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READING "THE WHITE PEACOCK" AS THE FIRST PHILOSOPHICAL WORK OF D. H. LAWRENCE

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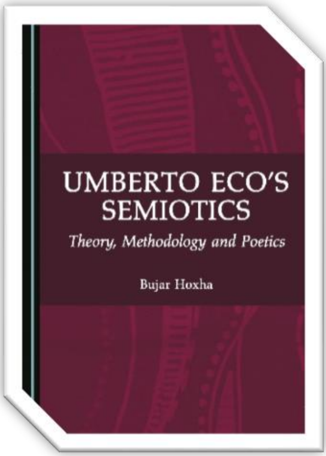

Abstract.
Book Review: Bujar Hoxha, *Umberto Eco's Semiotics: Theory, Methodology and Poetics*, CSP, Newcastle upon Tyne, 2022.

Keywords: Umberto Eco, semiotics, sign, symbol, signifier, signified, code, interpretation

1. You Laugh, You Die!

It was a crisp, foreboding morning at the end of November when Brother William of Baskerville and his young novice Adso of Melk arrived at the ancient, labyrinthine abbey. Shadows clung to the stone walls, whispering of an evil that slumbered within.

Are you treating it lightly?
The lifeless body of Brother Adelmo, a manuscript copyist, has just been found by monks; his face twisted into a final, grotesque laugh. Adso was now gripped by fear. Brother William, dispatched ahead to prepare for the impending debate on monastic poverty, stepped into the shoes of a detective.

So unfolds Umberto Eco's narrative from *The Name of the Rose* and, along with it, laughing gains deeper and deeper significance. It is a semiotic quest, as Eco wasn't only a great novelist, but a brilliant theoretician of semiotics too. The abbey, with its dark corridors and shadowy secrets, reveals a world which invites readers to explore how signs and symbols govern understanding and behaviour.

Humming with monks' silent toils, *Scriptorium* hid the library's true heart even deeper - a covert chamber, known only to a select few, that key held the most dangerous texts. Brother William, a master of logic and deduction, navigates the labyrinth, not just of the abbey but of language and symbols, thus uncovering that mysterious deaths were connected to a forbidden book - a continuation of Aristotle's *Poetics* that explored laughter. Brother Jorge, the old library's guardian, vehemently opposed it. Laughter becomes thus a symbol loaded with meaning and such many consequences. As Eco liked to say, "a narrator should not supply interpretations of his work; otherwise, he would have not written a novel, which is a machine for generating interpretations".

One last example. *The Mysterious Flame of Queen Loana* - another novel by Eco - likewise opens in quite an unusual way: "April is the cruellest month" - quotes the author. But why? What significance the reader should confer to "cruellest", this time?

I'll leave it to you to uncover how its meaning forms and develops, although I might say Bujar Hoxha's book - *Umberto Eco's Semiotics: Theory, Methodology and Poetics* - might be a great tool in this direction (*See* Hoxha, 2022, 132).

Many know Umberto Eco as a writer. Yet, his legacy extends far beyond the pages of his acclaimed novels. There is another Eco, a scholar who delved into the very essence of human communication. At the heart of his thought lies a profound fascination with signs and symbols – the very building blocks of linguistic exchange and meaning-making. This fascination finds its most rigorous expression in his semiotic theories, a complex and captivating web that seeks to untangle the intricate dance between signifier and signified, code and interpretation.

Shifting focus from his novels, Bujar Hoxha’s compelling volume explores precisely these extensive works of Umberto Eco on semiotics and hermeneutics, such as *The Open Work* (1962), *A Theory of Semiotics* (1976), *The Role of the Reader* (1979), *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language* (1984), *The Limits of Interpretation* (1990) or *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods* (1994).

2. Mapping the Woods: Semiotics and Narratives

Prof. Bujar Hoxha, a distinguished figure from Macedonia in the realm of semiotics, embarked on his intellectual journey as a linguist, delving into the subtleties of English and Italian languages. Umberto Eco's theories captivated him, leading his academic journey into this domain during his MA and PhD studies. With over two decades dedicated to unravelling symbolic systems, Hoxha's scholarly contributions have been profound, counting over 40 published papers. His fortuitous encounter with Dr Eero Tarasti, a trailblazer in semiotics, profoundly shaped his intellectual trajectory, providing invaluable guidance along the way. Driven by practical experiences, Bujar Hoxha also embarked on pioneering work in the "Semiotics of Autism", elucidating the profound dimensions of nonverbal communication. Currently, as a Professor at the Department of Communication Sciences at the South-East European University in North Macedonia, Bujar continues to expand the horizons of meaning-making systems, particularly in the realm of performing arts.

The book I am presenting to you primarily focuses on structural and interpretative semiotics. Eco's exploration of this field intersects closely with poetics, which is examined as a research methodology linked to semiology. The author builds an intriguing connection between semiotics - as defined by Charles Peirce and some heirs of the Vienna Positivist Circle, and "semiology" - in the sense defined by Ferdinand de Saussure, referring to the "science of signs", a precise methodology that should solve problems with mathematical exactitude (Hoxha, 2022, 3).

Four chapters make up this volume. The First addresses Eco's narrative strategies, grounded in structural research methodologies. Chapter Two focuses on his textual techniques, distinguishing between "narration" as a semiotic process within fragments of artistic creation or social contexts, and "textual strategies", which consider the entirety of a text regardless of genre or artistic origin. The Third Chapter explores the informational processes for communication and symbol analysis purposes, such as encoding and decoding. This chapter also dwells on Peirce's contributions to semiotics and Umberto Eco's legacy, culminating in the concept of "open work". Finally, Chapter Four discusses the notion of "poetics", aiming to integrate it into the symbol interpretation procedures specific for this multifaceted theoretical framework. (Hoxha, 2022, 2).

3. Decoding Dichotomies

Bujar Hoxha opens his book with an elegant observation: Umberto Eco's exploration of semiotics introduces the study of social phenomena through dichotomies, marking a significant shift in the structural approach (Hoxha, 2022, 20). Such an analysis brings forth new perspectives, embedding linguistics into a broader realm. Moreover, it delineates a dual understanding: on one hand, it translates normativity into language and, on the other, it thoroughly takes into account the mechanism of processing signs (Hoxha, 2022, 23).

Umberto Eco does not rest solely on structuralism but extends into the realm of generative grammar. This approach, championed by Noam Chomsky, deconstructs sentences from abstract forms to concrete expressions. It does so independently of the semantic content, making them grammatically coherent. Similarly, semiotics decodes messages devoid of their ultimate meaning, emphasizing the rules in generating sentences. The Italian author uses "transformation" to describe the process of rendering sentences into syntactically significant components, showcasing the philosophical stance of decomposing abstractions into practical applications (Hoxha, 2022, 25).

With the metaphor of the woods, Umberto Eco portrays this transformational process, depicting narratives that extend beyond micro-units to form macro-readings, often crossing disciplinary boundaries. This metaphor also underscores that communication is not merely about adhering to mathematical precision but about engaging fiction and imagination, particularly in literary arts.

Expanding on this idea, the study ventures into the essence of narrative construction by likening the literary or artistic text to a labyrinth, encouraging readers to navigate its twists and turns. This emphasizes that narrative texts are spaces of exploration and discovery. The metaphor of the woods thus stretches beyond literary tales to encompass all narrative texts, whether set in the urban maze of Dublin with Molly Bloom instead of Little Riding Hood or the cinematic landscapes of Casablanca with Ilsa Lund and Rick Blaine (Hoxha 2022, 35).

