Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Romania), Russia, Africa, Central Australia and Latin America, which enriched its geographical spectrum, while his specific cross-references between the lament of Mani and the lament of Corsica clearly revealed a transnational common code during moments of grief (Perkell 2008, 111).

However, Reiner's perspective for the triptych form of modern Greek laments, as the mixture of poetry, music and motion/drama still informed musicological approaches of that time, as for example Peristeris' and Spyridakis' 1968 study, where the seven laments under analysis were written in the European and Byzantine musical notations, as they had been registered during Peristeris' fieldwork. Every lament was accompanied by its title, the place it was performed, the exact date and the number of cassettes used as well as the name and age of each performer, the musical mode in which it was developed, its melodic line, the tonic chords and/or notes, the musical range it covers and the rhythmic context it follows (simple or compound). The text was presented both as a separate poetic structure and a form of musical singing, accompanied by words and melismatic embellishments, depicting the narrative through its musico-poetic qualities (Richmond 1966, 23-24). Supplementing Baud-Bovy's work, this study also enhances the aesthetic variables, which help define Greek laments through their performative details, locus and multifaceted nature.

The ritual lament in Greek tradition (Alexiou 1974), though, seems to culminate any comprehensive, interdisciplinary and meticulous examination of this phenomenon. By presenting all types of funeral dirge, as found in the ancient and medieval literature, the published collections of Greek folk songs and laments, the classical and Byzantine scholarship,[8] the author passes all these elements through the screen of their socio-cultural impact over centuries and provides a rich and highly informed synthesis about Greek tradition (Blum and Blum 1976, 342-345). Alexiou's fieldwork across Thessaly and Macedonia during the 1960s also conduced to illustrate the continuity of the Greek dirge and its interdependence with the funeral practices and rituals since antiquity. As she explains, this could be justified through a tread, which connects

the ritual performance of funeral dirge in antiquity and has been progressively assimilated in the ritual background of the Orthodox Church, permeating the Modern Greek folk customs about death, as encountered in rural and urban contexts (Alexiou 2002, 4-7, 29-35, 42-44, 171-175).

Moving beyond Greece, Jarrett also added another ethnomusicological perspective into the question, by considering and comparing similar elements in the mourning practices across Asia and the Mediterranean, which presented specific musical idioms and customs with regards to laments (Jarett 1977). In an attempt to establish international comparisons and correlations, her main focus evolved around the lament of Mani and the *klàma* (cry), as social, anthropological and musicological evidence, which enhances these comparisons. Underlying women's leading role in such instances, she emphasized on mourners' practices and associated them with death rituals beyond Greece, foreshadowing Seremetakis' approaches.

Through an anthropological lens, Caraveli-Chaves (1980 and 1986) discussed how she applied the ethnography of communication in fieldwork methodology around some parts of Epirus and Crete to approach laments.[9] Having as a compass Friedl's and Boullay's ethnographic perspectives, she managed to document their diversity and the way they communicate women's experience of pain, as shaped through historical, social, political, collective and personal circumstances.[10] Similarly, Herzfeld (1981, 44-57) examined some Cretan laments through an anthropological, but ethnographic lens, emphasizing on their masculine identity, as reflected in their verbal performance. His references to the etymological origin of the words *traghoudhi* and *moiroloyi* according to Zampelios (1859) and Menandros (1921) along with his comparisons between the wedding and funeral songs, led him to conclude that their thematic angle depends on the interpreter and the way the performance takes place, which differentiate laments' qualities on identity grounds. At the same time, the use of Baud-Bovy's records also enabled him to establish a common semantic and structural direction between some wedding songs and laments, which, although treating different texts (musical and literary), reflect nuances of gendered performativity and symbolism at a specific place.

In a much broader scope, laments' inherent psychological dimensions were treated by Pharos through pastoral psychology (Pharos 1981). His theological, philosophical and psychological descriptions on mourning as a waiting period revealed aspects of anticipation, while the moments after death depicted how loss was experienced by the Greek Orthodox society. Based on psychological, psychiatric, theological, anthropological and death studies, his comparisons on mourning and burial practices of Western societies unveiled a challenging, but quite specific attitude Orthodox priests (particularly confessors) should follow, when performing their pastoral duties and social responsibilities. However, Dracopoulou and Doxiadis challenged this approach, by addressing some skepticism around death as juxtaposed to medical ethics and folk culture. For them, the role of funerary lament, as a means of emotional support in clinical psychology holds a special place, as death 'remains universally tragic in the separation it imposes on those connected by the bond of love' (Dracopoulou and Doxiadis 1988, 15-16).

Danforth's and Tsiaras' interpretive anthropological insights (1982) discussed a particular interconnection between life and death as contiguous concepts, whose repercussions could be also traced in other social instances that share the sense of separation, as for example the case of marriage or exile. The combination of Lévi-Strauss' structural theory, van Gennep's and Hertz's theories on rites of passage and their emotional impact, Taylor's and Frazer's folklorist and historic methods as well as Durkheim's, Radkliffe-Brown's and Malinowski's functionalism, helped the authors examine death as a universal code of human experience, where laments have a symbolic, mythical, magical or didactic role and meaningfully contribute to the dialectical character of the rituals. The correlations developed among the deceased's soul (which rests in peace), the body (as it moves through burial, exhumation and transfer of bones or any other mortal remnants) and the bereaved relatives inform a process of grieving and anticipated reintegration into society, which entails a sequence of rights and duties, as dictated by local customs. Being unique to each place, they shape a rather distinctive case study each time with specific social relations, expressions and micro-cultural impact accordingly.[11]

Meanwhile, Baud-Bovy's (1983) endeavors around the Greek folk song encompassed comparisons between the laments of the mainland and insular Greece, which expanded the scholarly focus from a confined *locus*. Drawing elements from the island of Rhodes, Vanya (a small town in Thessaly) and the villages of Mani, he examined both their literary and musicological features, analyzing their lyrics' metrics and melodic lines. According to his arguments, the insular laments seemed to be mainly based on repeated stanzas of three semistichs, which came in contradiction with the mainland, where improvisation was an integral part of their morphological deployment. As for their musicological details, Baud-Bovy presented the anhemitonic melody of the laments in Trikala, which followed the pentatonic scale, while Rhodes' forms seemed to use micro-intervals in a chromatic melismatic scale.[12] However, the lament of Mani attracted his ethnomusicological interest, for once again, as an amalgamation of various elements, where performance and social impact shared a significant analogy.

His discussion was enriched by Caraveli (1986) and Auerbach (1987), who provided both a macro- and microscopic overview on the aesthetics of death rituals in the community alongside women's symbolic presence. Auerbach's fieldwork in Kalochori (a village in Epirus), considered the pleasure and joy of music through singing, dancing or playing instruments as a male privilege, while laments were treated as a feature of female expression. For Auerbach, women's vocal music constituted a means of purification and an attribute of their very nature, especially in patriarchal societies, which helped preserve some melodic vocal forms over generations; for example, laments were an integral part in moments of public social life and 'ceremonies of passage' (i.e. birth, baptism, adulthood, engagement, marriage, exile, death), where women had the opportunity to pass them on to the next generation as part of their tradition. By delineating the various musical genres, as employed in social and cultural events, she indicated a differentiation on 'tone charge' between several conventional songs and laments,

underlining identity and gender nuances, as evidenced in men's and women's roles within the community. Since women were believed to cry more often than men as a way to express their pain, they also seemed to be in charge of creating forms of plaintive content over improvised material. Usually coming out as a means of personal and social expression, these laments seemed to enunciate their emotional depletion against the constraints they may have already faced.[13] Consequently, although Caraveli gave a more generic framework of performance, she managed to provide a case of creation that went beyond any predefined funerary contexts (Stewart 2016, 307).

The following decade was marked by Seremetakis' studies in the field of anthropology, who, as a native researcher, explored the female representation in mourning practices of inner Mani (Seremetakis 1990). Within death rituals, she identified 'the warning signs of death' as well as some low voicing techniques towards the imminent death as compared to women's loud and high voicing and the *klàma*, namely the lament (Seremetakis 1990, 47-63). Treating Foucault's, Asad's, Scarry's and Taussig's observations, she illustrated the social and cultural vectors upon particular roles and practices within the community,[14] while through Rosaldo's, Abu-Lughod's, Lutz's and White's views, she shaped her interpretation on emotionality and human suffering.[15] As death rituals occupied a considerable part in her writings, Rosaldo's, Danforth's, Bloch's, Parry's and Aries's approaches helped her define their socio-cultural context besides Hertz's and van Gennep's theories.[16] Although she abstained from commenting on the contradictions between the folk and religious ritual norms, she provided well-informed studies within the European ethnography, where *klàma* was seen as an antidote to social fragmentation and an anthropological device of 'cultural power' (Saunders 1993, 318) within 'the strongly gendered solidarity of women who lament' (Herzfeld 1996, 153).

Holst-Warhaft also treated the funeral lament and rituals through their historical course and transnational presence, highlighting women's contribution. Her discussion expanded beyond Greece and looked at this kind of women's art, which operated as an agent of folk beliefs, but denied 'the value of death for the community or state, making it difficult for authorities to recruit obedient army' (Holst-Warhaft 1992, 3 and Smith 1996, 227). Inspired by the laments of Mani and based on their thematic development, she also examined the phenomenon of *gdikiomòs*[17] under both its social and cultural impact. As death rituals were dominated by women and were seen as a means of 'power and solidarity' (Smith 1996, 229), she argued that any loss of control weakens their role and pauperizes mourners, affecting women's legitimate place in Greek society. Thus, although she tried to deal with lament as an element of continuity of Greek culture, it seems that she inevitably encountered significant difficulties interwoven with such ventures.

Guy Saunier has already highlighted the methodological implications of laments' comprehensive systematization, especially the folk ones (Saunier 1993, 136-147). By laying particular emphasis on the subjectivity that emanates from researchers' preoccupations as well as the amplitude and complexity of this genre, he recognized that their thematic and motivic

fluidity can cloud coherent approaches. His observations on disciplines, such as musicology and ethnomusicology have also addressed questions that reveal the direct impact a given scholarly lens can have upon such rich material. Studying how the *in situ* recordings affect the written representation and structural setting of the Greek laments, he pointed out that the interpretation of their literary texts reveals concerns over their systematic classification, rendering it a challenging task to be completed (Saunier 2001, 11-12). Although a specific socio-cultural code can be traced in imagery as well as their thematic motifs and folk values about death, their semantic implications need to get clarified in order to understand the Greek death songs and laments. In his 1995 article, he approached the terms 'pikròs' (bitter), 'farmàki' (bitterness) and their relationship, in an attempt to correlate the concepts of bitterness and death through their metaphorical use, as encountered in the Modern Greek laments: for instance, 'pikramènos' means distressed, while 'pikrò farmàki' (bitter bitterness) or 'pikrà farmakomènos' (bitterly distressed) seem to reflect an inherent exaggeration (Saunier 1995, 225-241). His anthology on Modern Greek laments came as the culmination of his theoretical preoccupations, where he proposed a classification according to: social criteria (such as family's disintegration after a loss, folk beliefs about death and the phenomenon of *gdikiomos*); literary criteria (versification and metrics) and aesthetic parameters (e.g. thematic motifs) (Saunier 1999). Nevertheless, the texts of his listed laments do not contain any information about their recitation and performance or the place and circumstances of death, creating, thus, some problems in their thorough understanding.

Michael's Herzfeld 1993 article applied the anthropological perspective on a very specific event, describing the funeral ritual framework of a Cretan peasant, who had passed away, and the way his wife and two daughters took control over the whole situation (Herzfeld 1993, 241-255). Relying on textual interpretations, Herzfeld commented on how the intense emotional changes, the social rules that dictated a specific behavior towards death and the ritual framework found a meeting point. Alongside women's role, the impressive number of metaphors related to marriage that these laments contained was noteworthy for him, as they did not only have a prophetic character, but they nearly expressed a phenomenological promise for future to the deceased; among them, the marriage with the 'black earth' and 'the wedding with Death (*Kharos*)' reflected the prospect of marriage, especially for young girls, who may have lost their protector, while they also justified bereaved women's participation in an androcentric community, giving thus a meaningful example of gender relations and roles in rural Greece (Herzfeld 1996, 152).

Similarly, Psychogiou (1998, 193-271) and Giannakodemou (1998, 11-125) concentrated in Gortynia (an area in central Peloponnese) and the socio-cultural context that surrounds its laments. Psychogiou applied van Gennep's, Danforth's, Dabisch's and Seremetakis' approaches in order to structurally analyze an improvised lament she recorded in 1981, while Giannakodemou elaborated on its musical unfolding, finding thirteen distinct musical units and three larger literary parts, which demonstrated an eloquent symmetry. Although Psychogiou's goal was to

delineate death's spirituality, dramatization and ideology, as reflected in lyrics and women's involvement, who transformed it into a 'plaintive act' or 'plaintive tradition', Giannakodemou followed motifs' prosodic development and indicated that its textual density seemed to string out its melodic line, underlining the conveyed emotional charge of this form. By giving grounds to a dialectic relationship between its musico-poetic components, she has also broadened the ethnomusicological outlook on the question (Englund 2016, 59-60).

Whilst lamenting her grandfather's death, Panourgia explored mortality in urban Greece through an ethnographic and autobiographical lens (Panourgia 1995). As death was presented both as a personal and collective experience, memory and identity played a significant role into the shaping of mourning practices across the Athenian neighborhoods, streets, cemeteries and the Cancer Institute. Tracing the elements of a surviving plaintive tradition under the prism of urban specificity, she admitted her genuine astonishment by the laments of Mani, which informed her approach and took their study beyond predefined settings (Chatziprokopiou 2015, 130).

Motsios' studies, on the other hand, have adopted a quite complicated approach to the question (Motsios 1995 and 2000). By discussing laments' social, spatial and temporal evolution as well as their relationship with death rituals, he categorized them according to their poetic development over time, their poetic style, their thematic and motivic classification and their content interpretation. By establishing a differentiation between the mourners, who represent the folk poetry, and the priests, who represent the scholarly and religious poetry, he has also delineated the relevant context of funerary laments in several parts of Greece. As an outcome of his fieldwork, the material he included is deftly compared to similar topics and cases, as for instance some cave paintings and cave graphs in Algeria, France, Spain and the Ural Mountains. Their interpretative juxtapositions and multimodal observation have led the author to conclude that the composition of such forms, which belong to these oral plaintive traditions, could date its origins back to the twelfth and eighteenth millennium B.C., an argument that can reinforce an interdisciplinary dialogue with other researchers' findings, as for instance Brăiloiu, Zemp and Mazo, who have also studied these areas and their funeral songs on an ethnomusicological, philosophical, morphological and structural basis.[18]

In 1997, George Siettos published his study on death customs, where through Politis' and Economides' comparative methodologies, he produced a comprehensive analysis of funerary beliefs and rituals, emphasizing on their geographical origins. Escaping the idea of a centralized system with a 'national' character, he compared different cultures and periods – ancient and modern (e.g. Babylonian, Roman, Egyptian, Tibetan, Japanese) – and managed to evidence the transhistorical and intercultural qualities of funerary rituals across the globe (Boytsov 2017, 151-163).

Before bringing this summary into a closure, it is also worth mentioning Katsanevaki's doctoral thesis on the Vlach-speaking and Greek-speaking songs of the northern part of Pindos (Epirus), which includes eight laments in a comparative table, as the result of her extensive

fieldwork in the area (Katsanevaki 1998). As she underlines, their musico-poetic analysis aims to gather appropriate examples and features, which can support the evolution and continuity of these forms within Greek culture since antiquity and may serve as a compass to look for further evidence, both in and beyond the country (Katsanevaki 2012).

Having, thus, considered the multidisciplinarity of perspectives over the Greek lament, the discussion on the relevant scholarship of the previous century can help the reader trace the interactions, correlations and dissents among the approaches, while identifying the variety and remarkable depth this topic offers. Although the present article primarily considers works of the twentieth century, it also aspires to trigger questions on the connections it can establish with similar genres beyond Greece, shedding light on cultural variables, gender ideology and identity qualities, while nourishing critical thinking upon them. Such discourses have already started to come about in more recent years and the following brief section presents some studies that contribute into this question, opening new possibilities for research.

Current research and refocus: 2000 and beyond

After placing the variety of scholarly tessearae under a chronological account, the mosaic of the Greek lament seems to take shape, despite the apparent limitations this article entails. As this topic is still being examined, the inclusion of current research is expected to enable the reader to track down its specifics and promising directions.

Constantinidis' 2000 annotated bibliography presents a leading and paramount effort to collect 'works in English across twenty-two academic disciplines during the twentieth century', as its title suggests, where music and the Greek lament find their place within cross-disciplinary areas (Holst-Warhaft in Constantinidis 2000, 241-254), while Dué (2006) discusses this topic treating material from classical dramatists and tragedians. Juxtaposing the men-dominated epic tradition with women's singing in Homer's, Aeschylus' and Euripides' works, she contextualizes the collective and individual suffering, as it was shaped by the socio-cultural and behavioral mechanisms of ancient Athens. Her approach concentrates on captive Trojan women's laments and manages to address 'questions surrounding the dramatic function and cultural resonance of these figures' (Hausdoerffer, 2006), suggesting an eloquent example of audience and reception studies that has been missing so far, although it refers to a different era.

Suter's 2008 collective volume enhances 'critical thinking' and complements Alexiou's argument that 'lament is a female-gendered activity', providing iconographic evidence and insights, which seem to be particularly welcome for readers or students in the fields of archaeology, classics (Alden, 2008) and creative practice. Similarly, *The Fall of Cities in the Mediterranean* (2016) also exemplifies dirge, paying due regard to the city laments as a genre. Through theoretical and comparative approaches, which cover an extensive period of time (from ancient Greek and Roman traditions up to the Fall of Smyrna in 1922), it differentiates 'the lament for a fallen city' from "funerary laments" and "laments for heroes"' on the basis that 'the latter two, according

to Suter, are "carefully ritualized emotional outlet[s] and [...] vehicle[s] for managing an unexpected yet common event"' (Goldwyn, 2016), turning the attention to another genre of lament across the Mediterranean.

As the scholarly interest seeks to discover new grounds of examination, the relationship between the folk and art-folk genre of the Greek legacy has also initiated promising discussions over the perspectives this question opens. Fabbri and Tsioulakis (2016, 317-328) have already provided a comparative synopsis about the respective Italian and Greek musical genres, outlining their socio-cultural and political vectors of influence. Moving beyond the use of 'popular' and establishing the 'art-folk genre', particularly when it comes to musicological terminology, their suggestions are further treated in my recent article about lament in and beyond the Greek art-folk song (2019), where I argue that this genre has been nourished by lament and seems to have found the momentum to create a space for an identifiable musical attitude in Greece during the 1960s that continues to the present.

King's 2018 travelogue on the 'Lament from Epirus' is the last (although not least) piece of work to be included in this brief summary, as its hybrid character moves between music criticism and scholarly thought, providing a mixture of recent personal experiences and historical evidence that go back to pre-Homeric times. Outlining a longstanding folk tradition in Greece, his analysis over music recordings and community gatherings help illustrate a strong case of communication and interaction through lament, invoking memory with a wider application. His quasi-anthropological lens informs and invites several philosophical, social, cultural, ethnomusicological and political interpretations over a genre, which seems to be among the oldest surviving phenomena to this day.

Conclusions

Bringing this account to a close, this case-by-case study under periodization configures a broader contextualization upon the Modern Greek lament over the last century. Since cultural diffusionism inspired the first attempts of systematizing rationale, this research question has moved across different areas of inquiry, progressing from fixed and strictly text-centered approaches of a particular *locus* and formulaic units to a variety of holistic and nuanced directions, which embrace new genres and references. As it still resonates with current research and knowledge, this chronological arrangement enables a coherent structural understanding over this topic, which reveals bountiful grounds of exploration and can go well beyond a linear equation. Thereby, despite the apparently quite narrow timeframe of the present article and its scaling break-down, it is hoped that it will contribute to assess the spectrum of lament and the way it permeates similar considerations, setting up a fruitful concinnity besides such case studies. Realizing the wealth of research possibilities that lies ahead will eventually find new ways for its detection and new perspectives for its appreciation, as it still has a lot more to suggest.

Endnotes:

1. The word *moira* (destiny/fate) comes from the ancient verb *meiromai,* which means 'take a piece' and indicates the proportion that belongs to everyone in life. Symbolically, this piece contains what might happen in life and is believed to define fate, as predestined by a higher power. Deriving from Greek mythology and ancient beliefs, the original meaning of the word was closely associated with three superior forces, who were believed to determine human life: the *Moirai* (the Fates). These three old and immortal sisters had a big book, where the destiny of every human being was written (Babiniotis 1998, 1119).
2. Alexiou calls these moments 'psychoragima' or 'psychomachima' (the agony of death), 'tremosvisimo' (flashing), 'charopalema' (the last fight against death) or 'aggelokomma' (the belief about the fear of angels who come to take your soul) (Alexiou 2002, 69, 90-91).
3. The term 'child' (*paidi*) is used here to indicate the boy (Babiniotis 1998, 1313).
4. As Giannakodimou explains, this method was based on performances' recording, while dictating them in musical notes during the *in situ* research. As a process, the transcription of any melodic variations in a non-tempered scale was usually made in C natural scale, noting any additional changes (Giannakodimou 2003, 273).
5. See among others, Neils 2008, 91 and Boyd 2016, 200-221.
6. See among others, Alexiou 2002, 187-188 and Karanika 2016, 226-249.
7. It is also interesting to highlight Romaios' views about the 'cultural inactivity' attributed to Greece by the British intellectuals. First published in a newspaper article (*To Vima*, 07 August 1962) and later incorporated in his 1984 book about the Greek culture, specific examples of laments' analysis and characteristics were employed in an attempt to delineate an uninterrupted Greek cultural phenomenon that reflected an unpretentious folk expression and advocated in favour of it (Romaios 1984, 246-253).
8. According to Alexiou (1974, 113-151, 152-175), the types of dirge were mainly three: (a) the ritual laments for the gods and heroes, (b) the historic laments for the conquest or destruction of cities and (c) the funeral laments, as written or engraved in the ancient funerary inscriptions and columns, including the Byzantine literary and folk poetry and the Modern Greek laments of the twentieth century.
9. As Kanellatou indicates (2007, 82), the ethnography of communication appeared during the 1960s as a methodological tool to illustrate the multiple functionalities language and speech can have across a society. In Greece, Tsitsipis has made remarkable observations on this field, studying language as behaviour and practice (performance), while supporting its interconnection with its speaker's place and location (indexicality). See Koutoupis-Kitis 2008, 33 and Tsitsipis 2001, 55-100. For Caraveli-Chaves, these theories found particular application to laments, as they resonated with the context (i.e. what, when, where and under which cultural circumstances) something was said or sung.
10. To understand Caraveli's influence by Friedl's theories on male dominance across the rural areas of Greece, see among others: Papataxiarchis 1998, 47-49, 50-51, 55 and Gacs, Khan, McIntyre and Weinberg 1989, 102-108.
11. See among others: Tylor 1871 and van Gennep 2004, 10-13, 185-187, 209-210; Fraser 1990; Seremetakis 1991, 224-226; Waardenburg 1999, 209-219; Hamilton 2001, 29 -30; Venbrux 2007, 5-6; Hendry 2008, 68-810 and Hertz 2013.
12. See also Baud-Bovy 1994, 30-32, 44.
13. Inspired by specific anthropological views (Cambell 1964; Paristiany 1966; Friedl 1967; Boulay 1974 and Dubisch 1983), Auerbach explains that a woman with a singing or vocal talent had the privilege to publicly sing either joyful or sad songs, even if there was a possibility to become a gossip victim.

14. More precisely, the works Seremetakis treated are: Foucault 1979; Asad 1983, 287-327; Scarry 1985 and Taussig 1987.
15. See Rosaldo 1983, 135-151; Abu-Lughod 1986; Lutz and White 1986, 409-435.
16. See Rosaldo 1984, 178-195 and Bloch and Parry 1982.
17. As Petrounias and Alexakis described and Holst-Warhaft investigated later, *gdikiomos* was observed in Mani over the seventeenth to ninenteenth centuries. As a phenomenon, it was equal to the death penalty against a rivalry male family member from those who had lost someone in a murder. See also Petrounias 1934 and Alexakis 1980.
18. See among others, Brăiloiu 1960; Mazo 1987, 162-174 (Introduction and Appendices); Mazo 2006; and Zemp 2007.

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European Appropriation of Prehispanic Speeches: Reexamining the *Huehuetlatolli* as a Colonial Project

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Abstract:

The Nahuatl speeches known as *huehuetlatolli* have been studied primarily as a symbolic practice of Prehispanic Aztec morality and philosophy from the colonial period to the present. When the Spanish missionaries came to New Spain for their evangelical project, they needed to prove the Indians as capable and reasonable human beings who could be converted into Christians against their fellow Spaniards who despised the Indians as inferior creatures or barbarous savages. In this context, the Spanish priests presented the moral, philosophical, and religious behaviors that the speeches promoted as evidence of indigenous civility and intellectuality. Such a presentation of Indians, however, involved serious Europeanization of the speeches as the Spanish priests frequently modified and transformed the *huehuetlatolli* to make them similar to the content and style of European moral and religious speeches. This study traces how the Spanish priests transformed the *huehuetlatolli* by examining in detail not only the chronicles of Frays Andrés de Olmos and Bernardino de Sahagún who first collected the *huehuetlatolli* in Nahuatl and translated them into Spanish but also those of Frays Bartolomé de Las Casas and Juan de Torquemada, and other chroniclers who took advantage of *huehuetlatolli* to promote their own colonial projects.

Keywords: *Huehuetlatolli*, Nahuatl Speeches, Andrés de Olmos, Bernardino de Sahagún, Colonial Project

European Appropriation of Prehispanic Speeches: Reexamining the *Huehuetlatolli* as a Colonial Project

Far before the arrival of the Europeans to the New World, the Indians of central Mexico developed persuasive speeches whose purpose was to pray gods or exhort, counsel, and advise each other. These speeches, generally known as *huehuetlatolli* in Nahuatl, have been considered the most eloquent practices of Nahua oral traditions as well as the most symbolic examples of Nahua philosophy and morality. Angel María Garibay K., who first studied *huehuetlatolli* extensively in the nineteen forties, argued that the *huehuetlatolli* appeared to be "uno de los más

seguros veneros de la mentalidad antigua y el mejor instrumento para conocer las ideas morales y filosóficas de los mexicanos de antaño [. . .]" [one of the most reliable sources of ancient mentality and the best instrument to know the moral and philosophical ideas of the ancient Mexicans] (1992, 415). A little later, the French scholar, Jacques Soustelle, presented the moral behaviors and politeness that the *huehuetlatolli* emphasized as clear evidence of civilized practice in the Aztec society (1956; 2006, 221-227). In the same pattern, Miguel León-Portilla, who is probably one of the most influential scholars in the current Nahua cultural and literary studies, argued that "their [*huehuetlatolli*] value is fundamental for the study of the most elevated aspects of Nahua thought and culture" (1992, 76) and later presented the *huehuetlatolli* as clear evidence of a metaphysical understanding of human existence in contrast to the dominant ideology of the Aztec military mysticism (1992, 189-196; 203-205). Most scholars who have studied the *huehuetlatolli* share almost the same perspective as Garibay, Soustelle, and León-Portilla in their approach to the *huehuetlatolli*. To name a few, Thelma D. Sullivan (1976, 79), Josefina García Quintana (1976, 61), Salvador Díaz Cíntora (1995, 5), and Carmen Espinosa Maldonado (1997, 16) examine the religious, moral, political, and economic practices recorded in *huehuetlatolli* as the Prehispanic Nahua traditions. As these scholars emphasized the Prehispanic traits of *huehuetlatolli*, however, they tended to overlook the colonial influence in the process in which the speeches were collected and disseminated among the Spanish chroniclers.

When the Spanish missionaries came to the New World for their religious missions, they encountered a serious impediment to their evangelical project from their fellow Spaniards. The Spanish conquistadors and even some priests who tried to justify the colonization of the New World argued that the Indians could not deserve Christian doctrine, considering them intellectually inferior creatures like apes. In response to this claim, the Catholic missionaries needed to demonstrate that the Indians were intelligent and civilized enough to understand Christian doctrine and could be converted into Christians. Thus, demonstrating indigenous intellectuality and civility was one of the essential and urgent tasks for the missionaries, which was especially crucial for the Franciscans as the followers of millennialism who tried to build the eternal kingdom on earth through the conversion of the Indians in the New World. In this context, the Franciscan missionaries paid special attention to the indigenous speeches in Nahuatl, *huehuetlatolli*, because according to them, these speeches promoted the moral, philosophical, and religious ideas as advanced and civilized as those of Europeans. In order to present the Indians as civilized and intellectual human beings like the Europeans, however, the missionaries transformed the indigenous speeches into those similar to European speeches. This study traces such transformation of *huehuetlatolli* by examining in detail not only the chronicles of Frays Andrés de Olmos and Bernardino de Sahagún, who first collected the *huehuetlatolli* in Nahuatl and translated them into Spanish, but also those of Frays Bartolomé de Las Casas, Juan de Torquemada and several others who took advantage of *huehuetlatolli* to promote their own evangelical projects.

Presenting the *Huehuetlatolli* as a Prehispanic Indigenous Product

As the main collectors and translators of *huehuetlatolli*, Frays Olmos and Sahagún maintained the similar view of presenting these speeches as evidence of indigenous civilized practices before the conquest. Prior to presenting their argument, however, the priests had to prove the indigenous origin of *huehuetlatolli* and its faithful translation in Spanish because some Spaniards seriously doubted the indigenous intellectual capacity. Olmos collected first *huehuetlatolli* as a part of his larger project of examining indigenous culture and traditions. According to Fray Gerónimo de Mendieta (1971, 75), Fray Olmos was officially ordered to study indigenous political and social systems by the Real Audiencia and his Franciscan order in 1533. In the process of examining indigenous systems, Olmos was asked to select bad or good customs in order to decide whether they could be allowed to remain or would be destroyed under colonial rule. The *huehuetlatolli* must have been considered good customs and would have been recommended to be continued. As most of his studies about Prehispanic indigenous traditions are now missing, however, it is difficult to trace how Olmos himself verified the indigenous origin of *huehuetlatolli* and confirmed its faithful translation in Spanish. Yet, Olmos included one indigenous speech in his Nahuatl grammar book, *Arte para aprender la lengua mexicana*. In addition, several speeches collected by him were translated in Spanish and were widely circulated among the Spanish priests and chroniclers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. For instance, Frays Bartolomé de las Casas, Juan de Tovar, Jerónimo de Mendieta, Juan de Torquemada, and Juan Bautista, and the judge Alonso de Zorita included several *huehuetlatolli* in their chronicles acknowledging Fray Olmos's manuscripts as their main sources. Thus, these chronicles, along with Olmos's Nahuatl grammar book, could provide some clue as to how Olmos and later chroniclers tried to prove the indigenous origin of *huehuetlatolli* and its faithful translation.

Fray Olmos's Nahuatl grammar book, *Arte para aprender la lengua Mexicana*, provides little information about the origin and translation of *huehuetlatolli*. While dividing the book into three main parts, Olmos mentioned that the last part dealing with Nahuatl orthography accompanied "una platica por los naturales compuesta prouechosa y de buena doctrina, con otras maneras de hablar" [A useful and good doctrinal speech composed by the natives, with other ways of speaking] (1972, 10). Olmos simply verified the indigenous origin of the speech by stating that it was composed by the natives. Unfortunately, Olmos did not provide any more information as to how the speech was collected in Nahuatl and translated in Spanish. Yet, Zorita, who included several speeches collected by Olmos in his chronicle, recorded in detail a procedure as to how Olmos collected the entire *huehuetlatolli*. Before presenting the advice of a father to his son as an exemplary speech, which is almost identical to the speech Olmos included in his grammar book, Zorita explained how Olmos asked the indigenous leaders to provide him with the speeches in Nahuatl:

> Demás de criar los hijos con la disciplina é cuidado que se ha dicho, los padres ansimismo lo tenían en les dar muchos y muy buenos consejos, y los tienen hoy en día los indios principales por memoria en sus

> pinturas: é un Religioso muy antiguo en aquella tierra [Nueva España], é que ha siempre tratado é comunicado y doctrinado aquellas gentes, los tradujo de su lengua, y dice que hizo a unos principales que los escribiesen, é que no pusiesen más que la sustancia de ellos, é que los escribieron y ordenaron en su lengua sin estar él presente, y los sacaron de sus pinturas, que son como escritura é se entienden muy bien por ellas; é que no mudó letra de lo que le dieron, más que dividirlo en párrafos o partículos para que mejor se entendiese la sentencia; y que los nombres que había de sus dioses, les avisó que los quitasen é pusiesen en nombre de Dios verdadero y Señor nuestro: y para que se vea claramente que no son, como ya otra vez se ha dicho, tan faltos de razón como algunos los hacen, se ponen aquí á la letra. (2003, 497)
>
> [In addition to raising children with the discipline and care that has been said, the parents had maintained it in the same way by giving them much and very good advice, and today the indigenous leaders have them by memory in their paintings: a very old religious man in that land [New Spain], and who has always dealt with, communicated and taught those people, translated the advice from their language, and says that he made some leaders write them, and include only the substance of the advice. And they wrote and arranged the advice in their language without him being present, and they took the advice out of their paintings, which are like writing for them and they understood the paintings very well. He says that he did not change a letter of what they gave him, besides dividing it into paragraphs or parts so that the sentence could be better understood; and that he advised them to take the names of their gods out and put the name of the true God and our Lord instead. And so that it may be clearly seen that they are not, as it has already been said, so unreasonable as some people make them out to be, the advice is presented here without modification.]

Zorita did not identify "*un Religioso muy antiguo*" (a very old religious man) with Fray Olmos, but all the speeches that he included in his chronicle were almost identical to those of Olmos that other Frays Las Casas, Torquemada, and Bautista confirmed in their chronicles. According to Zorita, the indigenous leaders were asked by Olmos to write parental advice; that is, the speeches to their children, based on their oral tradition and pictorial books. They collected the speeches by themselves while Olmos was not present and were allowed only to replace the names of indigenous gods with those of Christian sacred figures because this replacement would demonstrate the Indians as reasonable human beings like the European Christians. In this paragraph, Zorita provided a couple of important clues to trace the indigenous origin and authenticity of *huehuetlatolli*. According to him, the *huehuetlatolli* was a pure indigenous product because the indigenous lords themselves collected the speeches based on their pictorial books and oral traditions, and the translations of *huehuetlatolli* were faithful because only the names of indigenous gods were replaced with those of the Christian God in the speeches.

While Zorita focused more on the indigenous origin and authenticity of *huehuetlatolli*, Las Casas, who also included several *huehuetlatolli* in his chronicle, emphasized the faithful translation of *huehuetlatolli* by Olmos in Spanish. According to him, Olmos stated in a prologue that he did not add or remove anything in the speeches translated in Spanish from the original Nahuatl source:

> Todo lo que habemos en esta parte de la crianza de los hijos destas nuestras indianas naciones, en los precedentes capítulos dicho, se confirma por unas exhortaciones que otro religioso de la orden de San Francisco me envió de la Nueva España, estando yo en España la Vieja, las cuales había él romanzado de la lengua mexicana fielmente, sin añadir ni quitar cosa que fuese de sustancias, sacando sentido de sentido, no palabra de palabra; porque como él dijo en un prologuillo que a las dichas pláticas y exhortaciones hizo, a veces una palabra en aquella lengua requiere munchas de las nuestras, y una nuestra comprende munchas de las suyas, y porque son cosa de notar en gente que ha sido hasta agora tan menospreciada, quise referillas aquí, mudando algunos vocablos que parecían no bien sonar, según el estilo de que al presente usamos. (1967, 437)
>
> [Everything that we have in this part of raising the children of these our Indian nations, in the previous chapters said, is confirmed by some exhortations that another religious man of the order of San Francisco sent me from New Spain, while I was in Old Spain, which he had faithfully translated from the Mexican language, without adding or removing anything that was substantial, making sense of meaning, not word for word; because as he said in a preface that he made to said speeches and exhortations, sometimes a word in that language requires many of ours, and one of ours includes many of theirs, and because they are something to notice in people who have been so despised until now, I wanted to refer to them here, changing some words that seemed not to sound well, according to the style that we currently use.]

Las Casas did not identify Fray Olmos here by name with 'the religious person of Saint Francis Order' who provided him with the indigenous speeches, but he later confirmed that he received them from Olmos (1967, 447). He mentioned that Olmos faithfully translated the Nahuatl speeches in Spanish based on their meaning, not necessarily word by word. This comment indicates that the original meaning of the Nahuatl speeches might have been modified or rephrased so that it could sound naturally to a Spanish audience. Yet, for Las Casas, the speeches in Spanish that he included in his chronicle were results of the faithful ("fielmente") translation Fray Olmos conducted from the original Nahuatl text.

The indigenous originality and the faithful translation of *huehuetlatolli* that Zorita and Las Casas presented seem to be verified by the only speech that Olmos included in his book, *Arte para aprender la lengua mexicana*. For a clearer explanation, three versions of the speech are examined below: a Spanish translation by Olmos, its original Nahuatl text, and the complete translation of this Nahuatl text. The first two versions appeared in Olmos's *Arte para aprender la lengua mexicana* while the final version is a complete translation of the same Nahuatl text which Fray Juan Bautista reproduced in his book *Huehuetlatolli* at the beginning of the seventeenth century:

> O mi hijo precioso, nacido y criado en el mundo por Dios, en cuyo nacimiento nos y tus parientes pusimos los ojos con gran sentimiento. (1972, 257)

> [Oh, my precious son, born and raised in the world by God, on whose birth we and your relatives looked with great feeling.]
>
> Nopilhtze, nocuzque, no quetzale, otiyol, otitlacat, otimotlalhticpacquixtico; in ytlalhticpac in totecuyo omitzyocux, omitzpic, omitztlacatili in ypalhnemoani in Dios. Auh mixco mocpac otitlachixque yn timonauan, in tinmotauan; yoan in mauiuan, in motlauan, in moayolhque omixco omocpac tlachixque, ochocaque, otlaucuxque mopampatzinco inic otitlacat in tlalhticpac. (1972, 231)
>
> Hijo mío, mi collar, mi pluma preciosa, has venido a la vida, has nacido, has venido a salir a la tierra, en la tierra del Señor Nuestro. Te forjó, te dio forma, te hizo nacer, Aquel por quien se vive, Dios. Hemos visto por ti tus madres, tus padres; y tus tías, tus tíos, tus parientes, han visto por ti, han llorado, han sufrido por ti en tanto venías en tanto nacías sobre la tierra. (*Huehuetlatolli* 1991, 49)
>
> [My son, my necklace, my precious feather, you have come to life, you have been born, you have come to appear to earth, in the land of Our Lord. He forged you, shaped you, gave you birth, He Through Whom One Lives, God. Because of you, we have seen your mothers, your fathers; and your aunts, your uncles, your relatives, they have seen because of you, they have cried, they have suffered for you as you came, as you were born, on earth.]

As Las Casas already mentioned, Olmos did not translate the original Nahuatl paragraph word by word in his translation by simply presenting the main ideas of the original Nahuatl text. The complete translation of the Nahuatl text, however, seems to support the indigenous originality of the speech that Zorita recorded because the speaker clearly used Nahuatl idioms such as necklace ("cozcatl") and feather ("quetzal") to metaphorically refer to his child, which did not appear in European discourse. In addition, several discursive techniques such as repetitions and/or parallelism of the same concept that are prevalent in oral traditions are evident in this paragraph. To describe the birth of his son, for instance, the speaker used the following three phrases in a parallel form: "you have come to life" (otiyol), "you have been born" (otitlacat), and "you have come to appear to earth" (otimotlalhticpacquixtico). Another example is shown when the speaker paralleled three different phrases to present the same meaning: he used "He forged you" (omitzyocux), "he shaped you" (omitzpic), and "he gave you birth, He Through Whom One Lives, God" (omitztlacatili in ypalhnemoani in Dios) to present his son as God's creation. Unlike Zorita affirmed, however, the names of the indigenous gods were not replaced with those of the Christian god. Rather, the word Dios borrowed from Spanish appeared in the Nahuatl text along with the epithet of the indigenous god, ypalhnemoani (He Through Whom One Lives), which might have supported the indigenous origin of the speech.

Another collector of *huehuetlatolli*, Sahagún, seems to have undergone almost the same procedure as Olmos to complete his collection and translation. Sahagún obtained information for his encyclopedic project, *Florentine Codex*, from the indigenous leaders who were familiar

with Prehispanic indigenous administrative, military, political, and religious traditions. Unlike Olmos who avoided a direct contact with the indigenous leaders, Sahagún collected the information through a dialogue in which he could ask questions and receive answers from them:

> En el dicho pueblo [Tepepulco] hice juntar todos los principales con el señor del pueblo, que se llamaba don Diego de Mendoza, hombre anciano de gran marco y habilidad, muy experimentado en todas las cosas curiales, bélicas y políticas y aún idolátricas. Habiéndolos juntado propúseles lo que pretendía hacer y les pedí me diesen personas hábiles y experimentadas, con quien pudiese platicar y me supiesen dar razón de lo que les preguntase. Ellos me respondieron que se hablarían cerca de lo propuesto, y que otro día me responderán, y así se despidieron de mí. Otro día vinieron el señor con los principales, y hecho un muy solemne parlamento, como ellos entonces le usaban hacer, señaláronme hasta diez o doce principales ancianos, y dijéronme que con aquellos podía comunicar y que ellos me darían razón de todo lo que les preguntase. (1997, 73)
>
> [In the said town [Tepepulco] I gathered all the leaders along with the governor of the town, who was called don Diego de Mendoza, an old man of great stature and skill, very experienced in all things of government, war and politics and even idolatry. Having brought them together, I proposed to them what I intended to do and I asked them to provide me with skilled and experienced people, with whom I could talk to and who would be able to answer the questions that I was asking. They answered me that they would talk each other about what was proposed, and that another day they would respond to me, and thus they took their leave from me. Another day the governor came with the leaders, and having made a very solemn dialogue, like they then used to do, they introduced me to up to ten or twelve elders, and told me that with those I could communicate and that they would give me an account of everything that I asked them.]

Sahagún tries to demonstrate that all information he recorded in his book came from the indigenous people and thus represented the true aspect of Prehispanic indigenous society. For emphasis, he repeated the indigenous authenticity when he presented the *huehuetlatolli*. In the prologue to Book 6 of the *Historia general* that consisted of indigenous speeches, Sahagún specifically confirmed that they were truly authentic indigenous products: "En este libro se verá muy claro que lo que algunos émulos han afirmado, que todo lo escrito en estos libros, antes de éste y después de éste, son ficciones y mentiras, hablan como apasionados y mentirosos, porque lo que en este libro esté escrito no cabe en entendimiento de hombre humano el fingirlo, ni hombre viviente pudiera fingir el leguaje que en él está. Y todos los indios entendidos, si fueran preguntados, afirmarían que este lenguaje es propio de sus antepasados, y obras que ellos hacían" [In this book it will be shown very clearly that what some rivals have claimed, that everything written in these books, before this one and after this one, are fictions and lies, they speak as biased parties and liars, because it is not within human understanding to invent what is written in this book, nor could a living man feign the language that is in it. And all the knowledgeable Indians, if they were asked, would confirm that this language is typical of their ancestors and the works that

they did] (1997, 297). Sahagún mentioned here that the reason he wanted to demonstrate the indigenous authenticity of *huehuetlatolli* was to counterargue those who thought his entire project was based on fiction or lies. According to him, the indigenous descendants could surely verify that their ancestors created and used the speeches.

The *huehuetlatolli* collected in Book 6 of the *Florentine Codex* demonstrate their indigenous origin that Sahagún fervently defended. Some scholars such as Baudot (1995, 231) even argued that the speeches collected by Sahagún were more refined than those collected by Olmos as the former were provided by the most educated informants of the indigenous society. The following paragraph could be one of the many speeches of the book that shows itself as a Prehispanic practice. Here again, three versions of the paragraph are provided: the original Nahuatl paragraph from the *Florentine Codex*, its English translation, and Sahagún's Spanish translation from the *Historia general de las cosas de Nueva España*.

> Tlacatle iaotzine, titlacaoane, tezcatlipucae, ioalle, ehecatle: manoço ivijan, iocuxca texillan, tetozcatlan maqujltitiaz in ac iehoatl: auh in quezquj oticmomaceujli, manoço ivian, iocuxca itech onaciz in Tonatiuh in manjc in tlanexti in totonametl, in quauhtleooanjtl, in vel cujcujliujc in nexeoac in quauhtli in ocelutl, in tiacauh, in oqujchtli, in javmjcquj in xippilli [. . .].

> "O master, O yaotl, o Titlacauan, O Tezcatlipoca, O night, O wind: may there be peace, repose, for whomever is brought unto the lap, the bosom [of god]. And as many as thou hast rewarded [with death], may they in peace, in repose attain the sun, which endureth, shineth; the resplendent one, the ascending eagle, the well-blotched one, the ashen one, the eagle, the ocelot, the valiant warrior, the brave warrior, the one who died in war, the turquoise prince. (Sahagún 1950-1982, 6:12-13)

> ¡Oh señor humanísimo, señor de las batallas, emperador de todos, cuyo nombre es *Tezcatlipoca*, invisible e impalpable! Suplícoos, que aquel, o aquellos que permitiéredes morir en esta guerra, sean recibidos en la casa del sol, en el cielo, con amor y con honra, y sean colocados y aposentados entre los valientes y famosos que han muerto en la guerra [. . .]. (Sahagún 1997, 304)

> [Oh, most humane lord, lord of battles, emperor of all, whose name is Tezcatlipoca, invisible and impalpable! I beg you, that he, or those whom you allow to die in this war, be received in the house of the sun, in heaven, with love and honor, and be placed and lodged among the brave and famous who have died in the war.]

This paragraph comes from a prayer dedicated to the indigenous god, Tezcatlipoca, in which the indigenous priest promoted war-death among the Aztec warriors. From the beginning of the prayer, the priest preached that the warriors were destined to nourish the sun with food and drink, in other words, with their body and blood. After their death, as shown in the paragraph, they could go to the house of the sun in the sky where they could stay and repose peacefully. The speaker then metaphorically presented the warriors who died during the war as eagles and

jaguars. The destiny of the warrior to be sacrificed to the gods eulogized here demonstrates without a doubt Prehispanic indigenous origin as it reflects the Aztec cosmological creation of the world and human beings. According to Aztec cosmology, people owed enormous debt to the gods because the latter sacrificed their body and blood to create the current world and human beings. Thus, the Aztecs thought that the debt could be paid back to the gods by their human blood and body through human sacrifice (Carrasco 1998, 183-188; Smith 2003, 215-218). The content of the prayer exactly matches with such a cosmology of the Aztecs. Along with the Prehispanic cosmological tradition, the paragraph seems to have kept original indigenous discursive styles and terms as it kept six different epithets to refer to the indigenous god Tezcatlipoca and repeated the same concept of the dead warriors with different metaphorical phrases in the original Nahuatl text. Presenting the *huehuetlatolli* as original indigenous speeches was an important prerequisite for the priests to develop and justify their colonial project.

Presenting the *Huehuetlatolli* as Evidence of Indigenous Civility and Intellectuality

One of the main reasons that Frays Olmos and Sahagún collected the indigenous speeches was to demonstrate that the natives were highly civilized and reasonable human beings just like European people, because according to them, the moral and philosophical content that the speeches promoted were not different from but very similar to those of the Europeans. Frays Las Casas and Torquemada, who extensively used Olmos's *huehuetlatolli,* were the most passionate about showing such as similarity between indigenous and European people. In his *Apologética historia sumaria*, Las Casas aptly used the *huehuetlatolli* to demonstrate indigenous civility and morality:

> Estas exhortaciones son las que, con otras que por abreviar dejo de referir, me envió aquel padre religioso de San Francisco estando yo en Castilla, llamando fray Andrés de Olmos, padre en su Orden, y también en la experiencia de la lengua de la Nueva España bien antiguo, las cuales amonestaciones creo yo que sonaban mejor en la lengua mexicana que en la romance que les dio el padre susodicho, porque es cierto, según arriba creo que hobe apuntado y abajo quizá lo diré más largo, que cuasi universalmente todas las gentes destas Indias tienen natural elocuencia, y así les es fácil orar y representar sus bienes y sus males como si todas las reglas y colores de la Retorica hobiesen aprendido y embebido en si toda su vida [cuanto] contiene el arte, mayormente las mexicanas. (1967, 447)
>
> [These exhortations are those that, with others that in order to abbreviate I stop referring to, sent me that religious father of Saint Francis while I was in Castile, called Fray Andrés de Olmos, very old father in his Order, and also with experience with the language of the New Spain. I believe that those admonitions sounded better in the Mexican language than in the romance language (Spanish) in which the aforementioned father translated them, because it is true, as I believe that I have noted down above and below perhaps I will say it longer, that almost universally all the people of these Indies have a natural eloquence, and thus it is easy for them to pray and exemplify their goods and their ills as if they, especially, the Mexicas (People of Tenochtitlan), had learned and imbibed all their lives all the rules and natures of the Rhetoric, all those that it contains.]