4. There's Music Too in the Woods: Time in Semiotics

Time, as Bujar insightfully remarks, is a critical component in crafting writing techniques and critical approaches to art. The scene of *Grand March* in Verdi's *Aida* might be one example. Another is Verdi's *Rigoletto* (Hoxha, 2022, 37), where the narrative gracefully oscillates between timelines. This technique enriches the storytelling by revealing Rigoletto's love for his daughter and the tragic history of her mother's death. Nevertheless, Gilda's heart is caught in a whirlwind of love for the Duke of Mantua, a truth she keeps hidden from her father. In the midst of their conversation, she becomes aware of the Duke's surreptitious presence nearby. Similarly, in Eco's novel *The Name of the Rose,* the persistent exchange between teacher and pupil unravels the mystery of consecutive deaths in the monastery, underscoring the temporal dimension in narrative progression.

The author extends his analysis to the concept of *ars ritardandi* — the art of delay — demonstrating how writers use seemingly unimportant details to captivate readers. This technique, prevalent in both Italian and world literature, employs intertextuality and fragmentation to create anticipation and enhance the narrative's depth.

Just as a walk in the woods. You go for a walk. If you are not forced to leave it in a hurry to get away from the wolf or the ogre, it is lovely to linger, to watch the beams of sunlight play among the trees and fleck the glades, to examine the moss, the mushrooms, the plants in the undergrowth. Lingering does not mean wasting time: frequently, one stops to ponder before making a decision (Hoxha, 2022, 42). Umberto Eco's examination of Dante's works exemplifies how strategic omissions and delays foster a sense of expectation, making the narrative journey more engaging.

In closing, the study illustrates how Tchaikovsky conveys the art of delay through his musical adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet* (Hoxha, 2022, 44). Overture and Fantasy's motifs slow down the progression of the plot, enriching its tragic essence. This musical analogy reflects Umberto Eco's broader assertion: the deliberate pacing and digressions in storytelling enhance artistic expression, inviting readers and listeners alike to immerse themselves fully in the narrative experience.

5. Model Reader and Dynamic Text

The second chapter shifts focus from the narration process to text and textual strategies. Central is the concept of *Reader,* as an active interpreter. The Italian semiologist introduced the *Model Reader*, a theoretical reader anticipated by the author to interpret his writings as intended. This contrasts with the empirical one, which lacks a contextual framework for full engagement (Hoxha, 2022, 48-54). There are also two types of *Model Readers*: one driven by curiosity and the other by deeper engagement with the text (Hoxha, 2022, 65).

Hoxha clarifies Eco's distinction between "open" and "closed" texts, emphasizing the former's invitation for reader participation and the latter's static nature. Furthermore, he delves into the interplay between narration and textual techniques, shedding light on how the spectator is deciphering artistic creations. In sum, the cooperative nature of reading and the generative potential of textual analysis enrich our understanding and underscore the importance of interpretive participation.

6. Meaning - From Sign to Signification

Chapter Three targets the core principles of semiotics, emphasizing the relationship between codes, narration, and representational methodologies from the philosophy of science. Umberto Eco termed this comprehensive approach *General Semiotics* and highlighted the significance of sign as the basic unit of communication.

Bujar elucidates his view on interhuman communication, whether verbal or nonverbal, as primarily aimed at exchanging information. He details this theory as it maps the journey of a message from source to destination, encompassing direct speech as well as written and artistic contexts. In other words, he refers to all cultural phenomena as sign systems, showing how communication is inherent to most fields within humanistic and social sciences.

In Eco's model, a message travels from its source, encounters potential noise, transforms into a signified message, and reaches its destination through encoding and decoding, with codes and lexical contents playing paramount roles at each stage. The concept of semantic "noise", which can alter a message's meaning during transmission, is skilfully pointed out by the author.

Furthermore, the process of signification, or obtaining meaning, is inseparable from communication and information processes. Eco's integration of Peirce's trichotomy of the sign-object-interpretant relationship emphasizes the triadic nature of signs in creating meaning. Ultimately, Hoxha underscores the importance of context for signification, noting that meanings evolve through successive interpretations.

7. Decoding Artistic Expressions Through Poetics

In the final chapter, we dive into the intricate world of interpreting art, particularly literature, through the lens of Eco's concept of *open work*, as it developed across different artistic periods, from Byzantine times to the modern era. The Italian challenges readers to produce their unique comprehensions of artistic expressions, emphasizing the interplay between narration, text, and reader engagement.

It delves, then, into the expansive realm of poetics, questioning whether poetry is exclusive to literature or if other forms of art can also embody poetic qualities. Umberto Eco gave examples from music, showcasing how performers have different degrees of liberty to interpret works in various ways, fostering openness within artistic expression.

Hoxha's analysis culminates with reflecting on the cognitive processes underlying interpretation, emphasizing how information, communication and semiotics connect. Eco's legacy to Peirce is also well displayed. In essence, all of these challenge readers to engage with art actively, to interpret and reinterpret, thereby contributing to the ongoing evolution of meaning.

8. Conclusions

Prof. Bujar Hoxha examines the semiotic theories of Umberto Eco, leading readers on a profound and illuminating journey through the frameworks constructed by one of the 20th century's most erudite scholars. He deftly unpacks the layers of meaning-making systems, historical intertextuality, and philosophical inquiry, making this volume a great companion for both seasoned Eco enthusiasts and new readers alike. With a keen analytical eye and an engaging narrative style, Hoxha celebrates Umberto Eco's contribution to semiotics, inspiring a deeper appreciation for the complex interplay of signs and meanings that characterize his intellectual legacy.

Hoxha's analysis also paves the way for numerous potential studies that could further elucidate the detailed and multifaceted nature of Eco's theoretical works. By emphasizing the connections between them and broader intellectual traditions, he sets a stage for interdisciplinary dialogues that can enrich our understanding of both Umberto Eco's contributions and the wider landscape of contemporary semiotic theory.

I am tempted, therefore, to correlate and leave open a study on how Umberto Eco's exploration of *the poetics of the open work* finds resonance with H.G. Gadamer's hermeneutics. In his T*ruth and Method,* Gadamer emphasizes the dynamic interplay between the interpreter and the text, wherein understanding emerges through a *fusion of horizons*. Similarly, Eco's notion of the open work underscores the significance of interpretation as a collaborative act, wherein both the creator and the audience engage in a continuous dialogue to unfold layers of meaning. Moreover, his discussions on music exemplify how the performative aspect of artistic expression embodies Gadamer's notion of play. Music, with its inherent openness, serves as a vivid manifestation of the hermeneutic process, wherein performers and listeners alike participate in the production of meaning. Thus, through Eco's lens, *the poetics of the open work* not only encapsulates the essence of artistic interpretation but also echoes fundamental principles of hermeneutics in the realm of aesthetic experience.

ART, METAPHYSICS AND CIVILISATION: READING "THE WHITE PEACOCK" AS THE FIRST PHILOSOPHICAL WORK OF D. H. LAWRENCE

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Abstract. D. H. Lawrence claims that art comes into being through the emergence of metaphysics. He evinces a deep anxiety about metaphysics deteriorating because of the scientific and societal developments in early 20th-century Europe. This paper demonstrates that his attempt to realise his ideal art — art that is completely dependent on metaphysics — is seen in his first novel, *The White Peacock*, which is not generally regarded as a philosophical work. First, the paper defines the close relationship between Lawrence's art creation and modern European civilisation and conducts a philosophical analysis of the narrative discourse with reference to the ideas of Arthur Schopenhauer — a considerable influence for Lawrence at the time of writing. Second, it verifies the idea that metaphysics is a substantial motive in Lawrence's novel, one that enables him to approach the problems of modern European civilisation through the medium of literature.

Keywords: D. H. Lawrence, Arthur Schopenhauer, art, metaphysics, civilisation

The idea that D. H. Lawrence (1885–1930) "sees it as his business (…), to put the wordless into words," (Becket 1997, 2) raises the question of *what* he is representing in his works through language. A possible answer is "metaphysics." Lawrence asserts, in the *Foreword* of *Fantasia of the Unconscious* (1921), that the creation of art inevitably presupposes metaphysics:

> (…) it seems to me that even art is utterly dependent on philosophy: or if you prefer it, on a metaphysic. The metaphysic or philosophy may not be anywhere very accurately stated, and may be quite unconscious in the artist, yet it is a metaphysic that governs men at the time, and is by all men more or

> less comprehended, and lived. Men live and see according to some gradually developing and gradually withering visions. This vision exists also as a dynamic idea or metaphysic–exists first as such. Then it is unfolded into life and art. (65)

Lawrence maintains that metaphysics "is wearing woefully thin, and the art is wearing absolutely threadbare" (65). The main cause of this was the rapidly developing civilisation in European society in his time. While *Fantasia* is generally recognized as arguing against Freudian psychoanalysis[1], "Foreword" concerns the author's own view of civilisation.

Lawrence calls the science that enabled European civilisation to develop, "a science of the dead world" (62). He refutes "evolution", but for "the strangeness and rainbow-change of ever-renewed creative civilisations" (64). For Lawrence, what is vital to this civilisation is "a science in terms of life" that once prevailed over the world from the beginning of history to the age of ancient Greece (63). This science is inseparable from "the intense potency of symbols" (63) beyond the differences between languages, ideas, and races, which is deeply involved with the existence of "creative civilisations." This symbolic power makes it possible for Lawrence's personal philosophy[2] to be deduced from his own literary works but "not the reverse" (65). His works of art are never deduced from his personal philosophy.

Lawrence's concept of the term "metaphysic" should not be recognized as a subtle and abstract idea of his own, but as "the ultimate science of Being"[3] which has been traditionally explored since the beginning of human history. In "Foreword", Lawrence argues that the ideal creation of art is to realize works into which "a metaphysic" or a question of Being unfolds. Furthermore, the formulation of his theory of art is closely related to his own view of civilisation and is caused by his recognition of modern Europe as reducing and eroding the value of metaphysics and art.

This paper contends that Lawrence's first attempt to realize his ideal art is seen at the beginning of his literary career. It then examines the validity of the theory through a philosophical analysis of his earliest novel, *The White Peacock* (1911). In this study, we will discuss how crucial the analysis of Lawrence's earliest novel is in order to show the significance of pursuing the essence of his art in relation to metaphysics and civilisation. In the following section, we analyse the background of *The White Peacock*.

SCHOPENHAUER: A DEFINITE MOTIVE FOR *THE WHITE PEACOCK*

During the period of writing *The White Peacock* — especially in his years at college, between 1906 and 1908 — as Worthen observes, "a most complex and far-reaching change" (179) dominated Lawrence's thought. During this period, he showed concerns with modern science and materialism which were closely related to European civilisation in the early 20th century such as the theory of evolution (Spencer, Darwin), materialistic monism (Haeckel), and pragmatism (James). However, they were "never satisfying" for him (179). In 1908, Lawrence wrote a letter to a friend of his to show the great disappointment he felt when he found that "half the pro's [professors] in college were not superior to me in intellect or character" (1979, 72). Frustrated by the intellectuals, who were unaware of the "real problems of the twentieth century," Lawrence turned to Arthur Schopenhauer's metaphysics, as a means to achieve his own perspective to approach these problems of modern European civilisation[4].

The rise of Lawrence's awareness of European civilisation and metaphysics is directly connected to writing *The White Peacock*. However, it is likely that the idea will arouse opposition: critics have regarded Lawrence in the early days of his literary career as immature both as a writer and as a thinker. According to various scholars, the novel has a literary youth or immaturity, far from being connected with metaphysics[5]. Moreover, it does not seem that other critics with deep insight into the relationship between Lawrence's literature and metaphysics place *The White Peacock* in his "philosophical works"[6]. As Montgomery observes, the novel presents expressions, reflective of ideas proposed in the works of the scientists and philosophers that Lawrence was reading at the time, "on almost every page," and among all the allusions, "those to Schopenhauer predominate and are clearly most central to the novel's themes" (44). Hough considers these expressions or allusions to signify different themes and motives just "stirring vaguely" in the novel (26). This may lead us to think of Lawrence's immaturity as a literary writer or, more precisely, the one-directional influence of modern scientific ideas and philosophy on him during his writing of the narrative of *The White Peacock*.

Lawrence's shifting intellectual concern - from modern science and materialism to Schopenhauer's metaphysics - at the time of starting his career as an artist is the first manifestation of his rejection of material civilisation in early 20th-century Europe[7]. It is also the first motive for him in his pursuit or questioning of the essence of life or Being. Given this question of Being leads to his own concept of "creative civilisation," we may suppose, like Schneider, that Schopenhauer is more important than Spencer, Haeckel, and James in their influence on Lawrence (27). However, as Schneider states, this does not mean that the influence of Schopenhauer alienated Lawrence from scientists, but that their ideas "converged to reinforce Lawrence's conviction that life is the manifestation of the inhuman will or force that remains unknown" (27). Therefore, Schopenhauer's metaphysics is one of the *definite* motives that formulate Lawrence's views within *The White Peacock*.

THE INTEREST OF SPECIES/INDIVIDUALS: SCHOPENHAUER'S VIEW OF THE WORLD AS WILL / REPRESENTATION

According to Chambers, as a second-year student at college, Lawrence read Schopenhauer's essay *The Metaphysics of Love*. Chambers suggests that the essay "made a deep impression upon him", and that Schopenhauer's idea "seemed to fit in with his mood" (111). During this period, a significant revision was made to the first draft of *The White Peacock*: the figure Annable was created in the revising process. Many common features are present within Annable's and Schopenhauer's discourse. The full title of Schopenhauer's essay mentioned above is "The Metaphysics of Sexual Love". The concept of *sexual* love is the crucial key to a philosophical analysis of the novel. The following is an outline of Schopenhauer's view of the world in relation to "sexual love", referring to this essay and *The World as Will and Representation*, one of his most notable works.

Schopenhauer asserts that "all amorousness is rooted in the sexual impulse alone" whose ultimate aim is "the *composition of the next generation*" (2: 533, 534). For those involved in matters outside of sexual love, the question is whether these matters consist of their own personal interests, such as fortune, social position, and honour of one's own. This is the question of "the weal and woe of the individual". For those in love affairs, the question is "the existence and special constitution of the human race in times to come" (2: 534). This is the question of "the weal and woe of the species", or the question about sexual love which sways all individuals to its purpose of the existence of the human race (2: 534–35). Schopenhauer declares that the interest of the species "is infinitely superior to any interest of mere individuals" (2: 552). The relationship of the interests corresponds with the relationship between "will" and "representation".