Las Casas began his evaluation of *huehuetlatolli* stating that he received indigenous speeches from Fray Olmos and presents a couple of major characteristics of them. He noticed that all indigenous people, particularly the Mexicas, the people of Tenochtitlan, possessed "natural eloquence" and thus could orate about or exemplify good and bad as if they had learned the rules and techniques of European rhetoric. Las Casas presented here the natural eloquence not only as the most important talent with which the Indians were able to develop moral standards, but also as a practice very similar to European rhetoric. It is important to notice Las Casas's emphasis on the natural eloquence of the Indians as evidence of indigenous civility and intellectuality. The Europeans of the sixteenth century considered the eloquence and moral orations as the highly esteemed cultural and intellectual traditions that the Renaissance humanists revived from the European classical period.

The renaissance humanists who tried to revive classical languages and texts paid special attention to ancient rhetoric. In this process, they focused on several classical orators among whom Cicero became probably the most popular classical rhetorician (Abbott 1996, 6-7). His ideas and books on eloquence, language, government, and human community greatly influenced the intellectual formation of the renaissance humanists. The importance of Cicero in the works of Las Casas and Spanish missionaries was very clear as these chroniclers implicitly and explicitly used Cicero's ideas about rhetoric. Cicero's following idea about eloquence can easily explain why Las Casas focused on indigenous eloquence in *huehuetlatolli*:

> Moreover, if we wish to consider the origin of this thing we call eloquence-whether it be an art, a study, a skill, or a gift of nature- we shall find that it arose from most honorable causes and continued on its way from the best of reasons. For there was a time when men wandered at large in the fields like animals and lived on wild fare, they did nothing by the guidance of reason but relied chiefly on physical strength, there was yet no ordered system of religious worship nor of social duties, no one had seen legitimate marriage nor had anyone looked upon children whom he knew to be his own, nor had they learned the advantage of an equitable code of law. And so through their ignorance and error blind and unreasoning passion satisfied itself by misuse of bodily strength, which is a very dangerous servant. At this juncture a man-great and wise I am sure- became aware of the power of latent in man and the wide field offered by his mind for great achievements if one could develop this power and improve it by instruction. Men were scattered in the fields and hidden in sylvan retreats when he assembled and gathered them in accordance with a plan, he introduced them to every useful and honorable occupation, though they cried out against it at first because of its novelty, and then when through reason and eloquence they had listened with greatest attention, he transformed them from wild savages into a kind and gentle folk (1949, 5-7).

According to Cicero, eloquence and reason were the most essential talents that distinguished human beings from wild animals, and with these talents human beings were able to initiate civilization. In this process of building civilization, a wise man could persuade his fellow human beings through eloquence and reason to follow his civilized projects. The Cicero's argument could be the most useful evidence for Las Casas, who dedicated his entire life to demonstrate the Indians as intellectual and civilized human beings: the eloquence demonstrated in indigenous *huehuetlatolli* could serve for Las

Casas to prove the intellectuality and civility of almost all indigenous people of the new world ("cuasi universalmente todas las gentes destas Indias tienen natural elocuencia" [almost universally all the people of these Indies have a natural eloquence]). In other words, Las Casas presented the eloquence of *huehuetlatolli* as a strong counterargument against his Spanish and any other European intellectuals who compared indigenous people to animal-like inferior creatures such as apes.

In addition to presenting eloquence and reason as evidence of indigenous intellectuality and civility, Las Casas pointed out the moral values that the indigenous speeches promoted as another piece of evidence. He argued that the moral values that the *huehuetlatolli* promoted were as virtuous as those that the Bible and the ancient Greeks encouraged:

> Pero comoquiera y con la llaneza y humildad del estilo que las susodichas exhortaciones y platicas familiares o paternales se hayan dicho y hoy se digan, considerando solo la sentencia de ellas, que es lo que es de atender y digno de considerarlo, ¿quién podrá decir con verdad que alguno de los preceptos de la ley natural que se contienen en nuestro divino Decálogo, ni en los que conciernen a las virtudes de la prudencia y justicia y fortaleza y temperancia, que son las que llaman morales, y todo lo demás tocante a la modestia y honestad, en especial, que son partes de la temperancia, en las dichas exhortación o avisos y consejos paternales falta? *Item*, ¿qué mejores o qué más naturales amonestaciones y más necesarias para componer en virtuosas costumbres la vida humana pudo poner y declarar a los hombres Platón, ni Sócrates, ni Pitágoras, ni después dellos Aristóteles, que las que acostumbraban y tenían en frecuentísimo uso dar a sus hijos y unos a otros estos barbaros? (1967, 447)
>
> [But just with the simple and plain style that the mentioned exhortations and family or parental speeches have been said and are said these days, considering only their essence, which is what is to pay attention to and is worth considering, who can say with truth that some of the precepts of natural law that are contained in our divine Decalogue and even in those that concern the virtues of prudence and justice and fortitude and temperance, which are those that they call moral, and everything else regarding modesty and honesty, especially, which are parts of temperance, are missing in the said exhortations or parental warnings and advice? Item, how much better, more natural, and more necessary admonitions in the moral customs of human life could even Plato, Socrates, Pythagoras, and later Aristotle propose and declare to people, than those that these barbarians (the Indians) had a custom to use and frequently give to their children and each other?]

Las Casas stressed that the *huehuetlatolli* as exhortations and family or parental speeches demonstrated not only the fundamental precepts that the divine Ten Commandments instructed but also the virtues such as prudence, justice, spirit, modesty, honesty, and temperance that were highly esteemed in European society as moral behaviors. Furthermore, he also presented the indigenous speeches, *huehuetlatolli*, as good and virtuous admonitions similar to those that the Greek philosophers such as Plato, Socrates, and Aristotle could compose for men.

After focusing on the major traits of *huehuetlatolli*, Las Casas then reached the final conclusive evaluation about the intellectuality and civility of the Indians: they were human beings

who maintained highly sophisticated government policies and lived good intelligent, prudent, and rational lives. Thus, according to him, the Indians certainly could be taught and deserved Christian doctrine: "*Item*, ¿qué más enseña la ley cristiana, salva la fe y lo que predica de las cosas invisibles y sobrenaturales? Luego ninguno puede negar estas gentes haber tenido suficientísimas policías muy bien gobernadas y vivir como hombres de muy buenos ingenios, y más que otros reglados, cuerdos, prudentes y racionales, y con lo que al fin de aquellas exhortaciones dice aquel padre, este capítulo acabo" [Item, what else does the Christian law teach, save the faith and what it preaches about invisible and supernatural things? Therefore, no one can deny these people having had sufficiently very well-governed orders and living as men of very good ingenuity, and more than those who were regulated, sensible, prudent and rational, and with what that father says at the end of those exhortations, this chapter ends] (1967, 448). In this context, the *huehuetlatolli* could have served as clear evidence for Las Casas who tried to refute so strongly the argument of his religious and political rivals such as Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda who rejected indigenous rationality and humanity at the famous Valladolid Debate in the middle of the sixteenth century.

The observations of Las Casas regarding *huehuetlatolli* seem to have set the standard criteria for later Spanish priests such as Gerónimo de Mendieta and Juan de Torquemada to approach these indigenous speeches. Torquemada, for instance, more concretely demonstrated how the Spanish priests used the *huehuetlatolli* to prove indigenous civilized governing systems by focusing on the wise and prudent education of the Indians. In Chapter XXXVI of Book XVIII titled "Donde se ponen ciertas pláticas con que estas gentes indianas doctrinaban a sus hijos, dignas de ser sabidas y muy provechosas para saberse uno regir y gobernar" [Where appear certain speeches with which these indigenous people taught their children, worthy of being known and very useful to know how one ruled and governed] (1975, 4:260), in which Torquemada included a speech collected by Olmos, he began with the importance of education of the children which the Greek philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle, and the biblical text, *Ecclesiastes*, emphasized. Afterwards, he presented the indigenous speech as a good example of child education in which the father taught his son how to worship an indigenous god as his real creator and also taught him that he should respect all types of people including the elders and the poor. While presenting the speech, Torquemada frequently interjected to demonstrate that the same types of instructions could be found in biblical tradition such as in the words of Moses and the *Proverbs*. His notes are italicized in the following paragraph:

> hijo mío, nacido en el mundo de tus padres y criado por Dios, en cuyo nacimiento, nosotros que somos tus padres y parientes, pusimos los ojos, quiero que sepas que has nacido y salido de nuestras entrañas como el pollito de el cascarón, y creciendo como él te impones al vuelo y ejercicio de las cosas temporales; no sabemos el tiempo que Dios querrá que gocemos de joya tan preciosa, como es un hijo; y para esto, lo primero que debes hacer, es vivir con tiento, encomendándote al Dios que te crió, pidiéndole que te ayude, pues es tu padre que te ama más que yo: *Bien vienen estas palabras con las que dijo el espíritu Santo: Ama al que te crió y hizo con toda tu ánima; porque como dijo Moysén: él es tu padre, que te posee, que te crió y*

> *hizo*; suspira a él (prosigue luego el padre) de día y de noche, y pon en él tu pensamiento; *que fue doctrina del Espíritu Santo, determinada en su eternidad para ser enseñada a los hombres después en tiempo, diciendo en los Proverbios: Pon en Dios tu pensamiento, en todas las cosas que hicieres y él enderezará tus pasos*; sírvele con amor y él te hará muchas mercedes y te librará de los peligros. A la imagen de Dios y a sus cosas ten mucha reverencia y ora delante de él devotamente y aparéjate bien para sus fiestas; reverencia y saluda a los mayores (proseguían luego) y no olvides a los menores y no seas como mudo; y consuela a los pobres y afligidos con buenas palabras; honra a todos, en especial a tus padres, a los cuales debes obediencia, temor y servicio. *Esto dijo Dios, por estas palabras: Honra a tu padre y la madre, para que vivas vida larga y buena. Y proseguía el indio, diciendo*: El hijo que esto no hace, no será bien logrado. No sigas a los locos desatinados que ni acatan a padre. Ni reverencian a madre; mas como animales brutos no van camino derecho, y como los tales son sin razón, ni oyen doctrina, ni se dan nada por la corrección; el semejante a éstos que ofende a los dioses morirá mala muerte o desesperado o despeñado, o las bestias fieras lo matarán y comerán. (1975, 4:262)

> [My son, born in the world of your parents and raised by God, in your birth, we who are your parents and relatives, we set our eyes, I want you to know that you were born and emerged from our entrails like a chick from the shell, and growing like him, you force yourself to fly and exercise temporal things; we do not know how long God will want us to enjoy such a precious jewel, as he is a son; and for this, the first thing you must do is live with care, entrusting yourself to the God who created you, asking him to help you, because he is your father who loves you more than I do: *These words come well with what the Holy Spirit said: Love the one who created and made you with all your soul; because as Moses said: he is your father, who owns you, who created and made you*; sigh to him (the father continues later) day and night, and put your thoughts into him; *that it was a doctrine of the Holy Spirit, determined in its eternity to be taught to men later in time, saying in Proverbs: Put your thought on God, in all the things you do and he will straighten your steps*; serve him with love and he will do you many favors and free you from dangers. To the image of God and his things have much reverence and pray before him devoutly and prepare well for his festivities; venerate and greet the elders (they continued later) and do not forget the minors and do not be silent; and console the poor and afflicted with kind words; honor everyone, especially your parents, to whom you owe obedience, fear, and service. *This is what God said, by these words: Honor your father and mother, so that you live a long and good life. And the Indian continued, saying*: The son who does not do this will not achieve much. Do not follow the foolish madmen who do not obey even their father. Nor do they revere their mother; but like brute animals they do not go straight, and as such they are without reason, nor do they listen to doctrine, nor do they give themselves anything for correction; the one like these people who offend the gods will die a bad death or desperately or shamefully, or the wild beasts will kill and eat him.]

This paragraph demonstrates how Torquemada took advantage of *huehuetlatolli* to prove that the indigenous intellectual and cultural traditions were not different from but very similar to those of the Christians. Thus, Torquemada like Las Casas argued that the Indians are rational and political human beings who lived with order and reason: "Aquesta doctrina tenemos maravillosamente probada en los indios de esta Nueva España, los cuales no sólo cuidaban de criar

a sus hijos, con el sustento y manjar corporal con que fortificaban los cuerpos y crecían en edad y años, pero con admirable doctrina moral, para hacerlos racionales y políticos y que viviesen la vida de hombres que tenían, como los que constaban de ánima capaz de orden y de razón" [We have wonderfully proven this doctrine in the Indians of this New Spain, who not only took care of raising their children, with the sustenance and corporal nourishment with which they fortified the bodies and grew in age and years, but with admirable moral doctrine, to make them rational and political and make them live the life of men they had, like those who consisted of a soul capable of order and reason] (1976, 4:261). The *huehuetlatolli* in Torquemada's chronicle appeared as clear evidence that could verify the highly advanced level of the Prehispanic indigenous society comparable to that of the ancient Europeans.

Most of the chroniclers who included Fray Olmos's *huehuetlatolli* in their chronicles shared almost the same purpose and pattern of justifying indigenous civility and intellectuality. While Las Casas y Torquemada selectively and partially used the *huehuetlatolli* collected by Fray Olmos, Fray Juan Bautista Viseo published the entire *huehuetlatolli* collected by Olmos in 1601 with slight modifications. As the complete title of the book, *Huehuetlahtolli, que contiene las pláticas que los padres y madres hicieron a sus hijos y a sus hijas, y los señores a sus vasallos, todas llenas de doctrina moral y política* [*Huehuetlahtolli, which contains the speeches that fathers and mothers made for their sons and daughters, and the lords for their vassals, all speeches full of moral and political doctrine*], demonstrates, Fray Bautista wanted to show how good the moral, religious, and political systems the Indians maintained were just like what Las Casas and Torquemada tried to show with the *huehuetlatolli*. Yet, Bautista went further, arguing that the indigenous systems were much better than those of the Christians or even the Spaniards and thus the Christian republics should emulate these indigenous systems. For instance, by presenting how an indigenous king was selected and instructed with several admonitions and wise advice, Bautista maintained that if the Christian republics followed the indigenous political system, they would have secularly and spiritually better shape and progress:

> Este era el modo que tenían en sus elecciones y los buenos y sanos consejos que daban a sus gobernadores, considerando como si lo hubieran leído en la Escritura Divina, que el buen gobierno del príncipe consiste principalmente en honrar y servir a Dos con que se perpetúan los Reinos. Y lo segundo en el buen trato y conservación de los plebeyos y pobres. Y no hay duda que si este modo de proceder se guardara en todas las Republicas Cristianas tuvieran otro talle y otra medra, así en lo espiritual como en lo temporal, bien diferente de la que por nuestros pecados vemos. (1601, folio A4, page 2)

> [This was the way they had in their elections and the good and healthy advice they gave to their governors, considering as if they had read it in the Divine Scripture, which the good government of the prince consists mainly in honoring and serving a God with whom they perpetuate the kingdoms. And the second in the good treatment and conservation of the commoners and the poor. And there is no doubt that if this way of practices were kept in all the Christian Republics, they would have another appearance and advancement, both in the spiritual and worldly matters, very different from the one that we see because of our sins.]

Fray Bautista focused not only on the political system but also on the indigenous education of children. He particularly centered on how girls were educated religiously and practically: they attended schools where well qualified teachers taught them their religious and moral duties and domestic responsibilities at the time as women. For this reason, Fray Bautista argues that if Spanish women of his time behaved like the indigenous women, their children could be better educated, their husbands would feel more comfortable, and they would behave themselves much better morally and financially: "De las cuales si las mujeres españolas de estos tiempos tuvieran mediano cuidado, sus casas fueran mejor regidas, sus hijos más bien doctrinados, y sus maridos más regalados, y menos molestados con infinidad de gastos impertinentes, que ellas hacen: con que muchos infiernan su anima, ya las veces antes de esto pierden su crédito y honra, y dejan muchos huérfanos y viudas en los Hospitales" [Of which if the Spanish women of these times were moderately careful, their houses were better managed, their children better educated, and their husbands more comfortable, and less bothered with an infinity of impertinent expenses, which they do: with which many bring hell to their soul, because in many cases due to this they lose their credit and honor, and they leave many orphans and widows in the Hospitals] (1601, folio A5 page 2-foilo A6 page 1). By presenting the superior quality of the indigenous moral behavior and political system demonstrated in *huehuetlatolli*, Fray Bautista concluded that "Por esto se entenderá, que los indios antiguos tenían mucha policía en su gobierno, y alcanzaban mucho de moralidad" [By this it will be understood that the ancient Indians had many laws and orders in their government, and they achieved much morality] (1601, folio A6 page 1).

While Fray Olmos was collecting the indigenous speeches in the middle of the sixteenth century, so was his Franciscan companion, Fray Bernardino de Sahagún. Sahagún's collection of indigenous speeches was not widely known to other priests of his time like those of Olmos, but Sahagún had the same purpose of collecting the speeches just like Olmos and his followers who took advantage of them to demonstrate indigenous civility, morality, and intellectuality. In Book 6 of his *Historia general*, in which Sahagún collected and translated indigenous speeches in Spanish, he insisted that these speeches represented a highly advanced level of Prehispanic indigenous society. As the title of Book 6, "De la Retórica y Filosofía moral y Teología de la gente mexicana, donde hay cosas muy curiosas, tocantes a los primores de su lengua, y cosas muy delicadas tocante a las virtudes morales" [Of the Rhetoric and Moral Philosophy and Theology of the Mexica people, where there are very curious things, regarding the beauty of their language, and very delicate things regarding the moral virtues] (1997, 295) demonstrated, Sahagún tried to present the speeches as the symbolic examples of indigenous rhetoric, philosophy, and religion. In the prologue to Book 6, Sahagún began with the argument that indigenous rhetorical, moral, and religious practices were not inferior nor barbarous but comparable and even equal to those of any European ancient or contemporary nation:

> Todas las naciones, por bárbaras y de bajo metal que hayan sido, han puesto los ojos en los sabios y poderosos para persuadir, y en los hombres eminentes en las virtudes morales, y en los diestros y valientes

> en los ejercicios bélicos, y más en los de su generación que en los de las otras. Hay de esto tantos ejemplos entre los griegos y latinos, españoles, franceses e italianos, que están los libros llenos de esta materia.
> Esto mismo se usaba en esta nación indiana, y más principalmente entre los mexicanos, entre los cuales, los sabios retóricos, y virtuosos, y esforzados, eran tenidos en mucho; y de estos elegían para pontífices, para señores, y principales y capitanes por de baja suerte que fuesen. Estos regían las repúblicas y guiaban los ejércitos, y presidían los templos. (1997, 297)

> [All the nations, however barbarous and lowly they may have been, have set their eyes on the wise men and powerful men to persuade, and on eminent men for moral virtues, and on the skilled and brave men for military exercises, and more in those of their generation than in those of others. There are so many examples of this among the Greeks and Latins, Spaniards, French, and Italians, that the books are full of this matter.
> The same was used in this Indian nation, more mainly among the Mexica, among whom wise rhetoricians, the virtuous, and the valorous were held in great esteem; and from these men they elected for pontiffs, and lords, and nobles, and captains no matter how lowly their status were. These people governed the republics and led the armies, and presided over the temples.]

Sahagún argued that as even barbarous and primitive nations recognized wise, virtuous, skillful, and courageous people, so did the European nations of the Greeks and Romans as well as the Spaniards, French, and Italians from the ancient to the contemporary period. Then, he also argued that the Mexicas (People of Tenochtitlan) did the same by electing wise rhetoricians, the virtuous, and the courageous as priests, political leaders, and military captains. According to Sahagún, the Mexicas in particular were able to build an empire with such leaders. The *huehuetlatolli* that Sahagún collected in Book 6 could serve as evidence to demonstrate how those Mexica leaders worshipped their gods, instructed their children, and maintained a righteous and virtuous society. By doing so, Sahagún wanted to make it clear that indigenous people were not different but capable human beings like the ancient or even their contemporary Europeans.

Examining the *Huehuetlatolli* as a Colonial Project

Frays Olmos, Sahagún, and other Spanish priests collected and disseminated the *huehuetlatolli* as a Prehispanic practice which proved the civility and intellectuality of indigenous people. In this process, however, there was a possibility in which the Spanish priests could have modified and transformed the original content, themes, and discursive forms of the indigenous speeches to make their argument more appealing to their European audience. In fact, a few scholars have noticed that several moral issues that the indigenous speeches dealt with were quite similar or even identical with those of the Bible or European traditions. Mónica Ruiz Bañuls observed that "Al leer los *huehuetlatolli* libres de toda predisposición, nos damos cuenta de que lo enseñado en ellos no sólo se encuentre en los cánones morales de la vida cristiana, sino que tanto su estilo como su temática guardan extraordinarias similitudes con unos textos esenciales dentro de la tradición sapiencial bíblica" [When reading the huehuetlatolli free of any predisposition, we realize that

what is taught in them is not only found in the moral canons of Christian life, but that both their style and their themes maintain extraordinary similarities with some essential texts within the biblical wisdom tradition] (2009, 161). She found that the similarities between *huehuetlatolli* and the Bible appeared as a result of the universal sapiential traditions that existed in every human society (2009, 199-200). Another scholar, Aysha Pollnitz (2017), also observed that the indigenous informants, who helped the Spanish priest, Juan Bautista, collect the indigenous speeches in Nahuatl, transformed these speeches emulating the Bible, European rhetoric, and Renaissance speech theory of Erasmus that they learned at the Colegio de Santa Cruz de Tlatelolco. Although these scholars provided insightful studies, I would argue that the similarities between huehuetlatolli and biblical traditions were the intended result of the careful deliberations of the Spanish priest-collectors, Olmos and Sahagún, who tried to demonstrate the similarities of both traditions. In addition, although the contribution of the indigenous informants to the speeches was obvious and important, I would argue that Frays Olmos and Sahagún as the supervisors of the collection project were more decisively influential in the process of selecting the contents and topics of the speeches. For this reason, it is essential to focus on how as the two main collectors of *huehuetlatolli,* Olmos and Sahagún modified or transformed the indigenous speeches into the products familiar to the European audience.

As examined previously, Zorita and Las Casas stated that Fray Olmos collected pure indigenous speeches and translated them faithfully. Zorita mentioned that Olmos only replaced the names of the indigenous gods with those of the Christian god in *huehuetlatolli* while Las Casas stated that Olmos did not translate the *huehuetlatolli* word by word, but his translation was faithful to the original Nahuatl text. It is true that the speeches that these chroniclers included in their chronicles reflected certain aspects of indigenous traditions. Yet, a close examination of the speeches in Nahuatl and their translation in Spanish that Olmos collected and completed respectively reveals that Olmos seems to have not only modified the indigenous speeches a lot more than by simply replacing the names of indigenous gods with those of the Christian god, but also by translating them as freely as possible. The following paragraph that appears in the only speech collected by Olmos in *Arte para aprender la lengua mexicana* demonstrates how he modified the indigenous *huehuetlatolli* to make it sound similar to Christian discourse. Here again, the first two paragraphs in Spanish and Nahuatl appeared in Olmos's book while the final paragraph is a complete translation of the same Nahuatl paragraph which Fray Juan Bautista reproduced in his book *Huehuetlatolli*:

> A la imagen de Dios y de sus santos, y a la cruz ten reuerencia y mas al santo sacramento y al nombre de I. C. ante el cual ora deuotamente y prepárate en las fiestas. (1972, 258)

> [To the image of God and his saints, and to the cross have reverence and more to the holy sacrament and to the name of J. C. before whom you pray devoutly and prepare yourself at the festivals.]

> *Yoan in canin ixpan tiquiçaz in yxiptlatzin in totecuyo, anoço yn ytlaçouan, anoço cruz, uelh ticmauiztiliz, ixpan timopachoz, anoço timotlanquacoloz. Auh intla uelh yehuatl in totecuyo I. C. ynacayotzin ysanto sacramento ixpan tiquiçaz, tlapanauia inic ticmotlatlauhtiliz in yca mochi moyollo, ca moteouh, ca motlatocauh, ca motemaquixticatzin, ca motlaçotatzin. Yoan uelh ticmauiztiliz in ytocatzin I. C., yoan in ilhuitzin uelh ypan tinocencauaz.* (1972, 233-234)

> Y por donde pases, frente a la imagen del Señor Nuestro, o de sus amados, o de la Cruz, los honorarás mucho; te inclinarás frente a Él o doblarás la rodilla. Y mucho más si sales al mismo cuerpo del Señor Nuestro, Jesucristo (que está dentro del Santo Sacramento), así le suplirás con todo tu corazón porque es tu Dios, porque es tu Señor, porque es tu Redentor, porque es tu verdadero Padre que está dentro del Santo Sacramento. Y mucho honorarás el nombre del Señor Nuestro, Jesucristo, y en su fiesta te ataviarás muy bien. (*Huehuetlatolli* 1991, 53)

> [And wherever you go, in front of the image of Our Lord, or of his loved ones, or of the Cross, you will honor them very much; you will bow before Him or you will bend the knee. And much more if you go to the very body of Our Lord, Jesus Christ (who is inside the Holy Sacrament), so you will supply him with all your heart because he is your God, because he is your Lord, because he is your Redeemer, because he is your true Father who is inside the Holy Sacrament. And you will very much honor the name of Our Lord, Jesus Christ, and at his feast you will dress very well.]

As Las Casas affirmed, Olmos did not translate the original Nahuatl text word by word but his translation was faithful and accurate as he presented the main ideas of the original Nahuatl text**.** In the example above, however, the original Nahuatl text and its translation that Olmos collected and completed respectively seem to have been already too Europeanized. Olmos's translation did not include any trace of indigenous religious and cultural traditions and thus sounded like a genuine Christian speech. Las Casas's comments (1967, 437) could explain this Christianization of the Spanish translation: he mentioned that he changed "algunos vocablos que parecían no bien sonar, según el estilo de que al presente usamos" [some words that seemed not to sound well, according to the style that we use at the present time]. Like Las Casas, Olmos and his followers might have trimmed the wording to be similar to the European speeches and thus appealed to European readers. On the other hand, the original Nahuatl text sounds even more like a part of a Christian sermon rather than indigenous speech. As Zorita mentioned, the speaker replaced the names of indigenous gods, for instance, *ypalhnemoani* (He Through Whom One Lives), with *totecuyo* (Our Lord) or Jesus Christ, but he went further to explain the religious meaning of Jesus Christ as God and Redeemer within Christian doctrine. Furthermore, the speaker introduced a new custom of bending the knee in front of the Christian god to indigenous people who did not have such a custom before the conquest. Many parts of both the Spanish translations and their original Nahuatl speeches collected by Olmos did not maintain their original indigenous content and meaning but were largely Christianized.

As another collector of the speeches, Sahagún also insisted on their indigenous origin by

arguing that any indigenous people could prove them to be the speeches of their ancestors. As previously examined, the *huehuetlatolli* collected by him surely demonstrated certain aspects of Prehispanic traditions. Like Olmos and his fellow priests transformed and modified original indigenous speeches to promote their colonial project, so did Sahagún with the speeches he collected. Sahagún's most serious transformation or modification of the indigenous speeches is found in the treatment of the indigenous god Tezcatlipoca. Sahagún collected 60 speeches in Book 6 of the *Florentine Codex* and its Spanish version, *Historia general*, and the first eight of them were dedicated to two indigenous gods: Tezcatlipoca and Tlaloc. Yet, seven of them are exclusively used to pray to Tezcatlipoca. In addition, numerous speeches in Book 6 dealt with the ceremonies of the inauguration of the new king, marriage, childbirth, and death that were presided over by Tezcatlipoca. Thus, in the speeches collected in Book 6, Tezcatlipoca appeared as the most omnipresent and almighty god that presided over almost all aspects of indigenous life just like the Christian god over the Christians. A comparison of the speeches collected in Book 6 of the *Florentine Codex* to those translated in Spanish in *Historia general* reveals how carefully Sahagún transformed Tezcatlipoca as the supreme god to be very similar to the Christian god. To better present the analysis of the transformation, three paragraphs are provided here: the original Nahuatl text from the *Florentine Codex*, its full translation, and the translation of the original Nahuatl text that Sahagún completed in his book *Historia general*:

> Tlacatle, totecue, tloque, naoaque, iooalle, ehecatle: a ca nelle ca axcan, mjxpantzinco njqujztiujtz, mjxpantzinco, nacitiujtz, mjxpantzinco njtlacueiacxolujtiutz, njtlaviltectiujtz: in njmaceoalli anânjqualli, in âjiectli, [. . .].
>
> O master, O our lord, O lord of the near, of the nigh, O night, O wind, now in truth I come to appear before thee, to reach thee. Before thee I come jumping over ridges, I come siding up – I who am a commoner, unrighteous, evil. (Sahagún 1950-1982, 6:1-2)
>
> ¡Oh valeroso señor nuestro, debajo de cuyas alas nos amparamos, y defendemos, y hallamos abrigo: tu eres invisible, y no palpable, bien así como la noche y el aire! ¡Oh, que yo, bajo de poco valor, me atrevo a parecer delante de V. M.! (Sahagún 1997, 299)
>
> [Oh our brave Lord, under whose wings we shelter, and defend, and find protection you are invisible, and not palpable, just like the night and the air! Oh, that I, of little value, dare to appear in front of Your Mercy!]

At first glance, Sahagún seems to keep the original indigenous discursive style and terms more than Olmos because he kept six different epithets to refer to the indigenous god Tezcatlipoca in the original Nahuatl text. In his Spanish translation, however, Sahagún simply translated only one epithet, Our Lord ("totecue"), which would sound very similar or even identical to the Spanish word, "Nuestro Señor" (Our Lord). In addition, he appears to paraphrase some of the

epithets in his translation: Lord of the near ("tloque") and Lord of the nigh ("naoaque") was translated as "tu eres invisible" (you are invisible) and "no palpable" (you are not palpable) respectively. In the same pattern, he also translated the Lord of night ("iooalle") and Lord of wind ("ehecatle") as "bien así como la noche y el aire" (just like the night and the air). Sahagún's paraphrased translations of the epithets of indigenous names arguably stated that the god exists everywhere and every single moment without being viewable or touchable. Yet, Sahagún's translations of the names of Tezcatlipoca did not fit in the indigenous religious practice before the conquest. According to Cartwright Brundage (1979, 57), "[t]he Aztecs appear to have been a people compelled to insist on the visible presences of their gods." Thus, the Aztecs made various types of the wooden or stone statues of their gods and displayed them in the temples and public places. In addition, they also selected a living person who was considered as an *ixiptla*, an impersonator or embodiment or representation of a god (Basset 2015, 45-88; Brundage 1979, 57-58; Smith 2003, 217-218), worshipped him as the god for a year, and ritually sacrificed him during the religious ceremony dedicated to this god. In case of Tezcatlipoca, the Aztecs demonstrated probably the most conspicuous example of the *ixiptla* practice which numerous colonial chronicles recorded. Sahagún himself as one of them documented that during the *toxcatl*, a religious festival dedicated to Tezcatlipoca, "mataban en esta fiesta un mancebo escogido, que ninguna tacha tuviese en su cuerpo, criado en todos los deleites por espacio de un año, instruido en tañer y cantar y en hablar" [At this festival they killed a chosen young man, who had no blemish on his body, raised in all the delights for a year, instructed in ringing and singing and speaking] (1997, 81). Thus, the translation of Tezcatlipoca as an invisible and untouchable god seems to be a deliberate effort by Sahagún to transform the indigenous to a Christian-like god.

There is another important transformation of the original Nahuatl text by Sahagún who tried to make the indigenous god, Tezcatlipoca, similar to the Christian god. He added to his Spanish translation the phrase, "debajo de cuyas alas nos amparamos, y defendemos, y hallamos abrigo [under whose wings we shelter, and defend, and find protection], which did not appear in the original Nahuatl text. A comparison between this addition and the following psalm shows how Sahagún tried to make the role of the indigenous god Tezcatlipoca similar to that of the Christian god: "Ten misericordia de mí, oh Dios, ten misericordia de mí; Porque en ti ha confiado mi alma, Y en la sombra de tus alas me ampararé Hasta que pasen los quebrantos [Have mercy on me, oh God, have mercy on me; Because my soul has trusted in you, And in the shadow of your wings I will take refuge Until the losses pass] (*La Santa Biblia* 2005, 835). By using the words, "alas" (wing) and "amparar" (take refuge) that appeared in the Psalms and also the same concept of God's protection in his translation, Sahagún presented an indigenous god very similar to the Christian god. The Spanish readers, most of whom did not know Nahuatl, might have been able to understand the indigenous speech as Sahagún intended in his translation. In the typical indigenous discourse, however, tree ("arbol") instead of wings ("alas") was used as a metaphor to describe the protection or shelter of the indigenous gods. The most representative example would

be the concept of *Tamoanchan*, a paradisical place of the Aztecs, where the gods lived and the dead or sacrificed warriors could go. According to several songs collected in the *Cantares mexicanos* and numerous pictorial codices, *Tamoanchan*, was identified with a blooming tree (Granziera 2012, 44). Under the tree, the warriors who were sacrificed or died during the war were transformed into various birds or insects that could enjoy their eternal life (Sahagún 1950-1982, 6:12-15). *Tamoanchan* appears here as the eternal shelter created by the gods for the Aztec warriors.

Throughout the Nahuatl speeches that he collected in Book 6 of the *Florentine Codex* and the Spanish translations that he completed in Book 6 of the *Historia general*, Sahagún presented Tezcatlipoca as the almighty god and the giver of life. In chapter 2 of the book in which the priests asked Tezcatlipoca for wealth, for instance, they called this god "!Oh señor nuestro, valerosísimo, humanísimo, amparador!, vos sois el que nos dais vida, y sois invisible y no palpable, señor de todos y señor de las batallas" [!Oh our lord, most courageous, humane, protector!, you are the one who gives us life, and you are invisible and not palpable, lord of all and lord of battles] (1997, 301). As the Aztecs worshiped Huitzilopochtli, not Tezcatlipoca, as the most powerful among the numerous gods before the conquest, however, the former must have been revered as the owner of the heaven and earth, and the giver of life. In fact, numerous colonial sources recorded that the rituals and temples dedicated to Huitzilopochtli were most solemnly and largely celebrated and constructed respectively in the Central Basin of Mexico. They also recorded that the same epithets that Sahagún used to refer to Tezcatlipoca were applied to Huitzilopochtli. According to Diego Durán, "El ídolo [Huitzilopochtli] de que vamos tratando era tan temido y reverenciado de toda esta nación, que a él solo llamaban "Señor de lo criado y Todopoderoso", y a este eran los principales y grandes sacrificios, cuyo templo era el más solemne y suntuoso, mayor y más principal entre todos los de la tierra" [The idol [Huitzilopochtli] that we are dealing with was so feared and revered by all this nation, that they only called him "Lord of creation and Almighty", and the primary and large sacrifices were dedicated to this god, whose temple was the most solemn and sumptuous, largest and most principal among all those on earth] (1984, 1:18). Another chronicler, Fernando de Alvarado Tezozomoc, also provided similar information about Huitzilopochtli but with more detailed information:

> La fiesta mas celebrada y mas solemnizada desta tierra, y en particular de los Mexicanos y Tetzcucanos, fue la del ídolo llamado *Huitzilopochtli*, cuyas ceremonias son muy diversas y tienen mucho que notar, porque mas simbolizan algunas de nuestra religión cristiana, y otras á la ley vieja. Era tan temido y reverenciado este ídolo de toda esta nación indiana, que á él solo llamaban todopoderoso y señor de lo criado; á éste eran los principales y grandes sacrificios, y por el consiguiente tenia el mas sumptuoso templo, de grande altura y mas hermoso y galan edificio, cuyo sitio y fortaleza se ve en las ruinas que dél and quedado en medio desta ciudad (1992, 93).
>
> [The most celebrated and most solemnized festival in this land, and especially of the Mexicas and Tetzcocas, was that of the idol called Huitzilopochtli, whose ceremonies are very diverse and have

> much to observe, because they symbolize some of our Christian religion, and others of the old law. This idol of this entire indigenous nation was so feared and revered that he alone was called almighty and lord of creation; To this god were dedicated the primary and large sacrifices, and consequently he had the most sumptuous temple, of great height and the most beautiful and elegant building, whose site and fortress can be seen in the ruins that remain in the middle of this city.]

Durán and Alvarado Tezozomoc commonly recorded that only Huitzilopochtli was called the God Almighty ("todopoderoso") and Lord of Creation ("lo criado"). The latter even stated that some rituals dedicated to Huitzilopochtli were very similar to Christian ceremonies, which Sahagún would have highlighted in the prayers or speeches he collected in Book 6. Along with the information on the rituals and temples dedicated to Huitzilopochtli, Durán and Alvarado Tezozomoc provided another clue to better understand the moral behaviors that the *huehuetlatolli* promoted. Sahagún presented Tezcatlipoca as the god promoting all these behaviors among the indigenous people, but according to Durán (1984, 1:35-36) and Alvarado Tezozomoc (1992, 102-103), it was Huitzilopochtli who obligated the Indians to strictly follow the ten commandments that dealt with most of the moral issues promoted in *huehuetlatolli*: serve the gods with fear and reverence, honor the parents, respect the elders, prohibit adultery, punish robbery with severe penalty, etc.

It looks like Sahagún intentionally transformed the roles of Huitzilopochtli into those of Tezcatlipoca to promote his colonial project. In order to make the indigenous religious speeches similar to the Christian prayers, Sahagún did not want to nor was able to present Huitzilopochtli as the almighty and omnipotent god similar to the Christian god due to the massive human sacrifice that the former required, as numerous Spanish chroniclers reported. For instance, Durán (1984, 2:345) recorded that when the ruler Ahuitzotl finished the construction of the Templo Mayor dedicated to Huitzilopochtli, the Mexica sacrificed 80,400 individuals of various regions. When Sahagún confuted the indigenous gods as devils and demons in the *Historia general*, he presented Huitzilopochtli as the most symbolic figure among the indigenous devils:

> Por vuestra misma relación sabemos que los antiguos mexicanos adoraron y tuvieron por dios a un hombre *Huitzilopochtli*, nigromántico, amigo de los diablos, enemigo de los hombres, feo, espantable, cruel, revoltoso, inventor de guerras, y de enemistades, causador de muchas muertes y alborotos y desasosiegos. A éste tan pésimo hombre hacían grandes fiestas vuestros antepasados cada año; y en cada fiesta mataban por su honra y delante de su imagen y en su capilla muchos hombres, sacándoles los corazones y ofreciéndolos al mismo *Huitzilopochtli*, derramando delante de él su sangre y comiendo las carnes de ellos, así sacrificados. Estas son cosas horrendas, abominables, crueles, y muy vergonzosas. (1997, 60)

> [By your own report we know that the ancient Mexicans worshiped and had as a god a man Huitzilopochtli, a necromancer, friend of devils, enemy of men, ugly, frightening, cruel, unruly, inventor of wars and enmities, the cause of many deaths and riots and distress. Your ancestors used to make big festivals every year for this worst man; and at each feast they killed many men for his honor and before his image and in his chapel, taking out their hearts and offering them to the same Huitzilopochtli, pouring

out his blood before him and eating the flesh of the sacrificed. These are hideous, abominable, cruel, and very shameful things.]

Sahagún desecrated Huitzilopochtli by calling him the worst man and explicitly expressed his abomination toward Huitzilopochtli mostly because of the human sacrifice dedicated to him that the indigenous ancestors conducted on a large scale. In this context, it would be unreasonable for Sahagún to attribute most of the moral speeches to Huitzilopochtli. As a missionary who tried to demonstrate indigenous civility and intellectuality and also the similarities between indigenous and European religion through the *huehuetlatolli*, Sahagún needed to avoid presenting Huitzilopochtli as the Lord Almighty and Lord of Creation who taught moral values promoted in *huehuetlatolli*.

The replacement of Huitzilopochtli with Tezcatlipoca seems to have been an important issue when Sahagún was collecting the *huehuetlatolli* for his encyclopedic project, *Florentine Codex*. Before this project, Sahagún presented Huitzilopochtli as the supreme god of the Indians. In one of his earliest works, the *Primeros Memoriales*, Sahagún described the pictorial images of the indigenous gods along with the alphabetic explanation of each god regarding their roles and positions in the indigenous pantheon. In the section entitled "in which are named what were attributed to the gods," Sahagún recorded the following roles attributed to Huitzilopochtli (1997, 121):

Vitzilopochtlj	Huitzilopochtli
Tenemjtia	He nourishes people.
Tetlamachtis	He makes people rich.
Tecuiltonoa	He makes people wealthy.
Tetlaocatilja	He makes people rulers.
Tetlauelia	He is wrathful with people.
Temjctia	He kills people.

Sahagún presented Huitzilopochtli as the patron of life or nourishment or giver of life, richness, wealth, and rulership. He was also presented as the patron who caused wrath and death among people. On the other hand, Sahagún attributed two roles to Tezcatlipoca (1997, 121):

Tezcatlipoca	Tezcatlipoca
Tlayocuya. i. Teyocuya	He creates things; that [is], he creates people.
Teyavchjoa	He makes war on people.

Tezcatlipoca was described by Sahagún here as the creator of things and people, and also the instigator of war among people. Comparing these descriptions of Huitzilopochtli and Tezcatlipoca

to those that Sahagún recorded in the *Historia general*, most of the characteristics of Huitzilopochtli were now transferred to Tezcatlipoca:

> El dios llamado *Tezcatlipoca* era tenido por verdadero dios, e invisible, el cual andaba en todo lugar, en el cielo, en la tierra, y en el infierno; y tenían que cuando andaba en la tierra movía guerras, enemistades y discordias, de donde resultaban muchas fatiga y desasosiegos. Decían que el mismo incitaba a unos contra otros para que tuviesen guerras, y por esto le llamaban *Necóc Yáotl*, que quiere decir sembrador de discordias de ambas partes; y decían él sólo ser el que entendía en el regimiento del mundo, y que él solo daba las prosperidades y riquezas y que él sólo las quitaba cuando se le antojaba; daba riquezas, prosperidades y fama, y fortaleza y señoríos, y dignidades y honras, y las quitaba cuando se le antojaba; por esto le temían y le reverenciaban, porque tenían que en su mano estaba el levantar y abatir, de la honra que se le hacía. (1997, 31-32)
>
> [The god called Tezcatlipoca was considered a true god, and invisible, who was present in every place, in heaven, on earth, and in hell; and they believed that when he walked around on earth, he caused wars, enmities and discords, from which much fatigue and anxiety resulted. They said that he himself incited one against the other to have wars, and for this they called him *Necóc Yáotl*, which means the sower of discord on both sides; and they said he was the only one who understood the regiment of the world, and that he was the only one who gave prosperity and riches and he was the only one who took them away when he felt like it; he gave riches, prosperity and fame, and strength and lordships, and dignities and honors, and he took them away when he pleased; For this reason they feared and revered him, because they believed that it was in his hand to lift up and to put down, by the honor that was done to him.]

Sahagún maintained here some original roles of Tezcatlipoca such as a cause of war and discord among people but at the same transferred to Tezcatlipoca several roles such as the patron of nourishment ("fortaleza"), richness ("riqueza"), wealth ("prosperidad"), and rulership ("señorío"), which he originally assigned to Huitzilopochtli in his *Primeros Memoriales*. The transfer of the roles of Huitzilopochtli to Tezcatlipoca was a significant colonial project for Sahagún because Huitzilopochtli, as the archival Satan that required of the Indians a massive human sacrifice, should not be a god who also required of them highly civilized and advanced moral and social practices as described in *huehuetlatolli.*

Conclusive remarks

After the conquest, the Spanish missionaries and conquistadors selectively collected and frequently trimmed Prehispanic indigenous traditions to justify their own colonial projects. The Prehispanic indigenous speeches known as *huehuetlatolli* could be a good example that went through such a process. Frays Olmos and Sahagún collected the indigenous speeches in Nahuatl, translated them into Spanish, and used their moralizing content to rationalize indigenous civility and intellectuality. By doing so, they tried to show that Indians were capable human beings who

could be converted into Christians like Europeans. In this context, the *huehuetlatolli* as original indigenous oral speeches were significantly modified and transformed by the Spanish priests who tried to make them similar to the content and style of European religious and moral speeches. Yet, this transformation does not mean that all surviving speeches were entirely Europeanized and completely lost their Prehispanic traits, but rather that they became hybrid products in many cases in which European content appeared in indigenous discursive styles or vice versa. Thus, to properly study the *huehuetlatolli*, it is essential to examine first which parts of *huehuetlatolli* were Europeanized or Christianized as well as which other parts could still be considered Prehispanic.

By examining the indigenous speeches in general and at the same time focusing on the specific speeches such as the religious orations dedicated to Tezcatlipoca, this essay suggests that the current scholarly tendency to view the *huehuetlatolli* as a pure Prehispanic product or as a simple hybrid product of European and indigenous traditions needs to be revised. In other words, the entire corpus of the surviving *huehuetlatolli* needs to be reexamined in the colonial as well as precolonial context. In addition, this essay also suggests possible future studies. For instance, Book 6 of Sahagún's *Florentine Codex,* which is a collection of *huehuetlatolli*, includes numerous pictorial images that correspond to the collected speeches. At first glance, just like the *huehuetlatolli* are currently treated, these images seem to be originated from the pictorial writing system that the Aztecs used to record their history, culture, and religion before the conquest. As a few scholars such as Jeanette Favrot Peterson (2019) have demonstrated, however, the pictorial images included in Book 6 also exhibit explicit influence of the European painting. More similar studies could fill in the gaps for current studies that have primarily focused on the indigenous speeches alphabetically recorded.

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"The Garden of America": Nature, Wonder, and Nationalism in the Creole-Jesuit Narrations of Chile

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Abstract:

Major changes in the political and social panorama affected the eighteenth-century world. The regalist policies of the Bourbon culminated with the expulsion of the Society of Jesus from the Spanish imperial domains in 1767, and Jesuits have been forced to move to the Papal State territories of central Italy. Many of them were Creoles, with Spanish ancestry but of American birth. During the exile, the Jesuit community developed a shared cultural and political identity which emerges from their works. The role of Creole-Jesuits goes beyond their figure as religious actors. Indeed, it was fundamental for their scientific contribution to the eighteenth-century debates and the development of modern science. Also, through the reading of their works, it is possible to reconstruct a picture of the late-colonial Spanish imperial world and to rethinking nationalism – in purely anthropological terms. Following these premises and through the analysis of primary sources, I will study the intellectual works of Juan Ignacio Molina and Felipe Gómez de Vidaurre y Girón as representatives of the Creole-Jesuits from the Chilean province who spent their exile between Imola and Bologna over eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Keywords: Atlantic World, Spanish America, Society of Jesus, Natural History, Nationalism

The object of this work is the cultural and political identity of the expelled Creole-Jesuits and the development of a patriotic perception of their homeland through the study of their accounts. Particularly, I will analyse the literature produced by members of the Society of Jesus exiled from the General Captaincy of Chile. Their contribution to the eighteenth-century intellectual debates goes beyond their role as religious actors, rather is fundamental for its scientific impact and the significance of such works composed by the Creoles exiled community. The situation of exiled they suffered increased the sense of belonging to a distant homeland on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean. The patriotic discourse that emerges in their literary production is capable to describe a picture of the late-colonial Spanish imperial world and to rethink nationalism – in purely anthropological terms.

As things stand, mainstream historiography denies the existence of a Creole nationalism before the nineteenth-century Independences of the Spanish American colonies. However, this view

underrates the high potential of a cultural-shared Creole background, even if it was merely cultural and not political yet. Indeed, nations could exist before the states, as imagined in their essence through public opinion or literature. Departing from this paradigm and through the reading of primary sources, I analysed the intellectual works of Creoles-Jesuits from Chile, that spent their exile in the Papal State after the expulsion from the Spanish Empire in 1767, and the patriotic narrative they elaborated about their distant homeland in these accounts. I examined selected published works by Juan Ignacio Molina and Felipe Gómez de Vidaurre y Girón as representatives of the Creole-Jesuits from the Chilean province, who spent their exile between Imola and Bologna over the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries.