"The world is my representation: this is a truth valid with reference to every living and knowing being" (Schopenhauer 1: 3). The knowing "I" (the subject) is the essential prerequisite for all objects (the world); "for whatever exists, exists only for the subject" (1: 5). Yet our cognition is only connected with the phenomena (appearances) of the objects. This means we are unable to perceive the "inner nature", or the ultimate cause of the existence of things, "from without" (1: 99). Schopenhauer calls this cause "will". "The will alone is; it is the thing-in-itself, the source of all those phenomena" (1: 184). He suggests that the "will" is another prerequisite for all objects, and he defines the world of representation as coming into being in the process of "the objectification of the will" in which the essence of the will emerges or unfolds into the representation (appearance) and becomes visible to the knowing subject.

Schopenhauer claims that the will "expresses itself most strongly in the sexual impulse" (1: 330). This impulse reveals itself through the medium of the "body" as "the objectivity of the will". Furthermore, he maintains that the sexual impulse "is proved to be the decided and strongest affirmation of life by the fact that for man in the natural state, as for the animal, it is his life's final end and highest goal" (1: 329). Schneider observes that "the general Schopenhauerian vision of life as the objectification of the will and the Schopenhauerian distinction between will and idea [representation]" was important to Lawrence (32).

The Emergence of the World as "Objectification of the Will" in Nethermere

In the first part of *The White Peacock*, we are invited to Nethermere, the centre of the narrative world, and deeply impressed by the description of a pastoral landscape isolated from real society. "Everyday problems and realities", as Worthen indicates, "are evaded almost completely" (225) in Nethermere. At the beginning of the narrative, Cyril considers the place "old, brooding over its past" (1). People live there enfolded within the peaceful valley "like an apple that falls in a secluded orchard" (59). Cyril feels as if he seems "to have lost my [his] substance, to have become detached from concrete things and the firm trodden pavement of everyday life" (83). However, other residents believe that life in Nethermere is "right" and "proper" because they feel "as if the world were old and good, not old and bad" (108). They are already "missing the poignancy of an actual today" in "a gap between today and tomorrow" (122).

In the second part of the narrative, Annable's peculiar behaviour and language are evident. His unique characteristics are clearly understood in the conversation he has with Cyril and other characters in the forest (*Ch. 1*). Annable has many children, but never exhibits an interest in them. He believes that his children should be as "natural" as animals. Given Cyril's advice that they will "get nicely trapped" unless he disciplines them, Annable retorts that they are "natural–they can fend for themselves like wild beasts do". When Leslie criticizes him, following Cyril, for neglecting his "duty" of a parent, Annable objects that "[w]hen a man's more than nature he's a devil" (131–32).

Referring to Schopenhauer's theory, we can interpret their conversation as a confrontation between two incompatible interests: "the interest of the species" and "the interest of individuals". Both the "trap" - a difficult situation into which the ignorant and the uneducated tend to fall - and "duty" or parents' education of their children to make them acquire social knowledge and common sense, can be counted as "the interest of individuals." Annable, in contrast, never cares about the interest of this kind. He lives his life with a motto, "Be a good animal, true to your animal instinct" (147); he is proud of having as many as nine children driven by the great force of sexual impulse, saying "I was a good animal before everything" (151). These words suggest that Annable lives as an "animal" or a "man in the natural state" in search of "the interest of the species" coming into being through the body as "the objectivity of the will". "What is looked for in marriage", as Schopenhauer states, "is not intellectual entertainment, but the procreation of children" (2: 545). However, even when the individual is to be dedicated to the continued existence of the species, the importance of the matter cannot be understandable to his/her intellect. "Therefore, in such a case", as Schopenhauer argues, "nature can attain her end only by implanting in the individual a certain *delusion (...)*". "This *delusion* is *instinct*", he goes on to declare, and "[we] observe the external phenomenon of instinct best in animals, where its role is most important" (2: 538). Schopenhauer's term "nature" is connected to the meaning of the "essence" of things, not the phenomena of the physical world. This connection is seen in the corresponding word Annable uses in his conversation with Cyril and Leslie.

There is a significant change between the first and the second part of the narrative. The dreamlike, unreal world of Nethermere - the cause or source of whose existence is uncertain - has been transformed with the entrance of Annable, into the world as the objectification of the will.

Annable's Death and Cyril's Paintings: the World as Will-Less Representation

Annable's influence on Nethermere is significant to the examination of the philosophical value of *The White Peacock*. It is unlikely that Annable awakes in Cyril (and other characters) an animal or natural instinct. Rather, the existence of the characters, including Annable, is gradually separated from the will as the essence of things after their encounter and interaction.

Schopenhauer repeatedly emphasizes that the formulation of his theory of "the world as will and representation" presupposes the metaphysics of "the two greatest philosophers of the West" (1: 170), Plato and Immanuel Kant. He identifies the will as Kant's "thing-in-itself", and the direct objectivity of the will, or unchangeable and original form (*eidos*) of all things, with Plato's *Idea*. In emerging into the phenomenal world, as Schopenhauer states, the will as *thing-in-itself* presents itself in innumerable "individuals". The plurality of such individuals is recognized through the forms of time, space, and causality as "the different aspects of the principle of sufficient reason" (1: 169). When humans seek the knowledge of the *Idea* as the original form of mere individuals (appearances) with their higher cognitive faculty, just as "the soul attain truth" when "the mind is gathered into herself (...) when she has as little as possible to do with the body, and (...) [she] is aspiring after being [in itself]" (Plato 42), a change takes place in the knowing subject and in the world present before it.

Schopenhauer states that, as long as the will is the essential prerequisite for all objects, "knowledge is completely the servant of the will" (1: 176). In contrast, the *Idea* as the prototype of all things (individuals) is beyond the constraint of time, space, and causality. Therefore, if the subject enhances itself from knowledge of mere representations to that of the *Idea*, it is "no longer individual" (1: 176) whose knowledge is "given entirely through the medium of a body" (1: 99). Consequently, knowledge "tears itself free from the service of the will precisely by the subject's ceasing to be merely individual and being now a pure will-less subject of knowledge" (1: 178). For Schopenhauer, it is only knowledge that can abolish the will itself (1: 400); and if that is the case, "the *world as representation* then stands out whole and pure" (1: 179). However, this does not mean that the subject comprehensively holds both the will and the representation within its knowledge but, as Simmel argues, that the will remains "beyond the limits of pure contemplation, for which things exist only as imagination [representation]" (77). Although the *Idea* is free from the constraint of space, time, and causality, as Schopenhauer claims, it is "necessarily object, something known, a representation, and precisely, but only, in this respect is it different from the thing-in-itself" (1:175).

Schopenhauer considers the knowing *Idea* as having an inseparable relation with art: "Its only source [the only source of art] is knowledge of the Ideas; its sole aim is communication of this knowledge" (1: 184–85). Schopenhauer declares that it is easier for the *Idea* to arise from the work of art than from nature and from reality, just because "the artist, who knew only the Idea and not reality, clearly repeated in his work only the Idea, separated it out from reality, and omitted all disturbing contingencies" (1: 195).

By interweaving the narrative discourse of *The White Peacock* with Schopenhauer's discourse, it is possible to clearly understand the second change in the narrative. We will subsequently analyze the events of particular significance for the philosophical analysis of the narrative: the death of Annable and Cyril's drawing paintings.

While walking over clumps of snowdrops, Lettie repeatedly asks her brother Cyril: "What do they [snowdrops] mean, do you think?" "What do you think they say - what do they make you think, Cyril?" (129) Then, Annable appears before them, argues with Cyril and Leslie, and advises Leslie to tell Lettie "not to come in a wood till she can look at natural things" (132). In Schopenhauer's terms, Lettie thinks of the snowdrops as the object of her knowing subject, that is, she recognizes them as the individuals presenting here and now in relation to her knowing subject in time and space as the *principium individuationis*; while Annable recognizes the "inner nature" of the flowers, the *Idea* as the object of real knowledge. He does not understand when, where, and how they are, but *what* they are *in themselves*. From the above, the scene represents - to borrow the title of the chapter in which it is described - "Strange Blossoms [emerging as the *Idea*], and Strange New Budding [of the world as representation]".

Following their encounter in the clumps of snowdrops, Annable encounters a peacock. He gets upset and shouts with hatred and contempt: "It's the devil" (148). The word "devil" immediately reminds us of his own phrase addressed to Cyril and Leslie: "When a man's more than nature he's a devil". If the word implies human intellect or knowledge "more than nature", then the word or signifier is connected to the meaning or signified of "pure will-less subject of knowledge". A few days later, Annable is killed in an accident.

Now we can identify the cause of Annable's death. Annable, who has originally lived in search of "the interest of the species," executes the faculty of knowing the essence of things. This consequently causes him to cease to be an individual and tear his knowing subject away from the will. Annable's pure knowing "nature" of things forces him into death, the loss of his body as the objectivity of the will. His death is considered the beginning of the second change in

Nethermere: from the world as representation of the will to that as will-less representation.

Cyril is the first person who is directly influenced by the change. Following Annable's death, perceiving different things and phenomena around him (such as flowers, birds, wind, etc.), Cyril asks himself, "What did I want, that I turned thus from one thing to another?" (220) This passage suggests Cyril's doubt about the knowledge of things as individuals (or appearances of the thing-in-itself). This doubt is subsequently communicated and transmitted to George.

Like Annable, George originally lives his life bound by sexual impulse. Cyril regards the men as having common physical characteristics: while watching "the noble, white fruitfulness of his [George's] form", Cyril "remembered the story of Annable" (222). George is driven by the sexual impulse within him to love Lettie. Although wishing she were free like wild animals, Lettie rejects his love and claims that they "have to consider things" (208). In addition, Lettie asks him: "You, for instance–fancy *your* sacrificing yourself–for the next generation–that reminds you of Schopenhauer, doesn't it? – for the next generation, or love, or anything" (210). This implies that she counts sexual love necessary for the existence of the species as just a "sacrifice", and Schopenhauer's metaphysics of sexual love as a mere "fancy." Lettie eventually leaves George, with her words addressed to him: "Look (...) how we are netted down–boughs with knots of green buds. If we were free on the winds. But I'm glad we're not" (214). This is a paraphrase of her claim that they "have to consider things", instead of loving each other at the mercy of their instinct.

Initially, George misunderstands what Lettie says, but Cyril's (and perhaps Lettie's) influence on him causes Nethermere to be recognizable to him as the world of pure will-less representation. George says to Cyril: "I have nothing definite to shape my life to (...) you and Lettie have made me conscious, and now I'm at a dead loss" (238). This remark indicates his anxiety and confusion when he is made to be "conscious", or to have knowledge, and thrown into the unknown world by Cyril and Lettie.

George marries another woman - Meg - and Cyril, subsequently, creates several paintings of landscapes of Nethermere and presents them to him as a wedding present. When George sees the drawings, "[a]ll the glamour of our [their] yesterdays" comes over him "like an intoxicant", and he realizes that "the wonderful beauty of life", which has been "weaving him into the large magic of the years", is "the splendour of the pageant" (239). From this statement, we can suppose the following: Cyril's drawing of water-colours implies that the world they used to live in is *re-presented* as works of art[8]; and Cyril's act of giving the paintings to George suggests, in Schopenhauer's term, "communication" of pure knowledge through the medium of the works of art. That is, Cyril's works of art cause George to recognize his life in Nethermere - that he has believed to be the reality - as a semblance, an illusion, or an appearance. Cyril feels "a sense of loss, and of change" (237) everywhere in the place. George anticipates the loss and the change with great fear: "I dread (...) this slow crumbling away from my foundations by which I free myself at last" (237). This is how Nethermere, the world as representation of the will, disappears, and the pure world (as representation) reveals itself to them. Now that Nethermere is no longer real for Cyril, George, and other characters, they direct their interests outward: "It was time for us all to go" (237).

"A New Start in Life": Entering into Modern Civilisation

In the third part of the narrative, the main characters leave Nethermere for "A New Start in Life"[9].

According to Squires, one of the reasons for its provoking different and opposing interpretations is that "the novel mixes lyrical, elegiac, and harshly realistic elements" (178). Squires particularly emphasizes a critical problem that the novel manifests "two strong but opposing tendencies: a tendency toward romanticism and a tendency toward naturalism" (178). This argument implies Lawrence's intention to depict a conflict of opposing ideas or ways of creating art in the novel: one resisting capitalism - and by extension material civilisation - with emphasizing the great power of creativity; the other attempting to acquire scientific knowledge of the physical world through creation of art. Squires indicates that harsh realism manifests itself outside the idyllic and nostalgic Nethermere in the third part and that such realism "is concentrated in the [character's] walking trips outside the valley of Nethermere" (177, 194). Squire's analysis is significant because it enables us to regard the characters of the narrative as representations of Europeans entering into modern civilised society from the old romantic life. It is life in pursuit of "the interest of individuals" in civil society that is awaiting the characters after leaving Nethermere.

Lettie marries Leslie, who "serves social systems rather than himself", and embraces "motherhood as her vocation in a social rather than a 'vital' sense" (Becket 2002, 41); while George struggles to compensate for his aimless life with an undemanding marriage, cynical involvement in politics, and sloppy management (Worthen 224). When he encounters Cyril again in London, they "scorned the faded procession of old years, and made mock of the vast pilgrimage of by-gone romances travelling farther into the dim distance" (Lawrence 1983, 281). George's life is originally influenced by "the interest of the species". When Nethermere is transformed into the world of pure or *will-less* representation, his knowing subject is emancipated from the will. Unlike Annable, he does not die but becomes aware of "the interest of individuals". George desperately struggles to pursue this interest, confused and not knowing exactly what to do in the strange world. Despite this, everything he engages in as a social role and vocation – husband, politician, and business manager – does not go well. His vital body, as closely connected with "the interest of the species", is now useless. At the end of the narrative, Cyril feels "choked" to see how thin George's body has become, even though he is in "the prime of his life" (321). As the narrative suggests, George undertakes the "ruining of his constitution" (314).

EQUILIBRIUM OF "BALANCE": BETWEEN METAPHYSICS AND CIVILISATION

This study supports the notion that Lawrence's first attempt to create his ideal works of art - into which "a metaphysic" is unfolded - is evident within his first novel, *The White Peacock*.