The contextualisation of the late-colonial Spanish Empire is also necessary to understand this discourse. For this reason, it is essential to briefly mention the major changes that affected the political and social panorama of the eighteenth-century Atlantic world, with special attention to the implications of the Bourbon reforms in the American provinces and the reorganisation of power that arose from such political and economic measures. These developments changed the relationship of power between the Spanish metropole and the American colonies.[1] This, unavoidably, lead us to the discourse on the Creole cultural identity within the imperial context, and the penetration of modernity and Enlightenment ideas in the traditional *ancien régime* societies, as well of the consequent reframing of the role of the Church.

The regalist policies of the Bourbon culminated with the expulsion of the religious order of the Society of Jesus from the Spanish Empire, and Jesuits have been forced to move to the Papal State territories of central Italy. The main factors that led to the expulsion of the Jesuits are of political concern, but this event could also be read as the apex of a wider process of re-evaluation of the Church role, that took place as consequence of the gradual penetration of ideas related to Enlightenment thinking into the *ancien régime* societies. Indeed, Enlightened thinkers considered the clergy as incompatible with the developing of modernity; therefore, their influence had to be downsized.

During the exile in the Papal State, many Jesuits did not stop their works as intellectuals, scientists, and theologians, and continued to produce valuables treaties about sciences and humanities. On the contrary, the production of intellectual works intensified during the exile. The works were consistent and qualitatively influential in humanities, sciences, and theology. Their approach to such disciplines evolved during centuries, also for the influence of global intellectual phenomena such as Enlightenment, and the list of Creole-Jesuits authors who wrote treatises on natural science, history, and philosophy is extended.[2] For this study, however, I will only consulted selected published works by Juan Ignacio Molina and Felipe Gómez de Vidaurre, to stress the prominence of such actors in the development of a – non-unitarian – patriotic consciousness during the exile. Assuming such premises, in the next pages, I will analyse the intellectual works by Molina's and Vidaurre's literary *corpus*, to retrace the image of their distant *Patria* through their narrations, which are mostly imbued with nostalgia and marvel.

Juan Ignacio Molina

Molina (1740-1829) was one of the most productive writers between the Creole-Jesuits from Chile. The themes debated in *Compendio della Storia Geográfica, Naturale, e Civili del Regno del Chile* (1776)[3], *Saggio sulla Storia Naturale de Chili* (1782) and *Saggio sulla Storia Civile del Chili* (1787) concerned the natural history of his homeland, with descriptions of the environment, local fauna, and of the native inhabitants. His work as naturalist substantially contributed to the development of modern science, also for coining a taxonomy for items not included in the classification by Linnaeus. His theories on evolution foreran those by Charles Darwin, as exposed in his work *Analogias Menos Observadas de los Tres Reinos de la Naturaleza* (1815) and *Sobre la Propagación del Género Humano en la Diversas Partes de la Tierra* (1818). Molina and his works acquired resonance in the intellectual European panorama of the eighteenth century; he was also a member of the Royal Italian Institute of Science, Letters and Arts, and the Academy of the Institute of Sciences.

In his first work, the *Compendio della Storia Geografica, Naturale, e Civile del Regno del Chile (1776),* Molina harshly criticises the superficiality and the erroneousness of the existing accounts about Chile. This is precisely the reason that pushed him to write his work, as he states. The *Compendio* is divided into two parts: the first is a general treatise about Chile with descriptions about flora, fauna, and the climate; in the second part, instead, he portrays the indigenous peoples with their customs, language, and religion.

The validity of his account is based on a straightforward assumption that Molina revealed since the very first pages of the *Compendio*, which suggests the existence of a gap between his testimony and those written by foreign intellectuals who rarely visited the places they depicted or worst, criticised: *"io vidi, ed esaminai per me stesso la maggior parte delle cose, che scrivo"* (Molina 1776, VII).[4] This reasoning recalls the 'patriotic epistemology' elaborated by Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra in his *How to Write the History of the New World: Histories, Epistemologies, and Identities in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World* (2002), and also places itself in the discourse on the *Disputa del Nuovo Mondo* of Antonello Gerbi (1955). Yet, the strong backbone of the work and its central theme could be identified in the continuous use of superlatives by which Molina depicted the uniqueness and superiority of Chile in contrast to other American kingdoms. The exceptional and marvellous essence of Chile became the main argument on which the author develop his description of the Province.

> Il Chile è uno de' migliori Paesi dell'America: la bellezza del suo Cielo, la benignità del suo clima, la fertilità, e ricchezza del suo terreno gli danno vantaggi considerabili sopra i suoi vicini (Molina 1776, 5).[5]

With no hesitation he also affirms in the same page:

> Questo Regno, è senza contraddizione il più bello, il più ricco, e il più fertile di quanti n'abbia in tutti i suoi domini la Monarchia di Spagna (Molina 1776, 5).[6]

The description of the Chilean land continues, as well as the rhetoric of validation and exaltation of its features, which remains a fixed constant in the entireness of the *Compendio*. Pestilences are common in the American provinces, but in Chile there are none. Those who suffered from such illnesses often travelled to Chile to cure them with its fresh and pure air, and neither the animals are affected by common diseases. The beauty of the Andes is matchless for Molina, as the local flora, which he described with some notes of melancholia. Chile has so many varieties of flowers growing free in the countryside, each one with an adorable scent, and in Spring the landscape seems a looked-after garden, rather than untamed fields; Europe also had flowers, but they were not picture-perfect as the American ones. Flowers grew wild and luxuriant in the province, while in Europe it was necessary to plant and take care of them. (Molina 1776, 20-21). The Chilean beauty is rough, and – at the same time – flawless, as a wild fruit that preserved its original taste. Molina also underlines the richness of metals in the Chilean subsoil: gold is so plentiful that is possible to describe the land as *"una piastra d'oro"* (a golden plate) and there is no mountain in which this element is not contained in the province. Besides, this gold is remarkably pure, and the exceptionality as a narrative expedient appears again in the pages of the *Compendio* (Molina 1776, 96-97).

Saggio sulla Storia Naturale del Chili (1782) is probably the most famous and successful by Molina, in which he analyses similar themes already debated in the *Compendio*. Unlike his first work, *Storia Naturale* raised wide interested and received recognition in scientific circles. It called the attention of intellectuals in Italy and Europe, including Alexander Von Humboldt – who tried (and failed) to arrange a meeting with Molina when he was in Bologna in 1805 (Hanisch Espíndola 1973, 38; Chiaramonti 2010, 476). The work is a praise based on the beauty of Chile, in which the Jesuit reaffirms and reinforces many concepts already formulated in the *Compendio*. Molina, by then, was accustomed to his life in the Italian peninsula since one of the key elements of the *Storia Naturale* is the continuous comparison between its homeland and its new residence.

> Questo Paese [Chile], dirò così, è l'Italia, vale a dire il Giardino dell'America Meridionale, ove tutto ciò che può desiderarsi per passare una vita comoda, proviene colla medesima abbondanza, e perfezione, che nell'Europa (Molina 1782, 3-4).[7]

The narrative trend is similar to the *Compendio*: the main topics are recurring, while the parallelism is the favourite tool through which Molina describes its homeland. Chile is apt for any kind of production, as also Italy is. Chile and Italy are geographically and orographically analogous: both are surrounded by huge mountain chains, the Alps and the Andes, which allow the prosperity of those countries (Molina 1782, 4). However, the author shows its displeasure since his kingdom was not properly known and valorised by foreigners, and he complains about those who wrote about Chile, who did it poorly. Cornelius De Pauw was his main target since he did a misleading use of sources and, for Molina, he manipulated the travellers' reports to confirm his thesis and to slander the country (Molina 1782, 12-13). Most importantly, De Pauw

had never set foot in America, and this is also a reason for criticism by the Chilean scientist. What bothered Molina the most of De Pauw's shallow assertions, however, was that the American state of affair that De Pauw reported was fully verifiable, if only he had wanted to.[8]

> Il Sig. Paw insomma ha scritto dell'America, e de' suoi abitanti colla medesima libertà, che potrebbe aver scritto della Luna, e de' Seleniti; ma il male si è, che l'America non è tanto lontana come la Luna (Molina 1782, 13-14).[9]

Storia Naturale has strong praise and patriotic traits which Molina expressed with no qualms. For the Jesuit intellectual, his *Chili* is one of the best kingdoms of America, as he affirmed explicitly. Also, this sentiment leaks by the constant exaltation of the Chilean singularity that resulted in the hyperbole, the usage of absolute and relative superlatives, and simile rhetorical devices already present in the *Compendio*. This literary techniques were not new to American accounts, and they have been used from the first chronicles written by the narrators of the Conquest. Indeed, this figurative stratagem is a dominant and characteristic trait in the descriptions of the Indies. In the epistolary exchange of Giovanni Nicolozzi, a visitor of New Spain Viceroyalty in the sixteenth century, Intimistitan – Mexico City – is compared to Venice. The aim of this rhetorical tool is elementary and logic. The American diversity was lessened to the European audience, to convert exoticism into something familiar through a process of homogenisation of the New World to the Old. However, this exotic essence sedimented itself into the '*meraviglia americana'* (American wonder) (Perassi 2011, 38-39), which a recurrent *topos*.[10] The marvel in front of the American beauty is present from the first letters by Christopher Columbus and his descriptions of the land features. For Colombus, everything is 'the greenest' and 'the richest' (Perassi 2011, 44). What cannot be describe – the marvellous element – became the dominant language and the favourite means used also by Hernán Cortés in his missives to Charles V (Perassi 2011, 42). By the use of this literary style, the reality is overcome through evocative and unparalleled images that looked picture-perfect into the readers minds. What surprises most, is that the theme of abundance and excess of the Provinces are reiterated into the same writing style that remained typical of the descriptive literature about America, which privileged an ecstatic over-generalisation and over-simplification of the New World, rather than close-up accounts (Perassi 2011, 47). America is different and unknown to Conquerors' eyes, but even over centuries, Europe was not able to describe the New World in realistic terms; rather, America continued to be identified as an exotic and alien object of interest. And, most importantly, even the Creole writers could not overcome this rhetoric when called to write for a European audience.

In *Saggio sulla Storia Civile del Chili* (1787) Molina is already aware of the debates between Creoles and European intellectuals about the American status of inferiority of the late-eighteenth century. In this work, Molina describes the indigenous people and the historical events of Conquest of Chile. The main subjects of Molina's work are Spaniards and *araucanos*, to defend the indigenous from the falseness affirmed by American detractors. Molina clarifies some of

Mapuche habits, and he mentions the harmonious structure of their language. For the Jesuit, the richness of the indigenous language is so surprising that seemed that they had a glorious and cultured past that eventually decayed into the status in which they lived. He also hazards the hypothesis that Mapuche were the descendants of a great enlightened society that yielded to physical or historical events, of which they did not have any memory about (Molina 1787, 10). This is the quasi-mythological explanation Molina fabricated to justify the sentiment of fascination he had toward such people. However, the author still considers the indigenous people as savages, and he does not try to refute this thesis in the work, while he often uses terms as 'uncultured' and 'ignorant' to refer to them. Nonetheless, for Molina, natives of Chile are superior to other native American people. The propensity to consider Mapuche as exceptional is particularly evident for the passion he reserves for the defence of their language, especially concerning foreigner affirmations. Indeed, this aspect is crucial for Molina, as irrefutable proof of the indigenous grandeur. Molina explores it in grammatical and philological terms, then he returns to criticise De Pauw's assertations on the narrowness of the native American languages and most importantly, one cannot trust travellers' relations for their inaccuracy since *"una lingua non s'impara di passaggio"* (Molina 1787, 306).[11]

Nostalgia, sentimentalism, and pride are the foundations of Molina's works and, as we saw, it is possible to recognise a pattern in his literary production. However, as Cañizares-Esguerra has noticed, the peculiarity of Molina exaltations of its *Patria* is the absence of a large group of Chile detractors.[12] Indeed, Chile was often pictured in positive terms by foreign writers, but Molina often responds to general assertations about America as they were addressed directly to Chile. In his works, America is Chile and Chile is America, as in a synecdoche that reveals an emerging Americanism.[13] Molina's thinking could be placed in a defined scenario that combined the knowledge of a religious man with the Creole regional historiography. For this reason, Molina's thinking could be identified within the framework of the Enlightenment, and it was not free from Eurocentric influences. Indeed, if the principal aim of his works was to let foreigners knew about his country – and its people – and the redemption from stereotypes that hovered about it, the method he employed was the assimilation of the Chilean essence to its origin, namely Europe and its traditional institutions (Fuenzalida Caro 2009, 234). Narrating about the history of native peoples, for Molina, was not a way to put those people on a pedestal; rather his intentions were to normalise their anthropological nature towards European eyes (Fuenzalida Caro 2009, 237). Presenting Mapuche people to Europe, Molina constructed unity between them and portrayed a series of segmented groups into a well-structured and centralised society.

Felipe Gómez de Vidaurre y Girón

Vidaurre (1748-1818) was the author of *Historia Geográfica, Natural y Civil del Reino de Chile* (1789) and *Conversaciones Familiares de un Padre Americano con Sus Hijos Caupolican y Colocolo* (n/a). He was a historian but, unfortunately, his work did not reach wide appeal and

recognition during his life. Indeed, the manuscript of the *Historia* was published only after Vidaurre's demise, almost a century after its writing. However, nowadays we can consider his *Historia* as a relevant source for ethnographic information about Mapuche people and about the situation in the Araucanía region, along Bíobio natural border with the southern territories in which natives lived. Remarkably, he was one of the few Jesuits who achieved to return to America due to an exceptional permission, and in June of 1800 he was already in his beloved Concepción with few other former members of the order. Also, during the Independence, Vidaurre openly supported the cause, and he consequently lost his pension in 1816 (Vidaurre 1889a, IX-XVIII).[14]

The *Historia Geográfica, Natural y Civil del Reino de Chile, Tomo I* (1789) follows a well-defined structure that, by now, should sounds familiar. Geography, climate, flora, fauna, and the indigenous people are the main themes of the work. The propulsive reason that leads Vidaurre to write his *Historia* is the wish to do justice to his homeland, which was barely or wrongly known in Europe. For Vidaurre, Chile is one of the most natural-blessed land in the world: its perfect climate has been denigrated by foreign authors who, on the contrary, used to define it as one of the most harmful. Chile precious outcomes have been *"omitidas del todo, o mal esplicadas, o equivocadas, ó confundidas"*, while its inhabitants were not depicted properly (Viduarre 1889a, 3).[15] Of course, Vidaurre did not ignore the works of other historians and naturalists who appreciated the beauty of the kingdom before him. Those authors are the same who appeared also in Molina's works: Antonio de Ulloa, Amédée François Frézier, and Louis Feuillée. Besides, also in the *Historia* by Vidaurre, the use of superlatives as *"sanísimo"*, *"fertílisimo"*, *"riquísimo"* is widely spread. Nonetheless, according to Vidaurre, even if the autochthonous fauna is not numerous, it also deserves a mention in his *Historia*. In this respect, the author criticises the foreign authors who only reported limited and superficial lists of such animals, without any accurate descriptions (Vidaurre 1889a, 3-4). For the Jesuit historian, even those who sang Chile praises in their works missed the central objective: how is it possible to transmit the beauty, the abundance, of the kingdom with no detailed descriptions of its treasures? This was a mistake perpetuated by many of those who sought to write about the Province, even if their goodwill was sincere. Indeed, Vidaurre's work is disseminated by descriptions of local species and historical events, scrupulously reported.

Vidaurre does not limit himself to the use of superlatives and comparisons, but he wants to prove the effective value of Chile through tangible contents. His role as a writer was to illustrate a faithful image of his homeland. Then, it would have been the reader role to deduce the true value of Chile. In so doing, the Jesuit does not want to convince the audience of Chile beauty, because it was authentic and tangible. For this reason, Vidaurre did not resort to literary devices and rhetoric figures to let the message pass, since an accurate report of reality was the preferable means to do so. Yet, this is exactly what Vidaurre tried to do in his *Historia*. As shown, Vidaurre's literary production is different from Molina's, still neither the former was immune to the assimilation of Chile to Europe.

Vidaurre criticises the existing literature about Chile, especially regarding the indigenous people: by then, there were only few descriptions of the native customs and traditions, and they were often defined as barbaric, inhuman, with no language, atheists, and lawless (Vidaurre 1889a, 4). Indeed, the mainstream narrations about Chile were dominated by war, death, and hostility. Vidaurre explicit purpose is to subvert this horrific paradigm, and to redeem Chile from such stereotypes. Clearly, he does not ignore the merits of more detailed and exhaustive works by authors such as Diego de Rosales, Miguel de Olivares, and Molina – to whom he was very attached as a friend (Vidaurre 1889a, 5). The will of Vidaurre is clearly revealed in *Historia* first pages: what he wanted to do – as Molina – was to *"servir al público y de hacer conocer a mi patria en su propio y verdadero aspecto"* (Vidaurre 1889a, 6).[16]

The *Historia* contains a general description of the *Reyno*, its geographical position and an anthropological distinction between its inhabitants (which lacks in Molina). Many authors, according to Vidaurre, used to include in the Kingdom of Chile also the Province of Cuyo, Patagonia and Magallanes. However, Vidaurre decides not to include such Provinces in his narration, for the cultural differences of the natives from those lands had compared to Mapuche. These people did not share traditions with the latter, and they lived apart. In this respect, Vidaurre ventures a remarkable and anachronistic thought about them. He also highlights that Chile corresponded to what Mapuche called with that name and the place they lived in. Any change of this concept would be misleading because it would not reflect the real extension of this social entity with shared language, government, customs, and traditions, namely 'culture' (Vidaurre 1889a, 12).

The exaltation of the beauty and fertility of Chile is a recurring *topos* also in Vidaurre's work, as well as nostalgia. Particularly, when Vidaurre describes the central part of the *Reyno* he emphasizes its extraordinary splendour: green-coloured landscapes were predominant in this area; fauna has multiple varieties; while the atmosphere is dominated by a peace and tranquillity aura. Albeit Vidaurre realises that his ardour and enthusiasm shines by his words, he clarifies that his affirmations are not driven by the *"ciega passion de la Patria"* (blind passion for the Homeland); rather, are the outcome of the actual knowledge of such environment and its true essence. Also, he states that is *"el amor de la verdad"* (the love for the truth) which imbued his intentions (Vidaurre 1889a, 20, 310).[17] To support his assertions, the author recures also to the use of foreign sources to guarantee a higher level of impartiality.

Vidaurre also deals with the eighteenth-century *'Disputa'* and, through the opinion of Guillarme-Thomas François Raynal, he tries to demonstrate an opposed thesis on the degeneration of the American continent. As in the perfect apologia, the trees and fruits that European introduced in the colonies did not deteriorate; rather, those improved thanks to the delightful Chilean climate and, by then, they almost resembled the endemic varieties for their quality (Vidaurre 1889a, 40-41). Vidaurre specifies: if there were variations in those European-original crops, they only affected positive aspects, *"porque si se nota alguna variedad o en la sazon o en la grandeza o cualquiera otra cualidad, es para hacerlas superiores"* (Vidaurre 1889a, 135).[18]

This reasoning was not only applied to European-imported crops, but also to animal species. European-imported animals found a suitable climate for their nutrition and reproduction that prospered in the entire region and, of course, – it could sound redundant – *"se han mejorado"* (Vidaurre 1889, 287).[19]

Besides, what Vidaurre energetically defends most are the native populations. The Jesuit was perfectly aware of the diversity that existed between the various indigenous people living in the territory, as mentioned before. Indeed, when he refers to the *'naturales'*, he distinguishes between the different ethnic groups. It is very interesting to focus on this feature, which lacks in Molina's works. The former often refers to them as generally *'araucani'*, *'chileni'* or *'chilesi'*. Vidaurre, instead, provides a descriptions of such groups, and he distinguishes between '*guiglieches'*, '*juncos'*, and '*araucanos'*. They all lived in the level grounds: *'Guiglieches'*, he explains, are those who live between Río Bueno and the Chiloé Archipelago; *'juncos'* are settled between Valdivia River and Chiloé; finally, the *'araucanos'* live along the border of the Biobío River to the north, and up to the Valdivia River which separated them with the *'juncos'*, to *'patagones'* and *'poyas'* at the East. 'Araucanos', he writes, are the most renowned ethnic group of the entire continent for their courage, fortitude, and resilience during the Spanish Conquest (Vidaurre 1899a, 301). As Molina, Vidaurre is also surprised by the harmony of the Mapuche language and, also according to him, indigenous were the timeless heirs of an ancient civilisation of which everything went lost except for their mild language (Vidaurre 1889a, 311). For that reason, the second volume of Vidaurre's *Historia* has as its main objective to demonstrate the value of natives, as he did for the Chilean nature.

The second volume is always part of the *Historia* but, for convenience, I prefer to treat them as two separated texts. What Vidaurre exposes in this work is, mainly, the *historia civil* of the kingdom, focusing on the main chronological events that marked the centuries from the Spanish Conquest. Vidaurre narrates the military achievements of Almagro, Valdivia, Caupolicán, Lautaro and Colocolo, and the consequences of Valdivia's demise, as well as the succession of the governors. He reports the events helped by other well-known historical sources, as the *Historia Militar, Civil y Sagrada de lo Acaecido en la Conquista y Pacificación del Reino de Chile* (1758) by Olivares, using a quite objectively and appropriate historiographical method with no speculations. Finally, he dedicates particular attention to the system of *castas* on which the colonial society was based, with a detailed explanation on *mestizaje*, Spanish nobility, *'pureza de sangre'* (blood's purity), and the status of *criollos* or *chilenos españoles*.

For this analysis, it is also worthy to examine the pages he dedicates to the latter. *'Criollos'*, in the words of Vidaurre, were usually healthy, and they rarely born with deformities; the benignity of the climate is the main explanation for understanding this status, he affirms (Vidaurre 1889b, 289). The Jesuit historian defines their attitude as affable, sympathetic, and generous. He only has gentle words for them, and he has no hesitancy in flattering them. Creoles grew up with sturdy principle concerning Christianity and politics, respect, and honesty. They had a propensity

for arts but, unfortunately, they were not broadly sponsored and studied in the region; although Vidaurre is sure they would have succeeded also in this field, if they only had the opportunity to deepen their studies (Vidaurre 1889b, 290). For Vidaurre, a well-educated European would surely have enjoyed any kind of scientific conversation with an American-born intellectual, because the contribution of the latter would have been of great significance by giving a different and American-based point of view (Vidaurre 1889b, 295).

The work by Vidaurre is the perfect apologia for his style of writing, and his patriotism goes beyond patriotism itself. Even though the Jesuit continues to assure his absolute commitment to impartiality concerning Chile, he was not. His *Historia* is studded of nostalgia, melancholia, and homesickness. The similarities with Molina's works are several; however, Vidaurre's *Historia* looks even more detailed in the description of nature and historical events. Yet, as in the Molina's *corpus*, it is possible to detect an emerging Americanism also in the *Historia*, due to the commitment of Vidaurre to participate in the vibrant intellectual debate on the nature of America, and for its propensity to identify *'la parte per il tutto'* (the part for the whole), in a paradigm in which Chile is America and vice versa. Moreover, another recurrent theme in Vidaurre's work is the comparison to Europe and the – false – claim of neutrality, which he often assured has nothing to do with patriotism.

The Chilean patriotism of Molina and Vidaurre is based on the continuous usage of analogies and parallelism as rhetorical tools to raise their homeland at the European expected standards. For that reason, according to Vidaurre, the marbles from Chile looked like those of Carrara, Bayona, or even Mount Sinai. Crystals, instead, are like those of Bohemia (Vidaurre 1889b, 176, 179). The main keyword in Vidaurre's work is also 'abundance': there no other place in the world as Chile, for its beauty and the same amount of natural resources.

Those congruencies between the two authors denoted the use of the same sources; also, their friendship is an element which worth mention in this analysis, as well as the profound esteem Vidaurre had towards his compatriot Molina. Similarly, the use of many rhetorical figures and narrative devices are common in both authors. For that, it is possible to identify a common pattern and a shared thinking by the two authors, which had its origin in the condition of exiled, in their participation into the European enlightened debates of the century, and in the use of common sources.

Molina's and Vidaurre's cultural identity – as Creole intellectual and former Jesuits exiled in Italy – led them to develop a patriotic perception of their homeland. Chile was the best country of the empire for its naturalistic features, resources, and people – both natives and Spanish-descendants. Indeed, even the indigenous were superior to other populations living in the New World before the Conquest. On the one hand, the astonishment, the surprise, and the wonder are the pillars of Molina accounts – who was not able to rid its writing style from old literary *cliché* belonging to the conquistador descriptions of America. On the other hand, the persistent chase for a most detailed and real account characterized Vidaurre's work, who tried to provide an accurate

image of Chile. Finally, the patriotic narrative they elaborated about their distant homeland in the analysed accounts is an indicator of a shared cultural and intellectual identity that could be placed into a global nationalistic framework, as we will see.

Reframing colonial space through nationalism

In the late-eighteenth century, Spanish – peninsular – Enlightenment identified the *Patria* with the peninsular nation, not with the Spanish imperial dominions (Ortega 2011; Entin 2013, 22). For that, it is difficult to identify the American dominions as a unitarian *patria* under the Spanish rule. By then, Spanish America was a combination of kingdoms and no Spanish American could have described his patriotism as *'criollo'* (Entin 2013, 30-31). In the late-colonial era, the sentiment of attachment of Creoles to their lands could only be regional, since American kingdoms were united under the Spanish rule, and not by a shared consciousness of belonging to the same continental entity.

The transformation of '*reynos'* into '*patrias'* took place only in the late eighteenth century. Still, America represented a community that, even of juridical inconsistency, was distinctive in its – cultural – identification (Entin 2013, 30-31). Spanish American patriotism is conceivable as part of situational rhetoric that saw the involvement of social actors tied together by the imperial dynamics, and by an essentially Hispanic, Enlightened and Catholic discourse (Entin 2013, 30-31). Nevertheless, it would denote shallowness to overlook to how Creole-exiled Jesuits referred to their birthplace, and the deep affection they showed in their written texts towards their distant lands. John Lynch has highlighted how much these well-educated religious actors gave tangible expression to the growing *'americanismo',* becoming the literary forerunners of American nationalism (Lynch 1976, 41).

Nationalism is a complex phenomenon with multiple facets, and many scholars in the last decades tried to set its features and explored it deeply.[20] A treatise about its definition, origin, and nature would be demanding for these pages. For that, I embrace the concept of nationalism already formulated by Benedict Anderson. In his view, the notion is deprived by its ideological connotation but meant in purely anthropological terms, implying the existence of an "imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (Anderson 2016, 5-6). Nationality, nation-ness, and nationalism are cultural artefacts, according to Anderson. Yet, this perception did not alter their authenticity. Nations are imagined, but not crafted, nor invented (Anderson 2016, 5-6). Assuming the existence of such communities does not imply necessarily the presence of a political project. Indeed, cultural nationalism and political nationalism are two different phenomena, not complementary nor consequential. Therefore, the distinction with the twentieth-century political nationalistic movements should be strongly underlined in this discourse. In Anderson's view, the nation is imagined, limited and sovereign. The community "is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the

image of their communion", and the imagination of those depends on the "horizontal comradeship" which characterizes the nation (Anderson 2016, 7). Consequently, communities are imagined but not fabricated; the sense of belonging comprises also genuine patriotic values by its people. At this point, a question could arise: is territory a prerogative *sine qua non* for the development of patriotic or nationalistic beliefs? What happens to a community that lives – or is forced to live – outside the national territorial borders? Which are the repercussions of distance on the sense of belonging to a common homeland? As Lord Acton affirmed, "exile is the nursery of nationality" (Acton 1967, 134; Anderson 1992, 2).[21] Anderson, following the thinking of Jacques Bénigne Bossuet, also analysed this aspect referring to a general human condition of attachment to the physical lands in which people have born (Anderson 1992). This imagined *patria* has variable frontiers. Indeed, the main reference point associated with this concept of *patria* could differ in each one's consciousness: homeland could be represented in people imagination by a town, by a region, or by a country (Anderson 1992, 2). The connection could also goes beyond geographical borders, and the bond with the ancestral home is similar to the classical definitions of territorial-based nationalism (Glick Schiller 2005, 570-571). The main difference, in this case, is "the nature of the relationship between the members of the nation and the national territory", which implies a potentially borderless communitarian bond (Glick Schiller 2005, 570-571). This definition of nationalism could open the path to a global approach in the analysis of the phenomenon, in which national communities are seen as nationalistic clusters in foreign national territory, but still tied to their native lands. These de-localised nationalistic communities could be self-ascribed or ascribed by others in a form of a diasporic tie. Yet, this belonging could be real or imagined, and the organisation of their relationship during the exile is not always necessarily enriched by political attempts to establish a state (Glick Schiller 2005, 571). In this respect, it is necessary to distinguish between nationalism as a cultural discourse and nationalism as a political aspirational project – which often endorses political mobilisations.

Analogously, the Jesuits' accounts created an 'imagined community' removed by any political pushes. Still, this community had a sense of belonging to a shared, beloved, and distant *patria* which can be reconstructed by their narrations. Indeed, literary production was the preferential means of expression during the exile. And, as illustrated before, natural histories were the key element of this Creole-Jesuit patriotic discourse. Still, the development of natural science and the writing of natural histories were not typical of the exiles Chilean-Jesuit, nor of the members of the Society of Jesus.

The writing of such literature was the product of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment in the Atlantic world, and of the development of modern science. Von Humboldt, Charles Marie La Condamine, Linnaeus, and George-Louis Leclerc de Buffon are well-known European naturalists, and they were key actors of the scientific panorama of their time. Natural Histories were proliferating in the late eighteenth century and Creole-Jesuits, as intellectuals, also joined this literary wave. Yet, their accounts are distinctive from those of Europeans. Creoles did not only

write about Natural History, but about their homeland. In so doing, Creole-Jesuits used such works as a tool to unload their feelings; such emotions comprehended longing, marvel, and melancholy, but also an emerging patriotism which becomes known by their narrations.

I explored Molina and Vidaurre accounts, but they were not the only testimonies of this trend. *"Solamente saben lo que es Chile los que lo han perdido"*, affirmed the Chilean Jesuit Manuel Lacunza in a letter to his friend Juan de Santa Cruz (Meier 2001, 436).[22] However, this phenomenon was neither merely Chilean: also Juan de Velasco and Francisco Javier Clavijero had similar views regarding their homelands, which it should be interesting to discuss properly and separately.[23]

As Cañizares-Esguerra noticed, however, Anderson underestimated the role of the *intelligentsia* in shaping nationalism (Cañizares-Esguerra 1997, 2). Cañizares-Esguerra argues that "subordinate elites ... not only been preoccupied with crafting autonomous spiritual-cultural space of difference but also with marking differences by inventing altogether separate physical spaces." (Cañizares-Esguerra 1997, 2). For our discourse on Creole-exiled Jesuits, it is not possible to overlook it because this intellectual space is exactly where Molina and Vidaurre placed themselves. Although this Spanish American patriotic wave was not political but merely cultural, Creole-Jesuit intellectuals made use of Natural History as a tool to give voice to a sense of belonging to a shared and distant *Patria*. This rhetoric was then reclaimed and inflated after the Independences of the nineteenth century, and history became an efficient political mean to forge national unity.[24]

The representation of American nature in the late eighteenth-century narrations reframed the image and space of the colonies, creating a pre-political imaginary national community (Cañizares-Esguerra 1997, 3). Molina's and Vidaurre's accounts manipulated the colonial space of Chile, depicting the American colony as an idealised, privileged, and autonomous kingdom in which the indigenous were unconquerable and had a glorious past. The colonial space, essentially fragmented, was depicted by those authors as an integrated, cohesive, and homogenous reality which posed the basis of what Cañizares-Esguerra called 'proto-national spaces' (Cañizares-Esguerra 1997, 12). This is particularly evident in Molina account, who constructed unity between the various ethnic groups of Chile – which he called collectively 'Chilean' – depicting them as a well-structured and centralised Western-style society, as above-mentioned. Yet, the questioning of the colonial space also had another dimension, as in the Vidaurre case. As we saw, he did not recognise in the imperial-settled borders the essence of the Chilean province: he decided not to include in his descriptions the Province of Cuyo, Patagonia, and Magallanes, recognising the diversity of those lands and the indigenous people who lived there.

The manipulation of America's image created a colonial space into which the national perceptions of the cleric intellectuals about their Province were settled. Moreover, through the exaggeration and exaltation of the American physical spaces, Creole-Jesuits emphasized the colonial economic potential of their lands, highlighting the presence of gold and silver in abundance. Colonies were microcosmos and commercial emporium, which God blessed with the

richness of everything necessary for life (Cañizares-Esguerra 1997, 5, 7). Molina's and Vidaurre's attempts to describe America proceeded along with two different directions: they exalted and strongly underlined the uniqueness and limitless beauty of Chile while, at the same time, trying to standardise those unmatched features in the constant comparison with European nature. Consequently, the American uniqueness should have been respected, but not feared by foreigners.

The patriotism showed by Molina in Vidaurre could be defined as nature-based patriotism, in which nature and the birth soil are the fundamental aspects through which establish the bond. For Maurizio Viroli, "natural patriotism is an attachment to the native soil understood as a place of memory" (Viroli 1997, 46). The land is loaded with unique meanings that is impossible to find elsewhere, which are then translated into the love for the *patria* (Viroli 1997, 46). The sentiment of attachment showed by those authors helped to increase the sense of territorialisation to a concrete object, namely homeland. However, the idea naturalists wanted to give of this land was crafted, altered, and imbued by exceptionality.

Chile is a *giardino* (garden) that, even if not explicitly clarified, recalls the Eden. The wonder contained in Molina and Vidaurre accounts is not far from the religious astonishment: they subverted the paradigm of the divine and substituted it with natural marvel. When analysed, this image is not dissimilar to that painted by Columbus in his travel diaries. If the feeling of marvel Columbus felt in front of the American beauty could be ascribed in relationship with possession, as explored by Stephen Greenblatt (1991), I argue it is possible to apply the same framework also for the Chilean Jesuit narrations. The marvellous was translated into possession by Columbus, and this expedient was necessary to put the American lands under the Spanish rule virtually. For the Chilean Jesuits, instead, it served to tie a strong bond with a remote land in which they could no longer live.[25]

In conclusion, the Chilean homeland is imaginary through the Jesuits accounts, but consistent. The patriotism of Molina and Vidaurre leaked by the reading of their works, and they did not try to hide this sentiment. But, as highlighted by David Brading, the development of Creole patriotism could be defined as an ideology belonging to a particular class of intellectuals, nor of a nation (Brading 2017, 334). However, even through these lenses, it is not possible to overlook to their contribution to the development of Creole nationalism through the identification of the national space. Although the sentiment was elitist, it included the awareness of a shared historical background of the *patria*, which is a fundamental component of nationalism (Lynch 1976, 43). The Creole patriotism of Molina and Vidaurre translated into nationalism in the exact moment in which they re-designed such territorial space as finite and concrete, different from that of the empire. The nation they crafted was there, on the other side of the Atlantic, tangible, and real; what was imagined, however, was the sense of unity.

Conclusions

The exogenous factors that influenced the Creole-Jesuits' thinking are of global interest and

they had their foundations on both sides of the Atlantic, in intellectual and cultural processes. There are major elements that shaped the sense of belonging to their *Patria*, of endogenous and exogenous natures; between these components, it is possible to distinguish the main aspects that constituted their thinking.

Firstly, (1) their status of Creoles is fundamental to understand the entire discourse. Particularly, the emerging cultural identity this social group was developing in the eighteenth-century Spanish America colonies played a fundamental role in fashioning their sense of belonging to the colonies. They were of Spanish origins, but of American birth. Secondly, (2) their role as members of a religious order as the Society of Jesus allowed them access to a specific kind of knowledge, of high level and of classical European-styled setting. The study of ancient literature was encouraged, as well as the study of Greek and Latin languages and selected philosophical school of thoughts to the detriment of other tendencies. Thirdly, (3) the gradual penetration of the Enlightenment in the eighteenth-century colonial societies of the Atlantic world, as well as modernity, prepared the ground for the re-elaboration of the relationship of power to the Spanish metropolis. (4) This process of penetration of modernity into traditional societies modified the role of the clergy within the *ancien régime* societies, reframing the paradigm which saw the Church as the bastion of old-fashioned values, that did not fit anymore with the new model. And, lastly, (5) their status of exiled after the expulsion and the suppression of the *Societas* entailed substantial consequences in their lives as individuals and as a displaced community, which sought refuge into science and literary production as an escape hatch to the unfortunate situation.

All those factors constituted the influences of their views of the world and of their homeland, enabling the development of patriotic and nationalist beliefs. Jesuits were conscious of the implications of their works and they were aware of the debates that animated the eighteenth-century European intellectual panorama. For that, their apologias perfectly suited into this context and tried to overturn sedimented stereotypes on America-related matters. Natives were re-evaluated in a new framework that identified them as successors of great forgotten civilisation; Creoles were depicted as the most honest and sincere people on earth; while nature has been exalted beyond belief, with the preponderant association with the quasi-divine. Chile was blessed and unique in its essence for Molina and Vidaurre, and they were firmly convinced that their writing attempts were deprived by any partiality, which were not. The beauty of Chile is under everyone's eyes, it is objective and undeniable: nature becomes, in the words of Cañizares-Esguerra, the 'patriotic space' to fulfil with their praises.

The way in which America has been described during the centuries, through the highlighting of the exotic and of the marvellous, is interiorised by the Jesuits intellectuals who used the same rhetoric to re-disclose America to Europe. The way in which they presented Chilean complex reality to Europe was the gala of the new image they fabricated for it, for its restored and triumphant entrance into the European collective imagination. They decided to revise and re-evaluate an old image of their homeland that did not reflect reality for them. In so doing,

however, they let themselves be tempted by the overemphasis and by the seed of patriotism. The marvel, the hyperboles, and the comparisons are parts of a singular patriotic discourse that saw a nation where there was not yet. They constructed an imperfect unity through the literary inventiveness, which reframed the Chilean image and space while creating a pre-political imaginary national community. The sentiment of attachment and territorialisation for this distant land, the awareness of a shared past, and the struggle of the exile created a tangible object in their narrations that could be defined as their *Patria*.

Endnotes:

1. See Francisco Ortega, "A Brief Conceptual History of 'Colonia,'" in *The First Wave of Decolonization*, Mark Thurner ed. (New York: Routledge, 2019).
2. In this essay I have chosen to take into consideration only sources relevant for their scientific value, to better analyse the secular contribution to the intellectual debates by Creole Jesuits from Chile. Clearly, Jesuits were primarily religious men, and their production of theological works is also abundant. See authors as Diego José Fuenzalida, Andrés Febres, and Manuel Lacunza.
3. The authorship of this work is still debated between Molina and Vidaurre. However, the predominant tendency attributes it to Molina.
4. "I saw and I examined for myself most of the things I write."
5. "Chile is one of the best countries of America: the beauty of its Sky, the benignity of its climate, the fertility and richness of its soil gave it considerable advantages over its neighbour countries."
6. "This kingdom is, with no contradiction, the most beautiful, the richest, and the most fertile between the Spanish Monarchy dominions."
7. "This country [Chile] is like Italy, namely the Garden of the Southern America, where everything that one could desire to conduct a comfortable life comes with the same abundance and perfect as in Europe."
8. For a deepened analysis on De Pauw affirmations and intellectual eighteenth-century debates about America, see Antonello Gerbi, *La Disputa del Nuovo Mondo: Storia di una Polemica, 1750-1900* (Milano e Napoli: Riccardo Ricciardi Editore, 1955).
9. "Mr Paw wrote about America and of its inhabitants with the same liberty that could have used to write about the Moon and of Selenites; but the sin is that America is not far as the Moon is."
10. See also Stephen Greenblatt, *Marvellous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World* (University of Chicago Press, 2017); and Antonello Gerbi, *Nature in the New World: From Christopher Columbus to Gonzalo Fernandez De Oviedo* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1975).
11. "A language cannot be learn passing through."
12. Criticism about American colonies were common in the eighteenth century, but they mainly interested the American continent in general. Few or none addressed their critique right against the Chilean province.
13. See Miguel Rojas Mix, "La Idea de la Historia y la Imagen de America en el Abate Molina," in *Revista de Filosofía*, 10, 1 (2016); and Osvaldo Rodríguez Pérez, "El Hispanoamericanismo de los Jesuitas Expulsos en Italia," in *Actas de XII Congreso de la Asociación Internacional de Hispanistas: 21-26 de agosto de 1995* (Birmingham: Department of Hispanic Studies, 1998).
14. See also Walter Hanisch Espíndola*, Itinerario y Pensamiento de Los Jesuítas Expulsos de Chile: 1767-1815* (Santiago de Chile: Andrés Bello, 1972).
15. "Completely omitted, misunderstood, or wrong, or confused."
16. "To serve the audience and to let them know my homeland in its true essence."
17. "The love for the truth."

18. "Because if one notices any variation in the smoothness or dimensions or any other aspect, it is to make them superior."
19. "They improved themselves."
20. See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, revised edition (London: Verso Books, 2016); John Alexander Armstrong, *Nations Before Nationalism* (Chapell Hill: UNC Press 1982); Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1986); and Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1788* (Cambridge University Press, 1990).
21. See also Edward Said, *Reflections on Exile: and Other Literary and Cultural Essays* (London: Granta Books, 2013).
22. "Only those who have lost it know what Chile is: there is not the least compensatory here."
23. See Juan de Velasco, *Historia del Reino de Quito de la América Meridional* (1789); Francisco Javier Clavijero, *Historia Antigua de México* (1780). See also the works by José Antonio Alzate y Ramírez.
24. See Antonio Annino and François-Xavier Guerra, *Inventando la Nación: Iberoamérica, Siglo XIX* (México DF: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2003).
25. See also Edmundo O'Gorman, *La Invención de América: Investigación acerca de la Estructura Histórica del Nuevo Mundo y del Sentido de su Devenir* (Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1958).

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The Confines and Freedoms of Female Identity in Diana Abu-Jaber's *Arabian Jazz*

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Abstract:

Diana Abu-Jaber's *Arabian Jazz* (1993) takes place in Euclid, New York, a town which remains "virtually the same as it had been one hundred years ago" (Abu-Jaber 1993, 88), filled with "dirt farmers, onion farmers, and junk dealers" (90). The Ramouds, an Arabian American family, move to town, attempting a fresh start after the death of Nora, the wife and mother. Their ethnic background and middle-class status make them stand out within the "white-trash town," which "produced poorly clothed and poorly fed children" (90). Within this environment, some characters, regardless of gender, culture, or economic status, struggle with the confines of their understood identities. The Ramoud sisters, Jemorah and Melvina, and the Ott sisters, Peachy and Dolores, act as foils to one another, emphasizing the unbalanced reality for these women in society. While many critics detail the hardships faced by Jemorah and Melvina because of their dual Arabic and American backgrounds, this duality and their middle-class status allow them to form their own identities and make their own rules in life. Unfortunately, many of the white women in the text feel trapped by their poverty and by a white trash label, which limits and stifles their life choices and opportunities.

Keywords: Abu-Jaber, Class, Oppression, White Identity, Women's Fiction

Diana Abu-Jaber's *Arabian Jazz* (1993) takes place in Euclid, New York, a town which remains "virtually the same as it had been one hundred years ago" (Abu-Jaber 1993, 88), filled with "dirt farmers, onion farmers, and junk dealers" (90) and surrounded by "ancient trailers . . . disintegrating into rust and red tears" (311), "scrap heaps," "car graveyards, and sewers" (176). The Ramouds, an Arabian American family, move to town, attempting a fresh start after the death of Nora, the wife and mother. Their ethnic background and middle-class status make them stand out within the "white-trash town," which "produced poorly clothed and poorly fed children," who attempt to leave town but usually only get "far enough for them to come back for good" (90). Within this environment, a number of the characters, regardless of gender, culture, or economic status, struggle with the confines of their understood identities. The Ramoud sisters, Jemorah and Melvina, and the Ott sisters, Peachy and Dolores, act as foils to one another, emphasizing the unbalanced reality for these women in society. Even though many critics detail the hardships faced by Jemorah

and Melvina because of their dual Arabic and American backgrounds, this duality, along with their middle-class status, allows them to form their own identities and make their own rules in life. Unfortunately, many of the white women in the text, such as Peachy and Dolores, feel trapped by their poverty and by a white trash label, which limits and stifles their life choices and opportunities. Being aware of "human suffering and the deep inequalities that generate dreadfully undemocratic and unethical contradictions for many people" (Giroux 2015, 276) allows society to "challenge, rather than support or ignore, the assumptions and inequities perpetuated by the dominant culture in favor of a narrow and privilege portion of society," ideally bringing forth social transformation (Brady 2008, 2).

Since two of the main characters in the text straddle two worlds, Arabic and American, it is not surprising that the literary criticism about *Arabian Jazz* often focuses on identity. Mazen Naous stresses the connection between the improvisation and interweaving nature of jazz music with the presence of "two cultures, two families, two identities, and especially two languages" (2009, 61) which require the creating and intertwining of individual and collective identities. According to Hind El-Hajj and Sirene Harb, gendered and ethnic memory aids "in shaping Arab American women's identity," allowing these women "to fight silencing and oppression" and to establish stronger connections to their background and community (2011, 138). In addition, Pauline Kaldas argues that Abu-Jaber's use of humor allows her to slowly chip away at stereotypes and showcase real individuals "in the midst of personal and cultural struggles" (2006, 184) as they try to understand themselves and their place in the world. Lastly, Michelle Hartman claims that Abu-Jaber employs specific symbols to "represent black America" and invokes African American music, which offer other possibilities for the construction of Arab American identities (2006, 146).

Scholarship on *Arabian Jazz* also addresses issues pertaining to gender. Nayef Ali Al-Joulan explains that *Arabian Jazz* "offers a hybridized feminist vision," which critiques patriarchal social beliefs of both Arabs and Americans (2010, 70). According to Salwa Essayah Cherif, Abu-Jaber "investigate[s] the interconnectedness of the past and the present in the making of the Arab American female self," allowing a space for self-invention for Arab American women (2003, 208). In addition, Ibis Gómez-Vega claims Abu-Jaber "works with the cultural imperative that girls must get married but wickedly employs Greek myths, fairy tales, and American popular culture to deconstruct the traditional marriage story," providing opportunities for her female characters to properly establish themselves as Arab American women (2016, 134).

While criticism predominately focuses on the two female Arab-American protagonists, few scholars discuss the plight of white women in the novel. Al-Joulan is the exception, arguing that Abu-Jaber's "portrayal of different perceptions of issues of sexuality, body, morality, marriage, and children comes through the varied types of Arab and American women in the novel, creating dialogue within and across cultures" (2010, 73). When addressing American women, Al-Joulan focuses on Dolores and Peachy Otts, "who suffer as much as Arabs" (78).

She claims they "adopt the patriarchal culture's anti-feminist stereotypes" (73) and "suffer from poverty, lack of education, . . . and gender oppression" (78). Dolores, especially, "enable[s] [her] own oppression through [her] fear, weakness, and ignorance" (74). No less than the critical readings focused on the struggles of Arab-American female characters, Al-Joulan's discussion of white women's oppression emphasizes the limitations of all women in patriarchal culture.

In *Arabian Jazz*, Jemorah and Melvina face oppression due to their Arabic background. On the bus to school, the other children taunt "Jem because of her strange name, her darker skin" (Abu-Jaber 1993, 92). They continuously search "for her weakness, the chink that would let them into her strangeness," while they "tore out a handful of her hair . . . pushed her down as she stood to leave . . . raked scratches across her face and neck as she stood" (92-93). As time passes, Jem recognizes that "'people see color first'" (194). Portia, Jem's boss at the hospital, wants to "'scrub all the scum [Arabic] right out of'" her to make her "'pure and whole'" (295) because she is "'tainted'" (294). Adding further insult, Portia claims that Jem's father is not "'any better than Negros,'" which will cause him to "'be stuck in that same job in the basement for the rest of his life'" (294). Not long after, the whole family must deal with a pair of hikers invited to picnic with them, who question if the Ramouds are "'I-talians? Wet-backs?'" and stare at them with "amusement and disgust" when they find out that the Ramouds are Arab (361). Jem struggles the most with these incidents, which prompt her to believe "'it's not enough to be born here [America], or to live here, or speak the language. You've got to *seem* right'" (328). She eventually points out that she has "'started to see better'" and understands that she does not "'fit in'" because Americans "'don't like Arabs'" (327-328).