Judging from the development of the plot, in which the will or the essence of beings unfolded into the narrative eventually remains beyond the limits of pure knowledge, it can be asserted that Lawrence's question of Being through the creation of this novel ends in failure. Indeed, this is quite relevant[10]. However, the emphasis on Lawrence's purpose of making the figure Annable appear in the narrative entails an idea that the failure might be *intentional*.

Chambers felt "horrified", as she herself admits, when she read Annable's first appearance in the second draft of the narrative, and reproached Lawrence. But he "shook his head decisively" and said: "He [Annable] *has* to be there (...). He makes a sort of balance. Otherwise it's too much one thing, too much *me*" (117).

Persisting the idea that all civilisation is "the painted fungus of rottenness" and having a deep hatred for "any sign of culture" (146), Annable boasts with great pride to Cyril about living at the mercy of sexual impulse as a direct manifestation of the will itself. However, he is represented as an exemplary person in civilised society: he is such a man of intellect that he is admitted to Cambridge and becomes a person (149). He is acknowledged to be "a character" and "a fine fellow" by Cyril and Leslie (132). Viewing these apparently incompatible characters of Annable with the perspective of "balance", Lawrence's intentions are detectable.

Lawrence could have chosen the way of representing the figure of Annable as defying modern European civilisation or "a science of the dead world" armed with the question of Being. However, it would be "too much *me*" - for him. Lawrence provided the figure with knowledge free from the influence of the will as the essence of being to maintain the equilibrium state of the *balance*. In other words, he did so to prevent the balance from tilting toward his personal preference. Here we can suppose that the other characters' absorption into a "bourgeois world of surface values" (Hough 28) - because of their being "communicated" pure and will-less knowledge from Annable in the last part of the narrative - implies Lawrence's intention to avoid an ideal or unreal ending for him, or the advent of the "creative civilisation." It also presents the fact that metaphysics "is wearing woefully thin" in his time. It is possible for us to recognize the death of Annable, the evaporation of the world of representation of the will, as a reflection of his intention above. Lawrence's writing enables us to understand his readiness to explore his own art creation (dependent on metaphysics) and tackle the problems caused by modern European civilisation.

We do not intend to emphasize Lawrence's debt to scientists and philosophers who had a huge impact on him for his writing *The White Peacock,* or the extent to which the scientific and philosophical languages are borrowed in the novel–the extent of the one-directional or diachronic influence from science and philosophy to literature. Rather, we aim to emphasize how their languages and Lawrence's literary style complementarily overlap, resonate, and correspond with each other throughout the narrative. Metaphysics, or the question of Being, is certainly embedded within Lawrence's first novel.

This study observes Lawrence's own philosophy being deduced or derived from the literary text in which multiple languages or "symbols" are creating dialogues, echoing, and contesting each other. This is revealed through the examination of the writing process, and the narrative discourse of the novel in relation to metaphysics and modern civilisation.

Schopenhauer describes the will as striving for "life" or the "will-to-live" (1:275). In the final phase of the narrative of *The White*

Peacock, the emancipation of the world of representation from the will is the result of the "denial of the will-to-live" (1: 378). Therefore, it can be postulated that Lawrence represents the advent of the "creative civilisation" and provides the transition from the "denial" to the "affirmation of the will-to-live beyond the individual life" (1: 329) in his succeeding works. This concern will be dissected in another paper through an analysis of his works, such as *Sons and Lovers* and *The Rainbow*, which are generally considered Lawrence's first philosophical works.

NOTES

1. *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious* (1921) and *Fantasia* are regarded as arguing against what Lawrence believed to be "profoundly mistaken ideas" in Freudian theory (Salgãdo 86; Burden 52).
2. According to Becket, Lawrence's attempt "to define his notion of unconscious functioning in contrast to Freud's ideas of 'the' unconscious" (2002, 21) shows his commitment to "further imaginative explorations of his developing 'metaphysic', his personal philosophy" (2002, 22).
3. "Metaphysics," def. 1a. *The Oxford English Dictionary*.
4. Lawrence's disappointment reveals, according to Worthen, "how much . . . Lawrence had expected his teachers to be wise about what he was coming to think were the real problems of the twentieth century: questions of faith and belief, of nature and science" (168–69). He was shocked to realize "that he would have to go on breaking new ground for himself, as a man coming to terms with the modern world, . . . and as he was to do with Schopenhauer during his college career" (169).
5. Frequently referring to the "literary youth" and "immaturities" of *The White Peacock*, Hough points out that there are some episodes which can be "dismissed" as not effective in the narrative structure of the novel. But they are "something more," or "attempts at saying or symbolising something that Lawrence knew to be important, whose bearing and relevance he cannot yet see" (29). The "attempts" are, in Hough's words, based on "a singularly pure and untrammelled kind of discernment" (33–34). Lawrence abandons this pure insight after writing the novel "in pursuit of something more turbid and more difficult." (34) In response to Hough's argument above, Kermode claims that the "attempts" are never found "after the development of a 'Metaphysic'" (8).

6. See Black's view that the "Foreword to *Sons and Lovers*" (1913) is "the first of the philosophical works" of Lawrence (102); and Bell's argument that the development of Lawrence's "metaphysic" can be seen first in the "Foreword to *Sons and Lovers*" then in *Study of Thomas Hardy* (1914) and that this process of the development "has its first mature fictional expression" (5) in *The Rainbow* (1915).
7. According to Schneider, Lawrence "rejected a mechanistic materialism that denied the creative, religious impulse in man" by the time he wrote *Fantasia* (11–12). It may be easy to find the intimate connection between the term "creative impulse" and Lawrence's concept of "creative civilisation."
8. For Schopenhauer, art is "both effect and cause of the emancipation of pure intellect [knowing] from will" (Simmel 77). It should be noted that Cyril's drawings depict Nethermere's landscapes. Landscapes are the kind of paintings, as Schopenhauer expounds, in which "the subjective side of aesthetic pleasure is predominant, in other words, our delight does not reside mainly in the immediate apprehension of the manifested Ideas, but rather in the subjective correlative of this apprehension, in pure will-less knowing" (1: 218).
9. *The White Peacock*, title of ch. 1 in pt. 3.
10. Annable's death and the emancipation of the other characters' knowledge from the will are necessary consequences, for Schopenhauer's theories on the process in which the will emerges into the appearances or individuals closely follow those of Plato and Kant. Plato defines Being itself as *Idea* and phenomena as mere seeming and then separates them from each other despite the fact that Being inherently emerges and holds itself in appearance or has its essence *in* and *with* appearance (Heidegger 110–11). Kant declares that human knowledge is only concerned with phenomena and that the thing-in-itself (i.e., the will) is "entirely beyond our cognitive sphere" (Kant 305–06). As Heidegger points out, Schopenhauer's concept of the objectification of the will is regarded as the degeneration of Being "into a prototype for reproduction and copying"; therefore, Schopenhauer's "world eye," or pure cognition, is "only the optical" (66).

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MADELEINE MYSTICISM STIGMAS BY PIERRE JANET. THE FAILURES OF THE TRANSCENDENTAL DISTANCING OF THE WORLD AS ANSWERS TO A CONGENITAL MALAISE?

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Abstract. Apparently, and at first sight, at least on the psychological level and not on the theological, or even empirical-physical level (as the parapsychological analysis of levitations does), the mystical hallucination and its stigmas of imitation would express the *non-dissociation* between the imaginary and the real within the synthesis *body-consciousness*. Thus, the Ego (composing the singular conative and cognitive synthesis and expressing itself through feelings (or judgments) of the I in the Self of the human world) focuses for long hours or even days, months, or years, on this non-dissociation or fixed point, a transcendental junction that forms the Absolute.

Keywords: hallucination, stigma, synthesis, conation, cognition, absolute

The Self embodies this *intersubjectivity* or "flesh", said Husserl, "*of the body in act*". This implies that when this Self deploys itself in the world (the *res extensa* of Descartes) it reasons, *thus* resounds, certainly, and at every moment. But it is not so simple because it is not a question of a "domination" in the sense of a clear caesura between the inertia and the action, but of the polyvalence of *positive* charges in the Comtian sense, and *negative* in the Hegelian way: since it is a question each time not only of unfolding or folding up, of preserving itself, but also of developing, refining itself to grow. Or the transcendence itself. The one linking the objective and subjective worlds. Except this *effort* (in the sense of Biran taken up by Janet) can (there) fail inevitably, especially if one makes a mistake in the diagnosis from the start.

Let us start, for example, with Janet's conclusion (1975 (1926), 38[1]) about her "Madeleine" (an assumed name for Pauline Lair Lamotte according to Jacques Maître reports Pierre-Henri Castel[2]):

> (...) I adopted the hypothesis of a slowly evolving syringomyelia about a spinal cord malformation probably dating from early childhood.

What does this mean? Janet is reasoning as a doctor who reports an organic situation whose effectuation could have produced the ecstatic psychic state; which does not mean, however, that this one must be reduced to that one; that would be associationist, mechanistic materialism, which under the pretext of isolating a stem or source factor forgets to analyze also the various states of consciousness which allow to counter it. For the thing is there. What could Madeleine have done? Make herself dependent on her condition, on the doctors, by focusing on the physiological level, becoming a vegetative thing that would have been transported from the lecture hall of medicine to the cabinet of curiosities, whereas the Psyche of Madeleine makes something else of it, an ecstasy. This never ceases to intrigue Janet, in fact. And it is this first aspect that will interest us here, besides the phenomenological dimension perceived a second time.

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So made Janet her medical diagnosis. Three lines (*supra*). And yet he will devote hundreds of pages to the psychological aspect. Does this mean that he will underestimate the parapsychological aspect of Madeleine's mystical affirmations? This is not the problem. Some people, during this study day, have argued the opposite[3]. For example, considering that Janet would have been reluctant to admit certain connections in real-time, such as the transmission of thoughts (not to mention levitation) that he would have had with some of his patients (advising them to sleep while thinking about themselves, which was happening at that very moment, according to those around them), Janet would have been hiding this parapsychological methodology *par excellence* of *remote* hypnosis for fear of seeing himself blocked in his institutional career. It is obviously impossible to deny or confirm such an assertion. And even if it were plausible, two major objections can be raised.

Was Janet afraid to see himself as a self-aware "metapsychic" analyst?

First, the epistemological state of the sciences, not only psychic but physical, did not allow in Janet's time to decide sufficiently in favour of Bohr rather than Einstein about the "non-separation of a wave function in a particle system" to state the question as Bertrand d'Espagnat did in *In Search of Reality*[4]. In other words, the EPR paradox. Janet could not, as it is, without this prior epistemological framework, prove in a way the *in situ* possibility of telepathy. Certainly, today, the probability that it can exist because of this non-separability is non-zero, also because of the analysis carried out on monozygotic twins showing that they can feel the same pains and even go through similar trials. But in Janet's time, it was not possible to scientifically insert these "new" problems of non-separability.

Secondly, and this is what will interest us most here[5], Janet tries to define even more than Charcot, Ribot, and especially James, the properly psychological orb distinct from physiology as well as from medicine, a distinction from which a Freud will benefit (but with the ingratitude that we know[6]).

Basically, Janet does not attempt to ask whether the relationship to mysticism is plausible in "Madeleine", even if he expresses some doubts about the theological and poetic quality of her words (thus he judges the poems of another patient, Loetitia, to be more “interesting” (p.88); instead, Janet devotes all his observational effort to observing the various states of consciousness on the psycho-physiological, psycho-cognitive, and psycho-motivational levels, in short, he attempts to develop psycho-dynamic analysis to its full extent. Thus, his scientific interest consists in observing how body and mind "manage" in a way their congenital deficiency, how they manage to compensate for the organic difficulties by a kind of effervescence of the mental conduct.

In fact, Janet takes the exact opposite view of the Romantic movement in philosophy and literature, considering that it is precisely this kind of physiological or psychic fault that would be at *work* in the emergence of *the work*. Thus, the creative genius of a Hölderlin would be the fruit of his "madness" whereas the opposite is more likely: in order to counter his crises, he writes a lot, in a more and more illegible way it seems, but thus compensates the gap by an overcrowding of concentration. This is reminiscent of Pinel's observations who, after having disenchanted them, advised to give work to the insane of his time, a method that is not well understood even recently when one can read the complete misunderstandings that Michel Foucault made in his *Histoire de la folie (*1966[7]); misunderstandings pointed out by Gladys Swain (1977[8]).

How does Madeleine compensate herself? By going towards states of consciousness which seem to relieve her, or even fill her with happiness, such as kindness - she is known to be very helpful from a very young age - empathy towards human suffering, but very little towards her own, and finally long meditations peppered with ecstasy. It is not a question of saying that without her organic deficiency noted by Janet, this acuity would not have been there, but of observing that a correlation can be envisaged between a given organic state and a hyper dynamization of such a state of consciousness whose endocrine hormonal mobilization, by bringing pleasure, not only compensates for the deficiency but also allows to forget it.

This is not just any reading. It would make it possible to understand why such a disposition of action, such a motivation, can also have at its root such and such a "pain" without reducing this one to that one; which is in any case foreign to the Janetian method, distancing itself from physicalism, associationism, and the mono-factorization supposed to explain such and such causality.

Madeleine thus allowed Janet to study in a clinical and also theoretical way the ecstatic behaviours noted elsewhere in a number of illustrious authors without, however, proposing any value judgement on their content (*Op. cit.,* 1975, pp. 119-120, T.1):

> As I do not have to discuss in the least the objective truth of the ideas and feelings whose psychological mechanism I am analysing, as I do not have to look for whether Madeleine is really transformed into God, any more than I used to look, in connection with possession, for whether the body of poor Achilles was really inhabited by the devil, I can take the word delirium in the sense of a set of beliefs accompanied by complete certainty and opposed to the appearances which determine the beliefs of ordinary men. The ecstasy will be then in summary a crisis of optimistic and immobile religious delirium.

Is this conclusion sufficient on another level, the phenomenological, in the sense of identifying the human *dimension*, *i.e.,* the socio-cognitive and conative role of psycho-physical phenomena such as religious delirium? Janet is not concerned with this aspect but with the proper psychological side in the sense of observing how behaviour is modified and how the body justifies this.