In addition to racial issues, both sisters struggle with oppressive gender expectations because of traditional Arabic customs. After the death of his wife, Matussem raises the girls alone with occasional assistance from his sister, Fatima, who emphasizes the need for both women to be conventional Arabic good girls because "a good girl does not leave her home. Does not go out in public, speak to a man, show her ankles, talk back to her parents, go to school, live alone" (289-290). However, the sisters must "'marry the handsome Arab boys and makes for us grandsons'" (77) soon because if they reach the age of thirty "'without a contracted male, [they will] be diagnosed as terminal spinster[s]'" (9). So, even though it drives both Jemorah and Melvina crazy, Fatima continues to push both women to "'wear a little bit Maybelline'" (52) and reminds them "'a little tanning booth is all it needs'" to help make them more desirable to potential husbands (53).

Throughout the novel, class oppression also affects people in Euclid. Janet Zandy defines class as "an experience of shared economic circumstances and shared social and cultural practices in relation to positions of power" (1996, 8). She further claims that "each of us is born into a family with a particular class identity and class history" (9), a "kind of inheritance we carry with us as individuals" (8). Don Slater adds that "it is partially through the use of goods and services that we formulate social identities and display these identities" (1997, 31). In addition, Annette Kuhn states that "class is something beneath your clothes, under your skin, in your reflexes, in your psyche, at the very core of your being" (1995, 98). Typically, people "fall into poverty not out of laziness or

stupidity but because of the structure of the economy or the indifference of the majority" (Marsh 2011, 615-616). Regardless, class relations "determine life-chances" (Reay 2005, 924) and are "deeply embedded in everyday interactions, in institutional processes, in struggles over identity, validity, self-worth and integrity even when it is not acknowledged" (Payne 909).

In the novel, Jemorah and Melvina come from a middle-class upbringing. Prior to moving to Euclid, their father works, while their mother remains at home with the girls, indicating that the family could survive on one salary. After Nora's death, Matuseem moves the family to a "sprawling" (Abu-Jaber 1993, 86) home, where "every May since their move to the country, their father went through fits of exuberance, driving to the local hardware store and bringing home lawn decorations" (107). In Euclid, Matussem manages the local hospital's maintenance department, but he also finds the time to play the drums in The Big Band Sound of Mat Ramoud and the Ramoudettes, a jazz band that he started that plays local gigs. Beyond their father, both Ramoud sisters received college educations and both have employment. Melvina is a nurse, and Jemorah works at the hospital in inpatient billing.

While Jemorah and Melvina have a conventional lifestyle, Dolores and Peachy come from a poverty-stricken background where both gender and class oppression trap them both in their current circumstances and plays a key role in shaping their lives. The "relentless" sisters "run wild" (92) and come from "one of the 'bad' families" in Euclid (33). Their mother, Hilma, spends her time at the Key West Bar, while wearing her usual "down jacket and nightgown" with her hair "pulled . . . tightly into curlers" (103). With their "sharp and blank" faces, "branded with grime" (92), the poor children of Euclid, a community filled with "silence" and the "afterglow of abandonment" (100), either drop out of school, get "pregnant, went to juvenile homes, foster homes, penitentiaries, turned up poverty-stricken, welfare-broken, sick, crazy, or drunk" (93). Matt Wray and Annalee Newitz claim being "incestuous and sexually promiscuous, violent, alcoholic, lazy, and stupid" (1997, 2) are stereotypes of poor whites, who, according to Nancy Isenberg, are "stigmatized for their inability to be productive, to own property, or to produce healthy and upwardly mobile children" (2017, xxvii). Unfortunately, this defines Dolores and Peachy, who does not even know how to read.

Even though her Arabic and American backgrounds prove challenging at times, Melvina's stance in both worlds and her middle-class status offer her more opportunities to pave her own way in life, leading her to identify herself, not by a man, a child, or a race, but through a career as a nurse. Even though her family believes she should marry and settle down, focused and "fierce" (Abu-Jaber 1993, 21) Melvina is quick to point out she does not "'need a husband'" (45) because she has "little use for men as a general rule" (283) and she has "'too many other concerns to attend to'" (223). When offered a marriage proposal by Larry Fasco, she claims she would "'rather swing from a vine'" (351). Instead, starting from a young age, Melvina focuses on "making herself into that woman [a nurse]" (12). She begins "playing nurse when she was three, bandaging her older sister in dish towels" (133) and starts attending community college nursing courses at her elementary school by sitting "in the back of the room and pass[ing] herself off as somebody's daughter" (36). Melvina even

takes "an accelerated course in nursing just after high school . . . to become an R.N. as fast as humanly possible" (133). Melvina's dedication to her career results in being "made a team leader after only a year on the job, and head nurse the year after that" because her supervisors saw that "she was 'all nurse'" (13). The hospital staff and hospital community "knew and respected her and honored her commands" (179). Even her relationship with Larry stems from her need to "dutifully" (286) help "keep him alive as long as she could" (287) by suppling and administering methadone due to a habit "introduced by way of muscle relaxants after an injury in 'Nam" (285). According to Gómez-Vega, "Melvina is so identified with her profession that, on her day off from school, she wears 'spotless white slacks and white blouse, more or less identical to those she wore to work'" (2007, 30). She is "both Arab and American, but she identifies with neither side of her ethnic divide. Instead, she defines herself by the one identity that she herself chooses, her work as a nurse" (30).

While Melvina quickly recognizes and progresses forward with her educational and career goals at a young age, young Peachy embodies the stereotypes and limitations of being poor white trash. Educational inequalities and deficient family backgrounds "lock poor children into lives of poverty" (Marsh 2011, 621), where they feel like "their descent into poverty as something that is beyond their control" (Hill 2007, 86). They fail to recognize that "they are caught up in circumstances originating much earlier that set the course toward increasing poverty," and "they are at a loss as to what to do" (86-87). "Barefoot" with "hair sticking out like a busy doormat" (Abu-Jaber 1993, 90) and "a smell . . . like dill pickles" (210), Peachy first appears when the Ramouds move to town. She quickly shares that her family is "white trash," and that "no one ever escapes" the "white-trash town" of Euclid, emphasizing her understanding of her place within society (90). Even though she continuously gets "throttled" by her mother "when she [is] up to no good" (89), young Peachy "leer[s]" at the other kids on the bus and "spit[s] in their faces," acting like a "permanent child-god of destruction" (92). Supporting the white trash stereotype, Peachy does not see any escape from "the things that . . . [her] brother Joe" does to her when she gets "home first from school" (176). She admits to Jemorah that her brother "pushed her down in the bedroom, stopped her mouth with a hand that smelled like axle grease, and sweated and groaned his face into the pit of her neck" (92). Because she is uneducated and unprotected by a drunken mother, Peachy is subjected to abuse by one of her family members. She is, effectively, defenseless against that kind of familial oppression, and this leads to her becoming "a repeating ninth-grader," who is quickly picked up by the police, for an undisclosed reason, while riding the bus to school one day (94). Her "face was squeezed past recognition in rage and fear as they carried her out" (94). Shortly after, Peachy "never return[s] to school" (94), and the school bus no longer stops at "the shacks and trailers," implying that "the school had forgotten those children," like Peachy, "were even there" (93).

Unlike Melvina's success as she gets older, the limitations of Peachy's life, the result of poverty and her poor white trash label, follow her into adulthood. According to Gregory Mantsios, class oppression significantly impacts the physical and mental well-being of individuals (2001, 313). As she gets older, she remains within the confines of her pre-determined label, "sleeping anywhere and

going off with anyone" (Abu-Jaber 1993, 346), knowing that there is little she can do to change things. On occasion, she works at Onondaga Orchards, "a big produce stand up the road," which requires no high school degree and offers no future career options (95). However, she seems to be "at home among the vegetables" with her dirty skin and her "vacant" eyes, "sweet and dull as molasses" (95). When Melvina tries to help Peachy continue her education, to try to make a new identity, Peachy claims that she is "'stupid and teachers hate me'" and argues that she only learned "'stuff like how to make fat noises on [her] arm'" (209). Her reason to avoid further education becomes clear when the Ramoud sisters discover that Peachy cannot read, which prompts her to "grab the [college application], crumple it up," and throw "it down on the table" (210). Lower and working classes are "the most vulnerable" and "made to bear the greatest psychological burdens of an unequal society" (Reay 2005, 924), where individuals feel "undeserving, unentitled, . . . [and] incapable of 'getting it right'" (Kuhn 1995, 98). By the conclusion, unlike Melvina, who acts like an adult from the age of two, Peachy's life seems stalled, trapping her in a continued state of childhood, where she will remain "'a goofy devil-child,'" waiting for her life to start through "'more smarts'" or "'hav[ing] a kid like herself'" (Abu-Jaber 1993, 95).

While Melvina disregards issues pertaining to her ethnic background and forges ahead in the nursing field, Jemorah struggles initially to understand who she is, but she eventually understands that her duality, which causes her so much frustration, actually offers more options to create who she wants to be. She begins the novel employed at the hospital and single as she nears her thirtieth birthday. After leaving college without a plan, Jem takes the position "out of necessity" (4) but finds herself "jealous of people who liked their jobs" (133). She eventually realizes "she would have to do something herself to change her life," so she plans "to quit her job" (133) and get "a new start" (330). This decision helps solidify a plan to attend graduate school, which would not allow her to "hide in Euclid and disappear" because "she wanted *more*" and "would *not* let herself vanish" (299). It is her own struggle with her identity that prompts her to study psychology, which will help her understand herself and others. Also, Jemorah becomes empowered by breaking from traditional gender norms, especially Arabic expectations. Year after year, Jem waited, "but the desire to marry, to love a man passionately . . . didn't come" (11). Eventually, she reencounters a past crush, Ricky Ellis, and "she knew she wanted him" (222). But when he extends a marriage proposal to her, Jemorah says "'no,'" opting for the possibilities of graduate school instead (371). According to Gómez-Vega, Jemorah "finally learns to see marriage as a way to hide from the life that she should be living" (2016, 144). In the end, Jemorah understands that she is "'torn in two'" by her Arabic and American backgrounds, but she gets "'two looks at a world,'" allowing her to "'see far more than most ever do,'" impacting her ability to understand, and even create, her own identity (Abu-Jaber 1993, 330).

Unlike Jemorah, Dolores, whose "'name is Latin for 'sorrow'" (172), finds herself confined by restricted life choices due to poverty and a white trash status. Iris Young stresses that "there are five dimensions of oppression: exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism

and violence" (1990, 9). Class oppression prompts feelings of "guilt, shame, resentment and defensiveness" (Sayers 2005, 201-202), as well as "envy, deference, contempt, arrogance, pride, rage, satisfaction, embarrassment and pity" (Reay 2005, 913). At the age of twelve, "swollen with pregnancy," Dolores stays home and stands "at the windows of the Otts's house, waving to the bus she should have been riding" (Abu-Jaber 1993, 182-183). While Jem decides to focus on her education instead of a man, Dolores, who is intelligent in her own right and could "read something or hear it on TV and get every word in her head," over the years, "turn[s] herself over so many times to that damn man, *that damn man* being many men, forty, maybe fifty, or even a hundred" (101), and "nearly every one put a baby in her" (102). Before she even turns thirty, Dolores finds herself "look[ing] haggard as old warriors, harrowed by poverty and pregnancy" (95). Unlike Jemorah's comfortable family home, Dolores lives in a trailer home, "a barnyard" (103), where "the kids slept on old sofa cushions and bus seats," "they cooked on a Sterno camp stove" (104), and "all she could hear or see or smell was babies, on and on, forever" (170). Surrounded by "tin walls," Dolores struggles with "animals with bottomless eyes and slots of mouths, just eating and shitting," and each new baby "suck[s] the life right out of Dolores's body" (104). Diane Reay adds that the "petty mundane humiliations and slights of social class" (917) lead to "resentment and antagonism . . . time and time again" (2005, 915). She often reprimands herself for thinking too much, knowing it only gets her "closer to things than she really needed to be, the kind of things that made her crazy" (Abu-Jaber 1993, 101). During these moments, she questions "when her life would begin" because "she hadn't seen any signs of it yet" (101).

Because of her established identity, the only real control Dolores wields in her life is the choice to live or die. When fearing yet another pregnancy, she takes "a hanger out of the closet and start[s] to unbend it" (102). Then, she "gently, even tenderly" guided the wire "between her legs" (104). Dolores recognizes that maybe the home abortion "would kill her," but "it seemed like she was looking at that in either direction. One way she'd be in charge, the other way would be in the hands of a red, bawling baby" (103). For her, death appears as an escape from her life, filled with "late welfare checks, . . . broken TVs, . . . babies," where "nothing changed" (171). Her brief reprieve at the hospital, which is "so different from her life in Euclid, where everything detracted from the pure pleasure of watching one show after another, straight through the days" (171), fails to detract Dolores from believing that "things didn't get better until you died" (102). Even though Melvina thinks that Dolores has "her whole life ahead of her" (83), Dolores does not fear death and hopes to "climb to the top of that field, no matter how [her children] cried and clung to her skirts" to "stand where she could look at the trailer and at Euclid and lay it all down. So she could step out of that body of hers at last, the heavy flesh, the teeth, the hair, lay it aside and go free" (271). Her only regret "would be leaving her sister Peachy behind, the only one of them all she could spare a thought for" (270). While Jem plans to attend school, which will likely lead to an eventual career, Dolores meets her end by lighting her trailer, filled with "stacks of magazines" and "collected towers of garbage" (275), on fire, embodying the idea "*live by garbage, die by garbage*"

(175). As a working-class female, Dolores feels worthless, which "leads to the emotional paralysis that defines her life" and her eventual death (Gómez-Vega 2003, 112).

Allusions to the biblical figure Lazarus further emphasize Jemorah and Dolores as literary foils, depicting freedoms for Jemorah and limits for Dolores. In the New Testament, Jesus goes to Bethany "'to awaken'" (New Revised Standard Version, John. 11.7) Lazarus, who died from sickness and "had already been in the tomb for four days" (John. 11.17). Upon arriving at the tomb, Jesus asks for the stone to be removed from the entrance, and then, he calls for Lazarus to "'come out'" (John. 11.38). Moments later, Lazarus is resurrected, and he leaves the tomb with "his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth" (John. 11.38). After "yelling at her boss, fleeing the office, and calling in sick for almost two weeks," Jem feels like she is emerging from a figurative tomb, "like she was Lazarus, still wearing the death rags" (Abu-Jaber 1993, 310). While Lazarus comes back to life, Jem plans to return to work to officially quit, allowing her a second chance at life by going back to school and by choosing her own path. On the other hand, Dolores comes back after a botched abortion, but she understands that "she was Lazarus, brought back to life . . . just long enough to see her death coming" (270). Unlike the figurative death of Jemorah's old life, Dolores recognizes that she must go back to the "newspapers, rags, the boxes of takeout food, the spools of thread" (311) and "the field around their place . . . piled up with diapers, plastic disposables, each with a nest of baby shit" (101). She consciously gets "involved in dying" (172) because she knows "nothing really mattered anymore" (173). She comprehends that her life, filled with poverty and white trash stereotypes, will never change. In the end, Dolores "could see her death out there, in the fields, waiting" (175).

The Ramoud sisters and the Ott sisters take, or are forced to take, very diverse paths throughout their lives because of their differing backgrounds. This is emphasized through Abu-Jaber's use of the two sets of sisters, Melvina/Peachy and Jemorah/Dolores, as foils. Jemorah's and Melvina's lives show countless possibilities and opportunities, allowing them to choose education and careers over traditional gender expectations involving men and children. Poverty and class oppression, however, trap Peachy and Dolores in a world with few, if any, future prospects in education or the work force, and Dolores ends her misery through suicide. Abu-Jaber's Arabic background allows her to speak convincingly for Jemorah and Melvina and the identity issues they face, providing a voice for women with dueling ethnic backgrounds who struggle to understand their place in Arab American society. Interestingly, Abu-Jaber chooses to depict white women who are burdened by poverty and ignorance, and she positions them as foils to the two Arab American sisters whose lives appear to be the main focus of the novel. Peachy and Dolores, minor characters in the novel, face oppression created by their class status. In this sense, Abu-Jaber draws attention to women from another marginalized group, the poor, and offers them a voice to break and change stereotypes.

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"Characteristics of the Hands": Gender, Race, and Palmistry in *The Sign of Four*

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Abstract:

Images of hands bookend Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Sign of Four*, but hands are more than a framing device in the text. Through a close reading of these hands and their connection to the popular nineteenth-century science of palmistry, this article illustrates how deeply embedded misogynist and colonial stereotypes are in this canonical work. Dr. John Watson's hands figure as strong and masculine emblems of the British Empire, for instance, frequently depicted as taking hold and taking care of Mary Morstan's gloved and modest hands. In the context of an historical palm reading, the cowardly Thaddeus Sholto's hands are described as effeminate; in reference to their smallness and unrestrained emotionality, the text draws a parallel between Sholto and Tonga, the novel's diminutive antagonist. A colonial subject, Tonga is so dehumanized in the text that Holmes looks to the baser appendage of his feet, rather than his hands, in deducing his character. In this way, a holistic view of the hands allows readers to analyze what Anne McClintock has called layers of hierarchy.

Keywords: feminist criticism, hands, jewels, literary analysis, palmistry, postcolonial criticism, Sherlock Holmes

The Sign of Four both opens and closes on the image of Sherlock Holmes's "long white hand" (Doyle 2010, 49). And like the descendants of Thing Addams, hands run rampant throughout the novel. They are consistently referred to in order to display action, emotion, and hidden meanings. The most prevalent and overt instance appears early in the novel, as Holmes reviews his study on hands for Dr. Watson's benefit:

> Here, too, is a curious little work upon the influence of a trade upon the form of the hand, with lithotypes of the hands of slaters, sailors, corkcutters, compositors, weavers, and diamond-polishers. That is a matter of great practical interest to the scientific detective,—especially in cases of unclaimed bodies, or in discovering the antecedents of criminals. (Doyle 2010, 53)

Depicting the hand as capable of not only indicating an individual's habits, but of predicting his

trade, Holmes identifies this appendage as a perfect subject for both observation and deduction—those nuanced powers that he insists are necessary in any worthwhile detective (Doyle 52).

Through Watson's narration, the novel further reveals what depths of meaning are contained in the figure of the hand, a preoccupation that feels perfectly attuned to the larger cultural interest in palmistry throughout the nineteenth century. Although a "diverting drawing room entertainment" for some, the insights afforded through palmistry were nevertheless esteemed by other Victorians, believed to offer a glimpse at an individual's inner nature (Matthews 2017). The science of palmistry, as Charles S. F. Burnett, defined it, refers to "[t]he practice of reading the future, or divining the character and disposition of a person from the lines and other indications in the palm of the hand" (Burnett 1987, 189). Victorians had many names for this practice—also referring to palmistry by the related terms *chiromancy*, *chirosophy*, and *chirognomy*.[1] According to Langdon Taylor's 1806 publication, *A Handy Guide to Palmistry*, these latter terms carried slightly varying connotations; while palmistry and chiromancy might be used interchangeably, "deal[ing] with the palm of the hand," "[c]hirognomy concerns the form and character of the hand as a whole" (Taylor 1806, 7). Chirosophy, Taylor writes, refers to the science as a whole. Although the *OED* dates these terms as far back as the fifteenth and sixteenth century, the frequency of their use saw a sharp rise in popularity during the latter half of the nineteenth century, specifically (Windscheffel 2006, 7).

The Sign of Four was published in 1890, at the height of what Victorian scholar Joan Navarre identifies as the "palmistry craze" (2011, 174). While this craze is evidenced throughout a number of Victorian publications on the subject, *Lippincott's Magazine of Literature, Science and Education* (the magazine in which Doyle's *The Sign of Four* was first published) serves as a useful case study in its own right. Oscar Wilde's "Lord Arthur Savile's Crime," for example, centers around a chiromantist's ominous palm reading and first appeared in *Lippincott's* in 1887. Alongside Wilde's story ran an essay by the prominent palmist Edward Heron-Allen titled "The Cheiromancy of To-Day: The Evolution of an Occult Science" (Lorang 2010, 22).

The subtitle of Heron-Allen's essay highlights part of the Victorians' fascination with this practice, i.e., studying the form of the hand offered yet another way of scientifically classifying different categories of people. Viewed in this light, palmistry takes on a taxonomic objective (adhering to a Linnaean system of ordering hierarchies) that might easily be identified alongside other evolutionary branches of pseudosciences like phrenology and physiognomy that peaked in popularity during the nineteenth century as well. In *The Racial Hand in the Victorian Imagination*, Aviva Briefel even suggests that the emerging practice of fingerprinting might be linked to the Victorians' interest in palmistry (Briefel 2017, 5). Approaching this preoccupation with hands from a wider context, Peter J. Capuano writes that "major changes unique to the nineteenth century made hands newly relevant, and . . . this new relevance reconfigured the hand's relationship to the body in ways that shaped just about every encounter of the Victorian novel. And these ways continue to influence how we live in the world today" (Capuano 2015, 1). In so saying, Capuano hints at the lasting cultural impact of this Victorian practice.

However, there is—of course—a reason that palmistry is regarded as a *pseudo*science and not as a proper branch of scientific study. Rosa Baughan, the author of *The Handbook of Palmistry*, even goes so far as to say, "We do not pretend to any absolute belief in this science, [...] but, having taken up the study from mere curiosity, we found it interesting" (Baughan 1885, 10). And yet, a "science" Braughan calls it, nonetheless.[2] Still, hints of skepticism appear in Heron-Allen's writing as well, despite his notably more earnest approach to the field. As Elizabeth Lorang points out in the title of Heron Allen's essay, "science" is paired with the "occult," and shifts the conversation to one more easily deemed science fiction than science proper. But whereas Lorang observes that palmistry's widespread appeal might create "a counter-history to empiricism and positivism," I argue that the Victorian practice of palmistry more poignantly continued to reproduce empiricist narratives through methods steeped in misogyny and racism (Lorang 2010, 22). While palmistry attests to an ideology that was regarded as both scientific and spiritual, this article illustrates how both narratives (science and the occult) work symbiotically to undermine effeminate and colonized subjects—often by conflating the two. While projecting a hierarchical and evolutionary mode of thinking, palmistry thus also embraced Adorno's notion of the occult as "a source of authority," able to articulate and impose a narrative that appeared, at once, both rational and authoritative (Kumar 2012).

In order to better understand the way palmistry constructed this authoritative narrative, it is useful to more closely examine the practice itself. According to Peter Hazel, a contemporary palmist, many of the occult science's tenets have remained unchanged since the Victorian era. Tracing the lineage of this practice, Hazel states that even Victorian chiromancy was simply "robust medieval palmistry" with "a good, hearty tweak"—Victorians overlaying "basic principles" with their own empiricist worldview (Hazel 2015, ix-x). While Hazel states that this led to readings that could be "extremely sexist and racist and rather disapproving in tone," he expands on neither how these changes occurred nor how palmistry made them tangible (x). In addressing these historical questions, Sherlock Holmes's deductive reasoning skills allow readers a clearer portrayal of palmistry's function in the lives of the Victorians. Although Holmes does not make direct reference to the field of palmistry in *The Sign of Four*, the text's emphasis on the figure of the hand, its import, and the ways it "speaks" to characters' inner traits are informed by an understanding of this Victorian practice, providing contemporary readers a rich case study of the values once embedded into the fingers, mounds, and shape of the hand. Indeed, Doyle's novel heavily reaffirms and relies upon the gendered constructs of palmistry before then extending and linking these constructs to both race and sexuality.

The Gendered Hand

The Victorian palmist Heron-Allen identifies many characteristics of the hand that might be linked to effeminacy, and these traits are always perceived as negative. A complete lack of hair, extreme paleness, softness and a prominent Mount of Venus (the pad of the palm where the thumb branches off, which is generally thought to be indicative of the subject's romantic temperament,

emotion and sensitivity[3]) all "betray effeminacy" (Heron-Allen 1885, 116). The implication is clear; effeminacy is something one must unwillingly "give up or expose" (*OED*). This implicit ideology tied to Victorian palmistry makes a similar, earlier appearance in Taylor's previously mentioned *A Handy Guide to Palmistry*. In the introduction to this work, Taylor writes, "A weak, effeminate hand shows a weak, effeminate nature" (Taylor 1806, 8). In this construction, "weak" and "effeminate" are intrinsically linked. There is no reference, for instance, to what a weak, manly hand might indicate.

While a small hand may indicate a "more *spirituel* disposition," it indicates none of the "force and power" which a larger (more masculine) hand possesses (Heron-Allen 1806, 28). In addition to being larger in size, a masculine hand is hard in consistency and rosy in complexion—indicative of its general utility and robustness (115-121). Although there is some biological backing for this claim pertaining to the differing average hand sizes of men and women,[4] this claim is often (still) exaggerated, and the correlations between hand size and inner traits put forth by Victorian palmistry have never been properly evidenced (and, most likely, never will be).[5]

This narrative is made abundantly clear in *The Sign of Four*. Men's hands are depicted as moving and working—as tools of industry (generally) and as instruments for observation and deduction (in the case of Holmes and Watson). The detective's hands, for example, are used both to display feats of athleticism (Doyle 2010, 84) as well as to investigate clues (85-86). Women's hands, however, are portrayed as inactive and fairly incapable of being put to any real use. And yet, each woman that Holmes and Watson encounter in the novel is immediately accompanied with a description of her hands—of how they look and what they are doing.

In addition to using his hands for manly detective work, Watson also mentions several instances in which his hands are symbols of strength and protection, offering to defend and comfort Mary Morstan. Mary's hands, which quiver and betray all of her femininity, at least have the decency to hide their effeminate outbursts of emotion. When she is first introduced at the novel's start, she is said to be "well gloved" (Doyle 2010, 57). As the only woman whose gloves are mentioned, many readings might fit alongside this depiction: perhaps Mary herself is a mystery; perhaps she is being represented as a Lockean *tabula rasa*; or perhaps the gloves are merely an indicator of her modesty. If the gloves are meant to conceal what Heron-Allen deems the emotionality of feminine hands, however, they fail in this endeavor. On the same page that her gloves are mentioned, Mary's hands begin to quiver—a sign which Watson quickly reads, identifying that it "show[s] every sign of intense inward agitation" (57). Seeing this, Watson rises to leave, allowing Mary to more privately discuss her case with Holmes (whose own hands are being rubbed together in anticipation of the mystery he expects to hear). Yet, Mary's hands further betray her. "[T]he young lady held up her gloved hand to detain me," records Watson, and he—seeing in this gesture not only her desire for his presence, but perhaps a foreshadowing of the romance to come—remains (57).

Yet Mary's emotion is expressed most visibly in a later scene, in which "[s]he put her hand to her throat, and a choking sob cut[s] short" her speech (Doyle 2010, 58). As a very different type

of hand-to-the-throat than the one Jonathan Small later says he would have liked to have around Major Sholto's neck, Mary performs a gesture that has somehow become synonymous with femininity—a gesture that Academy-Award-winning actor Eddie Redmayne relied upon heavily, for instance, to portray his character's inner (female) identity in *The Danish Girl* (2015). Sociologist Michael Kimmel has extended an analysis of this trope, noting that the pervasive understanding of certain hand gestures as feminine has not only been relied upon in order to *portray* inner gender identity, but to *expose* it as well. Kimmel points to contemporary childhood games (or what Kimmel calls "tricks") in which boys are coerced into performing such seemingly arbitrary tasks as looking at their own fingernails. "[I]f he held the back of his hand away from his face, and looked at his fingernails with arm outstretched, he was immediately ridiculed as a sissy," the sociologist recounts (Kimmel 2009, 65). In this way, a simple gesture is made to function as a test capable of "unmasking" effeminacy. This formula, this trick that Kimmel describes, still exists in various forms today, and—as seen in the passages above—has an early predecessor in the palmistry-infused deductions recorded in *The Sign of Four*.

The Racialized Hand

As seen in the classification of the gendered hands above, Victorians were quick to find ways for using palmistry as yet another method for inscribing order on the world. While gender was easily taken into account, classifying race through the characteristics of the hand presented more significant obstacles. Briefel states that the nineteenth century saw a constant demand for "a brand of palmistry that would illuminate the question of race," but connections were few and far between (Briefel 2017, 17). Briefel references an article in the *Saturday Review*, which concluded that "it must be admitted that men of much higher claims to respect than professors of palmistry have shown almost equal incapacity for scientific descriptions of different types of race" (Briefel 2017, 17). Yet, claims like this one certainly did not stop palmists from *trying* to imbue the hand with racial meaning anyway.

Indeed, if Heron-Allen was aware of the statement put forth by the *Saturday Review* just two decades before the publication of his essay "Cheiromancy of To-Day," he must have regarded it as a personal challenge. "[L]et us first settle the great question of the racial hand," he writes in *A Manual of Cheirosophy* before setting out on that very task:

> [W]e shall see, as we get further into the subject of Cheirognomy, how certain shapes of hands predominate among the English, the Germans, and the French; and again we shall notice the widely differing characteristics of the hands of meridional and septentrional, of oriental and occidental nations. Again, we shall see how different characters and mental calibres admire different shapes of hands, according to the characteristics which those shapes represent in Cheirognomy. (Heron-Allen 1885, 27)

In the passage above, Heron-Allen claims that palmistry not only offers the means of classifying the racial hand, but also that the results of this study will attest to the "mental calibres"

of its subjects. While he fails to expound on these claims, a worldview of Victorian imperialism is nevertheless projected upon the racialized hand. The resulting narrative, therefore, is emblematic of what Briefel describes as the unique blending of literary, cultural and scientific discourses that palmistry maps out (Briefel 2017, 22).

Although Briefel only makes slight references to Doyle's work, *The Sign of Four* functions as a complex case study of this phenomenon, primarily through the hands of Tonga (Small's companion from the Andaman Islands, just off the east coast of India). Tonga represents a Victorian desire for the ranking of racialized hands in two primary ways: through the replacement and the restriction of these instruments. Thus, while gender is evident in what *is* communicated about hand forms and hand gestures, racial qualities result from a more asymptomatic reading—i.e., Holmes relies on what is *not* present in order to piece together his knowledge of Tonga.

Before delving into this interpretation, however, it is worth noting that the most characteristic trait regarding Tonga's hands is their extreme smallness. While his hands are, generally, in proportion to the rest of his slight frame, the emphasis on the smallness of individual body parts instead of on the whole functions synecdochally, depicting Tonga *not* in relation to an entire (human) body, but rather through a colonial gaze that isolates fragments of the character in disembodied glimpses. Holmes illustrates this as he relays information regarding Tonga's people to an attentive Watson. Quoting from a volume he deems "the very latest authority" on the inhabitants of the Andaman Islands, Holmes states that its natives boast "the distinction of being the smallest race upon this earth" (Doyle 2010, 109). Elaborating on this claim, the volume (and Holmes) look to individual body parts: "small, fierce eyes," "feet and hands [that] are remarkably small" (109). And yet, in juxtaposing these more diminutive features with "large, misshapen heads" these Western authorities conclude that the inhabitants are "naturally hideous" (109). Rhetorically, this reference to the size of Tonga's head works toward comparative purposes. How would the reader be able to understand the strangeness of Tonga's small features unless they were clearly offset? And so it is that the focus remains on this character's individual parts, dehumanizing the person to whom these appendages are connected. For example, surprised at the footprints Tonga leaves—mere traces of a fragmented body—Watson mistakenly concludes that they came from either a child or a small woman (Doyle 2010, 93). As small hands have already been identified (by Heron-Allen) as indicative of effeminacy—a decidedly negative trait according to the chiromancy manuals—Watson's statement extends this notion to Tonga and (through Tonga) to his race at large.

While Holmes's "authority" might be used to deduce the smallness of Tonga's hands, such a conclusion is, indeed, the result of the detective's esteemed art of deduction and not to any observation within the actual text, as Tonga's hands hardly make any appearance in the narrative at all. The focus of the passage mentioned above, for example, is not Tonga's hands, but his feet. In viewing Tonga in light of his feet rather than his hands, the novel replaces those divine qualities which the hand represents with those of a baser appendage. In addition, Tonga's feet are almost immediately marked as black, racially Othered, after Holmes discovers that Tonga has stepped in

creosote: "You can see the outline of the edge of his small foot here at the side of this evil-smelling mess" (Doyle 2010, 86). Here, Holmes draws attention to Tonga's small foot by noting the black impression that it has left. This characterization of Tonga by his feet comes across as a deliberate choice on the part of Holmes as it contrasts with the detective's focus on the hands of all other (white) characters in the text. For instance, Holmes is able to track Small—the novel's other villain—through "a good deal of skin missing from the palm of his hand" (89). Although Holmes here is once more shown to enact a form of asymptomatic reading, he nevertheless offers a more even-handed analysis to Jonathan Small.

When Holmes does finally acknowledge Tonga's hands, it is in instructing Watson to "[f]ire if he raises his hand" (Doyle 2010, 125). Whereas the racialized hand is replaced with other appendages earlier in the novel, Tonga's agency is here denied through the restriction placed on him. Men's hands have been identified as symbols of power, but this characteristic is denied to Tonga, who is racialized Other. When he resists Holmes's dictate, bringing his blow-pipe to his lips, Watson and Holmes fire their revolvers, killing the Andaman native. In what seems a poignant, final display of resistance, Tonga is last seen with his arms thrown up over his head as he falls sideways into the Thames (125).

In analyzing these limitations, it might be noted that Small is somewhat conflated with his companion. Small's name, for example, also happens to be the most distinctive quality attributed to Tonga. Furthermore, Small is partially tracked and identified through his distinct footprints (as one of his legs is wooden) although this appendage never completely substitutes for the qualities of his hands, as is the case for Tonga. Lastly, Small is restrained by handcuffs at the end of the story, but again, this restriction is not as severe as the death that Tonga faces (and which the reader learns was unnecessary as Tonga had run out of darts for his blow-pipe, no longer presenting a threat to Holmes and Watson) (Doyle 2010, 126; 155).

In this intersection of race and criminality, the "layers of hierarchy" which Anne McClintock describes in *Imperial Leather* are revealed. According to McClintock, "race, gender, and class are not distinct realms of experience, existing in splendid isolation from each other," but that instead can only be experienced "*in and through* relation to each other—if in contradictory and conflictual ways" (McClintock 1995, 5, italics hers). Within *The Sign of Four*, these layers are nowhere so evident as when presented through the hands of Thaddeus Sholto and the merchant Achmet.

The Queer Hand

As with the women in the novel, the first thing Watson describes upon meeting Thaddeus is the movement of his hands: "He writhed his hands together as he stood, and his features were in a perpetual jerk" (Doyle 2010, 67). In a single gesture, Sholto is simultaneously effeminized and made unseemly. Despite his attempts to conceal this ugliness (he is "constantly passing his hand over the lower part of his face"), his hands betray him, instead highlighting the very traits he had hoped they might hide (67).

Throughout the course of the novel, Thaddeus Sholto's hands quiver, rattle, and shake (Doyle 2010, 78). They are thrust before him as he runs in fear and wrung in agony as he moans over his unfortunate state (79; 82). At one point, he is so shaken that he even requires the protective hands of another man to support him (80). Not only do these actions line up with those that palmists might expect of female hands, they also—more generally—point to the emotional outbursts which are unexpected (and disapproved of) in men.

While being likened to a woman in this way, Sholto is also continually read as "little." While this further indicates effeminacy, it also identifies Sholto alongside Tonga in the context of the novel. Ultimately, this works to conflate Othered identities. The point is made even more apparent in likening this effeminate character to the similarly feminized merchant Achmet (whom Small aids in killing). Achmet is the only other male character in the novel whose hand gestures, specifically, are described in entirely effeminate terms; Small recounts that they "quiver[ed] with fear" and "twitched as if he had the ague," likening his nervous and tell-tale gestures to illness, itself (Doyle 2010, 133). In comparing Achmet and Sholto to one another through the characteristics of their hands, they are both relegated to the position of colonized subjects—a connection that is further evidenced by the latter's aesthetic of "Eastern luxury" (67). This connection is concretized through the novel's conflation of effeminate and colonial subjects, which—as Mrinalini Sinha observes in *Colonial Masculinity*—is an association that stretches back to the earliest days of colonial rule (1995, 15).

The Jeweled Hand

Before concluding this essay, I would like to identify one further connection between gender and race through the form of the hand. The treasure is what ultimately drives the narrative of *The Sign of Four*, moving from one set of hands to another. Before the action of the novel even begins, the treasure is strongly colonial, belonging to an Indian Rajah. Jonathan Small steals this, of course, before Major Sholto later steals it from him. In the action at the beginning of the novel, the Major's son (Thaddeus Sholto) is in the process of sharing the treasure with Mary Morstan, but this is interrupted when Small once more steals the treasure back. By the end of the novel, Small has scattered the treasure across the bottom of the Thames. "Where is the justice that I should give it up to those who have never earned it?" Small asks, refusing to see the treasure in the hands of women like Mary Morstan or effeminate men like Achmet and Sholto (Doyle 2010, 133). In posing this question, Small is either ignoring the fact that he initially took the treasure from Indian possession or (just as likely) including them in his list of those he deems undeserving. Although the rajah had entrusted his "his jewels into the hands of Achmet," Small refuses to follow suit (144). Rather than see the treasure once more in any of these Othered hands, Small denies it from all.

In connection to how treasure is viewed *in* the hands of these Othered subjects is the way in which treasure has been viewed *on* these hands. According to Hazel, rings and bracelets are often indicative of negative characteristics in the subjects whom they adorn:

> It should be emphasized that these readings of personal choice in jewelry are rather judgmental and negative, reflecting Victorian values. Rings (except for those worn on the third finger of the left hand, i.e., wedding rings) may be considered an indication of difficulties within a person. The wearing of a ring tends to cut off the qualities of the finger on which it is worn. The actual size of the rings may also be significant. Small, unobtrusive rings signify a lesser influence than large, ornate rings. (Hazel 2015, 17-18)

In the case of rings, smallness is an attribute that is finally esteemed. More broadly, however, rings imply deceitfulness or vanity in a person. To better illuminate how Victorians viewed these adornments, we might consult William Jones's *Finger-Ring Lore: Historical, Legendary, Anecdotal*, first published in 1877. In this work, the history that Jones constructs around rings might be seen as merely another attempt to categorize racialized groups of people. In tracing the stories attached to a number of rings, Jones presents historical examples alongside contemporary, colonized subjects. By structuring his work in this way, he imagines an evolutionary trajectory, one in which his British countrymen are the most developed and civilized.

One does not have to look very far in order to discover whom these beliefs about rings benefit and whom they disadvantage. While esteemed nineteenth-century Indian rajas (like the one Jonathan Small robs) often wore abundant amounts of jewelry, British gentlemen were much more restrained in their adornments. Consider Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, for example, photographs of whom only ever display a thin wedding band across a solitary finger. In this way, jewelry might be seen to stand in for the hand synecdochally, with masculinity portrayed through restraint and limitation.

According to Jones, Hazel, and others, the wedding ring was, of course, the one exception to a Victorian palmist's denouncement of jewelry. Unsurprisingly, perhaps, the wedding ring was not only an exception, but exceptional. In 1888, for instance, Frank Baker, a professor of anatomy, observed that it simply made sense for the ring finger to carry a ring—attributing to this practice a scientific logic of natural order (Baker 1888, 72).

Within *The Sign of Four*, the wedding ring is an implied treasure. This is depicted most clearly in Mary Morstan's "choice" between independent wealth and the wealth of obtaining a husband—a prerequisite for taking part in an imperial futurity. Upon learning that Miss Morstan may become "the richest heiress in England," Watson fears that he will lose her before he has even fully obtained her (Doyle 2010, 76). In "Tautological Crimes: Why Women Can't Steal Jewels," Briefel suggests that the most threatening thing a Victorian woman could do was to desire owning her own property—as a woman who found herself financially independent from a man no longer had the same drives to create a (reproductive) future with him (2003). This explains why, despite feeling guilty that his response to Mary's favorable change of fortune is one of disappointment, Watson nevertheless dislikes the notion of her becoming independently wealthy. Furthermore, her ultimate loss of these expectations is accompanied by Watson's own delight in what his masculine hands are once more able to do: "[Y]ou are within my reach again," he says, and in taking her hand, he declares that she did not withdraw it (Doyle 2010, 131). In drawing attention to Mary's being "within [his] reach," Watson further emphasizes their relative position to one another through

reference to manual signification—a position that the doctor then proceeds to cement in the act of capturing Mary's hand in his own.

In celebration of their newly declared love, Watson states, "Whoever had lost a treasure, I knew that night that I had gained one" (Doyle 2010, 132). In this declaration, the woman is presented as treasure. While Watson does eventually obtain Mary, he too becomes a treasure for her, replacing the valuable jewels she might have, at first, hoped for.

The treasure Watson offers seems most tangible in the reproductive futurity that his marriage proposal extends. In this way, *The Sign of Four* might be regarded as an example of repronarrative. Michael Warner coined the term *repronarrative* in order to identify a prevalent convention in early American texts; by *repronarrative*, Warner refers to any literary works that revolves around traditional forms of marriage and reproduction (Warner 2000). In a text following this structure, an ending is generally marked by a new beginning (or, at least, the hint of a new beginning through a newly minted union). In *The Sign of Four*, this "natural" conclusion is further reinforced by the gravitational pull between Watson and Mary's hands which, on multiple occasions, find themselves clasped to one another of their own free will. This is most clearly evidenced in the extended passage below:

> Miss Morstan and I stood together, and her hand was in mine. A wondrous subtle thing is love, for here were we two who had never seen each other before that day, between whom no word or even look of affection had ever passed, and yet now in an hour of trouble our hands instinctively sought for each other. I have marvelled at it since, but at the time it seemed the most natural thing that I should go out to her so, and, as she has often told me, there was in her also the instinct to turn to me for comfort and protection. So we stood hand in hand, like two children, and there was peace in our hearts for all the dark things that surrounded us. (Doyle 2010, 79)

Here, the couple's hands once more reveal their true desires, but they do so in a way that is deemed natural, instinctive, and even childlike. In identifying these qualities, Watson not only attributes the actions of their hands to a type of scientific worldview, but predicts the natural result of their love, i.e., their gesture is not only childlike, but will—in fact—lead to the production of more children. It is this reproductive futurity which outweighs for Mary the loss of the jewels.

Incidentally, Peter F. Murphy has traced the term "family jewels" back to Victorian origin. According to Murphy, "family jewels" was "an allusion to the economic value of a man's genitals" (2001, 52). The term conflated reproduction with terms of "business, property, and political economy," denoting "their great value and their role in creating a family" (52). Thus, while Mary misses out on the Rajah's treasure, which has now been stolen so many times that it is rather difficult to keep count, she does succeed in obtaining these latter jewels of Watson's.

Conclusion

In this way, *The Sign of Four* continues to propagate the types of narratives that Hazel states

were deeply ingrained in Victorian palmistry. Through analyzing these notions within the novel, clear contrasts emerge between powerful, British, masculine hands and effeminate, colonized hands. While Watson and Tonga seem to represent the extremes of this ideology, the hands of characters like Thaddeus Sholto and Jonathan Small show that *The Sign of Four* places many of these hands somewhere on a spectrum, through hierarchical layers of identity.

As a last case study, I would like to return to where I began this essay, with the hands of Sherlock Holmes himself. As noted previously, the novel both opens and closes on the image of Holmes's "long, white, nervous fingers" (Doyle 2010, 49). Based on this description alone, Holmes's hands might be read as effeminate, yet their actions are almost always masculine: inspecting, climbing, shooting. This is further complicated when we consider that Holmes's hands, which Watson here describes as "nervous," are later paired with the narrator's claim that Holmes's lack of emotion makes him an "automaton . . . positively inhuman" (61). While this might complicate a reading of Holmes in terms of gender, placing him somewhere on a spectrum as well, it is just as useful to read this as a separate category in its own right—perhaps as a new type of masculinity or identity undefined by biological gender, unmarked despite his hands. In this way, *The Sign of Four* reinscribes a number of gendered and racialized narratives while simultaneously suggesting the possibility of breaking free from these constraints. However, it is a possibility that is yet unrealized, still uncharted. For indeed, while the object toward which Holmes's long, nervous fingers reach—a cocaine bottle that Mary's affair has distracted him from—certainly holds the possibility of escape, it is an escape marked by an entirely new kind of experience.

Endnotes:

1. *Cheiromancy*, *cheirosophy*, and *cheirognomy* function as alternative spellings to the terms *chiromancy*, *chirosophy*, and *chirognomy*.
2. Ruth Clayton Windscheffel traces Victorians' often ambiguous relationship to spiritualism and, more specifically, the practice of palmistry through the perspective of William Ewart Gladstone, the Prime Minister of Great Britain from 1868 to 1894. According to Windscheffel, "Gladstone's desire to discover, classify and utilize new knowledge for the ultimate benefit of humanity, as he understood the concept, contributed significantly to bolstering his attraction to spiritualism and sustained his solid, serious and openminded engagement with it" (Windscheffel 2006, 23). Although he likely did not endorse spiritualist practices, Windscheffel concludes, Gladstone's engagement with them was nevertheless marked by an "insatiable intellectual curiosity" (24).
3. See Rosa Baughan's *The Handbook of Palmistry* (1995, 9-13).
4. In a scientific article published in 2018, titled "Evaluation of Upper Extremity Anthropometric Measurements in Terms of Sex Estimation," the authors conclude that "[h]and measurements provide quite accurate information concerning an individual's sex, age and height" (Uzun et al. 2018, 48). Indeed, they report, "[O]n the basis of a single variable, the most reliable variable in sex differentiation was hand width" (48). Similar results have been reported in a number of similar contemporary studies—many of which are referenced in this 2018 publication.
5. In tracing these still-prevalent beliefs around hand size and their correlation to inner traits into the present, one's mind wanders to the 45th president of the United States and the media's frequent interest in the smallness of his hands.

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Loss in Benjamin Alire Sáenz's "Arriving at the Heart of Tragedy" and Alberto Ríos's "Taking Away the Name of a Nephew"

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Abstract:

Alberto Ríos's "Taking Away the Name of a Nephew" documents the traumatic loss felt by a woman who reads a newspaper article about "one of the disappeared" and assumes that the account of the dead body found refers to her nephew. At that moment, she becomes an unwitting witness to the pain of others. Through her reading of a newspaper account of someone's death, the aunt makes the reader aware of her nephew's pain and her own pain when she imagines the horror of his death. Benjamin Alire Sáenz, likewise, focuses on loss and trauma in "Arriving at the Heart of Tragedy" as he examines different events to determine what constitutes tragedy. He concludes that the death of a child left unattended in a parked car constitutes tragedy as does sacrificing one's life to one's values, as Lot's Wife does when she refuses to obey God's command to leave her land and family. These two poems document the violence or simple random events that affect people.

Keywords: trauma, witnessing, tragedy, desaparecidos, mourning.

In "Arriving at the Heart of Tragedy" and "Taking Away the Name of a Nephew," Benjamin Alire Sáenz and Alberto Ríos provide a historical record of the violence perpetrated against people whose only crime is being alive at the wrong time. The speakers in these poems face violence, directly or indirectly, rage against it, and make the reader feel what it means to suffer the loss of a nephew or to sacrifice one's life for one's values. Alberto Ríos focuses his poem on the grief felt by one person, a woman whose nephew may have been the victim of random violence, perhaps even political violence or the violence perpetrated by policemen against brown young men, while Benjamin Alire Sáenz writes about the pain of others to get at the heart of tragedy faced by most people who live in troubled times. These poets also rage against the cold hard facts of history, the indifference with which a newspaper article describes the body of a young man, one of the disappeared, possibly murdered by government thugs, and the equally disheartening narrative of historical events that alter the course of people's lives, for better or worse, but is now stated as a simple fact from which no one can escape. In "Crossing Boundaries," Myra Sklarew, traveling

through Lithuania, the land where her ancestors were murdered, writes that "only in the compressed silence of poetry could such experience find its language" (102). Her point contradicts Theodor Adorno's claim that "to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric" (*Prisms* 34), because for Sklarew, as it is for Ríos and Sáenz, poetry bears witness to the evil that people do. In "Taking Away the Name of a Nephew" and "Arriving at the Heart of Tragedy," Ríos and Sáenz tell the story of horrendous violence and provide a record as they attempt to make sense of the chaos of random violence and everyday disasters that people face.

Criticism of Alberto Ríos's work has focused on his use of the border in fiction and poetry. In *Border Matters*, José David Saldívar claims that many of Alberto Ríos's poems "focus on the liminal geographic spaces of Chicano border towns such as Nogales, often bordering on two worlds, two languages, two cultures and two literary traditions" (66). This notion of bordering two worlds recurs because, as Richard Vela explains, Ríos "grew up on the Arizona border," so his poems and stories explore "the basic concept and condition of dividedness" (115). Because he was born in Nogales, a border town, and often writes about the people who live in the border, Alberto Ríos is identified with the border. Irena Praitis points out that Alberto Ríos even "describes himself as someone who inherited and grew up with the idea of borders" (82). Being identified with the Spanish speaking side of the border has caused Ríos some negative reviews, especially one written by an established poet. In a review of *Teodoro Luna's Two Kisses*, Ted Genoways surreptitiously attempts to answer or perhaps discredit a statement made in 1986 by Carol Muske in a review of *Five Indiscretions* about "Mr. Rios's imposing of syntactical idiosyncrasies of Spanish on his English" (28). While Muske finds the use of Spanish-sounding words awkward and distracting, Genoways claims that Alberto Ríos manages to "capture the lilt and melody of the Spanish language" in his work, an obvious attempt to respond to Muske's criticism on Ríos's use of language. Genoways then adds that Ríos "still works with the themes of alienation felt by those on the fringe" (166), a nod to the poet's interest in lives lived on the border but also an additional mention of alienation as a possible topic covered in Ríos's poetry.

Being born in the border between the United States and Mexico marks Alberto Ríos and others like him as an "other," so critics have struggled with this issue of identity politics. Benjamin Alire Sáenz argues in "In the Borderlands of Chicano Identity" that he engages with the subject "because we live in a shitty, disgusting world that produces and reproduces appalling inequalities, a society that helps to create suspicions of 'others.' The politics of identity cannot be separated from these inequalities" (79). Claiming that the poetry of a Mexican American poet from Nogales suffers from the use of "syntactical idiosyncrasies of Spanish on his English" (28), as Muske does in her review, may not be one of the "appalling inequalities" mentioned by Sáenz, but such a statement from a well-known American poet could influence the way other people read Alberto Ríos's work or fail to read it. Carol Muske, writing for *The New York Times*, states that "Mr. Rios's Mexican-American background gives a special texture to his language and a forceful tone to his voice," but this reviewer also adds that

"Mr. Rios's imposing of syntactical idiosyncrasies of Spanish on his English, his use of an upbeat, baroque style, sometimes throws a cloud over his syntax; he can be tough to follow and quite verbose," a statement culminating on the claim that "through his overlay of Spanish syntax on English and his unusual use of common words he produces odd metaphors" (28). Stating that Ríos's poems can be "tough to follow and quite verbose" in a review published by a major newspaper reads like the kiss of death for a poet's work.

Probably because Carol Muske's review calls attention to Alberto Ríos's use of Spanish syntax in his poems, later reviewers often feel the need to defend the poet's use of language. Ted Genoways argues in a review of *Teodoro Luna's Two Kisses* that "Ríos's greatest asset has always been the authenticity of voice in his work. There is a calm certainty, an assuredness of a seasoned writer practiced in his craft" (166), and he adds that Ríos "manages to [...] capture the lilt and melody of the Spanish language in an English context" (166). David Barber, in "Habits of Mind," a review of *Teodoro Luna's Two Kisses*, mentions Ríos's "stripped-down phrasing and deadpan delivery" that "call forth the twists and turns of folklore, superstition, and apocrypha" (224). Genoways and Barber make a point of mentioning Ríos's use of language in order to dispel whatever damage Muske's review may have caused. David Barber also points out that Alberto Ríos is "a writer who smudges the lines between the actual and the marvelous as a matter of course in both poetry and prose" (224). Leslie Ullman claims that Ríos's "willingness to test the boundaries of the absurd belies a profound trust in, and affection for, human nature—for the foibles and flights of fancy that keep us alive, unique, and which live beyond us as they are embellished and passed along" (190). Ríos's use of the fantastic is the subject of "The Real and the Marvelous in Nogales," a review of *Whispering to Fool the Wind* by José David Saldívar who points out that Ríos's "gift as a storyteller is the ability to relate the marvelous reality incarnate in Nogales, Arizona, a whole different creation and culture whose chief power is to fascinate. His poems are the blood stories of his ancestors' lives" (143). Through this statement, the sense of otherness that some critics note in the poet's work about the border transforms into something else, a "marvelous reality" redefining life on the border and reclaiming as the norm what outsiders see as unusual.

Timothy S. Sedore attempts to place Alberto Ríos's work within the "mainstream" American canon by suggesting that some of the speakers in Ríos's poems remind him of "James Fenimore Cooper's American Adamic personae and the 'idea of the isolated individual' in *The Prairie*." He argues that "Ríos's work reflects the themes of archetypal American borderer literature" about "characters who are a functioning part of society and thus acculturated, yet who simultaneously live at the margins of society and experience alienation," but he adds that Ríos's "best prose and poetry is [sic] surgically precise in revealing the idiosyncratic, interior lives of characters who are disarmingly, affectingly human" (7). The humanity of Ríos's border characters impresses even Carol Muske in the same review in which the poet's Spanish-influenced language offends her. Muske finds "Taking Away the Name of a Nephew"

interesting because this is "a poem that allows us to grieve for atrocity, not simply experience its power to shock" (28). The fact that some of Ríos's poems allow the reader to grieve is a testimony to the point made by Joseph Deters, who argues that Ríos's work "almost always deals with real and serious issues" (28). Ríos lays claim to the serious side of his poetry when Leslie A. Wootten asks him about his "role as an artist-citizen." The poet's response is "that's a role I take seriously" because he wants his "poems and stories to serve the community in the same manner the baker's bread does" (5). Bread is sustenance, and therefore absolutely necessary to the survival of a people, so the poet's comment suggests that he wants his poems to be equally as essential to the survival of his people as the bread that a baker makes.

Alberto Ríos opens "Taking Away the Name of a Nephew" with a newspaper article about "one of the disappeared" ("Taking Away" 3). He writes from the point of view of a woman who thinks that the young man described in the news story could be her nephew. Even though the newspaper's story does not name the victim whose body is found, the woman who reads the story immediately assumes that the mutilated body being described is the body of her nephew. This establishes the notion that people everywhere are not only connected by familial bonds but can also fall victim to the same kind of violence suffered by the young man whose body is described. The poet stresses the point that the newspaper report about this young man who has been made to disappear is just one of many. Other people, also left without names, have suffered the horrible circumstances of his death. Ríos writes that

> One of the disappeared looks like this:
> One shirt, reasonable shoes, no laces, no face
> Recognizable even to the mother of this thing. (3)

The young man is described as a "thing," something not human because of what has been done to him, but the poet also describes him as a "Lump. Dropped egg, bag of old potatoes / Too old and without moisture" that has become "Food for the maggot flies and small monsters" (3). The newspaper's description of this young man who disappeared is cold, matter of fact, as if he were nothing more than meat decomposing. The news worthy item is that this young man has now been found as yet another victim of violence, but the poet points out that his body has been so abused that his own mother may not be able to recognize his face. Shameem Black, in "Commemoration from a Distance" suggests that "narration provides an important therapeutic undertaking for individuals, or those close to them, who have been intimately affected by violence" (41). In this poem, the poet's job is to narrate the young man's death in such a way that it makes his death significant. It may not recover his name, which has been taken away, but narrating his pain through the poem allows the reader to feel for the young man whose life and name have been taken. The poem forces the reader, whether the reader is the young man's aunt or the person reading the poem, to witness what happened to this victim of violence and feel his pain. The speaker and the reader become witnesses to the horror.

In the Introduction to *Against Forgetting*, Carolyn Forché argues that "the poetry of witness reclaims the social from the political and in so doing defends the individual against illegitimate forms of coercion" (45). Reclaiming the "social from the political" suggests that this poetry focuses on what the individual feels apart from whatever political statement the poem could be making. "Taking Away the Name of a Nephew" clearly makes a political statement against random acts of violence, but the focus lies on the individual aunt's pain at her loss, not the politics of what her loss represents. For the aunt in Ríos's poem, the pain is personal. She is mourning the pain suffered by her beloved nephew, even though in fact the mutilated body described in the newspaper may not be her nephew's body at all. She simply reads the account and assumes that the dead body is her nephew, who is missing. In doing so, she becomes a witness to random acts of violence. Her imagination and her awareness of the historical moment in which she lives allow her to connect with the pain suffered by the mutilated man, indirectly feel her nephew's pain, and bear witness to the injustice, even if in fact the mutilated body may not be the body of her beloved nephew.

The aunt's imagined pain, her ability to connect with the pain suffered by the mutilated man whose body is found, makes her a witness. She may not have seen the crime being committed, but her imagination allows her to identify with the pain of others. Kelly Oliver defines witnessing when she explains that an act of witnessing encompasses two ways of seeing: "the juridical connotations of seeing with one's own eyes and the religious connotations of testifying to that which cannot be seen" (16). The "juridical" witnessing is a firsthand account from someone who has firsthand knowledge about the event, which is clearly not possible for the aunt who only encounters the event through a newspaper article. The second account refers to bearing witness to "something beyond recognition," what Oliver calls "an infinite encounter with otherness" (16). In these encounters, the person telling the story encounters someone else's pain, someone else's story, which is exactly what the aunt is doing in Alberto Ríos's poem when she imagines what her nephew, if he is in fact the man whose body has been found, must have suffered. Brenda Carr Vellino suggests that "witness poetry needs to engage with the whole range of primary, secondary, and distanced tertiary witnesses in order to open up the range of witnessing contexts and ethical questions arising from them" (150). In "Beyond the Trauma Aesthetic," Carr Vellino examines the ethical questions posed by the poetry of witnessing written by poets who have not suffered the pain they describe. This essay, however, concerns itself with how the poem means, what the poets who write about someone else's pain, someone else's grief, want the reader to experience, not whether a poet is allowed to write about someone else's pain. However, Branda Carr Vellino's article is an excellent resource on the subject.

In "Taking Away the Name of a Nephew," the cold description provided by the newspaper account about the shape of the young man's body shocks the reader, and this makes empathy possible. Neil Jamieson claims that "good poetry often succeeds in jiggling our perceptual screens in ways that enable us to see both the past and the present in new and

sometimes more useful ways" (75). This happens because "those who 'make' history, like the 'makers' of poetry, can juxtapose elements in unfamiliar ways, illuminating previously unperceived dimensions of interconnectedness, deeper patterns of meaning, helping their audience to redescribe themselves and the world in more satisfying and more humane ways" (75). The cold description of the young man's body forces the reader to see not only the young man whose life has been taken but also the violence that has been perpetrated against him. The reader may be powerless to effect change or alter the brutality to which the young man has fallen victim, but she is not exempt from knowing or feeling because "poetry stimulates our moral imaginations by developing our capacity for empathy, by sensitizing us to deeper levels of meaning than those available to us through rational analysis or common sense understandings" (76). Through the aunt's grief, Alberto Ríos's poem brings the reader face to face with the tragedy facing los desaparecidos and the families who mourn them.

Anita Helle, writing about *The Angel of History*, *The Empty Bed*, and *Dark Fields of the Republic*, three books written by American poets, argues that these texts "present an intimate relation to singular deaths as symptoms of larger-scale, global, historical disaster; and they introduce notions of living out our lives, our mourning, nostalgia, protest, with a vague (or in some cases, more pronounced) sense of responsibility—in other words, they exemplify mourning as witnessing in a public, historical mode" (52). In "Taking Away the Name of a Nephew," the aunt witnesses what she perceives as her nephew's death as a "public, historical" event. Her grief may be private, like the memories "of a thick hugging / His Tía Susí gave him with the strong arms / Her breasts were" ("Taking Away" 3), but she still wonders as

> She begins to add up, again, to put numbers
> In the equation of how many cuts and glowing scrapes
> One more thing or another adds up to,
> What it must feel like,
> How many paper cuts might roughly equal
> The breaking neck of a favorite nephew. (5)

The private pain of losing a favorite nephew is universal, wrapped up as it is in the horror of historical excesses and violence against unsuspecting people. The aunt hopes that her nephew's "memory of Susí was better than how the soldier held him" (3) because she knows that the soldier held him violently, without sympathy or mercy of any kind. Susí hugged him against her breasts; the soldier probably brutalized him and tortured him, and this is what the aunt who reads the newspaper report on "one of the disappeared" (3) is mourning. The "crisp bag of seventeen birthdays" (3) could be anybody's son, anybody's nephew, because such is the historical moment in which these people live, but the aunt nevertheless mourns as if the young man whose body is found were actually her nephew, still unaccounted for. She mourns what she knows could have happened even before she knows for a fact that it happened. Brenda

Carr Vellino suggests that "the speakers in such poems stand as avatars for the mediated position of readers as tertiary witnesses, who are also summoned to extend the chain of witnessing in response to the provisional human rights subjects of the poems" (150). The aunt's words encompass her pain and touch the reader; they make the reader witness her grief, her pain as she mourns the death of her nephew.

Mourning is not new in poetry. In fact, Jahan Ramazani claims in an essay published by *The Poetry Foundation* that, "whether writing about the intimate deaths of family members and friends or the mass death of industrialized genocide and global war, poets have made of poetry a privileged space for mourning the dead" (np). Contemporary poets who write poetry about loss, however, do not use traditional forms used by more conventional poets who favored the elegy, which is a "formal and sustained lament in verse for the death of a particular person, usually ending in a consolation" (Abrams and Harpham 77). Poets like Alberto Ríos and Benjamin Alire Sáenz, as Eleanor DesPrez suggests, do not follow the "conventions of mourning and the elegy, with their drive toward sublimation and closure" because they "may feel an urgent responsibility to register not only personal grief but also large cultural and historical losses" (30). Their work eschews traditional forms while retaining the imperative need to mourn perhaps because these two poets, having witnessed random acts of violence, do not believe that violence leads to sublimation and closure. Violence is destructive, indiscriminate, and ever present. For Ríos and Sáenz, the elegy does not suffice. Their poems are not just laments that will end in consolation because both poets know that people who suffer violent acts or witness acts of violence cannot be consoled. In fact, neither "Taking Away the Name of a Nephew" nor "Arriving at the Heart of Tragedy" provides consolation, which is what a traditional elegy attempts to provide the reader. Alicia Ostriker in "Beyond Confession" states that the work of certain contemporary poets represents "a crisis that is at once global and intimate: the simultaneous impossibility of *objective* witness and of *subjective* wholeness" (329). Sáenz and Ríos use the dichotomy of an "intimate" but simultaneously "global" crisis to examine what it means to live in a violent world where human lives seem worthless to the people who perpetrate either intimate or historical violence.

Adrienne Rich examines the poet's need to write about the historical moment as she focuses on the connection between the poet's life and history. In "Resisting Amnesia: History and Personal Life," she claims that "we cannot help making history because we are made of it, and history is made of people like us, carriers of the behavior and assumptions of a given time and place. About this, the impact of our individual existences, we have no choice" (144). Rich adds that people "have a choice to become *consciously* historical," but she also argues that "breaking silences, telling our tales, is not enough" because "historical responsibility has, after all, to do with action—where we place the weight of our existences on the line, cast our lot with others, move from an individual consciousness to a collective one" (145). For Adrienne Rich, the poet has a responsibility to witness and to be engaged in the historical moment. Living outside of history cannot be the poet's conscious choice.

Adrienne Rich's insistence on the poet's conscious choice of being in the moment, involved in the historical events of her time, echoes Emmanuel Lévinas's argument that art must serve a purpose. In "Reality and Its Shadow," Lévinas argues that "art for art's sake [. . .] is false inasmuch as it situates art above reality and recognizes no master for it; and it is immoral inasmuch as it liberates the artist from his duties as a man and assures him of a pretentious and false nobility" (2). Contemporary poets like Alberto Ríos and Benjamin Alire Sáenz may not ask themselves whether it is noble to be a poet whose work focuses on the violent excesses of contemporary life, a poet who attempts to define the meaning of tragedy, but their poems nevertheless address these issues in what is almost a calling, an attempt to discern a moral compass apparently lacking in the real world outside of poetry. Their wrestling with moral issues like the value of a human life or the meaning of tragedy reminds the reader of John Gardner's statement in 1978 that, "if there *are* real values, and if those real values help sustain human life, then literature ought sometimes to mention them" (24). Benjamin Alire Sáenz and Alberto Ríos mention these values because, as Travis Poling reminds his readers, "poetry enables vision, a particular way of seeing the world as it truly is." He claims that poetry "removes the mask that humanity dons to hide from the gravity of life amidst doldrums, brokenness, anxiety, violence, and death and reveals the bitter—and the joyous—truth: we are alienated yet united, unfeeling yet tearful, frightened yet courageous, violent yet loving, dead yet alive" (126).

Benjamin Alire Sáenz's "Arriving at the Heart of Tragedy" attempts to pinpoint the moment when something that happens actually becomes "tragedy" and not something awful that someone must bear. His poem catalogs multiple disasters, from the moment when Quetzalcoatl loses his realm to the Spanish conquerors to the idiotic instance when a man walks home thinking about what he can say to his wife to deliver the knowledge that he has lost everything they own in a game of cards. The poem opens with the poet's mention of an early act of defiance, the statement that "Lot's wife glanced back at Sodom as she was / Fleeing," but a quick reminder that "just like *that* she became a pillar of salt" ("Arriving" 87). Lot's Wife's transgression is immediately punished, but Sáenz's poem does not focus on the punishment, her transformation into something not human. Instead, the poet focuses on her humanity and wonders if "maybe she adored her beloved city / More than life itself and wanted to say *adiós*" or "if she could escape / With one little transgression in her pocket-- / Like cheating on your diet" and thinks to herself, "'*I can't believe that God is doing this*.'" But God does punish her, and the poet wonders "how one last moment of terror / Would feel. Lightning and thunder in the heart" (87).

The moment of lightning in the heart concerns this poet who moves from Lot's Wife's lot to the irreparable damage done by someone who "lost / Everything—his cows, his horses, his barn, his house, / His property. Everything lost in a lousy game of poker." Although the poet asks, "What in the hell was he thinking?" he also wonders if "he kept his wife's glare in the darkest / Corner of his heart till the day he died" because "He would never / Be sure if she had truly forgiven him" (87). The problem, of course, is that "You can't take back / A poker hand"

any more than people can take back "the mean things they said to one another," which is why "At a certain point *I'm sorry* becomes a hollow phrase" (88), but the poem's title points to something other than hollow phrases or the hole a foolish man has dug for himself in his marriage. Benjamin Alire Sáenz includes the story of the foolish man who loses everything he owns "in a lousy game of poker" (87), which is very sad and could cost him his marriage, but the poet simply uses this story as something he can compare to the other stories that he mentions in the poem. Lot's Wife loses everything, including her life, which is tragic, but losing one's possessions in a game of poker does not come anywhere near being tragic.

In the poem's second stanza, Sáenz wonders what life would have been like if Eve had not tasted of the forbidden apple. If Eve had not tasted of that apple, the poet jokes that life as we have known it from the beginning would have been different because "everyone would adore snakes and none of us would / Have to work" (88), but the joke leads to the more serious awareness that, if life had been different because Eve had avoided taking the bite of that apple, then maybe our not having to work "would mean we wouldn't have to worry / About illegal immigration (and we would have to invent / Another reason to hate poor Mexicans)" (88). One "what if" would change the course of history so radically that we would not even have to hate Mexicans, although the poet humorously adds that "we would have to invent" other reasons to hate Mexicans. The whimsical possibility of people adoring snakes and not hating Mexicans is presented almost as a joke, as something that could not possibly be true because people do tend to hate snakes and Mexicans, not always in that order, and the possibility of people not hating Mexicans is presented as something not to be taken seriously when the speaker in the poem points out that "The whole world is littered / With what-ifs." The fact of the matter is that Eve did take a bite of that apple; thus, history remains unchanged, and for some strange reason people do hate Mexicans, which may or may not be tragic.

The poet's search for the heart of tragedy will not allow easy answers, and the poet is not in search of history but in search of the heart of tragedy, which may or may not include history. If one believes that the characters in the Bible are real, then Lot's Wife is a historical figure whose transformation into a pillar of salt serves as a warning to people who disobey God's mandate. Her transformation is tragic to people who value her defiance, especially contemporary feminist poets like Kristine Batey, who claims in "Lot's Wife" that "It is easy for the eyes that have always turned to heaven / not to look back," but she points out that "those that have been—by necessity—drawn to earth / cannot forget that life is lived from day to day." Batey admires that "On the breast of the hill," Lot's Wife "chooses to be human, / and turns, in farewell—/ and never regrets / the sacrifice" (129). A feminist poet in search of women heroines finds Lot's Wife's defiance thrilling, whether she was a real historical person of a fictional character. Lot's Wife's choice "to be human" is commendable, even if it is tragic, but the foolish relative who loses everything in a game of poker is simply foolish, not tragic; his story does not reach the pathos that the story of Lot's Wife reaches. They could both be real people, or as real as

fictional stories can be, which suggests that they may have existed in history, but the poet juxtaposes their stories to make the point that only one of these stories is tragic. Poets like Kristine Batey value and respect the choice made by Lot's Wife because she values and respects that this Biblical character chooses to be human and in doing so teaches women to make moral decisions that square with their own moral values. They can follow God's command blindly, as Lot does, or choose what makes sense for their lives in spite of the consequences.

In "Arms and the Muse: Four Poets," Emily Grosholz claims that "poets have an important part to play in the drama of our moral self-education" (634). After stating that "poets should moralize," Grosholz explains that poets "are masters of concrete reflection, the representation of universal patterns in the rich complexity of individual experience, and so combine the gifts of storyteller, historian and philosopher" (634). For Grosholz, "morality, like legal justice, requires the harmonizing of abstract principles with the idiosyncracy [sic], unpredictability and finitude of particular human lives" (634), which is exactly what Sáenz accomplishes when he connects Eve's taking the bite of an apple with people hating Mexicans or what Ríos accomplishes when he presents the reader with a woman's grief in the presence of a body that could be her nephew, murdered by unknown forces and abandoned to rot in the fields. Sáenz and Ríos force the reader to face the "drama of our moral self-education." The reader may never have wondered "what if" Eve had not done this or if the aunt in Ríos's poem had never faced the violent death of a nephew, but the poem brings her face to face with the tragedy and with the choices that people make in their lives, two reasons for the reader to examine her own moral values.

In the third stanza, Sáenz jumps from heavy philosophy to a foolish everyday occurrence, the poet's propensity to lose his glasses and his keys. He states that he hides "keys in the garage " and has "spare glasses everywhere," but he is aware that, when he compares his losing things to the problems faced by other people, "None of this qualifies as tragedy" ("Arriving" 89), which once again reminds the reader that the purpose of the poem is to "arrive at" the heart of tragedy. This is when the poet remembers "the man / Who forgot his infant child in the car as he rushed off / To work" and sees a mental picture of that man "as he flings / Open the back door of the car" to find his son dead. The man, of course, "is inconsolable / As he holds his limp son in his arms," and he immediately blames himself by stating, "*How could I have / Done this? What have I done?*" (89). Losing one's keys or glasses cannot compare with the horror of forgetting a baby strapped to the car seat. The poet notes that the man, when "His wife called in the middle of the afternoon, wanting / To know why their son was not at day care" (89) realizes immediately what he has done and asks himself "*how / could I have forgotten*" (89), but he has no answer to his own question.

How does a busy man forget that his child is strapped to a carrier in the back seat? Obviously, the distraction of everyday life, of getting to work on time, of anticipating what work must be done that day could have caused him to forget that his child was still inside the hot car when he walked to work. The question then becomes not "how could I have forgotten" but

how will he live with such knowledge. His neglect causes his child to die a horrible death, a death that in fact happens far too often in the United States. *The Motor Vehicle Safety Issues Injury Facts* page reports that "on average, 38 children under the age of 15 die each year from heatstroke after being left in a vehicle" (np). Scientists from the American Meteorological Society, Andrew Grundstein, John Dowd, and Vernon Meentemeyer, point out that "most cases (54%) involve caregivers simply forgetting their children" (1183). The fact that a caregiver can forget about the child sitting in the back seat of the car strikes a chord with most people who have seen the reports on the news, just as the poet does. The poet, however, connects the silly act of losing his keys or his glasses to the horrendous act of forgetfulness that costs a child his/her life and dooms a man to grieve not only the tragedy of his child's death but also his own involvement in what happens. This is the heart of tragedy.

The man whose child dies as a consequence of his own forgetfulness may never recover or find consolation. Jacqueline Kolosov points out in "The Art of Losing" that, "since 1900, or 1910 (the year Virginia Woolf said everything changed), grief has no longer served as a temporary stage that the poetic mourner surpasses, but as a continuous state of immersion" (31). The man whose forgetful act causes his son's death will be forever immersed in grief. He is, however, not a character in a myth or a play. He's a regular person who gets up in the morning, straps the child to the car seat, and drives to work, but the story of his negligence, his forgetting the child in the hot car, causes a horrendous thing to happen. This is not a random act of violence or yet another case in which a police officer kills a brown child. This is an intensely personal foolish act of forgetfulness, neglect, done without thinking, resulting in the loss of a child's life. In this case, the father's grief is eternal, steeped in guilt, but the child's death is the significant part of this man's story, the tragedy that he will never escape.

The story of the father whose negligence or distraction causes the child's death is one of the many sad stories that Sáenz uses in his poem to get to the heart of tragedy. He compares the real story of a man's loss reported in a newspaper and documented by scientific studies to the mythological story of Quetzalcoatl, the feathered serpent deity from whom Mesoamerican people descend. He sees in a sculpture of Quetzalcoatl given to him by his ex-wife that

> Quetzalcoatl is lying down
> In a small and lonely boat. He is in mourning.
> He, too, is inconsolable. Tenochtitlán has been razed
> To the ground. Cortés has won the day. Quetzalcoatl alone
> Has escaped to tell the others: Mexico has fallen. He is
> Floating out to sea, holding in his hands an image of a world
> With a cross firmly planted into its core.
> The Christianized world has arrived
> With an army that cannot be turned back. The Aztec
> World has been destroyed by fire. For Tenochtitlán

> There will be no resurrections—and for Quetzalcoatl
> There is only this eternal and solitary travel in a sea
> Of endless sorrow. ("Arriving" 90)

The poet's conclusion is that "The world is in ruins. / We are left cursing and clutching at our bitter hearts, / Wondering, wondering why we are not dead" (90). Quetzalcoatl drifts off into legend; the Aztec world is destroyed, but Mexico survives, as do the Mexican people, although the conquering army forces them to change. Octavio Paz explains in *El Laberinto de la Soledad* that "Quetzalcóatl-Nanauatzin es el dios-sol de los sacerdotes, que ven en el autosacrificio voluntario la más alta expresión de su doctrina del mundo y de la vida: Quetzalcóatl es un rey-sacerdote respetuoso de los ritos y de los decretos del destino, que no combate y que se da la muerte para renacer"[1] (88). Quetzalcoatl accepts as his destiny his own displacement through the arrival of Cortés. He accepts self sacrifice, according to Paz. For him, "eternal and solitary travel" feels like "a sea / Of endless sorrow" ("Arriving" 90).

In spite of the poet's awareness that we are not all dead, that Mexico makes the transition, and Quetzalcoatl's story is now told in the conqueror's language, he finds it important to tell this story and wonder whether the banishing of Quetzalcoatl and the arrival of Cortés can be considered tragedies. Magdalena Zolkos claims that, "when faced with genocidal occurrences and when unable to resist them, we are not altogether powerless—we can tell a story about them" (214). In the telling of Quetzalcoatl's story, Sáenz forces the reader to consider what is lost and what is gained from the historical moment, and the poem is published in a collection called *The Book of What Remains*, which suggests that the poet expects the reader to move beyond the stories that he examines in his quest to arrive at the heart of tragedy and consider what remains. Sáenz does not consider Quetzalcoatl's loss of his realm in Mexico a tragedy, and this becomes evident in his argument with Gloria Anzaldúa's suggestion in *Borderlands/LaFrontera* "that a return to indigenous ways of thinking will 'change our fate.'"

In an essay titled "In the Borderlands of Chicano Identity," Sáenz finds disingenuous Anzaldúa's "project" that "if we but immerse ourselves in a particular mythology (a non-European, nonlinear discourse), then our sick body politic will be healed" (86). Although Sáenz agrees with Anzaldúa "that we live in a society desperately in need of healing," he explains that he finds "it impossible to appreciate this solution even while I understand the gesture. This is no solution. This is an escape, *not a confrontation*." For Sáenz,

> the return to the 'traditional' spiritualities that were in place before the arrival of Cortés and company makes very little sense. The material conditions that gave rise to the Aztec's religion no longer exist. Anzaldúa's language, her grammar, her talk are ultimately completely mortgaged to a nostalgia that I find unacceptable. The resurrection of the old gods (be they 'white' or 'indigenous') is a futile and impossible task. To invoke old gods as a tool against oppression and capitalism is to choose the wrong weapon. (86-87)

Although he uses Quetzalcoatl's story in his poem to remind the reader of what was lost, Sáenz knows that "the land will never be returned to the people who lived on it before the conquest" (87-88) because "the conquest was cruel, harsh, and irrevocable" (88). Anzaldúa's work may be permeated with a longing for a healing mythology, a mythology that was presumably available to the people before the arrival of the conquering Spaniards and their god, but Sáenz knows that, "whatever the future looks like, it will not resemble the past" (88).

Sáenz admits that far too many people "want / To elevate our unhappiness into the realm of tragedy / As if we were all auditioning for a leading role / With the Royal Shakespeare Company" ("Arriving" 88), but most things are not tragic, only sad. Quetzalcoatl's loss may have been painful at the time, but Mexico and its people survived, faced the invading army, evolved, and became something different. The indigenous people did not disappear or turn into pillars of salt. Octavio Paz points out that the ancient indigenous cultures still remain, that "cualquier contacto con el pueblo mexicano, así sea fugaz, muestra que bajo las formas occidentales laten todavía las antiguas creencias y costumbres. Esos despojos, vivos aún, son testimonio de la vitalidad de las culturas precortesianas"[2] (81). It is a historical fact that, regardless of what happens to Quetzalcoatl, Mexico and its people remain. However, the one thing the poet cannot forget is "the man, a dead son / In his arms" as he tries "to imagine what it is like to feel / The weight of that kind of grief. Lighting and thunder / In the heart" ("Arriving" 90). Writing in a book about loss, David Eng and David Kazanjian point out that, "We might say that as soon as the question 'What is lost?' is posed, it invariably slips into the question 'What remains?'" because "loss is inseparable from what remains, for what is lost is known only by what remains of it, by how these remains are produced, read, and sustained" (*Loss: The Politics of Mourning* 2). For the man whose child lies lifeless in his arms, only pain and grief remain of what he lost.

Benjamin Alire Sáenz's "Arriving at the Heart of Tragedy" forces the reader to examine what remains after something awful happens, to determine what qualifies as tragedy and what is simply sad. Sáenz suggests that Quetzalcoatl's loss of his land was horrific at the moment it happened, especially for Quetzalcoatl, but Mexico survived and became something other than what it was because the passage of time allows for transformation. The foolish man who loses all of his possessions in a game of poker also survives and finds himself in trouble with his wife because his foolish behavior makes them poor. For these characters, life goes on, albeit changed. Lot's Wife, however, does not survive her defiance; she is punished immediately and loses not only her belongings, her children, her land, but also her life, which qualifies as tragedy. She simply dared to look back, and in that radical decision loses everything. The father who is too harried to notice what he is doing and leaves his son in the hot car to die is struck, according to the poet, with "Lighting and thunder / In the heart" (90). His moment of forgetfulness causes not only the death of his son but also eternal grief. His act is tragic; for him, only eternal grief remains.

In "Arriving at the Heart of Tragedy," Benjamin Alire Sáenz examines what constitutes tragedy. He concludes that losing a child to a foolish mistake constitutes tragedy, a tragedy that creates eternal grief, as does sacrificing one's life for one's values, as Lot's Wife does when she refuses to follow God's mandate that she abandon her land and her friends. The aunt in Alberto Ríos's "Taking Away the Name of a Nephew" grieves the crime perpetrated against a young man who could have been her nephew. She imagines the pain that he must have suffered as she reads in a cold newspaper article about the young man's wounds. Her grief allows the reader to empathize with her pain and with the nephew's pain, and through such empathy both the aunt who speaks her grief and the reader serve as witnesses to the horror of random violence. "Taking Away the Name of a Nephew" and "Arriving at the Heart of Tragedy" catalog losses and force the reader to arrive at the true meaning of what constitutes tragedy.

Endnotes:

1. "Quetzalcóatl-Nanauatzin is the sun-god of priests, who see in voluntary self-sacrifice the highest expression of their doctrine of the world and of life: Quetzalcóatl is a king-priest of the rites and the decrees of destiny, who does not fight and who surrenders to death in order to be reborn"
2. "any contact with the Mexican people, even if it is a quick one, demonstrates that under the western influences still live the ancient beliefs and habits. Those remains, still vibrant, are testimony to the vitality of the precortesian cultures"

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"I do not lie": Caliban as a Truthful Devil in *The Tempest*

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Abstract:

In Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, Caliban says, "I do not lie" (III.ii.47). The meaning of this line is interesting to unpack because Prospero defines Caliban as a "poisonous slave, got by the devil himself/Upon thy wicked dam" (I.ii.319.320). The status of Caliban as half-devil/half-witch beast is complicated by John Dee's *A Treatise on Angel Magic*, in which angels, demons, and devils are categorized and defined through their actions and language, including their lies. The use of this text adds an important dimension in understanding Caliban, his counterpart Ariel, and the truth value of their language in the text.

Keywords: Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, Caliban, Devils, Lying

In Shakespeare's *The Tempest* Caliban makes the assertion that "I do not lie" (III.ii.47). My students often find this line to be amusing. After all, Prospero defines Caliban as "a born devil on whose nature / Nurture can never stick (Shakespeare 1973, IV.i.188-9). If Caliban is a demonic figure, then of course he lies; we can't believe anything he says as he is a "bad" creature. *The Tempest*, though, is written by Shakespeare, who often masterfully inverts and turns inside out normal expectations. As such, we need to look at what Caliban says in conjunction with what he does and who he is in order to analyze if he is a "lying demon", or if Shakespeare in crafting him makes him something new. From this perspective, what we find is that this character is a focal point for Shakespeare to play with dualities associated "good" and "bad" demons, and through doing this it makes Caliban far more "real" and frightening character, because, in the end, he is "just like us", lies and all.

For the purposes of this article, I will be using as a background the book *A Treatise on Angel Magic: Magnum Opus Hermetic Sourceworks*, edited by Adam McLean. McLean notes that there are a variety of works, comprised on Mss. Harley 6481-86 which act as a "compendium of Western occult traditions about Angels and related spirits", collected by a Dr. Rudd and based on the work of John Dee--mathematician, astrologer, perhaps practitioner, and advisor to Queen Elizabeth. I will, more specifically, be using Ms. 6482, *A Treatise on Angel Magic*, which

is "Of Angels Good and Bad: Their Degrees and Offices". The use of this text presupposes, as noted by Gabriela Horvath in *Theatre, Magic and Philosophy: William Shakespeare, John Dee and the Italian Legacy*, that John Dee had broad philosophical influence on Early Modern understanding of science and nature, including the workings of Mages, Witches and creatures, like Angels and Demons. Horvath asserts that this influence was pervasive as an undercurrent, or generalized understanding, about the nature of Otherworldly beings. It is from this foundation that I analyze the characters in the *Tempest* to see how they fit within and overturn stereotypes and, through this, form a commentary on spiritual dualism, especially in relation to truth values, in the play.

From the perspective presented in Ms. 6482 a *Treatise on Angel Magic*, Prospero and Ariel will be analyzed first and, once this is done, how Caliban fits within the framework. After situating what category of demon Caliban seems to represent, I will examine his use of language and begin to evaluate how he plays with the truth and the framing of reality through his language. As is not surprising, in the process of crafting Caliban, Shakespeare has an interplay between using/complicating the stereotype of the "lying demon" in order to show how this figure is very much like ourselves.

Framing of Prospero and Ariel

In *The Tempest*, Shakespeare writes of an island ruled by the master magician Propsero. Prospero uses magic, aided by Arie, to create the tempest that is the impetus to the action at the beginning of the play. One traditional view of Prospero is that he is a stand in for Shakespeare, while some scholars will say that he is a stand in for John Dee. If he is a representation of a real person or not is beyond the scope of this project, as the focus is more on Caliban, however, it should be noted that Prospero does seem to function in the text as a Magus, one who manipulates nature as a means of controlling the "world", the island which he rules and all of the inhabitants on it. Prospero's status as a Magus has been discussed by various scholars. Arguments include Barbara Mowat's discusses that the "pre-island Prospero" has "linked magic to intellectual study"; this changes when he is on the island to manifest as "godlike control over the natural and supernatural worlds", to a third and final stage at the end of the play as "pagan/enchanter brought [back] into the Christian world" (Mowat 1981, 284, 287, and 289).

The second stage in Prospero's development as a magic user (godlike control over the natural and supernatural world) is taken up by Karen Flagstad, who focuses on the interplay of identity and magic in *The Tempest*. Flagstad comments upon Renaissance views of the occult as a form of creation, noting that as a Magus who controls the island "there is a sense in which Prospero also 'creates' Caliban, who [then] returns to wreck vengeance on the visionary scheme of things which depend on his exclusion" (Flagstad 1986, 213). This sort of commentary is important because it frames Caliban as a "bad" and vengeful creature. Adam McLean, in his introduction to *Treatise on Angel Magic* notes that "occultists of an earlier time, especially during

the transition of the Middle Ages to the Renaissance, were strongly influenced by [a] prevailing current of dualism' (McLean 13); in other words, if there are good Otherworldly beings, then there must be bad as well. If one traces this perspective of dualism in the text, then Caliban, as bad creature, is the foil to Ariel, a "good" being, who is, as the cast of characters in *The Tempest* notes, an airy spirit. Within *Treatise on Angel Magic*, there are various categories of Otherworldly beings, specifically demons, starting with those of the air and going down to those in Hell. Those which exist higher in the air, closer to Heaven, are able to occupy this space because, although they rebelled against God, they were not so wholly committed to the Rebellion, didn't orchestrate it, etc., so, though fallen, they are able to exist closer to God than those who played a larger part in the rebellion and, thus, are more physically removed from Him (i.e. in Hell). Airy spirits are "second level" demons who often are recruited by Mages to help manipulate nature. For instance, it is noted that "these are they whose help the Necromancers" and engage in "operations of nature, do move the winds with greater fury than they are accustomed and do out of season congeal the clouds causing it to thunder, lighten, hail and destroy the grass, corn, and vines of the earth" (McLean 2006, 60). This sounds a great deal like the tempest that is used at the beginning of the play to shipwreck Antonio and the others on the island. Although Prospero might initiate the idea of using a storm, it is only with the help of Ariel that such a tempest can be conjured. One can see that Shakespeare is drawing from this undercurrent of categorizations and qualities of demons in order to frame Ariel in the play.

Framing of Caliban

Thus, if Shakespeare is using the conventions of Magus and airy spirits in his text to frame Prospero and Ariel, then what is Caliban? The first thing that is significant to note about Caliban is that he is a chimera. Prospero says that, Caliban is a "poisonous slave, got by the devil himself / Upon thy wicked dam" (Shakespeare 1973, I.ii.319.320). His father is a devil; his mother, Sycorax, is "wicked" and a "foul witch" (Shakespeare 1973, I.ii.309). This parentage has an impact on how the audience, particularly those who are more well-versed in the occult, would view Caliban. For instance, as noted in *Angel Magic*, section on "The Difference Between Witches and Enchanters", "though they [witches] have familiars and conversations with the Divine...they themselves scarcely understand" the meanings in these discussions" (McLean 2006, 137). A witch, though a dabbler in the occult, is not as skilled or knowledgeable as a Magus. This sort of perspective may be used in support to show how Prospero, being superior to Sycorax in power and importance, may be justified in taking over control of the island. Continuing this and by extension, this sort of argument also shows how Caliban, through his mother's lineage, is also inferior to Prospero and should, because of this, be subject to him. Although a modern audience may cringe at the argument of power dynamics just noted, they are common assumptions that were used to justify conquest and colonization in the Early Modern world and are reflected in the social dynamics in Shakespeare's play.

Although this power structure is the norm, Shakespeare does complicate the issue. Caliban may be part witch and part demon, but man has a dual nature as well. There is a section in *Angel Magic* which emphasizes that man may be seen as a chimera also:

> Flesh is two-fold, flesh from Adam and not from Adam. Flesh from Adam is gross, because earthly, but what flesh is not Adam, it is subtle, not fit to be bound or comprehended…these subtle Creatures do differ in this from spirits, that they have blood, flesh and bones, beget children, speak, eat, drink, walk. Spirits do none of these…They are therefore a peculiar creature, and from their double nature they are made one mixture as any compounded matter of sweet and sour, or two colors under one species" (McLean 2006, 153-4).

Granted, in this description the "parts" of man are not witch and demon, but human and divine, so there is an elevated quality to man that Caliban seems to lack, but the mixture of two aspects of being is significant. Neither Caliban or Prospero is "pure" or "whole"; they are both amalgamated beings with part of one's nature being base. Perhaps this "likeness" is why Prospero has such a difficult relationship with Caliban. With Ariel, who is more fully and distinctly Other as a second-level demon of the air, the relationship is easier to define, the identity of the "Other" easier to understand. With Caliban, however, identity is something more complex as he is a blended being, just like Prospero and all humans are blended beings. Perhaps what Prospero despises in Caliban, then, is a reflection/understanding of the blended, including the base, nature in himself.

So, what "level" of demon is Caliban? With Caliban's sort of parentage, it is clear that he can't be a spirit of the air but he also is not damned to the underworld; as noted in the section of *Angel Magic* called "Of Angels Good and Bad, Their Degrees and Offices" he occupies the position of a "third-level demon", the sort of being (like man) which exists in corporal form, walking on the Earth, and, in occupying this space, interacting with humans. This sort of demon is one whose "principal and function is to persecute men and to tempt and allure men to sin, and thereby work their damnation" (McLean 2006, 60). Certainly, within the play there is content that can be used to frame Caliban in this way. For instance, Prospero's reason for describing Caliban as a monster and for his need to control Caliban with "internal pinches" is because he tried to rape Miranda and, of Caliban's own admission, "Thou dist prevent me; I had peopled else / This isle with Calibans" (Shakespeare 1973, I.ii.350-1). Such a comment presents Caliban's intentions toward Miranda, intentions that clearly runs counter to her wishes, as unwanted and violent in nature. This violent nature is compounded with Caliban's desire to get Stephano and Trinculo to kill Prospero. In both cases, the behavior enacted by or encouraged by Caliban is a grave sin, and shows just how dangerous Caliban can be. Using just these few points as reference, we might frame Caliban as a monstrous character whose his actions are disturbing and reflective a stereotypical dangerous demon.

One might point to the relationship Caliban has with Miranda, Stephano and Trinculo to underscore Caliban as a physically and morally dangerous character, but in these interactions does he use language in a dangerous way? In another section of *Angel Magic*, "Of the Orders of Wicked Demons and of their Fall and their Divers Natures", the classification of demons is drilled down further. For instance, there are classification of demons who represent false gods, impersonate miracles, and even are bad Genii. Within this classification system, there are two types of demons that Caliban might represent. The *Spiritus mendaciorum* are "spirits of lying...this kind of Demon deceives by their Oracles, divinations and predictions" (McLean 2006, 69). Going back to the introduction of this article we might consider not only the actions of Caliban, but also his exasperated outburst that "I do not lie" (Shakespeare, 1973, II.ii.48). One might question when Caliban says this if he is a reliable source or not; does he or does he not lie? Alfred Tarski, a Polish mathematician, in "On the Concept of Truth in Formal Languages", focuses on a formula of "truth" values in order to deal with the Liar's Paradox. In the Liar's Paradox, if a liar says "I am lying", and is lying, then he is telling the truth. By Shakespeare having his third-level demon, which is stereotypically framed as a liar, saying "I do not lie", it is almost as though Shakespeare is giving us, years before it became an issue, an inversion of the "liar's paradox" in order to complicate the stereotype of the "lying demon" and, through this, problematize and move us out of the medieval idea of duality (good versus bad demon) and toward a more nuanced view of the good and evil. This happens particularly in the sections of the text in relation to dreams. Dreams are significant because, according to the texts studied by Dee and which were generally understood as characterizing demons in the Early Modern world, demons often deceive by "their Oracles, divinations and predictions", which may come in the form of a dream. (McLean 2006, 69). But in this case, Caliban doesn't use a dream to tempt others, but uses the idea of the dream in a very different way. Karen Flagstad argues that one of the qualities of the island that readers often forget is that for as much as Prospero is a dream maker in the text, so Caliban is as well (Flagstad 1986, 205). It is this quality of dream making that is of importance in one of the most celebrated speeches that Caliban makes:

> Be not afeard; the isle is full of noises,
> Sounds and sweet airs that give delight and hurt not.
> Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments
> Will hum about mine ears; and sometimes voices
> That, if I then waked after long sleep,
> Will make me sleep again; and then, in dreaming
> The clouds methought would open and show riches
> Ready to drop upon me, that, when I waked,
> I cried to dream again. (Shakespeare 1973, III.ii.140-8)

It is in a dream state that we have Caliban say these lines, which I would argue underscore the complication of the stereotypical "lying demon"; Caliban may be "a born devil, on whose nature / Nurture can never stick", but it seems like the contrary is true (Shakespeare 1973, IV.i.188-9). When Miranda and Prospero "teach me [Caliban] how / To name the bigger light, and how the less / That burn by day and night" (Shakespeare 1973, I.ii.336-8) they give Caliban the gift of their language and through it a way to understand, order and describe the natural world. Caliban uses this language in both positive and negative ways. He misuses language in a number of ways. For instance, he uses slippery language in his persuasion of Stephano and Trinculo and he also uses language to curse at Miranda and Prospero. He even says to them "You taught me language, and my profit on't / Is I know how to curse. The red plague rid you / For learning me your language!" (Shakespeare 1973, I.ii.365-367).

But as can be seen in Caliban's soliloquy he also uses language to craft beautiful descriptions of the island that he loves. When he is in this dream state, the island that he sees is his, is beautiful, and when he wakes he feels and incredible sense of loss. It is through this dichotomy that we see Shakespeare problematizing the limitation of Caliban as creature who only uses his language to deceive—as a lying devil. We see that through the language of this dream state that Caliban has the potential to be more than Prospero's limiting stereotype suggests. This moves the idea of the demonic beyond the medieval idea of the "good" and "bad" duality; Caliban has both good and bad qualities, just like Prospero.

So, if Caliban isn't a *lying* devil, then what might he be? In the same section of *Angel Magic,* we have another classification that might fit Caliban better—*Vasa Iniquitatis* or a "vessel of anger" which are "the inventors of mischiefs and of all wicked Arts" (McLean 2006, 69). This seems like it might fit Caliban as he is, through much of the text, angry at Prospero, Miranda, even Ariel. He rages at Prospero, but in doing so, we, as audience, can understand why. He charges that:

> This island's mine, by Sycorax my mother,
> Which thou tak's from me. When thou camest first,
> Thou strok'dst me, and mad'st much of me; wouldst give me
> Water with berries in't; and teach me how
> To name the bigger light, and how the less,
> That burn by day and night: and then I lov'd thee
> And show'd thee all the qualities o'th'isle,
> The fresh springs, brine-pits, barren place, and fertile.
> Cursed be I that did so!—all the charms
> Of Sycorax, toads, beetles, bats, light on you!
> For I am all the subjects that you have, which first was mine own king. (Shakespeare 1973, I.ii.336-347)

One of the things that is significant in this passage is that Caliban may be angry and may curse, but this is as far as his powers go. He says that toads, beetles and bats will light on Prospero, but they never do, and they don't even derive from Caliban, but Sycorax. This aligns with commentary in *Angel Magic* that, in the end, demons are not as powerful as humans might initially think that they are. Coming out of Middle Age duality, there are angels which are glossed as good and which help man, and demons, which are glossed as bad and which harm man. *Angel Magic* and the depiction that Shakespeare has of characters in *The Tempest* complicate this duality. In the section on "Of Angels Good and Bad, Their Degrees and Offices", it is noted that "their power is restrained that they cannot put in execution the full puissance of their malicious desire without the permission of God" (McLean 2006, 60-1). Caliban can be angry; he can even say a curse, but that curse will have no effect unless God allows it to happen.

Recall that one of the ways that a first level demon operates is to help necromancers with altering weather; as such it is Ariel that is helping Prospero create a tempest. In this way, Prospero doesn't have as much power as it initially *seems* that he does. Likewise, people may fear Caliban, for he does seem like a frightening chimera that rants and curses, but language is all that he has. Certainly, language can be a form of power, but the language that demons use can only be so powerful as God allows it to be. In the end, the curses are futile; they have no real impact on the world. It is in this space of that Joshua Held finds importance in Caliban's final lines in the play--"I'll be wise hereafter / and seek for grace" (Shakespeare, 1973, V.i.295-6). Whether Caliban truly has learned to forgive the loss of the island and accept Prospero or not, we as readers will never know. Shakespeare's play ends with ambiguity in Caliban's character and the audience is left with the task of grappling with his sincerity. For Caliban in Shakespeare's text, the defining moment of redemption may be those final lines "I'll be wise hereafter / and seek for grace" (Shakespeare, 1973, V.i.295-6). If so, then Caliban's potential, as indicated by the elevated language in his soliloquy, finally may be realized and he will move beyond being the underside or "bad demon" part of a medieval dichotomy of the Other. Rather, he may be considered to be a more nuanced being, very much a mutable man, like Prospero, and reflective of our varied nature, lies and all.

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Remembering the Harlem Renaissance and Its People in the Time of #Black Lives Matter

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Abstract:

This article offers a brief overview of the Harlem Renaissance and its people in the light of a renewed interest in the African American literature produced in the 1920s that the Black Lives Matter Movement generated in recent years. Since its inception, the Black Life Matter grassroots organization rekindled a strong, collective desire for social justice as a result of the continuous police brutality against black people. The systemic episodes of racially motivated violence experienced in the last decade or so in America are not that different from the racial tensions that inspired the production of the Harlem Renaissance. This literary enterprise, also known as the New Negro Movement, became a cultural phenomenon capable of attracting the attention of domestic and international followers who supported the idea of reassessing, by means of cultural renovation, mainstream representations of black people. Like the #Black Lives Matter Movement today, the Harlem Renaissance asserted the unlimited value that black individuals had in the fabrics of American society and its history. While this essay discusses the main production and ideas of the New Negro Movement, it also aims at showing that the complexity and the legacy the Harlem Renaissance left calls for further investigations especially in consideration of the racial divide still taking place today in the United States.

Keywords: The Harlem Renaissance, #Black Lives Matter, Langston Hughes, Systemic Racism, Literary Rebirth

On July 13, 2013, following the release of Trevin Martin's assassin, social activist Patrisse Cullors responded with the hashtag "BlackLivesMatter" to a post that her friend, Alicia Garza, wrote on Facebook after hearing the news of the acquittal. Cullors recalls in her memoir that a few days after the slogan was created, she was brainstorming ideas with Garza on how to develop a major network for black people. Garza reached out to Opala Tometi, an organizer for Black Alliance for Just Immigration in New York, who eventually created the first Black Lives Matter Movement website together with its Facebook, Twitter, and Tumblr accounts (Khan-Cullors and Bandele 2020, 180). In a short period of time, #Black Lives Matter become a worldwide organization demanding justice for black people victims of racial violence.

According to the *Pew Research Center*, between 2013 and 2018 alone, the slogan has been

used thirty million times (pewresearch.org). The numerous uses of the mantra Black Lives Matter occurred in a mere five-year period are a clear indication of the swift pace with which the movement acquired acolytes all over the world. Despite the social mobilization the movement caused, however, police barbarity against black people did not cease, and when George Floyd was killed in May 2020, street protests erupted again throughout the United States. During one of these passionate manifestations, as Laura Ryan reminds us in article published in the online journal *The Modernist Review*, *CBS News* featured an African America teenager reading the poem "Let America Be America Again" by Langston Hughes, one of the major figures of the Harlem Renaissance. According to Ryan, in the last few years, Hughes's words were cited on multiple occasions during many peaceful demonstrations embracing the cause of the #Black Lives Matter movement. In an interview with *The Huffington Post*, Arthur Rampersard, one of the major biographers of Hughes, says that he had no doubt the poet would "have strongly approved of ["Let America Be America Again"] being used to protest anti-black violence [...]" (Mathias 2015).

These many references to Hughes indicate that a connection exists between the social, political, and cultural outlook of the Black Lives Matter Movement and the Harlem Renaissance. In one of his recent articles appeared on *Time* magazine, historian Ibraham X. Kendi claims that, today, a new Black Renaissance is taking place. As he puts it, "a renaissance does not emerge on its own. Structures must be built to allow creativity to truly flourish. During the past six or so years, black artists formed mechanisms to lift up their own work and that of their peers." Contemporary black intellectuals and various public figures (among the others Kendi mentions Oprah Winfrey and Ava DuVernay) are building these structures by helping their community not only to keep on fighting for their freedom but also to emphasize that black Americans cannot, and should not, be defined by racism.

The creators of the Harlem Renaissance who came together to dismantle racial discrimination certainly contributed to creating these scaffoldings, which people still use or want to rebuild today. The correlation of the various Black Renaissances, rebirths which Kendi, for instance, hints at in his essay, across time and people encompasses both the rendering of a modern and more authentic vision of society filtered through the African American experience and an unyielding quest for social justice. The tragic, and unfortunately common, episodes of police violence against African Americans, cement even more the association between the Harlem Renaissance and the #Black Lives Matter.

In his very last speech delivered on February 16, 1967 – about three months before his death – at the University of California, Los Angeles, Hughes shared with the audience the memory of a vicious incident occurred many years earlier. According to the blues poet:

> The word 'bebop,' I asked one of the bebop musicians one time, where they got the word bebop for their music; he said, well you know, that comes from the sound of the club of the cops on the head. Every time it hits the clubs: ba-bap-bi-bap-map-map. Well, the story was they used to work the Negro's head so well that a rhythm was developed.

Despite demonstrating a great resilience inherent to the African American culture, the anecdote resonates with today's most dramatic confrontations between blacks and law enforcement officials who used, and still employ, unwarranted ferocity against non-whites.

Throughout his life, Hughes objected fearlessly white supremacy. In one of his most anthologized essays, "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain," he suggests that what he calls 'racial mountain' "stand[s] in the way of any true Negro art in America—this urge within the race toward whiteness, the desire to pour racial individuality into the mold of American standardization, and to be as little Negro and as much American as possible" (Patton and Honey 2001, 40). Hughes' words denote that racism is so imbedded in the fabrics of American society that, as they attempt to participate and succeed in mainstream culture, black writers force themselves to adopt white standards. Thus doing, they deceive their legacy, which, on the contrary, should rather be the sole source of inspiration to create genuine representations of their own community, especially the black poor and disenfranchised.

Together with other black intellectuals, Hughes tried to construct a new identity for the new generation of artists. This modern black *self* came to be identified as the 'New Negro' and represented not only a new mode of depicting African Americans in artworks, but also, and more importantly, perhaps, a new way for blacks to relate to their own surroundings. The sentiment of protest and affirmation animating these people founded an unprecedented social, cultural, and literary venture where the stories of black individuals (themselves included) determined to succeed despite racial and social adversities could be told in their own words. The New Negro Movement became as popular as to attract the attention of domestic and international black acolytes who supported the idea of reassessing, by means of cultural renovation, mainstream representations of black Americans meant to entertain white audiences.

The exact beginning and end of the Harlem Renaissance are still a source of academic debate. Venetria K. Patton and Maureen Honey, for example, submit that the movement began with the production of Angelina Weld Grimké's play *Rachel* and culminated with the publication of Zora Neal Hurston's novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (Patton and Honey 2001, xxvi). Other scholars like Eugene C. Holmes suggest that rather than starting in New York, the New Negro Movement originated somehow in Philadelphia, but ended up developing in Harlem (Holmes 1968, 61). As Hughes puts it in his first autobiography, *The Big Sea*, "Harlem was like a great magnet for the Negro intellectual, pulling him from everywhere" (Hughes 1993, 240). Again, Nella Larsen's Helga Crane in *Quicksand* describes her first encounter with the "teeming black" place as a site that "welcomed her and lulled her into something that was [...] peace and contentment" (Larsen 2011, 40).

Between the two world wars, Harlem became like a mecca for African American culture. In that period, the city of New York registered a rapid demographic growth of African Americans. In *Gay New York*, George Chauncey suggests that the black population expanded in Harlem because of a real estate market crash occurred in 1904 (Chauncey 1994, 245). Because of this

economic crisis, housing in the area became more affordable to blacks and those who lived in the West Thirties area due to the construction of the Pennsylvania Station (Chauncey 1994, 245). In addition to this internal migratory flow, the African American population in the Big Apple also expanded due to the so-called first Great Migration (1916-1940), which began a movement of six million blacks from the South to the North and ended with a second migratory flow between 1940-1970. Howard Dodson and Sylviane A. Diouf note that "[i]n the decade between 1910 and 1920, New York's black population rose by 66 percent" (Dodson and Diouf 2005, 123), and that the conditions of the migrants were one of the sources of inspiration of the Harlem Renaissance (Dodson and Diouf 2005, 133).

W.E.B. Du Bois' *The Souls of Black Folk* influenced greatly the intellectual stance of the Harlem Renaissance by creating a new perspectivism for the black culture. In the book, Du Bois describes the way in which he came to realize how *different* he was from other children and elaborates on the crucial ideas of the so-called "veil" and "double consciousness." Du Bois recalls that one day his schoolmates decided to buy and exchange visiting cards, but a white girl refused to take his. Reflecting on the disturbing anecdote in the book, he writes that, in that moment, he felt as separated from the white world "by a vast veil" (Du Bois 1996, 4). The "veil," Du Bois posits, is the social element that keeps whites and blacks divided, but its presence is so subtle that a black individual might perceive it only when something as dramatic as being refused by a white person may occur.

The writers of the Harlem Renaissance explore the image of the "veil" in many ways. Just to give an example, Rachel, the heroine of Angeline Weld Grinmké's play, gradually learns to recognize its existence. One of the moments in which she understands the meaning of the "veil" happens when her mother reveals to the family that a white mob lynched her husband (Rachel's father) and one of her sons (Rachel's little brother). Again, in another episode, Rachel encounters a woman looking for a place to rent because in the neighborhood where she currently lives white kids bullied her daughter in school and the teacher did nothing to stop them. Listening to the mother's story, Rachel is clearly dumbfounded and upset and says that, as a child, she too "was made to feel my color – but I never had an experience like that" (Patton and Honey 2001, 217). After talking to the woman, Rachel is told that one boy she cares deeply about was also bullied in school.

These three crucial episodes suggest that Rachel lives in an environment where racial discrimination is so rooted and normalized that she must deal with a traumatic experience in order for her to understand fully the trials affecting the emotional and social state of black Americans. As she recognizes once and for all that American society treats blacks differently, Rachel also shows signs of what Du Bois calls "double consciousness," which he describes as follows:

> [It is a] sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness,—an

> American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder (Du Bois 1996, 5).

The passage portrays African Americans as people in between two cultures that are often confrontational, but the Harlem Renaissance took on the challenge to synthesize this ubiquitous duality.

One of the defining moments of the New Negro Movement was the publication of *The New Negro: Voices from the Harlem Renaissance*, the first anthology of the Harlem Renaissance, published in 1925 and edited by Alain Locke, a well-known literary critic and professor at Howard University. The anthology represents a comprehensive volume of the newest generation of African American writers (though the text also contains works by white writers) who reject the assumption of black inferiority (see preface to the 1997 edition of the book by Arnold Rampersad xv-xvi).

The book also includes an essay, "The New Negro," written by Locke where he redefines the social significance of African American culture and praises the new generation of black writers over the "Old Negro." Locke says:

> for generations in the mind of America, [...] has been more of a formula than a human being – a something to be argued about, condemned or defended, to be 'kept down,' or 'in his place,' or 'helped up,' to be worried with or worried over, harassed or patronized, a social bogey or a social burden (Locke 1997, 3).

Locke's contemporaries rejected all these demeaning categories and felt compelled to debunk anti-black, derogatory imageries such as the *mammy* (a black, robust woman who nursed the children of the white master) and the *coon* (abbreviation for 'racoon,' a lazy, ignorant, and gullible individual). Steaming from the way in which black slaves were perceived in the South, whites repeatedly refurbished these figures to demonstrate that African Americans were still undeserving and to legitimize the infamous Jim Crow laws enacted right after the Reconstruction period.

The literature of the Harlem Renaissance expresses the predicament of black lower classes and migrants together with gender issues as they were perceived by women writers. In the poem "I Sit and Sew," Alice Dunbar-Nelson – wife of the poet Paul Laurence Dunbar and herself a migrant from Louisiana – addresses the condition of black working-class women and their desire to free themselves from male dominance while still fighting for social justice. The composition also suggests that the speaker's lack of means and own gender prevent her from fulfilling her dreams. "I sit and sew – a useless task it seems/ My hands grown tired, my head weighted down with dreams," she writes at the beginning of the poem (Patton and Honey 2001, 148). Here the act of sewing is not in itself worthless but appears to be so in the speaker's eye because, like other women of her generation, she believes she has the potential to find a position more useful to help her community. Clearly, she would rather like to be on the battlefield. According to David A. Davis, Dunbar-Nelson believed the war to be a way to end racial violence. The poet

encouraged African Americans to join and support the war and she raised funds for war relief (Davis 2008, 479). At the very end of the poem, she reinforces the idea that she sees herself fit to perform more complex tasks than sewing. Thus, invoking God, she says, "You need me, Christ! It is not roseate dream/ That beacons me-this pretty futile seam, / It stifles me-God, must I sit and sew?" (Patton and Honey 2001, 148).

While the Harlem Renaissance tried to dismantle gender roles and various black stereotypes, they also aimed at creating literature that spoke to and for the black community. In the essay "Blueprint for Negro Writing" published in 1937, Richard Wright indicates that black writers had the role to guide their community through their collective struggle and proposes them to become the voice of their race by reaching a deep understanding of its diversities. He writes:

> [...] a Negro writer must learn to view the life of a Negro living in New York's Harlem or Chicago's South Side with the consciousness that one-sixth of the earth's surface belongs to the working class. It means that a negro writer must create in his readers' mind a relationship between a Negro woman hoeing cotton in the South and the men who loll in swivel chairs in Wall Street and take the fruits of her toil" (Patton and Honey 2001, 58).

Black writers were then invested with an unprecedented social role demanding to be the voice of their community.

The Harlem Renaissance shared the same breath of renovation and embraced the social and cultural changes of modern time, but its representants were rather divided on deciding which aesthetics in particular they needed to espouse to accommodate the complex images steaming from "new negro" projects. Holmes suggests that, as it happened to the generations of writers and visual artists whose compositions predated the New Negro Movement, the new authors too grappled with issues directly related to linguistic and aesthetic choices (Holmes 1968, 61). For these writers the matter revolved around the possibility to choose to express their feelings in vernacular, standard English, or even both languages. Together with other intellectuals, Locke and Du Bois proposed a departure from vernacular poetry because it "had neither the wit nor the beauty of folk speech, but was only a continuation of the stock stereotypes about gentility, humility and buffoonery, and an evasion of the realities of Negro life" (Holmes 1968, 61). This outlook resonated with an emergent black middle class that valued European, mainly white, standards (Holmes 1968, 61).

Other writers, however, resisted this call and conceived the Harlem Renaissance as a moment for black vernacular to reach higher literary standards. Hughes, together with Starling A. Brown and James Weldon Johnson, was one of the most vocal supporters of vernacular poetry. He even used to criticize those who believed that black writers should use the same language found in the compositions by white writers. At the beginning of his essay on the racial mountain, referring to Countee Cullen, who once told Hughes he wanted to be like a white poet, Hughes, again, argues that "this urge within the race'" to take whites as model, thereby becoming

standardized, is the element preventing black production to be elevated to the rank of fine art (Patton and Honey 2001, 40). Hughes was so convinced that the black vernacular was the ultimate linguistic solution of the new negro's expression that he created a new poetic form, which came to be known a blues poetry – a literary, and controversially successful experiment, which even though was harshly criticized, aimed at reframing the black American poetic tradition.

The schism between the promoters of white cultural values and the advocates of a more genuine black popular culture suggests that black artists and critics used to categorize artifacts according to a "low" and a "high" black culture. All this illustrates an evident class stratification of the black community. Black middle classes wanted to assert themselves through white standards and were very critical of those who did not. Many black writers of the time embraced European writing standards, others like Claude McKay, for instance, with time converted to it. Born in Jamaica, British West Indies, McKay started writing poetry in Jamaican dialect for which he was awarded the medal of the Jamaican Institute of Arts and Sciences, but once in the USA, he favored standard English (Patton and Honey 2001, 271), and published mainly in white avant-garde magazines and not in black periodicals like *The Crisis* and *Opportunity: a Journal of Negro Life* (Sayre 2014, 68).

During the Harlem Renaissance, the black community was internally fragmented due to social and economic differences existing among its members. Cultural divisions were exacerbated by the idea and the act of *passing,* a phenomenon occurring among lighter skinned individuals who were indeed able to *pass* for white and enjoy white privileges. The act of passing was not unique to the Harlem Renaissance experience. We know that runaway slaves who were light-skinned and were able to pass for white had to behave and talk like white people (Dodson and Diouf 2005, 33), however, some New Negroes criticized those who passed. By *passing* for white, these individuals tended to discriminate against their own community. Many authors of the Harlem Renaissance, among whom Hughes, Larsen, Wallace Thurman, and George S. Schuyler, show in their prose how quickly social actors engaged in passing learn to play their role as whites, thereby abandoning their true self. Hughes clearly disapproves of the practice in one of his short stories, "Passing," included in the collections of brief narratives titled *The Ways of White Folks*, Larson ended up exploring the obnoxious subject in her novel *Passing*, Schuyler in his *Black no More*, and Thurman in the book *The Blacker the Berry*.

Hughes's "Passing" consists of a letter that Jack, a man passing for white, writes to his mother after, while walking with his white girlfriend, accidently sees his parent in the street and pretends not to recognize her. The reader does not know whether the message will ever reach Jack's mom, but the man starts it as following:

> "DEAR MA,
> I felt like a dog, passing you downtown and not speaking to you. You were great, though. Didn't give a sign that you even knew me, let alone I was your son. If I hadn't the girl with me, Ma, we might have talked [...]. Since I've begun to pass for white, nobody has ever doubted that I am a white man.

> Where I work, the boss is Southerner and is always cussing out Negroes in my presence, not dreaming I'm one. It is to laugh! (Hughes 1990, 51).

Here Jack expresses consternation by likening himself to a dog. Since at this point of the narration the audience is not yet familiar with the reason why Jack is passing for white, at first one may even show some sympathy to the young man's predicament, but as the narration unfolds, s/he realizes that, according to Jack's perspective (which never changes in the story), his mom totally surrenders to her son practicing passing. Because Jack can easily play the part of a white man and do pretty much anything he wants without restrictions, he turns out to be as racist as his boss who cusses African Americans out while Jack has the nerve to laugh at the matter.

In her novel *Passing*, Larson discusses the intermittent friendship of two black women, Clare Kendry (the character passing for white married to a white man named Jack) and Irene Redfield. The two are childhood friends, but somehow lost connection when Clare started living with her white aunt after her father died. When the women meet again, Irene does not approve Clare's choice of racial passing; she thinks, indeed, that it is too risky to try to follow the whites' lifestyle. On her part, Clare believes that her husband Jack will never discover her secret, but one day, the man sees her with a black female friend, and Clare's fate is forever marked. Soon after, during a party, Clare falls out of an open window where she is standing waiting for Irene to arrive.

Thurman's novel deals with racial passing by narrating the story of Emma Lou Morgan who, having a very dark skin color, experiences firsthand what it means to be discriminated against by her own people. Everywhere she goes (she attends a college in Los Angeles), she notices that black women who are able (and willing) to pass have privileges she will never be able to attain.

The idea of passing takes a different turn in yet another story, *Black no More* by Schuyler, a satiric novel in which the main character, Mark Disher, decides to undergo a procedure that allows blacks to become white. Mark, who in the meantime has also changed his name into Matthew Fisher, finally marries Helen, a white woman he loves but who used to reject him because of his skin color. Eventually, due to the results of a genealogical project, sponsored by Helen's father, Rev. Givens and his political supporter, Arthur Snobbcraft, people start believing that every American has some African ancestry. So, when Helen and Matthew have a biracial baby, Helen thinks that it is because of her. Matthew, however, tells her the truth about him and she accepts the situation. The genealogical project turns out to be a disastrous political move, and at the end, Rev. Givens and Snobbcraft are killed and burned in Mississippi.

Together with suggesting that tragedies might strike those who can and want *to pass* for white, this literature also shows that the white world was a constant concern in black American representations. During the New Negro Movement, whites interacted with blacks, especially in Harlem where whites often frequented cabarets and nightclub, listened to jazz music and drank liquor illegally (Robertson et al. 2013, 865). However, even in Harlem, blacks could rarely

enjoy the same type of entertainment whites were interested in as African Americans were not allowed entrance in the facilities offering it. In the famous *Cotton Club*, for instance, black artists could only play or be staff members. Like many other night clubs on Lennox and Seventh Avenues and 125th Street, the *Cotton Club* was owned by white businessmen and only meant for the amusement of white patrons. Contemporary newspapers like the *New York Age* and the *New York Amsterdam News* also depicted other kinds of interracial relationships in Harlem. Stephen Robertson, Shane White, and Stephen Garton note that:

> [the newspapers] are filled with reports of not only white business owners, police, and slummers, but also other whites who featured in the everyday life of black residents: deliverymen, salesmen, and bill collectors; public school teachers; hospital staff; drivers; and sports fans. They describe interracial encounters often quite different from those that occurred in Harlem's nightclubs, contacts that often led to conflict (Robertson et al. 2013, 866).

Whites also penetrated the everyday life of black artists by supporting them financially and becoming their benefactors. One notorious white philanthropists of the time was Carl Van Vechten, a well-known photographer and art critic, who wrote a novel, *Nigger Heaven*, about the way in which African Americans lived in Harlem. Regarding the novel, Chauncey suggests that, even though it caused the indignation of black intellectuals, the lasciviousness of its black characters made white New Yorkers even more interested in the place (Chauncey 1994, 246). Another popular patron was Charlotte Osgood Mason (who wanted to be called "godmother"), William E. Hurston (who founded the Harmon foundation), and Julius Rosenwald (who used to donate to African American schools). The authors of the Harlem Renaissance became very familiar with these benefactors.

If on the one hand, these people helped to make the Harlem Renaissance a phenomenon able to draw national and international attention, on the other, they also made black writers involved in the negro rebirth, but lacking financial means, more dependent on white patronage ("The Cost of Patronage"). Mason supported writers like Locke, Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Arthur Fauset, and visual artists like Aaron Douglas, the art critic of *The Crisis* who today is considered the initiator of African American art. Mason believed that black literature should have found inspiration in the so-called primitivism (often referenced in Douglas's paintings that synthesize traditional African culture and modern African American expectations), namely, through forms of "uncivilized" black culture. Her strong interest in this type of art created no little clashes with black writers whom she was sponsoring. In reference to his experience with Mason, Hughes writes:

> She wanted me to be primitive and know and feel the intuition of the primitive. But unfortunately, I did not feel the rhythms of the primitive surging through me, and so I could not live and write as though I did. I was only an American Negro – who had loved the surface of Africa – but I was no

> Africa. I was Chicago and Kansas City and Broadway and Harlem. And I was not what she wanted me to be. So, in the end it all came back very near to the old impasse of white and Negro again, white and Negro – as do most relationships in America (Hughes 1993, 324).

The passage shows, once again, that the divide between white and black perspective regarding those elements that should have been included in African American artifacts. White patrons encouraged their protégées to depict the benefactors' own vision of being black. Thus doing, more than helping black artists, white philanthropists rather managed to have them cultivate distorted representations of the African American culture.

Despite the limitations that white patronage forced on the creativity of some New Negroes, the Harlem Renaissance was established on the idea that black people should have been able to determine their own fate and choose to live their lives on their own terms. An example of this modern black American character can be found in one of Hughes' short stories, "Slave on the Block," where Luther, a black man hired by Michael and Anne Carraway – a piano player and a painter respectively – whom the author describes as "people who went in for Negroes [...]. But no in the social-service, philanthropic sort of way, no" (Hughes 1990, 19) - to be their gardener. More than taking care of the garden, however, Luther ends up posing as a model for Anne who, in her next painting, wants to capture "the boy" (Carraways' definition of Luther in the story) in the moment of being sold at a slave auction. Anne thinks that precisely because he is black and he does not have any specific skills, Luther must be available to pose every time she needs him to. At the end, however, to the Carraways' great dismay, the young man rebels against the couple. Luther will eventually leave the Carraways showing that he takes his destiny in his own hands, resisting any possible plan the white duo has for him.

The production of the Harlem Renaissance presents characters equipped with an extraordinary sense of extrication from the constrictions imposed by whites, which characteristic resonates with a modern way of thinking, making, and producing art, and embraces the climate of the streets of Harlem where people of all walks of life could communicate their creative and personal inclinations more openly. The sense of freedom imbedded in that Harlemite lifestyle allowed gay people, for instance, to express who they were without fear of being prosecuted. According to Chauncey, this open-mindedness "turned Harlem into a homosexual mecca" (Chauncey 1994, 244). Black gay life played a big role in the Harlem Renaissance and many of its artists and supporters either identified with the gay community or were sexually active with people of their same sex (Chauncey 1994, 264). Countee Cullen, Thurman, Bruce Nugent, McKay, and possibly Langston Hughes, Chauncey says, "regularly socialized with each other in gay settings and discussed the affairs they were having with other men" (Chauncey 1994, 264). McKay's *Home to Harlem* (1927), Thurman's *The Blacker the Berry* and *Infants of the Spring* (1932) and some of the poems written by women writers have either queer speakers or include LGBTQ themes.

Grimké's "El Beso" ("The Kiss") exemplifies poetry emphasizing a type of romantic love

that does not conform to well-established gender and social norms. The first part of Grimké's composition develops a *crescendo* of emotions that leads the speaker to refer to her encounter with another woman as the "Lure of you, eye and lip;/ Yearning, yearning,/ Languor, surrender;/ Your mouth" (Patton and Honey 2001, 171), but as soon as "el beso" is consumed, the speaker almost regrets that it happened. It is not clear if the kiss is exchanged in the present or it is just a "remembrance," as the verse indicates towards the end of the poem. We know though that the aftermath of the act of kissing is followed by "Pain, regret-your sobbing;/ and again, quiet- the stars,/ Twilight- and you" (Patton and Honey 2001, 171). The numerous hyphens connecting various images here show that the speaker is confused, elated, surprised, and that she is even suffering (together with the partner who is "sobbing") for exploring or having explored same-sex desire.

The queer scenario of the Harlem Renaissance inspired contemporary movies such as *Looking for Langston*, directed by British filmmaker Isaac Julien and released in the United States in 1990. As the title suggests ("looking"), rather than being about Hughes' sexuality per se, this film explores more fully the black queer life of the '20s. Another film, *Brother to Brother,* released in 2004 and directed by Rodney Evans, has as protagonist a young black man estranged by his family because he is gay. He ends up meeting an icon of the Harlem Renaissance, the writer and painter, Nugent, who now an elder man, shares his experience with the teenager.

Recent studies done on the queer life in New York City can help to understand even more the many facets of the Harlem Renaissance. Among the others, one finds *Gay Voices of the Harlem Renaissance* (2003) edited by Darlene Clark. In addition, the *NYC LGBT Historic Sites Project*, available online, displays places in Harlem where black gay art and life took place. During the Harlem Renaissance, the gay community used to frequent places like the *Hotel Olga* on 695 Lenox Avenue, the *YMCA Building* on 181 West 135th Street, the *Ethel Waters Residence* on 580 St. Nicholas Avenue, the *Gumby Book Studio* on 2144 Fifth Avenue, and the *Langston Hughes Residence* on 20 East 127th Street.

Narrating a modern vision of the African American culture, the Harlem Renaissance paved the way to other black movements that emerged in the United States after the 1930s. The complexity of the social and cultural background of the Harlem Renaissance still calls for further academic investigation, especially as the quest for social equity in today's America accentuates the historical importance of the New Negro Movement.

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The History and Ancient Literature of "Naodongfang": Chinese Wedding Games prior to 1912

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Abstract:

This article focuses on archiving and translating Chinese written form materials about Naodongfang (鬧洞房): the obscene wedding games from ancient times to 1912. Naodongfang refers to pranks with sexual innuendo carried out by participants during the wedding nights and literally means "disturbance in ta bridal chamber." Based on twenty-seven references in classical Chinese historical texts, I outlined the development of Naodongfang. The records include various types of literature, such as official history books, scholars' comments, folk ballads, regional records, travel accounts and poems. Historiography here proves the existence of Naodongfang for over 2000 years and its geographical spread across China.

Keywords: Naodongfang, Chinese customs, wedding games, folklore, Chinese literature

There is a long history of recording and collecting folklore in China that extends from the pre-Qin period (1100BCE-221BCE) until now. Comprehensive published historical materials are always Chinese humanities studies' advantages. As a branch of Chinese folkloristics, historical folklore studies stand unique in the world because of the wealth of centuries-old Chinese texts and ancient documents (Xiao, 2002). Based on a compilation and comparison of texts, folklorists read, annotate and translate various dynasties' histories, and finally construct the history of certain traditions. Therefore, this English collection is not only important to construct a chronological history of Chinese Naodongfang, but also allows for rich historical and comparative studies, such as exploring meanings of wedding customs in the earlier stage of human history.

According to Huang Huajie (黃華節), the first modern scholar who tried to define Naodongfang, "during the period of the wedding, the guests and relatives come to prank, mock, trick and molest the bridal couple without regard for morals, etiquettes and laws, [it] is called Naofang/Naodongfang" ([1934] 1999, 193). "Naodongfang" falls on the spectrum of "Chinese obscene wedding games" and it is the general term to refer to all wedding games. This term was established in the late Qing Dynasty around 1869-1928 (Xv Ke) when Naodongfang, and its

abbreviated version "Naofang," appeared in a book by Zhong Qi (鐘琦 1818-1904) and other regional records. However, before the term "Naodongfang" was widely used in the Qing Dynasty, the spectrum of "Chinese obscene wedding games" includes various wedding customs such as beating the groom (打聳), teasing the bride (戲婦), seeing the bride (看新婦), teasing the wedding family (謔親), eavesdropping under the window (聽房), blocking the wedding carriages (障車), and so on.

To trace the history of Naodongfang, I have located twenty-seven references on Chinese wedding games from the pre-Qin period (1100BCE-221BCE) to the Revolution of 1911, the end of the feudal empire. This documentation shows that Naodongfang's core elements of dirty jokes and sexual pranks remained stable over its long history but that the custom adapted to each dynasty. Historical collections include but are not limited to *The Book of Songs* (《詩經》) (around 1100BCE-600BCE), *The Spring and Autumn Annals* (《左氏春秋》) (around 403BCE-386BCE), *Records of the Grand Historian* (《史記》) (around 104BCE-91BCE), *The History of the Former Han Dynasty: Geographic Records* (《漢書·地理志》) (around 32-92), F*olk Customs and Traditions* (《風俗通義》) (around 153-196), *BaoPuZi · Disease and Absurdness* (《抱樸子·疾謬》) (around 317-420), *Youyang Miscellaneous Morsels* (《酉陽雜俎》) (around 803-863), *Book of Old Tang Dynasty* (《舊唐書》) (around 945), *Splendour Dream of Eastern Capital* (《東京夢華錄》) (around 1102-1125), *Dream of Past Capital Lin'an* (《夢粱錄》) (around 1274), and *Classified Records and Anecdotes in the Qing Dynasty · Marriages* (《清稗類鈔·婚姻》) (around 1869-1928). These materials include scholars' comments, folk ballads, myths, regional records, travel notes and diaries. Contributors include historians, biographers, scholars, poets and illustrators. I also refer to *Dunhuang Scripts* (敦煌寫本) and Tang poems (唐詩) to analyze the custom of "blocking the wedding carriages" (障車). Drawing on rich historical texts, I examine what Naodongfang was and how it has developed over its long history.

Scholars hold different views of the genesis of Naodongfang. Some consider the earliest recorded reference to Chinese Naodongfang to date from the Pre-Qin period (2100BCE- 221BCE). Pre-Qin people sang rhythms and songs on many festive and ritualistic occasions. *The Book of Songs* (《詩經》(1100BCE-1600BCE), collected by Yinjifu (尹吉甫), includes 311 folk songs/rhymes that depict many aspects of Pre-Qin people's lives. Confucius (孔子) censored and finalized the collection as *300 Songs* (《詩三百》), promoting it as a classic requisite for his disciples in the Confucian School. Scholars have noted the significance of *The Book of Songs* to the study of ancient Chinese folklore, including wedding customs. Late Qing Dynasty scholars such as Ma Ruichen (馬瑞辰 1782-1853) (1989, 346) and Fang Yurun (方玉潤[1811-1883] 1986) considered "Tang Feng· Chou Mou" (《唐風·綢繆》) from *The Book of Songs* a wedding song. Later, contemporary scholar Chen Zizhan (陳子展 1898-1990) argued that this song's lyrics depict a Naodongfang occasion held on the wedding night when guests congratulated and embarrassed the bridal couple by singing songs (Chen 1982, 4). Its classic Chinese text is as follows:

綢繆束薪，三星在天。今夕何夕? 見此良人。子兮子兮, 如此良人何!
綢繆束芻，三星在隅。今夕何夕? 見此邂逅。子兮子兮, 如此邂逅何!

綢繆束色，三星在戶。今夕何夕? 見此粲者。子兮子兮, 如此粲者何!

Arthur Waley translated *The Book of Songs* and his version is relied on widely by English language academics. He put "Tang Feng· Chou Mou" under the categorization of "marriage," indicating that he also believed it was a ritual wedding song. Arthur Waley translated the lyrics as follows:

> Fast bundled is the firewood; the Three Stars[1] have risen. Is it to-night or which night, that I see my Good Man? Oh, masters, my masters, what will this Good Man be like?
> Fast bundled is the hay; the Three Stars are at the corner. Is it to-night or which night, that shall see this meeting? Oh, masters, my masters, what will that meeting be like?
> Fast bundled is the wild-thorn; the Three Stars are at the door. Is it to-night or which night, that I see that lovely one? Oh, masters, my masters, what will that lovely one be like? (Waley 1960, 87)

At first glance the Naodongfang elements are barely visible in this translation. They emerge more clearly, however, when Wang Wenjun (王文君) points out that the folk song would have been sung in an antiphonal way by male and female participants. Wang contends the first stanza was sung by female guests to tease the bride, the second stanza that pokes fun at both sides of the bridal couple would have been a chorus for male and female guests, and the last stanza directed towards the groom would have been performed by male guests (Wang 1984, 41). While Wang's interpretation (1984, 39) differs from that of Liu & Yang (2008), Jiang Linchang (江林昌 2009, 42), and Li Shan (李山 2017), these modern scholars all agree that "Tang Feng· Chou Mou" is a folksong depicting Naodongfang and that it includes an obvious joking and bantering scene. Drawing on their translations, I read the last four sentences of each stanza as follows:

> What is the night tonight? You have met a Good Man as excellent as him. You, you, what will you do with him? (Females)
> What is the night tonight? You two could be such excellent partners to each other. You, you, what will you do tonight? (All participants)
> What is the night tonight? You have met such a lovely one like her. You, you, what will you do with her? (Males)

In contrast to my interpretation, Arthur Waley thought the song was intended to be sung by the bride or the groom rather than by other participants. Concerning the translation of "子兮," he used "oh masters, my masters," and in a footnote explained that "子兮" "may merely be a meaningless exclamation" (1960, 87). Other scholars who regard "Tang Feng· Chou Mou" as a Naodongfang song, have argued that the translation of "子兮" should not be read as a "meaningless exclamation" but as "you," the second-person pronoun. Considering the apparent gender implications of "良人" and "粲者," which respectively indicate good boys and pretty girls, the antiphonal characteristic is distinctive. That said, despite the evidence of bantering and joking,

and lyrics that have obvious sexual connotations, the song does not explicitly describe characteristic pranks and tricks of Naodongfang. Rather, it leaves us imagining what Pre-Qin's weddings looked like.

Some scholars believe that Naodongfang originated in the custom of "seeing the bride" (Wang Shaoxi 王紹璽 1933). According to *The Spring and Autumn Annals* (《左氏春秋》 403BCE-386BCE), when the leader Zhuanggong (莊公) married Madam Aijiang (哀姜夫人) in 670BCE, he invited ministers and women from royal families to "see the bride." Curiosity to see the bride, as well as gossiping and making judgements about her, arguably contributed to the lively atmosphere that made up the Naodongfang event.

In contrast to these above two interpretations that only a few scholars supported, most Chinese academics trace Naodongfang back to the late period of Warring States Time (戰國 500BCE-221BCE) (Chen [1935] 1990, 269; Chen 1998; Qu 2002; Shang 2000; Zhu 2009) through a historical description of Prince Dan (?-226BCE) of the Yan State. They regard this as the earliest official reference to Naodongfang. The text and my translation are as follows:

> 初太子丹賓養勇士，不愛後宮美女，民以為俗，至今猶然。賓客相過，以婦侍宿，嫁取之夕，男女無別，反以為榮。後稍頗止，然終未改。
>
> At first, Prince Dan of the Yan State raised and supported valiant warriors in his palace for defending against the other states during the wars. He did not value beautiful women in his palace; on the contrary, he used those women to serve and entertain warriors. Hence the custom spread from the palace to commoners. Things are the same today. When guests arrive, people greet guests by sending women (wives, daughters, concubines, etc.) to sleep with them. Men and women do not have any sense of gender segregation during the wedding night. They are proud of that. There is no fundamental change until today, even though some minor adaptions have been made. (*The History of the Former Han Dynasty: Geographic Records* (《漢書·地理志》, Ban Gu 班固 32-92AD)

In my view, the story of Prince Dan of the Yan State may refer to communal marriage and promiscuity dating from the early stages of institutionalized marriages as indicated by the statement that "men and women do not have any sense of gender segregation during the wedding night. They are proud of that." The passage also lends possible support to Zhu Jiantai's view that during the Warring States Time there was a social ethos toward audaciousness and frivolity that spread outwards from the Yan area through the influence of Prince Dan, the member of its governing class (2009, 10).

The Han Dynasty saw the formation of Naodongfang in today's sense. For example, Yang Shuda (楊樹達 1885-1956) believed that Naodongfang became popular during the Han Dynasty (202BCE-220AD): "Guests and hosts drank alcohol and laughed loudly; their behaviours did not have taboos and restraints. As with contemporary Naodongfang, this tradition had already existed in the Han Dynasty" (《漢代婚喪禮俗考》 *Textual Research of Customs and Etiquettes for Marriages and Funerals in the Han Dynasty*. [1933]1989, 23). Moreover, other materials

record a custom called "eavesdropping outside the bridal chamber" (聽房), which is a type of Naodongfang. This custom was recorded in *The History of the Former Han Dynasty* (《漢書》): "During the wedding nights, people eavesdropped below the windowsill of a bridal chamber to catch sounds, such as movements, conversations and even moaning, from a newly married couple. People regard this as an entertainment and gossip what they have heard during the next day" (Ban Gu 32-92 AD).

The most vivid and exciting proof in the Han Dynasty comes from archaeological evidence. In the archaeological site of Shenliuzhuang Han Dynasty Tomb in Ju County (莒縣沈劉莊漢代畫像石墓) in Shandong Province, archaeologists discovered a stone relief of a woman and man who seem to be kissing (Figure 1). The archaeological field reports noted, "the lower frame shows three people; a man and a woman stand in the centre and face each other. They are embracing each other, and it seems like they are kissing. A woman who looks like a maid stands behind the women. The maid pushes the woman's head by her hands to make/force them to kiss. Relief shadows above those figures' heads indicate bed curtains, which means that this is an indoor occasion" (Su & Zhang 1988, 797). Liu Yuxin (劉玉新) argues that the carving vividly depicts an indoor occasion of joking and pranking during a wedding proving that Naodongfang was popular in the Han Dynasty (Liu 1998, 70). Shang Huipeng supports Liu's hypothesis (2000, 178).

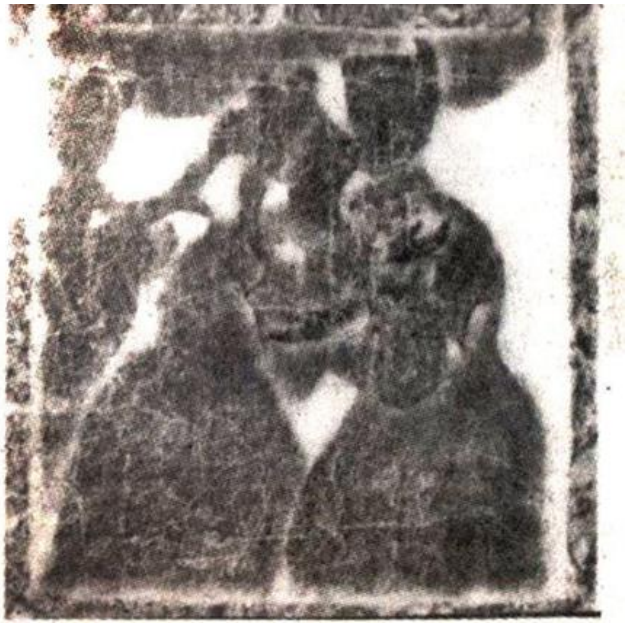

Fig. 1. Unearthed Han Dynasty Stone Relief Shows "A Picture of Woman and Man Kissing" (Liu 1998, 70)

From the Eastern Han Dynasty (25-220), scholars began to criticize Naodongfang openly. Comments in *Flourishing Speech* (《昌言》) by Zhong Changtong (仲長統) are frequently cited as the earliest criticism of the custom of Naodongfang: "Nowadays, during the wedding period, people tease the bridal couple and threaten them with rods; they drink a lot and induce the newly married couple's sex desires by liquor. People advocate for obscenity in public and expose privacy among clans and relatives. These traditions are extremely obscene, and it is easy to indulge people in illicit sexual relations. No other tradition could influence people like this. It should be prohibited"[2] (See also Qu 2002; Wang 1997). His opinion of Naodongfang was shared by other ancient literati and officialdom who obeyed Confucian morals and codes.

Fengsu Tongyi (*Folk Customs and Traditions*《風俗通義》) was the first to use "folk customs (風俗)" in the title of a book, proving that ancient Chinese folklorists realized the importance of folk customs by around 153-196AD. In this publication, Ying Shao (應劭 153-196) documented the earliest tragedy associated with Naodongfang. He described how in the Ru'nan

(汝南) region, a man called Zhang Miao (張妙) knew another man named Du Shi (杜士) who was getting married. After the banquet and liquor, guests started playing around and joking. Zhang Miao tied Du Shi up and hit him twenty times with a rod. Then he hanged Du Shi upside down by tying his toes together. Although Du Shi died from this treatment, officer Bao Yu (鮑昱) judged the death accidental as a result of drinking liquor. He concluded that Zhang Miao did not intentionally mean to kill Du Shi and therefore he received a reduced penalty (Sheng 1993; Wang 1997). This is the earliest record of a lethal accident associated with Naodongfang.[3]

In the Jin Dynasty (around 265-420), Naodongfang became a controversial topic among scholars. Ge Hong (葛洪) directly appealed to forbid Naodongfang in his book *BaoPuZi · Disease and Absurdness* (《抱樸子·疾謬》) (around 317-420), and he has been widely quoted:

> Among commoners, there is a tradition to tease the bride. The bride stands in the middle of a group of people; relatives test her with obscene questions. If the bride answers slowly or with hesitation, people will embarrass and blame her. The obscenity of this custom is hard to mention. People often beat the groom and even hang him upside down with toes tied up. They are drunk and alcoholic; they do not know anything about limits and restrictions. These behaviours leave people bleeding, bruised, bent or with broken limbs. What a pity it is! Ancient people felt sad when they left home (for marriage), so that they did not snuff out a candle; they felt upset and did not play music or sing during weddings. According to ancient etiquette, wedding families were ashamed, and people did not celebrate. Nowadays, people fail to abide by classical etiquettes which would make them admired by folks and trusted by neighbours. People should berate these behaviours and change them. How could we tolerate those folks and develop this custom with them? However, folklore has been practised for a long period. People never think it wrong. Only fierce criticism and rigorous punishment could stop it. (Ge Hong [317-420] 1954, 148)

During the Northern and Southern Dynasties (南北朝 420-589), regimes were frequently replaced by northern nomadic groups. Governors of Northern and Southern Dynasties were famous for their non-Han ethnic identities. The Xianbei (鮮卑) who are regarded as ancestors of Mongolians and other nomadic groups from Northern China, are thought to have beaten grooms during their weddings and made them "exhausted and weakened" (大委頓者). Accordingly, a wedding custom with strong nomadic influences, known as "beating the groom with rods" (杖婿), emerged around this time. In the book *Youyang Miscellaneous Morsels* (《酉陽雜俎》) (around 830-863), Duan Chengshi (段成式) described this custom: "In the Northern Dynasties, people set up a tent close to the residence. This tent was called Qinglu[4] (青廬). People held weddings there. Depending on the level of luxury or frugality, the groom's family gathered hundreds or tens of lads. These young men gathered around the wedding carriage and kept yelling, 'hurry up and come out, the bride' (催妝). Yelling would not stop until the bride came out and boarded the carriage. During the day of picking up the bride, the bride's family members and friends all came. They used rods to beat the groom and regarded this beating as a token of joyfulness. Sometimes the groom would be extremely exhausted and weakened after these tortures" (Li 2002, 159).

Another example suggests the prevalence of "beating the groom with rods" in royal families. According to the *History of Northern Dynasties* (《北史》), an emperor whose name was Gao Yang (高洋 526-559), was teased by his sister-in-law during his wedding, causing him to hold a grudge against her. Gao Yang was the emperor of Northern Qi (北齊). When he married Duan Zhaoyi (段昭儀), Yuan Shi (袁氏), the wife of Duan Zhaoyi's brother Duan Shao (段紹), played pranks on Gao Yang that were popular among commoners. This resulted in Gao Yang developing hard feelings towards her, and he reportedly yelled at Duan Shao, "I will kill your wife." Yuan Shi felt afraid of him and hid in the palace of Lou Taihou (mother of Gao Yang); she never dared to go out until after the emperor died. Scholars, such as Shang Huipeng (2000) and Zhu Jiantai (2009), agree that Yuan Shi probably beat or whipped Gao Yang with rods or bamboo. Gao Yang and his noble families were of Xianbei descent, so the custom of beating the groom would have been known to them, and it is therefore not surprising if the emperor was beaten and tricked at his wedding (Chen [1935]1990, 270; Shang 2000; Zhu 2009). The report is interesting, however, because it provides evidence that even members of royal families could not avoid Naodongfang during their weddings; they could not suppress the power of customs during ancient times.

Centralized power re-emerged in the Sui and Tang Dynasties (618-907). According to Chen Peng, the custom of "blocking wedding carriages" (障車) became of paramount importance in the Tang Dynasty. The *Chinese Encyclopedia of Etymology* (《辭源》) explains the term as follows: "when Tang people held weddings, crowds waited for the wedding troops and they blocked streets and doors. When the wedding carriage came, it cannot pass. Hence, there were proses and verses made to accompany this custom. Most of them are blessings and congratulatory sayings" (Fang et al. 1931). When the wedding carriage or sedan chair was on the way to deliver the bride to the groom's family, villagers gathered together to try to stop it and demanded food and liquor in return for letting it go on. From emperors (aristocrats) to commoners, it appears that no one escaped being blocked during their weddings (Chen [1935]1990, 250). According to *Old Book of Tang* (《舊唐書》945AD), Left Silangzhong (左司郎中 the title of an official rank) Tang Shao (唐紹) made a proposal to the emperor to curtail the custom of "blocking wedding carriages" in the first year of Taiji (太極元年 712AD):

> Wedding ceremonies and rituals should follow the *Six Etiquette*[5] that is why marriages and weddings should be reported to clan temples and seniors. The bride is supposed to be delivered at dusk and greet her parents-in-law and seniors in the morning. However, some obscene and vulgar peasants will stop wedding parties and carriages on their way to deliver the bride to the groom's family. They ask for food and drinks for frivolity. Recently, the custom has become more and more popular and even with aristocrats. They gather together and play music, stop the wedding party and block their passage. The path is blocked for a long time, and wedding schedules are delayed. Expenses that attribute to these people are over 10,000 (Tang Dynasty currency). The expenses to satisfy these people even exceed the expenses of betrothal presents and dowries. Even though the occasion is full of songs and

> dances, laughter and chatting, it is of no help to the marriage. This custom disturbs social order, impairs finances and should be restricted. It does not fit into the etiquette that nobles should abide by. I propose that people who are participating in blocking wedding carriages must be punished. People who have warrantors should list their names in the crime book. People who do not have warrantors need to be beaten 60 times and then convicted. (Zhou [1930] 2011, 44; Zhu 2009, 13)[6]

Tang Shao was clearly unsuccessful in eradicating the custom of "blocking wedding carriages" given that this tradition is still widely practised today in China with vehicles replacing carriages and sedan chairs. While Tang Shao was not happy to see the custom of "blocking wedding carriages" continue, the tradition of composing prose and verse about it became popular among the aristocratic classes and then spread to lower economic levels. Before the Tang Dynasty, there were no verses about "blocking wedding carriages." It was just the hustle and bustle of the crowds. During the Tang Dynasty, a new literary genre developed to congratulate newlyweds and their families. This genre was called "prose and verses about blocking carriages" (障車文). During the preparation of weddings, aristocratic families invited (or hired) famous poets, literati and scholars to write prose about blocking carriages. These proses would be recited at weddings to show off the wedding families' high level of literacy and decency[7]. Sikongtu (司空圖), wrote a "Prose about Blocking Carriage," and this piece was included in the *Full Collection of Tang Literature* (《全唐文》). The work was well polished; its main body emphasized how physically and mentally suited the bridal couple was, how splendid the wedding was and how graceful the newlyweds' virtues were.

By the Tang Dynasty, many wedding customs were well established. For instance, the customs of "blocking wedding carriages" (障車 Chen [1935]1990, 250), "speeding up the bride" (催妝 Chen [1935]1990, 248), "putting down the fan" (卻扇 Chen [1935]1990, 256) and "seeing the bride" (看新婦 Chen [1935]1990, 278) were prevalent in the Tang Dynasty. Meanwhile, as a representative genre of classic Chinese literature, Tang Poetry (唐詩) reached its peak. Therefore, in the Tang Dynasty, the tradition of making poems and verses combined with diverse wedding customs was invented and shared. As mentioned above, during the Northern and Southern Dynasties, wedding guests gathered outside the bride's family home to loudly urge her to finish her make-up (妝) and to come out of the house. The bride generally did not want to leave her natal family and often felt sad about the separation. Plus, the bride's family sometimes intentionally hampered her departure and tried to delay the wedding schedule. However, the wedding schedule was strictly governed by Chinese beliefs and taboos that were thought to bring good fortune; for the sake of auspicious time (吉時), the groom's family and friends gathered around the bride's family home and tried their best to speed up the departure. Meanwhile, making poems about "speeding up the bride" (催妝詩) and "putting down the fan" (卻扇詩) became part of wedding customs in the Tang Dynasty. Bai Juyi (白居易), a revered poet in the Tang Dynasty, composed a poem about "speeding up the bride":

《和春深二十首 十九》
何處春深好，春深娶婦家。
兩行籠裏燭，壹樹扇間花。
賓拜登華席，親迎障幰車。
催妝詩未了，星鬥漸傾斜。

The spring has so blossomed. In late spring, someone is holding a wedding. Two rows of candles, flowers and fans are decorating the room. Guests are standing on the gorgeous carpet and greeting each other. The carriage is blocked by guests when picking up the bride. The competition of exchanging "催妝詩" (poems of speeding up the bride) never ends. Stars come to fade in the horizon and morning is coming.

The Tang emperor asked Lu Chang (陸暢) to write a poem of "speeding up the bride" for his sister Princess Yun'an (雲安公主) during her wedding:

《雲安公主下降奉詔作催妝詩》
雲安公主貴, 出嫁王侯家;
天母親調粉, 日兄憐賜花。
催鋪百子帳, 待障七香車;
借問妝成未? 東方欲曉霞。

How noble Princess Yun'an is. She will marry an aristocratic family. The mother of the emperor helps her make-up. The emperor gifts her flowers and hair accessories. Her wedding bed has already been decorated with "curtains with the pattern of hundreds of children" (百子帳). People have already prepared to block the "carriage of seven fragrances" (七香車). May I dare to ask whether the Princess has dressed well and finished her make-up? The rosy dawn is coming from the east[8].

"Putting down the fan" poems are based on a traditional Chinese aesthetic concerning the beauty of shades and covering. The ideal for ancient Chinese women was to be shy and reserved and, as a result, they often held up fans to cover their mouths when they were smiling. Thus, holding a fan not only invoked an image of a bride's beauty and reserved nature, but also had a symbolic meaning in Chinese aesthetics. Poems of "putting down the fan" were composed when the bride arrived at the groom's family or during Naodongfang. As is easy to imagine, in the space of Naodongfang in the evening, the room was full of people, liquor and noise. People in their neighbourhoods were curious to see what the bride looked like. Was she pretty or not? Did she have a good personality? The bride felt shy and bashful, so she used a fan to cover half of her face. According to the *Dunhuang Scripts*, people who were good at making up verses and poems would narrate as follows: "you don't need to cover your beauty with thousands of layers of fans. A beauty like you is rare to see. Please don't feel attached to your past lives, because finally, you will belong to your husband's family."[9] For the wedding of Princess Yun'an, Lu Chang also

created a poem of "putting down the fan" that compared the Princess to the goddess of the moon, Heng'e (姮娥):

> 寶扇持來入禁宮，本教花下動香風。
> 姮娥須逐彩雲降，不可通宵在月中。
>
> You held a precious fan and stepped into the forbidden moon palace. Your skirt blew the flowers, and the wind became fragrant. You cannot stay in the moon palace during the whole night. You should descend with seven colours' clouds and land in the mortal world.

During the Song and Yuan dynasties, Naodongfang did not change significantly. Even though intellectuals' negative comments and assessments pervade historical materials, Meng Yuanlao (孟元老) nostalgically depicted wedding customs in his book *Splendour Dream of Eastern Capital* (《東京夢華錄》1127). He writes: "During the wedding day, the groom's family dispatched carriages or sedan chairs towards the bride's natal house. The bride's family was responsible for greeting guests. They put colourful ribbons on the carriage. While musicians played music, people began urging the bride to board the carriage and depart (催妝). The wagoner and sedan chair lifters refused to depart and asked for 'Lishi' (利事、利是、利市 red packets with money or gifts like foods, cigarettes and candies). This tradition was called 'lifting the sedan chair' (起檐子). When the wedding family satisfied the people's requests, they finally lifted the sedan chair and departed. When the wedding party came back to the groom's house, followers, wagoners and sedan chair lifters would again ask for money, gifts and decorations. This tradition was called 'blocking the door'(攔門)" (Meng [1127] 1982; Chen [1935] 1990, 248).

In his book *Dream of Past Capital Lin'an* (《夢粱錄》) (around 1274), Wu Zimu (吳自牧) made a thorough record of a complete Song Dynasty wedding routine which is very similar to a modern Chinese one:

> Before the wedding day, the groom's family needs to set up the schedule and gather groomsmen (行郎) in advance. These boys hold vases, candles, fragrant balls, curtains, towels, dressers, mirrors, skirt boxes, costume cabinets, auspicious knots, shade umbrellas, chairs, and so on. Masters of the schedule, executives and female entertainers ride on horses and head to the bride's family. Musicians are playing instruments. Flower sedan chairs or brown sedan chairs follow the team. The bride's family treats the party with the etiquette of liquor. Colourful flakes are dispersed; sliver plates and gift money are distributed. Musicians play instruments to speed up the bride. The master of the schedule informs the group of the auspicious time and urges the bride to board soon. The masters of tea and liquor exchange poems and verses, also speeding up the bride to come out and board. After the bride has boarded, sedan chair holders are refusing to lift the chair and depart. Poems and rhymes are continually exchanged until sedan chair holders are satisfied by money and liquor. When they lift the sedan chair, musicians start playing. When the team arrives in front of the groom's house, the schedule is just caught. Musicians, female entertainers and masters of tea and liquor start to exchange

> verses and rhymes, ask for red packets and gifts through blocking the entrance. The master of the schedule holds a flower bucket and disperses five types of grains, beans, candies and pastries in front of the entrance. Children compete to pick up these gifts. This custom is called "Dispersing beans and grains" (撒谷豆), for repressing the evil spirit of Qingyang (青陽煞).[10]

Compared to the above writers who neutrally wrote down the wedding routines, many officialdoms focused on the negative aspects of Naodongfang. Hong Mai (洪邁 1123-1202) wrote a book titled, *Textology of Folk Customs* (《俗考》). He commented: "today, people still practise this custom. In the bridal chamber, the groom is invisible, but a gang of young men come to molest the bride. This custom is called 'Xueqin' (謔親 bantering wedding families). They lift the bride's clothes and use needles to stick into her; or take off her shoes and stare at her feet, which makes the bride, who is supposed to be seriously displayed and serve in clan temples, now behave like a prostitute who is leaning against a doorframe to tout" (Jiang 1927, 151; Shang 2000, 179). Quoting Ge Hong's *BaoPuZi,* Hong Mai raised a point that still puzzles researchers today: "This custom is undoubtedly bad. However, according to *BaoPuZi,* from the Jin Dynasty until now, this custom has been popular for thousands of years and has not changed. How strange this is!" (Jiang 1926, 151; Shang 2000, 179).[11] Also drawing on *BaoPuZi*, Yang Shen (楊慎 1488-1559) questioned why the obscene practice of Naodongfang/Xueqin had continued for so many years in his book, *Minium (Red Lead) Extension* (《丹鉛續錄》).

In the Ming Dynasty, Tian Yiheng (田艺蘅 1524-?) recorded Naodongfang in his book *Liuqing Diary* (《留青日札》): "Among the Huizhou area (徽州), when the bride arrives at the groom's home, all relatives try their best to trick and molest the bride. People call it 'teasing the bride.' Sometimes accidents can happen, and newlyweds can die from pranks and tricks." He mentioned an interesting method the newlywed used to defend themselves from Naodongfang: "It is said that newlyweds often carefully seam their clothes and shoes to avoid being torn off by crowds. Yet this method still does not always work during the chaos." He traced back the custom to the Tang Dynasty but suggested its origins lie in ethnic groups in the south of China: "How do customs and traditions get corrupted like this? This custom was practised in the Tang Dynasty under the name 'Nongxinfu' (弄新婦, 'teasing the bride'). It is indeed the remnants and influence of Southern ethnic savages. Nowadays, in the Yue region, relatives and friends will definitely make the groom drunk in the bridal chamber" (Chen [1935]1990, 271; Tian 1985, 701).

By the Qing Dynasty, criticizing Naodongfang became "political correctness" among literati. For example, Gong Wei (龔玮) discussed Naodongfang under the title of "Malicious Marriage Customs" in his book *Chaolin Critics Extension* (《巢林筆談續編·嫁娶惡習》). This attitude was also reflected in *Textual Research on Puberty Rites, Weddings, Funerals and Sacrifices* (《冠婚喪祭考》):

> Among the secular world (民間), there is a custom called "seeing the bride" (看新婦). After the wedding ceremony, no matter old or young, the relatives and friends who come from the clans or

> neighbourhoods will come to see the bride for consecutive days... Nowadays, not only do people privately practise this custom, but in a very formal and public way. For example, seniors and children gather in a line to wait to see the bride... During commoners' weddings, there will be a large crowd gathering around. They may embarrass the bride through strict rules or trick the groom through pranks or jokes... They claim that these behaviours will cheer up the crowd and make the newlyweds more affectionate... many harsh pranks are practised in some remote villages. For example, to frighten the couple, people pour water on them or throw firecrackers towards them. Some brides get sick after this. Hence the wedding families always suffer a great loss of money because of this custom. (Chen [1935]1990, 271; Zhu 2009, 14)

In the Qing Dynasty, Xv Ke (徐珂 1869-1928) used the full term "Naodongfang (鬧洞房)" in his book *Classified Records and Anecdotes in the Qing Dynasty · Marriages* (《清稗類鈔·婚姻》) (around 1869-1928). "In Huai'an (淮安), when a bride walks into a bridal chamber, all the guests follow her. People try their best to make the bride laugh. Jokes, riddles, bantering and obscene speeches spread through the chamber... The purpose of doing Naodongfang is to insult brides and bridesmaids. They exchange dirty jokes or gossip about a bride's appearance; they paint their faces with the bride's make-up powder or rouge to entertain each other. They will not stop until they get satisfied. The wedding families will not do anything to stop them but let them do whatever they want without interference" (Wang 1997, 50). Meanwhile, Zhong Qi (鐘琦 1818-1904) wrote, "There is a folk custom during the wedding night. Relatives and friends gather and come to the bridal chamber. They yell and laugh, sit or lay down until late-night, or even stay up until the daylight. People call it 'Naofang' (鬧房 an abbreviated version of Naodongfang). This custom spreads in Jiang, Zhe, Yue and Min areas (江、浙、粵、閩 roughly covering today's southeastern China including Jiangsu Province, Zhejiang Province, Guangdong Province and Fujian Province). How loud the room and the crowd are will depend on the appearance of a bride. If a bride is plain, people would laugh loudly and drink a lot while bantering her. If a bride is ugly, people will make fun of her. If a bride is pretty, people would definitely try their best to tease her and get close to her. Generally, the crowd will not allow the bridal couple sleep for the whole night. Sometimes clan members and relatives also join Naodongfang, which is very malicious" (Chen [1935] 1990, 272).

Wu Youru, an illustrator in the late Qing Dynasty, published a book called *Wu Youru Paintings Compilation* (《吳有如畫寶》, 1884) in the traditional Chinese ink and brush painting style that includes a wedding night accident (Figure 2). In Ningbo (寧波), Zhu held a wedding for his son. Zhu was the servant of Fan's family and Fan's son came to the wedding. After the banquet, Fan's son snuck into the bridal chamber and hid in the couple's bed with the quilt covering him. After a while, the newlyweds went into the room and did not realize Fan's son was there. The couple began preparing to go to sleep. Fan's son spied on the groom taking off his clothes and the bride taking off her shoes. He giggled and the bed shook. The bride was shocked and jumped to escape. Fan's son lifted the quilt and revealed himself. The groom got so angry that he grabbed a

pair of scissors and stabbed Fan's son's shoulder, severely injuring him. The groom's mother rushed into the couple's bedroom when she heard the noise. Discovering that her son had stabbed their master's son, she pleaded for forgiveness, but Fan's son cursed loudly and left (Wu [1884] 1998, 41).

Fig. 2. *A Wedding Night Accident (鬧房受刺)* Illustrated by Wu Youru (Wu [1884] 1998, 41)

This brief overview of historical references attests to Naodongfang's long history. It illustrates that the custom took various forms throughout Chinese dynasties. At first, out of people's curiosity, people came to see the bride (看新婦) in the Spring and Autumn Period and mischievously eavesdropped outside the bridal chamber (聽房) in the Han Dynasty. Later, during the Northern and Southern dynasties, grooms were fiercely "beaten" (打聳), while in the Tang Dynasty entertaining and economic functions are discernable through "blocking the wedding carriages" (障車). In Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties, Naodongfang appears to have been more widely practised and there are more references in this time period, but sources also show that it was harshly criticized by intellectuals. Over 2000 years, Naodongfang has reserved the same elements, and all these forms of wedding games are still visible today. Naodongfang may have been one of the most stable traditions among all Chinese folk customs. Even though it never gets official and academic recognition, the unsuccessful efforts that past governments and intellectuals have made to criticize, ban and stigmatize Naodongfang, proves that this custom has significant meanings for past and current Chinese societies and people. The cultural inertia and resilience of folklore, gender dynamics and power negotiations within the space, have been discussed in my doctoral thesis (Memorial University, 2022).

Endnotes:

1. The Belt of Orion.
2. The original Chinese text of Zhong Changtong's critique is as follows:
   今嫁娶之會，捶杖以督之戲謔，酒醴以趨之情欲，宣淫佚於廣眾之中，顯陰私於親族之間，汙風詭俗，生淫長奸，莫此之甚，不可不斷者也。
3. *Youyang Miscellaneous Morsels · Odd Rituals* (《酉陽雜俎·禮異》) (around 830-863) recorded a similar tragic accident. When Jia got married, his friends Yi and Bing tricked him. Yi and Bing put Jia in a cabinet and covered the cabinet with quilts. Jia was smothered to death (Wang 1997).
   In the Qing Dynasty, scholars still cited the example of "Zhang Miao beat Du Shi to death" from Ying Shao (應劭 153-196)'s manuscript. For example, in his *Guisi Reserved Scripts* (《癸巳存稿》), Yu Zhengxie (俞正燮) asked, "...these accidents are exactly what Du Shi experienced. From the Han Dynasty to the Jin Dynasty, the folklore did not change. Was it the fault of Bao Yu (the judge) who lightly sentenced the murderer and did not outlaw the custom that it has thrived until today?" (Qu 2002; Sheng 1993)
4. The colour of the tent could be either green or black. There is not yet consensus among scholars due to the ambiguity of classic Chinese characters.
5. Generally initiated by the groom's family, the "Six Etiquettes" consisted of six procedures required to arrange a marriage and hold a wedding: Na Cai (納彩 letting a matchmaker representing a man's family, visit a woman's family to make a proposal), Wen Ming (問名 asking for the woman's name, birth date and Ba Zi (八字 Chinese horoscope)), Na Ji (納吉 going to temples to foretell whether the man and the woman match well with each other according to their names, birth dates and Chinese horoscope), Na Zheng (納征 delivering the man's betrothal presents to the woman's family), Qing Qi (請期 asking for the consent of the woman's family and deciding on the most auspicious wedding date), and Qin Ying (親迎 the process of transporting the bride to the groom's family and formal wedding ceremonies) (*Book of Etiquettes and Rites*《儀禮》, 221BCE).
6. The original Chinese text: 又士庶親迎之儀，備諸六禮，所以承宗廟，事舅姑，當須昏以為期，詰朝謁見。往者下俚庸鄙，時有障車，邀其酒食，以為戲樂。近日此風轉盛，上及王公，乃廣奏音樂，多集徒侶，遮擁道路，留滯淹時，邀致財物，動逾萬計。遂使障車禮貺，過於聘財，歌舞喧嘩，殊非助感。既虧名教，實蠹風猷，違紊禮經，須加節制。望請婚姻家障車者，並須禁斷。若有犯者，有蔭家，請準犯名教例附簿；無蔭人，決杖六十，仍各科本罪。
7. For example, Zhong Chuan's daughter was married to Du Hong's son in Jiangxia. Until the dusk, someone came to ask for "proses of blocking carriages" from Tang Yun. Yun ordered his four servants to prepare for paper, ink and brush. They waited next to the horse for minutes, and Yuan immediately finished four proses. The original text in Chinese: 唐末汤筠"俱以书奏受惠",晚年辅佐江西钟传,"传女适江夏杜洪之子时,及昏暝,有人走乞《障車文》。筠命小吏四人各执纸笔, 倚马待制, 既而四本俱成"(Fan 2005: 813).
8. According to the above Tang poems, we can tell that in the Tang Dynasty a wedding generally was held at nighttime. Nowadays, some areas of China still begin a wedding before dawn according to the divination of auspicious time.
9. 千重羅扇不須遮，百美嬌多見不奢。侍娘不用相要勒，終歸不免屬他家。
10. The original Chinese text: 至迎親日，男家刻定時辰，預令行郎，各以執色如花瓶、花燭、香球、沙羅洗漱、妝合、照臺、裙箱、衣匣、百結、青涼傘、交椅，授事街司等人，及顧借官私妓女乘馬，及和倩樂官鼓吹，引迎花檐子或粽檐子藤轎，前往女家，迎取新人。其女家以酒禮款待行郎，散花紅、銀碟、利市錢會訖，然後樂官作樂催妝，克擇官報時辰，催促登車，茶酒司互念詩詞，催請新人出閣登車。既已登

車，擎檐從人未肯起步，仍念詩詞，求利市錢酒畢，方行起檐作樂，迎至男家門首，時辰將正，樂官妓女及茶酒等人互念詩詞，攔門求利市錢紅。克擇官執花門，盛五谷豆錢彩果，望門而撒，小兒爭拾之，謂之"撒谷豆"，以壓青陽煞耳。

11. The original Chinese text: 今此俗世尚多有之，娶婦之家，親婿避匿，群男子競作戲調，以弄新婦，謂之謔親。或寒裳而針其膚，或脫履而規其足，以廟見之婦，同於倚門之倡，誠所謂敝俗也。然以《抱樸子》考之，則晉世已然矣，歷千余年而不以變，可怪哉。

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The *Art Front*: A Vehicle for Artistic Awakening in the Strenuous Decade

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Abstract:

The *Art Front*, was a specialist journal published from 1934 until 1937 that reflected the views of politically radical artists as they confronted the changing realities brought on by the Great Depression. In particular, the journal promoted the interests of the New York Artists Union as it strove to better the economic and social circumstances of its members. The challenges were immense, and this meant attacking existing policies of city and national government, as well as the exhibit policies of galleries and museums that negatively affected the livelihoods and everyday existence of most artists. The *Art Front* represented a call for change and socialism in the midst of capitalist market crises and the rise of Fascism and militarism. The growth of the New Deal, Federal Art Project after 1935 provided a degree of financial relief. The *Art Front* nevertheless revealed the critical debates of the era and raised awareness of the often continuing artistic struggles that still have relevance today.

Keywords: Radical artists, Art Front, New York, Artists Union, Federal Art Project, the Great Depression, Popular Front, social and economic crisis

The pioneering radical journal, *Art Front,* began publication in November 1934, first from offices on 11 West 18th Street in New York City and appeared intermittently directed by a loose and frequently changing editorial team, until the final November/December 1937 issue. The journal printed a mix of current left-wing politics and art criticism, along with a spectrum of specifically focused Depression era social and economic demands. As Frances K. Pohl explained in her *Framing Art: A Social History of American Art*:

> there have been other long-term economic crises in the history of the country, but none has seized the public imagination as firmly as the one that began with the Stock Market Crash in New York City in 1929 (Pohl 2002, 364).

In the light of these devastating events, "it is not surprising that the more politically conscious should have wanted their own publication", simply to vent their frustration with current circumstances

(Hemingway 2002, 39). Among many artists, the nation's plummeting social conditions and economic constraints led to a rising belief that their lives now shared common ground with mainstream Americans, and that only persistent pressure, if not revolutionary action, could counter the malaise.

Although many artists believed a better society was achievable in such extreme circumstances; the actual uniting of artists with such a nationally diverse and politically amorphous public, was difficult to realize. This was particularly the case when outside political pressures, mainly those dictated by Communist Party ideological constraints, shaped the nature of debate. Though it claimed to be politically unaffiliated, the *Art Front's* sympathies ultimately shaped its dynamics, be it discussing socialist styles and artistic influences, perceived capitalist failures, Fascism's threats to the arts, the impact of racism and lynching on African-Americans, or the course of the Spanish Civil War. In its later editions, the place of Abstraction and Surrealism as stylistic competitors were discussed in the context of an artistic world of tightly defined, Stalinist approved socialist realist prescriptions (Marquardt 1997, 235). By 1935, the Third International called for a 'Popular Front' to combat Fascism which would take the form of a merger of various leftist political associations whose philosophies were less sectarian. As art historian Patricia Hills observed, "the editorial policies of the *Art Front* reflected the coming to terms with this new strategy" (Hills 1994, 30).

Though short lived, the *Art Front,* nevertheless provided penetrating perspectives on a range of troubling 1930s political and economic issues that affected artists. When translated into actions, these included organized protests against perceived social wrongs, resistance to restrictive exhibition policies, and the failure to pay living wage commissions. Anger over falling sales was made worse by the lack of open gallery exhibit policies, and the denial of direct museum and state support. The *Art Front* also was a forum for specific dialectical issues, all generally shaped within the confines of evolving Marxist aesthetic critical debate. The periodical, during these dark and gloomy days, provided a key outlet to a highly varied base of artistic activity and leftist opinion. It was, at least initially, an outlet for the *New York Artists' Union* and the *Artists Committee of Action* whose symbols together initially marked the Journal's masthead (Marquart 1997, 235).

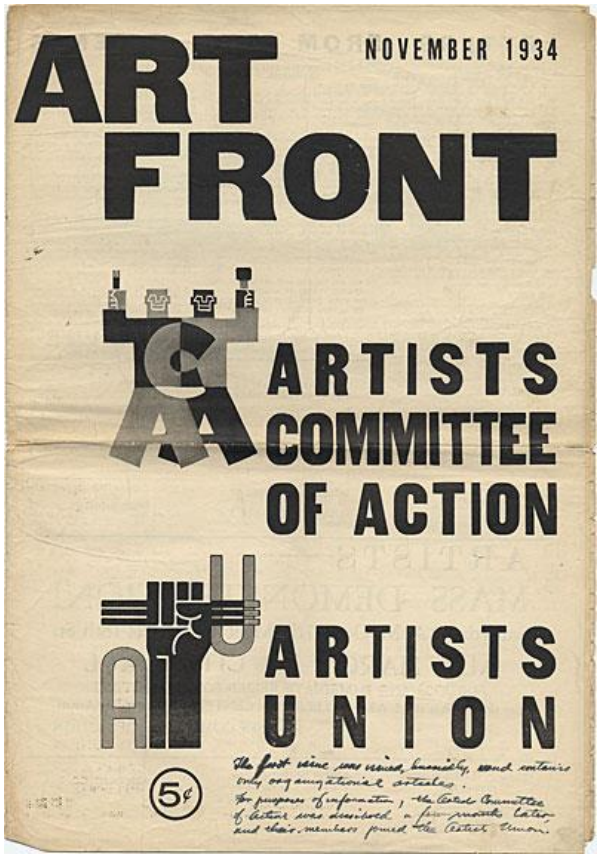

Illustration 1, November 1934 Inaugural issue, *Art Front*, Archives of American Art

The *Art Front's* first managing editor was Herman S. Baron, and he was supported by a large editorial committee led by art activists including Hugo Gellert, Stuart Davis, Abraham Harriton,

Max Spivak, Jacob Kainen, Harold Rosenberg, Joseph Solman, Clarence Weinstock (sometimes known as Charles Humboldt), and Ethel Olenikov. The magazine sold for five cents and was initially planned as a monthly but appeared as only seven issues over its first 13 months covering November 1934, and then January, February, April, May, July and November, 1935.

These issues were of eight pages and displayed in an eleven by sixteen-inch format, giving it poster like dimensions (Monroe 1973, 13). From its inception, the *Art Front* argued that:

> private patronage cannot provide the means to satisfy needs in this period of grave economic crisis. Therefore, it (*Art Front*) demanded that government fulfill its responsibility towards the maintenance and furtherance of the cultural standards of the country by the proper use of artists' talents and to set up the machinery necessary for the widest possible distribution of art to the general public (*Art Front*, vol. 1 1934, 2).

Although true to its editorial purpose which was repeatedly and passionately stated, the irregular publication schedule of 1934 to 1935 indicated future troubles as to the *Art Front's* function and sustainability. There were obvious financial limitations, given practical production and revenue economics, matters made worse by continuous organizational and political bickering among its writers and supporters.

Most significantly, arguments as to editorial direction arose and proved a constant in the journal's relatively short existence. Artist Stuart Davis assumed the role of editor in chief for the second through tenth issue, but over time his devotion, as well as that of other board members, became more geared to their work with the emerging American Artists Congress. The physical format also changed in the December 1935 issue to a smaller and presumably cheaper to produce nine-by-twelve inch format of between 16 and 32 pages. Historian and artist, Gerald Monroe, believed that Joseph Solman's position on the editorial board "was most influential in liberalizing *Art Front's* policy, but it was the activities of (Harold) Rosenberg and (Max) Spivak that proved to be the greater annoyance to the union's leadership" (Monroe 1971).

After December 1936 and reflective of new tensions and demands, the name American Committee of Action disappeared from the masthead. The dual involvement of the Artists' Union and the Artists' Committee of Action, illustrated the emerging Popular Front focus found in radical circles. This emphasis reflected the Soviet Union's ideological move away from denouncing the range of progressive non-communists as social-Fascists, to accepting broader politically cooperative endeavors in opposition to the rising reactionary tide yet on-going frictions existed between these two groups particularly over the Artists' Union's emphasis on more immediate economic and political issues (*Art Front*, vol. 1 1934, 2). These differences of opinion were initially confidently masked in the belief that, "the scope of this magazine will be as wide as art itse1f" (4). In support of this view, the Artists' Union welcomed, "all artists engaged in the practice of graphic and plastic art in their struggle for economic security and to encourage a wider distribution and understanding of art" (2). Although often divided as to how ideals were to be implemented as Virginia Marquardt suggested,

> the *Art Front* became the single most important forum for radical and even non-radical artists to air their views concerning the appropriate social function of art, to review and address new art movements, and to lobby for federal art programs (Marquardt 1997, 235).

In addition, it was said that the

> decision by the editors of *Art Front* to feature contributors outside the Artists Union—particularly men and women of well-known expertise—also conformed to the new Popular Front strategy (Hills 1994, 30).

One aspect of the *Art Front's* significance at this juncture was its attempt to formulate a leftist cultural identity that tied the artistic community to the larger, very changeable, and often ill-defined proletarian struggle. By placing artists in the proletarian fold, as equally affected economic victims, an ideological fit could be made that allowed artists to feel they were doing their part, according to the period's accepted ideology, in bringing about the irreversible decline of capitalism. This made many participants see themselves as members of a vanguard movement that was leading the way to a classless socialist utopia, ultimately offering the promise of an end to all society's ills.

Illustration, 2, 'Man at the Crossroads', Diego Rivera with copy of destroyed mural, Museo Frida Kalho

Historian Andrew Hemingway believed that the *Art Front's* most likely "immediate inspiration may have been the Chicago militant magazine *Left Front* (1933-1934)", an offshoot of

the Communist influenced John Reed Club (Hemingway 2002, 39). This link provided a familiar political focus and ideological backdrop, if not a successful financial formula, for a leftist publication. However, another view of the *Art Front's* actual origins stems from Gerald M. Monroe's notion that the radical artist, Hugo Gellert, was the spearhead behind the journal*'s* creation. Gellert was alarmed over the jackhammered destruction of Diego Rivera's grand mural at Rockefeller Center lobby and, in particular the removal of Rivera's portrait of Lenin which was placed on the right side of the mural, an addition that was not part of Nelson Rockefeller's approved design. Although Rivera was paid in full Gellert believed that the stage had been reached where a specialized artistic journal was needed as a channel for artistic protest against such actions as well as for the promotion of progressive agendas believed pertinent to artists of all strips and styles (Monroe 1973, 13). Through Gellert's considerable efforts many artists came to support the journal idea and the editorial committee reflected similar shared interests.

Illustration 3, Artists' Union Protest, *Art Front* Collection, Archives of American Art

In the face of a seemingly worsening Depression, most artists felt that even more drastic measures were necessary due to current pressing circumstances, and that a more determined political struggle was the only means to achieve some form of remedy. Examples of such an awakened social consciousness had occurred before. Artists from the early 1900s such as John Sloan, William Glackens, George Luks, George Bellows and Everett Shinn, sometimes known as the 'Ash Can' School, were also outspoken as to social conditions and called for progressive political reform (Pohl 2002, 304-315). Frances K. Pohl's examination of the social history of art suggested that "they

captured the changes made by immigration, mass media, shifting gender roles, and the increasing lavish public display of wealth" (304).

However, the depth of the 1930s crisis was such that in more urban and radical quarters an even greater stridency and wider sense of mission emerged inside the artistic community. For many this understanding was best dictated through an acceptance of the aesthetic guidelines of socialist realism. In addition, artists of the 1930s in their search for a mass identity, joined ranks with other cultural forces such as writers, musicians, and actors to become part of an energized leftist response to a nation in the throes of deep crisis. Robert Schulman observed in his *The Power of Political Art* that,

> although conflicts, rivalries, and later in the decade basic political and artistic antagonisms were integral to left discourse, during the thirties young left writers and artists nevertheless had a sense of shared purpose, of working together towards political and artistic goals they were in the process of creating (Schulman 2000, 15).

The *Art Front's* political vision did to a degree differ from the standard left orthodoxy in that it, on occasion, took a broader, less rigid position with an "emphasis less on immediate utility than on pictorial aesthetics. Rather than considering art as a form of propaganda, they argued for its cognitive value in broader and more diffuse terms" (Hemingway 2002, 39). Gerald Monroe, as a keen student of the *Art Front* years, agreed that, "the entire range of art styles existed within the rank and file and the leadership'. Nevertheless, his view was that the political orientation was 'generally committed to the Marxist doctrine of 'art as propaganda'" (Monroe 1973, 13). Nevertheless, the notion of what constituted revolutionary art did broaden, for example, as seen with the growing critical acceptance of Surrealism (Marquardt 1997, 238). As Grace Clements' stated in an *Art Front* article, "'Surrealists' techniques of juxtaposition and associative ideas were based on dialectical materialist methods of using modernist technique and past art to create new content'" (Clements 1936, 8-9 qtd. in Marquardt 1997).[1]

Illustration 4, *Art Front* Collection, Cover, Archives of American Art

As the Depression deepened its hold on the economy, many artists began calling for formal federally subsidized support regardless of artistic styles and techniques. Since 1933, the New York based Artists Group of Emergency Work Bureau produced a stream of demands for public financed art projects and they evolved after 1934, into the more formidable and aforementioned Artists Union, the key force behind the *Art Front.*

Formal federal involvement in the arts is well documented both as administrative histories, and through the extant examples of New Deal art projects

that can still be observed in many public spaces across the USA (O'Connor 1959; O'Connor 1975; McKinzie 1973; McDonald 1969; Hapke 2008). Artists who became involved with the FAP/WPA (Federal Art Project, Works Progress Administration) were paid weekly and had to produce suitable art for potential distribution to specific buildings or other municipal purposes. As has been noted by Francis Pohl, "government sponsorship affected the day-to-day lives of the artists who enrolled in the various federal programs in several ways. Importantly, it provided many with their first experience of independence from the commercial art market" (Pohl 2002, 366).

The *Art Front's* contributory role as a critical voice behind the drive for municipal, state and federal support is less well known. Although the Artists' Union's demands were linked to the larger leftist ideological struggles to replace American capitalism along socialist lines, the PWAP (Public Works of Art Project), WPAP (Works Progress Administration, Arts Project) initiatives were clearly tied to mainstream New Deal systems and objectives. Given the acute financial position of most artists, the Artists' Union believed that increased economic support and recognition was more pressing than ideological consistency. The idea of generously paid Art rentals became one partial solution for generating a steady income, but the more comprehensive idea of a *Federal Arts Bill* provided a guide to gaining a more permanent system of income support. Yet the PWAP, and finally the WPAP, were the only existing options for establishing baseline art incomes.

The Depression era free market simply, with few exceptions, denied any semblance of a steady or predictable income for artists. In addition, artistic survival in hard times was not viewed as particularly a federal responsibility. In reaction to the question of support, the Artists' Union, with its heavy representation of New York artists called for the creation of a New York Municipal Art Gallery to serve local artists' interests through a fair exhibition policy. They believed that to achieve real change, such a gallery should be managed by artists and not by private or city administrators who might dictate policy and direction.

In face of these economic demands, and perhaps to circumvent the threat of radical Artists' control, Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia designed his Committee of 100 to oversee the direction of the Municipal Gallery. The reaction of the Artists' Union was predictably antagonistic as seen when they declared, "The Municipal Art Center was being made the excuse for all this genteel back-scratching by the Mayor and his hand-picked committee of New York's most splendid citizens" (*Art Front*, vol 1 1934, 4).

Furthermore,

> Thousands of these artists are now struggling with no means of subsistence other than inadequate work relief or horn relief, without even the promise of any effective art program which will give them regular employment and enable them to continue as contributors to, and builders of culture (*Art Front*, vol 1 1935, 4).

The controversy over the Mayor's Committee provided an obvious opportunity for caricature. Ben Shahn's illustration 'Committee of 100' disparaged the whole notion of such a

committee guiding the artistic process. The *Art Front* frequently relied on satire as the best tool in their political belt. To combat what was deemed politically reactionary, the visual could carry maximum propaganda impact. In the February 1935 issue, contributor Elliot Paul caught the moment when he wrote,

Today in Germany and Italy it is forbidden under penalty of castor oil, infested prisons, forced military drill and firing squads to make fun of those superbly comical figures, Hitler and Mussolini. The suffering these clowns are causing, the rank injustices, and the contemptible frauds, the drain upon self respect...will surely pass into oblivion before their clownishness is forgotten. In fact, the hero of the middle classes is pathetically ridiculous and is more afraid of being caricatured than of being assassinated (*Art Front*, vol 1 1935, 5).

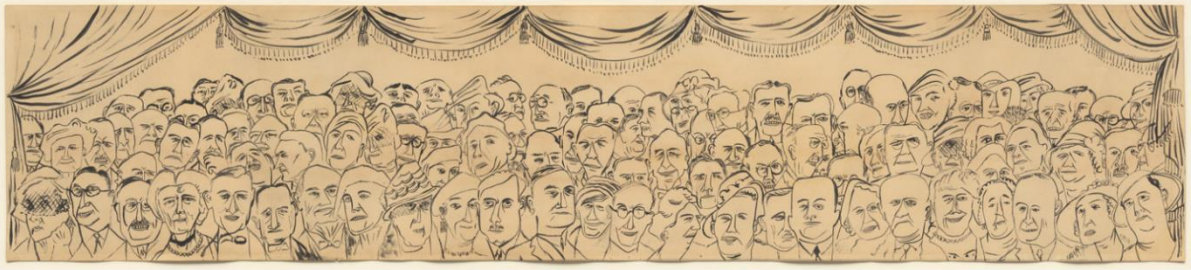

Illustration 5, Ben Shahn's Committee of 100, *Art Front*, Archives of American Art

In the course of its history, the *Art Front*'s editorial policy was often conflicted. This was the result of several factors: CP political interference and orthodoxy, the various challenging viewpoints of powerful personalities, and the nature of how art criticism should be shaped when applying the Popular Front strategy. What, after all, was the practical meaning of Marxist aesthetics? This was particularly seen in the rising divide caused by Trotskyist and other more radical challenges to Stalinist dominance of Communist artistic sensibilities. There was a feeling among some important voices that 'proletarian' art might legitimately reflect any number of representational outcomes. However, this notion of what was socialist acceptability did face recurring and heated debates throughout the journal's existence (Monroe 1973, 17).

Reflecting this atmosphere attempts were made after 1936, as popular front awareness grew, to acknowledge that the social basis of art could take several forms other than strict realism (Benton 1935, 4, 8; Schapiro 1936, 10-12; Weber 1936, 8-9; Lozowick 1936, 12-14; Putnam 1937, 10-12; Klingender 1937, 17-20; Lloyd 1937, 12-19). The contributions of art historian, Meyer Schapiro, to both the *Art Front* and the American Artists' Congress revealed that all art could be placed in a more revolutionary context with clear internationalist overtures. His writing furthered the debate as to how far prescriptive art criticism could go. Schapiro encouraged current artists to action based on class interests and not nationalist concerns (Hills 1994, 30). As Virginia Marquardt noted,

> a comparison of the assessments of surrealism appearing in the *Art Front* in 1935 and 1936 reveals a striking shift from criticism to acceptance, a change that may be attributed to the less sectarian restrictions on art qualified as revolutionary (Marquardt 1997, 238-239).

Artistic form it seems could now legitimately reflect modernist stylistic imagery and confirmed that revolutionary politics, including surrealism and abstraction, were not mutually exclusive or deserving of automatic denunciation as bourgeois.

Although the *Art Front* hosted a range of artistic concerns and assumptions in regard to the overall notion of revolutionary art and artists, what remained the most consistent issue was the plight of the individual artist in the face of current reality, and that ultimately formed the unifying social function in the *Art Front's* existence. Under the existing system of private sales, controlled by the dictates of fashion and gallery exposure, artists outside the latest vogue had restricted sources of income and virtually no security. This fact was as true for abstract painters as for realists. George Grosz's *Art Front* illustration 'Just for the Dining Room' confronted this commercial reality and poked fun at artists serving as decorators for the rich. Philip Bard's illustration 'Hunger' emphasized the destitution, resulting from the absence of commercial sales outlets which was as true for abstract painters as for realists.

Illustration 6, Grosz, 'Just for the Dining Room', *Art Front*, Archives of American Art

Illustration 7, Bard, 'Hunger', *Art Front*

The *Art Front* consistently placed blame on the capitalist marketplace as the source behind all social suffering. Adolph Dehn's cover design for the July 1935 issue reflected this overall sense of total artistic social dependency upon outside appointed committees such as the Arts Commission.

The *Art Front's'* politics also examined the larger world outside New York as it faced the full range of 1930s crises that impacted culture nationally and internationally. The rise of European fascism was such a political foe to free expression that the *Art Front* addressed. World circumstances in the 1930s saw fascism as a constraining force for artistic as well as individual freedoms and its impact threatened lives just as did the Depression.

Again the Artists' Congress saw its mission as a channel for resistance to the fascist threat, and Artists' Union members, and thus the *Art Front* needed to be part of this general effort. The November 1935 editorial declared, "Artists like all other people whom the pressure of recent events has made politically literate recognize fascism and war as the two greatest enemies of culture" (*Art Front*, vol. 1 1935, 3). This editorial went on to place the Artists' Unions in the broadest resistance context,

> The Artists' Union is primarily an organization for economic aims. We are interested in bettering the living standards of our artists. Nevertheless, we recognize that economic action is only one phase of the battle today. The prospect of a barbarous fascism necessitates a firm stand of all progressive elements against this political throwback to the Dark Ages. The Artists' Union unreservedly supports this call for an Artists' Congress and hopes that it will mobilize the best and most intelligent artists in the country behind its program. (*Art Front*, vol. 1 1935, 3).

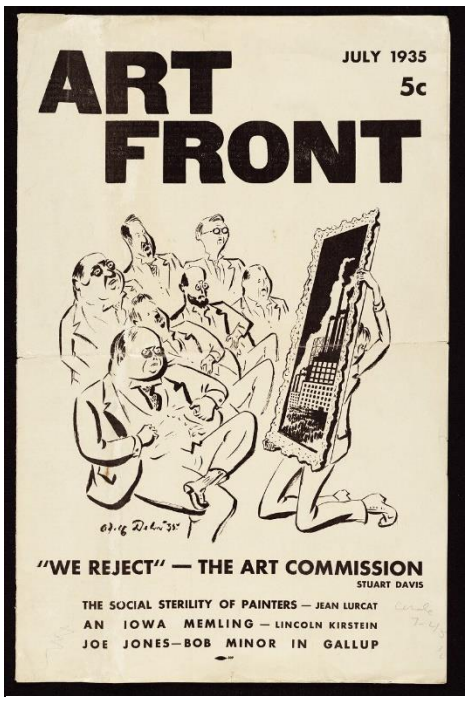

Illustration 8, *Art Front*, Archives of American Art

The symbolic 'call' for an American Artists' Congress, signed by over 400 artists, dramatically underscored the increasing need for concrete action in the face of dangerous world affairs. The Congress, held in mid-February 1936, overlapped in energy and belief with the *Art Front* and Artists' Union's direction and membership. In addition, the AAC tied its Popular Front philosophy to other groups such as the Artists International Association, founded in London in 1933, which were concerned with similar issues and, in particular, with the emerging anti-Fascist struggle in Spain. It was, according to historian Susan Platt, "one manifestation of the international Popular Front against fascism organized by Stalin to counter Hitler's increasing power (and) was a high point of activism for American artists" (*Art Front*, vol. 1 1935, 3).

As Patricia Hills also confirmed, "The AAC, like the American Writers' Congress, was initiated by party members in the summer of 1935 to replace the more sectarian John Reed Clubs, in order to achieve a broad appeal among nationally known and influential artists and writers" (Platt 1999, 72).

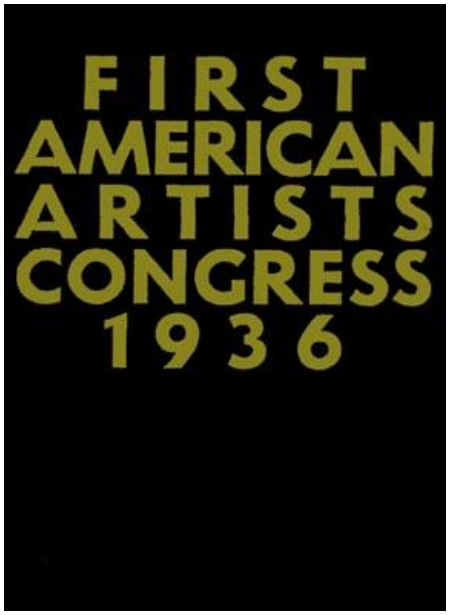

Illustration 9 and 10, Stuart Davis Papers, Archives of American Art

Anton Refregier's 'Clinched Fist' in the May 1936 *Art Front* issue emphasized this spirit of international Communist resistance to German and Italian authoritarianism suppression. The ultimate goal was a multi-front struggle against fascism in all its shapes and sizes. The coming of the Spanish Civil War provided a specific opportunity for the Artists' Union and the Artists' Congress to translate their 'premature anti-fascism' into more concrete actions.

ART FRONT

MAY 1936

THINKING IT OVER

IN the hurry of g[illegible] to press last month, we noted that [illegible] members of the American Society of [illegible], Sculptors and Gravers had re[illegible] to send their paintings to the com[illegible] Carnegie show. The issue is that the [illegible] outfit can't see paying the [illegible] fee. The facts are that from 23 to 26 [illegible] of the Society have refused the invitations, and that no member of the S[illegible]ciety has accepted to show. These refusals represent one-third of the total number of artists invited to the American Sect[illegible] of the exhibition. Those who have f[illegible]lowed the rental policy fight will reca[illegible] that the organization [illegible] museum directors ridiculed the idea from the start and wouldn't negotiate. Now comes a proposal from the Association of Museum Directors that the Society get together with them in conference over the matter. It would be quite a dent in the Carnegie show at that. Between now and the opening a majority of the big shots may sober up.

A GROWING FORCE

IN the short space of time that the Commercial Artists Section has been in existence, it has made definite advances, in spite of limited funds, man power, and experience. A large part of the errors made was largely due to lack of a trained organizer, but we are taking steps to remedy this immediately.

Because of lack of trained leadership, we have been sidetracked on many occasions from our program of organization We have over-stressed at times the cul tural side of our work, at the expense [illegible] definite union activity.

The reason for this is that we [illegible] been outstandingly successful in the symposiums we have sponsored, featuri[illegible] the leading figures in our field wh[illegible] have voiced from our platform their [illegible] approval of our aims, and their [illegible] to support us to every extent. Nationally famous artists, like Steichen; Bernhard; Sinel; Grasstrom, the famous illustrator; Gordon Aymar, noted art director, and Russell Patterson, the well known humorist artist—all have lent their services to the Union on numerous occasions.

These forums have brought together many hundreds of artists in discussion of [illegible] vital economic and cultural problems [illegible] which affect their lives. For many of [illegible], this has been the first time they [illegible] joined with their fellow artists on any issue whatsoever. Naturally, these forums have added much to the prestige of the Union. But because we did not organize ourselves sufficiently to handle the great crowds that turned out, we gained very little in increased membership from these efforts.

Our cultural programs, as we are planning them now, will be more consciously an instrument for the building of the Union. The first symposium under this new plan took place on Monday, March 16th, at the Hotel Delano. The subject, "Speculation and the Free-Lance Artist," was of utmost interest to all commercial artists.

But what made this discussion a momentous step in our history is the fact that we succeeded in drawing into it delegates and speakers from the foremost artists' organizations in the city: The Artists Guild, The Society of Illustrators, The Art Directors Club, The Photo Illustrators Club, and the Photographers Union. As a result of this meeting, unified resolutions against speculation have been formulated and put into action.

The help of the Photographers Union, of the American Federation of Labor, in our work has been an important step towards the building of a powerful Graphic Arts Council, one of the primary aims of our section. Such a council would eventually include engravers, printers, photographers, typographers—all those engaged in the creation and reproduction of commercial art. When finally developed, this council should prove to be a most effective force in maintaining the living and working standards of all these allied crafts. Our "united front" symposium on Speculation, described above, is another step towards such an organization.

On April 4th, we staged the first great costume ball ever held exclusively for commercial artists. Nationally known figures, such as Russell Patterson, Tony Sarg, Grafstrom, Hoff, Mellisse, Corcos, and Adward A. Wilson acted as judges and sponsors of this affair, whose theme was "Kidding the Ads." As a result of the ball, we hope to have in our hands sufficient funds to employ the trained organizer we need so badly.

This in brief is a record of our first year's work. In the coming year, we hope to see much more tangible results. We urge all New York's commercial artists to join our section and help in building a powerful trade union.

If out of town commercial artists have any inquiries, they may address them to Ben Lassen, at the Artists Union, 430 Sixth Avenue, New York City.

Anton Refregier

ART FRONT, Official Organ of the Artists' Union, 430 Sixth Avenue, New York City. Vol. 2, No. 6. Editorial Board: Joe Solman, Editor-in-chief; Joseph Gower, Murray Hantman, Jacob Kainen, [illegible] Rosenberg, Balcomb Greene, J. Yeargens, Clarence Weinstock, Steve Mazie. Business Manager, John Opper. 10c a copy. Subscription $1.00 a year.

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Illustration 11, 'Fist', *Art Front*, Archives of American Art

Propaganda became a first weapon in the defense of Spain and articles like Ben Ossa's 'Artists in Arms' published in the November 1936 issue served this need. Funds were raised to supply ambulances and medical help to aid the Republican side, and Combat volunteers were soon turning support into more consequential action (Hills qtd. in Anreus et al. 2006, 183).

The death of sculptor, Paul Block, an American Artists' Union activist, and one of at least 35 Artists' Union members that joined the International Brigade volunteer force, provided a clear example of the ultimate sacrifice found in committed struggle.

reaction is to attack minority groups within a country one by one. From exclusion of aliens on W.P.A. it becomes easier to exclude non-Aryans, Jews, Negroes or what have you. The method of reaction is to create a precedent and then to quote it.

Strangely, the officials of the art projects do not see in such legislative manoeuvers a serious threat to art. Instead, we find them anxiously examining this piece of legislation with myopic eyes, fearful that they may have to take a progressive stand. There is nothing anywhere in the law concerning those who have applied for citizenship, which makes it mandatory for the administration to fire a single person. Yet under the pretext of abiding by this clause, they have rushed eagerly at the opportunity to dismiss in wholesale fashion!

Time upon time the Union attempted to prove that many of these foreign-born artists were indispensable to the project as they were men of high merit and possessed international reputations. It is a fact that they have given years of their lives in furthering American art and their loss is a distinct loss to the project. Yet the business office of the project has ruled that merit cannot be a consideration in the matter of indispensability to the project. Moreover, they ruled that if any section of the project were to be so severely crippled by the loss of the foreign-born artists, they would even liquidate that section of the project. In other words, if too many mural artists were fired to keep the mural division working effectively, rather than retain these artists they would liquidate the mural division!

Such a callous attitude toward the quality of the projects is sometimes called by an ugly word. Let us make it clear this time—we expect a business administration of the arts project to have a more constructive, progressive point of view.

We will not let the matter rest here. We have arranged for a conference with our Washington officials in order to obtain a more liberal ruling on the problem of the foreign-born artists. A broad conference of trade unions has been held in order to introduce a case in the Federal Courts to interpret the law. Nor will we be content until the problem is finally solved in the next session of Congress by legislation which will wipe out the unwelcome clause in the present Appropriations Bill.

PAUL BLOCK

In the town of Azaila, near Belchite in the Spanish province of Aragon, a mound of fresh-turned earth covers the body of Paul Block, sculptor and American soldier of the International Brigade. On September 4th, in the crucial and victorious Republican drive upon Belchite, fascist machine-gun bullets struck Paul as he led his men into the fight. He died two days later, not yet twenty-eight years of age.

Paul Block was one of the ablest leaders of the New York Artists Union. With quiet sureness he guided the Union through its most trying period: he was the main spirit behind organizational adjustments that gave new life to union

on the Project which forces them to do creative work under the most difficult circumstances.

Despite these organic defects the Federal Art Project has long since demonstrated its value to the people of America. This project, originally intended for the relatively limited purpose of relieving economic distress among the artists, has become the basis for the complete development and maturation of art in this country. Under government sponsorship through the W.P.A. we have seen for the first time in our country the growth and stimulation of a broad and progressive movement in art in *all sections of the nation*. The important consideration is that this art movement has not functioned in isolation within a few metropolitan centers but has expanded and grown in conjunction with an audience of millions. The constant contact and interaction between the artists and the general public, which had been provided by the Federal Art Project, is the only basis and guarantee for a more democratic growth and distribution for art in America. Such a program cannot any longer survive and expand under the limitations and constant shocks prescribed by the Federal Work Relief Program. This program must be given a reasonable tenure of life sufficient to allow the operation of a long range plan. To accomplish this the program must have a stable employment policy which will leave both the administration and the artists free to concentrate upon the building of a public art for America which should function on the basis of a cultural service in each community. A limited program confining itself only to the decoration of the walls of public buildings can never meet the public's art needs and their demands. It could never meet the educational requirements particularly necessary in this field of American life.

We have previously brought to the attention of our readers draft legislation providing for the permanency of government sponsorship of the arts. We can now

PAUL BLOCK

Drawing by
C. YAMASAKI

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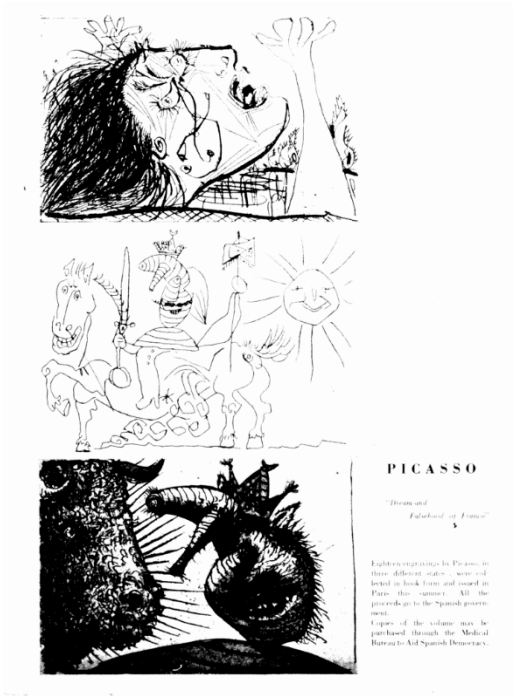
Illustration 12, Paul Block, *Art Front*, Archives of American Art

The conflict was further highlighted by works such as Picasso's 'Dream and Falsehood of Franco' published in the October 1937 issue. The *Art Front* was tied firmly to the Spanish Republican cause. Spain symbolized the initial battleground against the spread of Franco's and by extension, Germany and Italy's Fascist brutality. The *Art Front,* along with other leftist Popular Front magazines, saw Spain's struggle as central to their political internationalism, and as such, there was great sympathy and anger felt within the American artistic world at Republican losses.

The *Art Front* was a frontline witness to these harsh realities, and clearly reflected the artistic spirit of the times then so challenged by economic and social issues. Like so many small radical magazines, the *Art Front* lasted but a few years, and ended without fanfare or expectation. As Gerald Monroe made clear, "the *Art Front* went out of existence without warning; the last issue was still soliciting subscriptions" (Monroe 1973, 19). The *Art Front's* short publication life did not prevent it from being a key reflection on era events, and from being an insightful force in the period's artistic evolution. It also provided a critical outlet for many American artists absorbed in their own personal awakenings to the face of crisis. In addition, the Artists' Union, as the publication's leading sponsor, looked for a place for the artistic community within the nation's broader labor movement. This included, eventual merger as an associated union inside the Congress of Industrial Organizations. It was believed that this identity could best be realized through solid socialist political commitment, and by focused debate on the important economic/social issues of the day. To further their artistic outreach, many of the key *Art Front* participants such as Herman Baron, Adolf Dehn, and Stuart Davis were also active in the creation, in 1932, of the ACA Gallery (American Contemporary Art) which eventually moved to 52 West Eight Street in Greenwich Village. Here, a more progressive artistic gallery atmosphere existed with an exhibits' policy that opened commercial doors and provided additional public exposure for a variety of art styles and artists.



llustration 13, 'Dream and Falsehood of Franco', *Art Front*, Archives of American Art

Editorial boards changed frequently during the *Art Front's* short existence. Such transitions also influenced the journal's philosophical direction and clearly reflected the period's frequently shifting aesthetic and political orientation as well as the powerful personalities of its many constituents. However, its commitment to promoting the welfare, worth and varied aspirations of the American artist did not waver. Although mainly reflective of the New York Art scene, the journal also gradually broadened its base to represent a more national artistic following.

Although Artists' Union members accepted federal checks and commissions, the *Art Front* stood outside the established New Deal WPA structures and policies. Members consistently argued for an alternative path towards a more permanent approach to government art support (Monroe 1978, 20). The journal used its editorials to challenge the policy decisions of the Federal Art administrators and warred constantly against congressional cut-backs, be they economically or politically inspired.

In addition, the *Art Front* maintained its strident voice and radical viewpoints as it critiqued

capitalist culture's role and influence upon 1930s art. In order to realize a broader appeal, the *Art Front*, ultimately embraced standard Popular Front politics. Many activists believed that the latest Comintern guidance was the best ideological format for bringing the type of unity needed to meet rising Fascist threats. Although editorially often openly divided as to the correct publishing emphasis and thrust, a variety of artistic deviations in the area of stylistic expression did emerge and went beyond strict socialist realist propaganda. In Donald D. Egbert's classic *Social Radicalism and the Arts,* he captured the dominance of the particular era in shaping artistic expression when he stated, "most great painters or sculptors even in modern times when left to themselves have been essentially apolitical in their art and lives except at occasional times of great political and social crisis" (Egbert 1970, 736). This in essence defined the *Art Front.*

Much like the WPA itself, the *Art Front* didn't survive the crisis of the 1930s. This was made worse by the Stalinist purges that ordered the deaths of leading Communists, and the USSR's rising aggression against their immediate neighbors. The 1939 Soviet-Nazi Pact finalized the steady disillusionment felt in left wing circles that occurred between 1937 and 1939. With the coming of World War and full employment, the exigencies of the 1930s became part of the past. More specifically, the Artists' Union, and the *Art Front*'s proselytizing also failed to produce the implementation of a permanent Federal Arts Bill that guaranteed the security of the artist in American society.

The *Art Front* nevertheless symbolized critical debates, and revealed the cultural climate that defined the strenuous decade. In this way, the *Art Front* joined with other American little magazines, short lived though they were, such as the *Masses,* the *Liberator*, and the *New Masses*, to have an impact upon the intellectual history of an era. However, though *Art Front* sympathies were indeed loudly expressed, they were often only heard by the same ideological audience and, as such, became a distraction for the already committed. Wartime and the return to economic prosperity completed the breakup of the *Art Front* organization. In the end, not union, or community, but the transitory market relationships which initially keyed the protest of the Artists' Union, as artists faced the Depression, remained the only consistently available outlet for artistic creation and artistic survival in America. Just as historian Neil Harris observed in his study of American artists before the Civil War, "the American artist would be left with the conviction of things undone and goals unrealized" (Harris 1966, 316).

Endnotes:

1. There were, on occasion, even opportunities for American regionalists such as Thomas Hart Benton and John Steuart Curry to address criticism. See Hemingway, *Artists on the Left*, p. 42.

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Sacred Water and Cultures of Worship: Some Observations on the River in India

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Abstract:

The belief that the divine is embedded in nature is part of the spiritual discourse of the religions of antiquity. Nature has been worshipped in one form or the other in different cultures of the world. In India, rivers are considered sacred, purifying, life-giving, and redeeming. The corporeality of the rivers is subsumed and often modified by its metaphorical, mystical, and transcendental associations. The Ganga (Ganges), the Yamuna, the Sarasvatī, the Narmada, and other major and minor rivers of India are narrativized within a sacred discourse. The myths, rituals, and belief systems surrounding river worship in India are woven into the syncretic and composite cultural mosaic. However, the contemporary realities of globalization and environmental crises raise quite a few questions regarding the paradoxical nature of this sacred discourse. This essay explores the cultures of river worship in India in its scriptural as well as quotidian forms and attempts to understand the tangible and intangible issues contributing to its continuance and to locate the interface between religious discourse and environmental ethics.

Keywords: Religious ecology, Sacred geography, River worship, Environmental ethics, Ecological prudence

Introduction

Religious ecology is predicated upon the founding principle that the natural world is part of the divine. The belief that gods dwell in nature can be traced back to the beginnings of any civilization. The mysterious, unknown, and often unknowable phenomenal world, held with awe, reverence, and gratitude led to the early deification of the natural elements. Nature has been worshipped in one form or the other, especially by the religions of antiquity. Veneration of nature and natural objects, assigning divinity to them, might have emerged from the belief that god and nature are indivisible; the belief in the sacrality of nature stems from the conviction that nature is the dwelling place of the divine, while in some belief structures nature is perceived as the embodiment of the divine. This interchangeability, according to religious iconography, makes it possible for the human to be aware of the omnipresence of the divine and be in intimate contact with it. Chris C. Park (1994) refers to

the idea of 'conceptual relevance' in underpinning the uniqueness of sacred spaces. He suggests that through sacred spaces human beings try to inscribe the unknown world into the known world; sacred space symbolizes and sometimes embodies the "gateway to the unknown" (246). In many cultures, different aspects of the natural world – mountains, lakes, springs, and rivers – are venerated as sacred spaces, providing tangible expressions of religious ecology. The distinction of the 'sacred' from the 'profane' is also inevitably central to any kind of religious geography. Richard H. Jackson and Roger Henrie (1983) underscore this dualism by distinguishing the sacred space as "that portion of the earth's surface which is recognised by individuals or groups as worthy of devotion, loyalty or esteem. Space is sharply discriminated from the non-sacred or profane world around it. Sacred space does not exist naturally, but is assigned sanctity as man defines, limits and characterises it through his culture, experience and goals" (94). The sacred space is animated with a separateness and otherworldliness distinct from the trite and quotidian, standing apart from the commonplace, otherworldly, apart yet wholesome. The spiritual epistemology of some religions, especially religions of antiquity, emerges from the engagement of human beings with the earth's living systems. The 'premodern' religious structures provide an organic or holistic world view that asserts an interconnectedness and integration of the human agency with nature and its elements; they are not outside nature, but inscribed within it. What is interesting, however, is the resilience and persistence with which these belief systems survive and are in practice in different parts of the world. The scepticism and anxiety that the 'project of modernity' ushered in with its emphasis on the principles of rationality might have countermanded unquestioning belief in the mysterious and the transcendental, but the continuation of rituals and practices as part of popular religion indicates a plurality of discourses.

Throughout human history, rivers have nurtured civilizations and have also caused death and devastation. This dual aspect of the river, as the destroyer and the preserver, is represented in myths, rituals, and religious practices in different cultures. The fact that rivers flow or it is what may be perceived as 'live water,' as opposed to static water, makes it suitable for purification purposes or for rituals of cleansing (Dowden 2002, 7). Rivers feature prominently in accounts of Paradise in Hebrew, Christian, and Islamic traditions. According to the story of Genesis, a single unnamed river flows out of Eden to water the garden, from where it emerges to feed four rivers. These four rivers were Tigris, Euphrates, Gihon, and Pison. While the Tigris and the Euphrates were known rivers, there were several conjectures regarding the identity of the latter two. Pison was identified as the Ganga, the Indus, and the Danube while the Gihon was considered to be the Nile. The sacred geography of the rivers thus spanned the earth. In the Islamic description of Paradise, rivers too play a significant role. The iterability of the stories of flood in the creation myths of different cultures underscores the centrality of rivers as embedded codes. Nick Middleton, in *Rivers: A Very Short Introduction*, suggests: "The great flood has considerable symbolic significance, involving an obvious cleansing element as well as being a vehicle for rebirth, marking a clean break between the antediluvial and postdiluvial worlds" (Middleton 2012, 34).

Anthropomorphizing the river in the form of a goddess is common to many cultures. Rivers Shannon and Boyne (Ireland), Nile (Egypt), and Biren (Ghana) have iconic manifestations as river deities. In Hinduism, rivers Ganga (Ganges), Sarasvatī, Godavari, Narmada, and Kaveri (Cauvery) have symbolic values; not just the rivers themselves, but many places along their courses are marked as sacred. The source, mouth, and confluences of these rivers embody divine principles. There are several river creatures that are venerated in association with the rivers – the South Asian river dolphin, often likened to Ganga's vehicle or *vahana*, 'makara,'[1] is a notable instance. Rivers as sacred spaces form part of religious mythology as well as everyday existence.

Water is perhaps the most sacred symbol of spirituality in India, at once the purifier and the miracle of life. It is the source of mystery and embodiment of the generative principle of life. The sanctity that is assigned to water in Indian ethos and spiritual traditions can be traced back to the Indus valley civilization, whose influence remains unabated even in the present times. In *Kaṭhopaniṣad,* water symbolizes the *mūla-prakṛti*, "the aspect of supreme being that remains even after the universe is dissolved into the source. In iconography it is represented by the milk-ocean upon which Lord Viṣṇu floats reclining upon the serpent named the remnant of infinity – Anant Sesa" (45).[2] In the Indian tradition water is perceived as a substance without a shape, a reminder of the *pralaya*,[4] the potential that all things possess before they assume a shape and form that is unalterable. Water bodies, the rivers, in particular, are regarded as the source of life in tangible and mythical senses. The *Nadi-stuti Sūkta*[3] (praise of rivers) of the Ṛg Veda eulogises the rivers Sindhu, Satudru, Ganga, Yamuna, and Sarasvatī, among other rivers. The names of the rivers might have changed, but the divinity invested in them persists. Rivers provide a valence for the embodied forces of purification and regeneration as they have obvious associations with nourishment and vegetation.

This essay intends to explore the cultures of worshipping the river in the Indian context, tracing the trajectory from the ancient belief systems to their present manifestations. The attempt is to locate and understand the patterns of continuity, forms of disruption, paradoxes, exigencies, and essentialisms, as well as the variegated possibilities embedded in these practices. The scope of the study has been limited to the major rivers of the land, but it also looks at the less-known practices and narratives which bring the negotiations, debates, and tensions between sacred geography, environmental ethics, crises of modernity, and religious ecology to the centre of discussion.

Ganges: The Redeemer

River Ganga is an eternal presence in the collective consciousness of the Indian subcontinent in the form of myths, legends, and fables. It is the holiest of the holy rivers and is believed to possess purificatory qualities. Ganga water is held sacred; a dip anywhere in the river cleanses one of all sins and assures *mokṣa* (salvation) from the karmic cycle of life. The ritual purity of the river is manifest in its uses in almost every aspect of Hindu life. Commenting on the significance of the Ganga in the religious consciousness of India, Diana L. Eck (2015) states:

> The Ganga as goddess is more than a single river. She functions in India as the archetype of sacred waters. Other rivers are said to be like the Ganga, other rivers are said even to be the Ganga [such as the River Kaveri, the 'Ganga' of South India]. But the Ganga remains the paradigmatic sacred river to which they are likened. The River Ganga is not confined to the course she takes across the plains of North India but participates in that spatial transposition that is so typical of Hindu sacred topography, pervading the sacred waters of all India's great rivers. (234)

In Hindu mythology, River Ganga is the purest form of Lord Viṣṇu; she is also the consort of Lord Śiva. It is the river incarnate, occupying the central place in the culture and civilization of the Indian subcontinent. The entire length of the river is marked by sites of pilgrimage or *tirtha* manifesting the quintessence of the sacred. The beliefs associated with the river are given shape through practices/rituals reinforcing the 'performance' or embodiment of a 'lived religion.' Sudipta Sen (2019) makes an interesting observation regarding the intersection of the mortal and the divine in the deification of rivers with particular reference to the Ganga: "The relationship between anthropomorphic and naturalistic conception of the Ganga ... has deep roots in Indian culture" (6). In the Hindu Tantric tradition, this anthropomorphising of the river is seen in various rituals and bodily practices. In the Yogic conception of the human body the three channels (*Nāḍī* s) of life force correspond to the three rivers, Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati – the solar *piṅgala* is Yamuna, the lunar iḍā is Ganga and the fiery suṣumṇā is Saraswati. (7)

In India, rivers are predominantly worshipped as maternal presences and as female deities. The philosophical rubric of renewal and rebirth organic to the Hindu way of living is seen to be ritualistically 'performed' in/by rivers. Ablution in the sacred water of river Ganga, *pitr tarpaṇa*,[4] the invocation of River Ganga in the rituals related to *upanayana*,[5] and *śrāddha*[6] reflect man's attempts to grasp the intangible through a tangible object – in the case of the Ganga, a river which has been embedded in the psyche of the civilization that grew around it, to be the ever-flowing nurturer and redeemer. Ādi Śaṅkarācārya prays in *Ganga Stotram* [Praise of Ganga]:

> *rogaṁ śokaṁ tāpaṁ pāpaṁ hara me bhagavati kumati-kalāpam*
> *tribhuvana-sāre vasudhāhāre tvam asi gatirmama khalu saṁsāre*
>
> O Bhagavati! Purge me of diseases, sorrows, impediments, sins and ill-intentions.
> You pervade all the three worlds, you adorn the earth like a necklace. In your flow I find solace and comfort![7]

Etymologically, the word *Ganga* is derived from *gam*, which means 'to go' – in this sense, the river represents the flux and fluidity of human life. There are several myths tracing the descent or *avataraṇa* of Ganga. According to the Vaishnava version, Ganga is called *Vishnupādi* or one who emanates from the foot of Vishnu (also spelt as Viṣṇu). In another version of the myth, Ganga agrees to descend on earth to revive the sixty thousand sons of King Sagara, who were

turned to ash by the ire of the Sage Kapila when they disrupted his meditation. Bhagīratha, the descendent of King Sagara pleased the gods by his dedicated and rigorous asceticism, and as a reward Ganga agreed to follow him to earth. But the descent of Ganga on earth unchecked would have caused a deluge, which was avoided when Lord Śiva permitted her to descend on his head. Ganga lost her way in the entangled locks of Śiva until she finally made her way to the plains of Northern India. Bhagīratha guided her to the sea in the Sagara island of West Bengal; there she flowed into the underworld to redeem Bhagīratha's ancestors and eventually joined the ocean. Ganga confers benediction, even in the underworld; the river had pointed the way to paradise. This juxtaposition of a religious-mythical vision and the cartography of the river from its source in the Himalayas to its flowing into the Bay of Bengal underscores the relationship between human beings, their religious practices, and the earth's living system. This brings us to Mircea Eliade's distinction between the sacred and the profane. Eliade insists that some ordinary spaces could be assigned sacrality by virtue of the spiritual characteristics associated with both the physical features as well as the sublime implications that demarcate a particular space as symbolic (1959, 20-24).[8]

The *Gaṅgāvataraṇa* is celebrated as *Ganga Dussehra* on the *daśami* (the tenth day) of *śukla pakṣa* (the waxing moon cycle) in the month of *Jyestho* (summer month) in the Hindu calendar in the states through which the river flows. Bathing in the river on this auspicious day is believed to cleanse the sins of ten lifetimes. The onset of the monsoon is celebrated as *Ganga Dussehra*, marking a time for cleansing one's sins and heralding new beginnings. While the monsoon provides the occasion, the festival celebrates the descent of Ganga from the heaven. In *The Ganges in Myth and History*, Steven G. Darian (1978) observes: "The correspondence at once reveals the primal role of Ganga as both source and symbol of plenitude. Since Vedic times, from 1000 BC, Indian thought has provided the elements with a human counterpart. This personification, in the form of myth, allows humans some recourse from the otherwise malevolent forces of nature. People pray not to water but to the life within the water" (17).

The *Gaṅgāvataraṇa* myth celebrates the journey of the celestial river tumbling from heaven to nourish humanity and connects the river with the great gods of the Hindu Trinity. The primordial relationship that the river shares with Brahma, Viṣṇu, and Śiva manifests the interlocking aspects of the sacred embedded in the Hindu belief system: "... he (Śiva)as lord, she as mother and child of the mountain; he as the organ of generation (lingam), she as the liquid essence of life; he as the mystery, she as the door to the mystery; he as the tomb, she as the waters of life" (Darian 1978, 30–31). The image of *Ganga Māta*, 'Mother Ganga,' bringing life in the form of water, resonates through history. Several tales are spawned which emphasize her generative powers – she gives birth, restores life, and confers immortality. The sacred associations of the river are not restricted to the Hindu world view alone. Abul Fazl, in *Aini-Akbari*, records the habits of the Mughal Emperor Akbar: "His majesty calls this source of life the water of immortality. ... Both at home and on his travels he drinks Ganges water"

(qtd. in Darian 1978, 11). Another interesting instance of syncretism is Zafar Khan Gazi, also known as Darap Khan Gazi, a self-proclaimed warrior of Islam, who conquered and plundered the upper deltaic regions of Bengal during the first major Islamic expansion in Bengal in the thirteenth century. He is credited with a *Ganga Stotra* composed in Sanskrit, which has remained an integral part of the oral tradition in Bengal, eulogising the river with a remarkable poignancy:

> O River, daughter of Sage Janhu, you redeem the virtuous
> But they are redeemed by their own good deeds –
> Where's your marvel there?
> If you can give salvation – I, a hopeless sinner – then would say
> That is your greatness, your true greatness
> Those who have been abandoned by their own mothers,
> Those that friends and relatives will not even touch
> Those whose very sight makes a passerby gasp and take the name of the Lord
> You take such living dead in your own arm
> O Bhagirathi, you are the most compassionate mother of all. (qtd. in Sen 2019, 19)

Zafar Khan's tomb, part of the mosque built by him over the ruins of Hindu, Jain, and Buddhist monuments, still stands overlooking the Hindu pilgrimage site on Tribeni, a small town in Hugli in West Bengal on the bank of River Bhāgīrathī, as Ganga is known here. It is a sacred place, according to the myths of antiquity, where Ganga branched off into three streams: the Sarasvatī river, which flowed south west; the Jamuna river, which flowed south east; and Bhāgīrathī, which flowed towards Kolkata (Calcutta). It must be kept in mind that both Sarasvatī and Jamuna, in this context, are distinct from the rivers with the same name in Northern India and East Bengal. In popular imagination, this branching off is conceived as unbraiding the knot, *muktabeni* (*beni* being a vernacular term for a braid), whereas *juktobeni* would imply braiding of the rivers, as seen at Prayag in Uttar Pradesh at the confluence of the rivers Ganga, Yamuna, and Sarasvatī.

The Kumbh Melas, held in a cycle of twelve years, is hailed as the largest pilgrimage in the world and mentioned in the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. The Kumbh Melas take place in four places: Hardwar, Allahabad, Trimbak-Nasik, and Nasik along the banks of rivers Ganga; the confluence of Ganga, Yamuna and the invisible Saraswati; Godavari; and Shipra, respectively. These fairs derive their name from the mythical *Kumbha* or the pot which held Amrita or divine nectar that is believed to have been spilled in these four sites. Taking a dip in the waters of these rivers during the Kumbh Mela is considered to be most sacred. The *Ganga Sāgara* mela held every year in Swagardip, West Bengal, at the confluence of river Ganges (here known as Hugli) and Bay of Bengal on *Makar Sankrānti* (14th January) witnesses millions of pilgrims from all across the country bathing in the holy waters to

rid themselves of sin, before visiting the temple dedicated to the mythical sage Kapila. The ubiquity of the mythical iconography of the river overlapping with performative ritualism transforms the Ganga into an inclusive symbol of absolution. The worship of the river goddess often goes beyond the scripturally sanctioned structures. One such instance is the festival of *Ganga Pūjā* celebrated by the *Rajbanghsis*, a tribe in Tripura, to ward off epidemics and pray for the well-being of pregnant women. The devotees build a temporary temple made of bamboo in the midstream and offer sacrifices to the river. The fishermen and boatmen in various parts of the country also have their own sets of rituals to worship the rivers which provide them with livelihood.

India remains a culture abounding in myths, folktales, fables, and proverbs which create links between the mutable and the immutable, the immanent and the transcendent, the human and the divine. These connections facilitate reconfiguration and retelling of the same stories adding nuanced interpretative dimensions. The Ganga story is present in the epics, the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*, with several variations. In the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the sage Vālmīki narrates the story of the river to Rama and Lakshman, the princes of Ayodhya. According to this story, Ganga is the daughter of Himalaya and the sister of Lord Śiva's consort, Uma. She is a captivating beauty who entices Śiva out of his meditation. In the *Mahābhārata*, Ganga is a goddess as well as a capricious beauty who enthrals King Santanu. She becomes his wife and then proceeds to drown her seven children begotten from this marriage in the river until she is prevented by Santanu from doing the same to the eighth child, who grows up to become Bhishma, the patriarch of the *Kuru* dynasty. Ganga, in this story, is an instrument of fate; the seven drowned babies are reincarnations of the *Saptarṣī* or the mythical seven sages who could only be released by Ganga's intervention. The river is thus conceived as a goddess, a woman of beguiling beauty, a nurturer, a redeemer, straddling the three worlds and deeply enmeshed in the commonplace practices as well as the profound epistemologies of the Indian consciousness.

Sarasvatī: The Transformational Deity

River Sarasvatī is a transformational deity: she is referred to as a mighty river in the Ṛg Veda, but in the *Brāhmaṇas* and the *Purāṇas* she is the goddess of speech, knowledge, art, and culture (Prasad 2017). The Sarasvatī assumes different roles in the Vedic as well as the post-Vedic period; the transference of valence conflates both the physical and the celestial aspects of the river. She is deified as the nurturer, protector, healer, and harbinger of fertility in several hymns of the Ṛg Veda, Yajur Veda, and Sāma Veda.[9] But the Sarasvatī, unlike the other rivers of India which are worshipped as goddesses, exist more as an idea rather than as a physical presence. There are several theories about the 'disappearance' of River Sarasvatī,[10] but the river as the embodiment of knowledge and speech remains an abiding presence in the popular imagination. Apart from Hinduism, the Sarasvatī cult is also present in the tantric traditions of Buddhism and Jainism. In fact, the figure of Manjusri, one of the *bodhisattvas*,[11] and Sutra Devi in Jainism are likened to the figure of Sarasvatī as symbolic of knowledge and wisdom. In the Vedic literature, the banks

of River Sarasvatī were deemed sacred for sacrificial and funerary rituals, but in later Hinduism, with the receding of the physical presence of the river, the importance of the spiritual associations of the river as the embodiment of knowledge and truth gained ascendancy. The presence of several pilgrimage sites along what was once the course of River Sarasvatī indicates the significance of the river in the Hindu cosmology. But the shift in the iconography of the river marked an extension of the value of the river beyond the material sense. In the Ṛg Veda, Sarasvatī is eulogised as follows:

> She, the inspirer of true intuitions, the awakener in
> Consciousness to right thoughts, Sarasvatī, upholds our sacrifice.
>
> Sarasvatī by the perception awakens in consciousness the great
> Flood and illumines entirely all the thoughts (qtd. in Danino 2010, 294).

Sarasvatī is worshipped in the Purāṇas as a source of benediction and forgiveness; she is the source of the three Vedas and a repository of supreme knowledge. Sarasvatī has been invested with a particular form in which she is eulogised; she is white in complexion, adorning a lotus, holding a *vīna* and a book, with a goose as a *vāhana*. In some representations she has a rosary and a water vessel (*kalash*) hinting at her riverine origin. Prasad (2017) suggests that "the *Vina* (harp) symbolizes her as a stirrer of finer sensibilities; the book symbolizes learning and knowledge both in their acquisition and application and the symbol of water vessel shows her as a river goddess. A rosary that Sarasvatī wears symbolizes meditative process which contributes in the pursuit of truth and acquisition of knowledge" (91).

Sarasvatī continues to be part of the popular religious rituals in different parts of the country. The fifth day or *panchami* of the lunar month of *māgha* is the *vasant panchami*, the day Goddess Sarasvatī is worshipped among the Hindus, especially by students and artists. *Śāradā Tilaka Tantram* by Lakshmanadesikendra is believed to have provided some of the ways of worshipping Sarasvatī along with other deities such as Śiva and Viṣṇu. In Bengal Krishnananda Agamvagisha's *Tantrasāra* is considered to be a source of many of the rituals and mantras associated with the goddess worship. Apart from these sources, there exists innumerable *ślokas* and *pranām mantrās* dedicated to Sarasvatī, some with valid genealogies, some apocryphal. For example, the common Sarasvatī mantra "*Jaya jaya devi/ characharo share/ kucho jogo shobhito/ mukta hare/ vina ranjito/ pushtaka haste/ bhagwati bharati/ devi mamaste*"[12] cannot claim any definite source but is deeply embedded in the psycho-religious cultural patterns and is in currency as a trangenerational aspect of the goddess worship. The early symbolism of Sarasvatī in the Vedic literature refers to her river origins as well as to her divinity; she is the 'best of rivers,' 'the best of goddesses,' the goddess of speech, and a source of illumination and inspiration. Among the *Saptasindhus* referred to in the Vedas, it is only Sarasvatī who has been invested with these attributes. Could this be explained by the fact that the river was considered in the

Vedic literature to be the 'inspirer of hymns,' thereby making the connection between the river and the speech more tangible? However, the worship of the goddess in the present times hardly acknowledges its riverine origin, focussing on her anthropomorphized form instead. The river is now conceived as *antasaleela*, the submerged, invisible one, flowing with Ganga and Yamuna forming a sacred triad of the river goddesses. Danino (2010) points out rightly: "The Sarasvatī has been pulled down to the earth from the realm of legend. The river was 'lost,' but not forgotten. And even as she dried up, she grew in vigour as an incarnation of Speech and Inspiration. Her last waters gurgling to a stop, the goddess took up her dwelling at the source of every thought and word – a source unlikely to ever run dry" (294).

Yamuna: The River of Love

The Yamuna is the largest tributary of Ganga and is worshipped alongside her. In Hindu mythology, Yamuna is the daughter of the sun god, Surya, and sister of Yama, god of death. It is believed that a dip in the holy waters of the Yamuna liberates one from the torments of death. Unlike the Ganga, whose water is mythically held to be clear and sparkling, Yamuna is dark, likened to the melancholy lover forgotten by the beloved. Yamunotri (the origin of the river), Mathurā, and Bateshwar are among the many places that are held sacred or are pilgrimage sites along the course of the river. The river is inseparable from the myths and legends surrounding Lord Kṛṣṇa (also spelt as Krishna). In *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, the river Yamuna is an iterative motif in the life of the Lord. It is related to the story of Kṛṣṇa's birth, when the river parts to make way for Vasudeva (Kṛṣṇa's father) to carry the baby Kṛṣṇa to safety. The river is also a witness to the Lord's childhood pranks in Vrindāvan, the clandestine yet eternal love between Kṛṣṇa and Rādha, and other adventures. Yamuna is closely connected to the worship of Kṛṣṇa. According to the *Puṣṭimārg* sect founded by Sri Vallabhacarya, Yamuna is worshipped as the fourth consort (*chaturth patrani*) of Kṛṣṇa. The river is also known as *Kālindi* in later texts, where she is represented as one of the wives of Kṛṣṇa. Yamuna holds more appeal than Ganga among the Vaishnavas.[13] It is the river of love, the love-lorn *gopi* (milk-maid) in the poet Jayadev's imagination in *Gīta Govinda*,[14] which enjoins Rādha to hasten and meet Kṛṣṇa, who is waiting on the windswept shores of River Yamuna: *dhīra-samīre yamunā-tīre vasati vane vanamālī*. The river Yamuna forms one of the triads of the sacred rivers of the holy confluence, or *sangam*, which continue to form an important spiritual discourse as much as it is a manifestation of the abiding trope of popular religion.

The advent of the river is also celebrated on the sixth day of the waxing moon phase of the Hindu month of *Chaitra* as *Yamuna Chatt* or *Yamuna Jayanti* in Vrindavan, Mathura, and other parts of Northern India. The anthropomorphizing of the river deity takes on another significant dimension in the popular ritual of *Bhai dooj*, which is celebrated as *Bhau-deej*, *Bhatri ditwiya*, or *Bhai-phonta* in different parts of the country. It takes place in the autumn months following the festival of lights or *Deepavali* and commemorates the bond between

brothers and sisters. Among other legends and stories surrounding this popular festival, the narrative of the mythical twins Yama and Yami (or Yamuna) is of special interest. The rituals of the festival suggest a continuity; Yama and Yamuna are the prototypes of the generations of brothers and sisters celebrating their loyalty and love. The sister recites the same chant every year, wishing for long life and happiness for the brother ("As Yamuna draws a vermilion mark on the forehead of Yama/ So do I/ Let my brother be immortal like Yama"). The river is a shape-shifter – river, goddess, lover, and sister.

The cult of Ganga and Yamuna became so popular that it permeated even heterodox religions in one way or the other. Ganga and Yamuna are included among the five important rivers of Buddhist iconography. The *Majjhima Nikāya*, however, speaks of seven rivers, namely Bahuka, Adhikka, Gaya (Phalgu), Sundarika, Sarasvatī, Prayaga (Ganga and Yamuna), and Bahumati. This explains the presence of the twin rivers sculpted on the doorways of Buddhist monuments. Jains also regarded Ganga and Yamuna as sacred. A number of *Tīrthaṃkaras* had chosen to take birth in holy towns on the banks of these rivers. River Narmada figures prominently in the *Śaiva* sect; the *Matsya*, *Padma*, and *Kūrma Purāṇas* elaborately deals with the greatness of the river. It is considered to even excel Ganga in the power of sanctifying agency. According to the *Mahā Purāṇa*, Ganga comes to the Narmada in the form of a jet-black cow but returns quite white, free from all sins. *Matsya Purāṇa* insists that Narmada is holy everywhere, whether in a village or in a forest. *Agni Purāṇa* suggests that whatever virtue is obtained by a holy dip in the Ganga can be easily accrued by the mere sight of the Narmada. The *pradakṣina* of Narmada – the circumambulation of the river from its mouth at Bhrigukaccha to its source at Amarkantaka on the one side and return by the other side – is considered an act of highest religious merit. The river is also called *Śaṅkari*, one who has emerged from the body of *Śaṅkara* or *Śiva*. There are a number of myths surrounding the *banaliṅgas* found in the river Narmada. These *liṅgas* are considered to be *Śiva* himself. According to popular belief, all the stones in the river are Śivaliṅgas or the manifestation of Śiva. To confirm this belief, all the pebbles collected from the river are sold as *banaliṅgas* at the nearby pilgrim cities. The ecological importance of these mythological facts is manifest in the survival of the essential belief system of the religions, orthodox as well as heterodox in nature, in their perpetuating patterns of rituals and practices. The contradictions or paradoxes that emerge from the intersections of the lived experiences and the realities of contemporary society with its set of ideologies and imperatives are undeniable.

The 'Minor' Narratives

The iterative presence of the rivers as goddesses in the ancient texts suggests their importance in the Hindu cosmology. However, not all the rivers of the Indian subcontinent are equally venerated according to scriptural rituals. The myths and legends generated from the living presence of the rivers are often orally transmitted, especially among the indigenous

communities whose religious practices are based on animistic principles. Lloyd Burton (2002), while analyzing the importance of the sacred space in the Native American practices in *Worship and Wilderness*, observes: "indigenous spiritual traditions are *of* the environment rather than separable from it" (33). One such interesting instance is the Lepchas, who were considered to be the first inhabitants of Sikkim, of which, Kalimpong district used to be a part. The entire complex of Lepcha myths, legends, fables, and fairy tales transmitted orally throughout the centuries is known as *lungten sung*, 'mythology, legends.' Heleen Plaisier (2005), in "A Brief Introduction to Lepcha Orthography and Literature," mentions that the traditional Lepcha narratives contain views and statements on fundamental matters of life and are aimed at the survival of the traditional values of the Lepcha community that they reflect. Doma Yishey, in the book *Legends of Lepcha* (2010), records an interesting story about the race between Teesta and Rongeet, the two rivers that originate in Sikkim Himalayas and meet at a confluence in the Darjeeling district of West Bengal. Rongeet and Rongnyu (as Teesta was previously known) were the river spirits revered as Itbu-moo's[15] creations all across Mayel Lang[16] for their grace, beauty, and their love for each other. According to this myth, the two river spirits in a light-hearted banter as befits lovers, decided to race each other. Since they were venturing outside their familiar region, both decided to have guides to help them in their journey to the plains. Rongeet, the male spirit, chose *totfu*, the mountain bird, while Rongnyu, the mild and gentle-mannered female spirit, chose *parilbu*, the snake, as her guide. Ironically, the bird that should have been the swifter guide was distracted by the sights and sounds in the journey, thereby delaying Rongeet. On the other hand, Rongnyu, guided by the steadfast snake, reaches the plains earlier. Rongeet, seeing Rongnyu already there, cried out "Thi- see-tha (when did you arrive)?" His pride was hurt, and in anger he started retreating towards the mountains ignoring the entreaties of Rongnyu. The destruction that was caused by the rising waters of the two rivers reminded the people of their neglect of the Mother Creator or Itbu-moo. The people took shelter on the top of the mountain Tundong Lho in South Sikkim, the only place that was not submerged by the deluge. They offered sacrifices and oblations to the sacred deities, the deluge receded, and the lovers were reconciled and met on the plains at a confluence, never to be separated. The confluence of the rivers Rongeet and Rongnyu, now called Teesta, is considered a sacred place by the Lepchas. It is a ritual among the Lepchas to take the newlyweds to the confluence of the river gods to offer prayers, to seek blessings from the eternal lovers for a long and blissful married life. Every year, in the month of December or January, the Lepchas celebrate the feast of the river gods commemorating the sacred space. It is interesting to note that in recent years attempts at damming Teesta and construction of hydro-electric projects along the course of Teesta have faced strong resistance from the indigenous Lepcha population. In this context, the intersections of popular religious beliefs, rituals, and the implications of the sacred space especially for the indigenous population and environmental ethics generate a discursive minefield. Kerry Little (2013), in her thesis "Stories of the Lepcha Narratives from a Contested Land," makes

an ethnographic survey of the resistance movements of the Lepcha youth against development projects on the rivers. They believe that these projects will cause environmental devastation, jeopardise their sacred spaces, and endanger their identity. Little makes a cogent point on this interlinking of the sacred discourse with the agency of activism: "The sacred space from the elders' time became protest narratives when the activists referred to their mythology to prove their ownership of the land" (15).

India is criss-crossed by several rivers with myriad narratives and diverse forms of worship according to their geographical and cultural uniqueness. The Shilabati river in Purulia district of West Bengal presents a curious case. Not all the rivers of the district are inscribed as sacred; in fact, Shilabati is the only river that has been deified in the indigenous and popular imagination. Here is a myth without rituals, transmitted through oral tradition. According to the local legend, Shilabati was a young maiden working as a menial labourer in the house of Joy Ponda, a prosperous and devout Brahmin. Once, when Ponda intended to go on a pilgrimage to take a dip in the holy Ganges, Shiliabati requested him to immerse a few things packed in a bundle on her behalf. Ponda had almost forgotten about Shilabati's request, but when he did remember to cast the bundle in the Ganges he was confounded to witness a miraculous event. It is so transmitted in oral narratives of the myth that the Goddess Ganges herself emerged from the water to accept Shilabati's bundle. Joy Ponda realized that it was no ordinary maiden toiling in his household – but a divine being. He rushed back to his village and called out to her. Shilabati, who was at that moment bringing back water in a *kalshi* (pot), realized that she had been discovered, and disappeared, leaving the upturned pot on the ground with water gushing out of it. This abandoned pot of Shilabati is believed to be the origin of the river in popular imagination. A temple, one of its kind, stands near the source of the river; the presiding deity is Shilabati, the river goddess with the myth of the maiden and the Brahmin depicted on the murals. A week-long fair is held every year near the temple during the *Pous Sankrānti*. This is an instance of an indigenous myth anthropomorphizing a natural element suggesting a primitive innocence borne out of an organic link between man and nature.

Conclusion

Bron Taylor, in the introduction to *The Encyclopaedia of Religion and Nature* (2005), raises a few pertinent issues that are of considerable importance here. Though Taylor primarily uses Western epistemological models in his enunciation of 'nature religion,' he puts forth a series of questions which are relevant to our understanding of the paradoxical nature of the sacred discourse assigned to the rivers of India, especially in the contemporary context of globalization and environmental crises. The questions can be summarized as follows:

1. How have the ecosystems influenced the culture or religious practices of people, if at all?
2. What are the attitudes reflected in religious practices of people towards earth's living systems?
3. Are there inherent environmental ethics in the religious practices of India?

4. Does globalization complicate, or is incompatible with, the different forms of nature worship that have survived in India?

The list is not exhaustive since the phenomenon of deifying the rivers not only as scripturally validated convention but as a part of everyday practice behoves reorientation of interpretative tools. On the one hand, it is conceded that the formidable, awe-inspiring, or benevolent nature was anthropomorphized and worshipped in the premodern age as a way of controlling, yielding to, or negotiating with the unknown and mysterious. But the acceleration of the project of modernity, nurtured by the principles of rationality and scepticism, inevitably led to the decline of those practices which were predicated upon the interconnectedness of man and nature. What is perplexing in this context is the survival and continuation of the age-old practices in the contemporary age, which are incongruent and often contradictory to the predominant discourses of globalization and progress. Does this establish the thesis proposed by Lynn White, Jr., in his influential and controversial article "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological crisis" (1967), that the Asian religions are more environmentally conscious than their occidental counterparts where the human/non-human dichotomy is more pronounced? Would it therefore follow that the mythologization of some religious systems is more valid than that of others? Emma Tomalin refers to Banwari (Banwari in *Pancavati: The Indian Approach to the* E*nvironment* suggests that certain religious traditions are 'environment-friendly') in her article "Bio-Divinity and Bio-Diversity: Perspectives on Religion and Environmental Conservation in India" (2004) to introduce the debates on this issue:

> We have never thought of nature as inanimate and never did we make the mistake of exploiting it for our benefits. Be it our religious scriptures or literature, everywhere we have been made to realize that nature is something divine. That is why an average Indian has always had an inclination to worship everything in nature. We generally believe that all things in nature need to be preserved and we use them only when we feel that their use is essential for the continuity and preservation of our life. (qtd. in Tomalin 2004, 266)

But this assertion of environmental ethicality evinced in religious practices of India is countermanded by the realities of apathy and irresponsibility towards those elements of nature that are worshipped. In the case of the rivers of India, the pollution of the Ganga and the other major and minor rivers are incongruent with the rituals and practices that assign divinity to them (Shiva 2002, 2012; Guha and Gadgil 1995). The rivers of India are believed to foster physical, spiritual, and ritual purity in the devotee and are considered to be self-purifying. The realities of environmental degradation, industrial pollution, and other human activities however present a paradox to the nature of sacred purity of the rivers. The resolution of the paradoxes and contradictions lies in reviewing the ideas of nature worship vis-à-vis sustainability, conservation, and utilization of biodiversity. Madhav Gadgil (1985) refers to the practice of "ecological prudence" while discussing aspects of the preservation of sacred groves in India. This can be a significant strategy for the reassessment of the value of river worship in

India. The indigenous, place-centric practices of river worship should be popularized rather than the disjointed randomness of institutional practices which are neither connected to the living ecosystem nor are aware of their dependence on it.

Endnotes:

1. Makara or the crocodile is an emblem of the water, the plants, the vegetal substratum of life. It has a dual significance underlining the dual nature of the river goddess. While she has been represented as benevolent in myth and literature, one cannot overlook the devastation that she causes, destroying countless settlements along its bank. The vehicle or the *vāhana* embodies this paradoxical nature of the deity.
2. http://www.srimatham.com/uploads/5/5/4/9/5549439/katha_upanishad.pdf, (accessed on 8.7.2019).
3. See Hymn 10.75 of *Ṛg Veda*. Griffith, Ralph T.H. (Trans), 1896. *The Hymns of the Rigveda*. http://www.sanskritweb.net/rigveda/griffith-p.pdf, accessed on 29.9.2020.
4. The term *pitr tarpaṇa* means offering to the deceased ancestor, usually sesame seeds, on prescribed auspicious days.
5. *Upanayana* is the traditional Hindu rite of passage of induction or initiation marked by accepting a sacred thread across the body. It is usually restricted to the Brahmin or upper caste Hindu male.
6. The term *śrāddha* denotes funeral rituals.
7. http://mychinmaya.org/sitebackup/bv/bvresources/gangastotram.pdf, accessed on 22.9.2020.
8. Eliade, Mircea. 1959. *The sacred and the profane: The nature of religion*. Willard R. Trask. Trans. New York, N. Y: Harcourt, Brace, & World.
9. For a detailed discussion of the occurrence of the river/goddess Sarasvatī in scriptural literature, see Prasad 2017.
10. Michel Danino, in *The Lost River: On the Trail of the Saraswatī* (Gurgaon: Penguin Random House, 2010), offers a fascinating narrative of the 'disappearance' of Sarasvatī.
11. In Mahāyāna Buddhism, bodhisattva is one who is dedicated to the path of Buddhahood through suffering and compassion.
12. May Goddess Saraswati,
    who is fair like the jasmine-coloured moon,
    and whose pure white garland is like frosty dew drops;
    who is adorned in radiant white attire,
    on whose beautiful arm rests the veena,
    and whose throne is a white lotus;
    who is surrounded and respected by the Gods, protect me.
    May you fully remove my lethargy, sluggishness, and ignorance.
    Source:
    http://www.esotericonline.nhttp://www.esotericonline.net/group/mantras/forum/topics/goddess-saraswati-and-her-mantraset/group/mantras/forum/topics/goddess-saraswati-and-her-mantras, accessed on 22.9.2020.
13. Vaishnavas are one of the major sects of Hinduism. Followers of this sect consider Lord Vishnu (Viṣṇu) to be the supreme lord.
14. Gīta Govinda is a literary work composed by the twelfth-century poet Jayadeva, which celebrates the love of Kṛṣṇa and Rādha in Vrindāvan.
15. Itbu-moo is the mother creator in the Lepcha cosmology.
16. In Lepcha mythology, it is the land blessed by god.

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