But if we want to study the functional role of the absolute as an eschatological limit necessary for the delimitation of the Self[9], let us define the search for the absolute as *being* what seems to be a *phase agreement* - or ecstasy - between the body/spirit *and* the world also filled with bodies/spirits. This agreement, also in the sense of the Platonic mediation - proportion - of the cosmological communion is the justice itself -that balance between the stable (good), the coherent (beautiful) and the exact (true) - whose dialectical reading is a "delirium", in the Platonic sense of having the feeling to be, if not the world itself, at least to "read" " all the geometry of the links that weave body/mind/world in so many *relations* ("*no one enters here if he is not a geometer*" was written on the pediment of the Academy).

Janet captures this *agreement,* for example in Magdalene's displayed sexuality with God (*Op. cit.,* T.1, p. 67):

> Madeleine, who is, in reality and has been all her life the most modest and chaste of women, loses all modesty in certain crises of ecstasy and shows us

> brutally that she is not only the daughter of God, the mother of God, but that she is also the mistress or, if you like, the wife of God and that she knows how to be him completely.

And all this desire of "union", this carnal actualization of the *mathesis universalis* - would say Leibnitz, reflecting with Plato - turns out to be also what Hegel delivers to us, delivers, also in the "absolute knowledge" itself prolonging, amplifying Kant and his transcendental synthesis or the original and synthetic unity of the apperception with the imagination - this was besides the real *starting point of* Heidegger "moving away" from Husserl. Now, the latter had succeeded in moving away from this too globalizing and speculative temptation (which can be spotted even in Heidegger, who moreover ethicises it by the "purified" historicity as analysed by Leo Strauss). Husserl has indeed developed a weighted method of observation of the Self (by *the epoche*) by considering that it is not necessary to speculate on the global combinations to observe their *restricted* application in the sense of delimiting for analysis local perceptive fields, anyway crossed by these global combinations, that it is necessary thereafter to weight by multiform verifications.

To realize this complexity, some of Madeleine's behaviours can help. Francesca Biagi-Chai[10] relates this:

> It happened to Madeleine, in the presence of abnormal noises, such as the noise caused by new shoes or the grinding of a saw, to be taken of shivers and violent shakes, being able to go until the fainting.

How can we read this sequence? By positing this: if Madeleine flinches at the slightest sound not previously integrated into the ordinary, *i.e.,* in reality transcendental, setting of the world - in the sense of inserting each sound into a reading grid that is both local and universal -, this hypersensitivity would indicate an *absence of prior synthesis*, which forms the ego in Janet. This *Synthesis* has, as its object, to precisely hierarchize the order of importance of the interacted data according to the *hic et nunc* balance of the tendencies. This absence of synthesis implies either that the pressure of the physiological failure from which Madeleine suffers would be the cause of it, or that its psychic compensation, namely the exacerbation of the mystical reading of the world, comes to phenomenalize each sound in the sense of discovering its emergence each time and to startle when this last one tries to be integrated with the intimate synthesis of time, the circular temporality, its horizontality, in a word when an "abnormal" noise presents itself as a sensitivity, a vibration, of which it is necessary to give a sense in a local, syntactic, cultural frame, in a word global as presence also of the human world in every moment.

All this reading is possible, and it would be very fruitful from this point of view to decipher each symptom related, in this study, with Madeleine. We would then see that the phenomenological explanation, while being specific, profoundly reinforces the psychological analysis of the absence of synthesis which characterizes Janet's hysteria and of which the religious delirium can be one of the modes, which could moreover be studied in the study of fanaticism.

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THE LOSS OF NATIVE LANGUAGE. TOWARDS A MODERN POST-IMPERIAL WRITING (YEATS AND JOYCE)

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Abstract. This article addresses the issue of language in colonial and post-colonial contexts and its role in delineating authentic features of national identity. The first part tackles African and Irish theorists such as Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Douglas Hyde, whose views of clinging to the native tongue promote the politics of an essentialist identity. According to them, the loss of native language brings about feelings of inferiority and estrangement, which serves only to empower the colonizer. The article, then, proceeds to more tolerant writers who believe in the colonizer's share in making the present, and favour hybrid identities. For them, it is impossible to reduce the poly-vocality of the moment into the too-familiar, too-reassuring fictions of the old days. Finally, this work focuses on the Irish context through Yeats and Joyce, who radically transformed the idea of 'nation' by theorizing for style as an agent of redemption from colonial artistic and political confines. Their cosmopolitan techniques allow the breakthrough of a new context, post-imperial writing. The loss of the native language, therefore, opens alternative artistic paths to experiment with the language of the colonizer, fostering a modern, cosmopolitan and always-already in the make "national" identity.

Keywords: national identity, native language, essentialist, hybrid, experimentation, post-imperial

I. INTRODUCTION

Appeals to the native language in colonial and post-colonial contexts are among the most common strategies to recover one's indigenous identity. What animates such appeals is actually not only the consciousness that a language is perishing along with its culture but that patterns of power become dependent upon learning, speaking and writing in the imperial language. Therefore, the native language is associated with narratives of loss and disablement. Hence, the retrieval of language becomes a positioning and re-positioning of the colonial subject on the map of power. This problem automatically raises the discussion about what language should be deployed by subject peoples, especially in national literature, to construct national consciousness.

II. Rejecting the Colonizer's Language

Ngugi wa Thiong'o in his *Decolonising the Mind* stresses the importance of using one's native language in the process of independence and post-independence to secure a fully African identity. He explains the workings of language in the politics of cultural identity:

> Language carries culture, and culture carries, particularly through orature and literature, the entire body of values by which we come to perceive ourselves and our place in the world. How people perceive themselves and affects how they look at their culture, at their politics and at the social production of wealth, at their entire relationship to nature and to other beings. Language is thus inseparable from ourselves as a community of human beings with a specific form and character, a specific history, a specific relationship to the world. (16)

Here language overwhelms its communicative function: not only our personal, historical and social specificities are mapped in language and through language, but the entirety of our being is determined by our linguistic faculty. Excluding all other modes of self-perception, Thiong'o posits language as the sole mode of perceiving ourselves, others and our inter-relations, theorizing for an organic relationship between language and the self.

He, consequently, laments the identification of post-colonial writings with European languages, which are glorified and posited as points of references wherein the task of the native writer were to dismantle these myths of the European language centrality:

> African countries, as colonies and even today as neo-colonies, came to be defined and to define themselves in terms of the languages of Europe: English-speaking, French-speaking or Portuguese-speaking African countries…Unfortunately writers who should have been mapping paths out of that linguistic encirclement of their continent also came to be defined and to define themselves in terms of the languages of imperialist imposition. (Thiong'o 1986, 5)

Thiong'o points out that the obliteration of the native language is a deliberate scheme from the part of the colonizer, which aims at but also achieves a permanent distortion and destabilization of the coherence of the colonial subject. It is a beheading of the natives and a defilement of their pure nativism through forcibly mingling two heterogeneous linguistic entities. He further clarifies:

> Colonial alienation takes two interlinked forms: an active (or passive) distancing of oneself from the reality around; and an active (or passive) identification with that which is most external to one's environment. It starts with a deliberate disassociation of the language of conceptualization, of thinking, of formal education, of mental development, from the language of daily interaction in the home and in the community. It is like separating the mind from the body so that they are occupying two unrelated linguistic spheres in the same person. On a larger social scale, it is like producing a society of bodiless heads and headless bodies. (28)

Thiong'o's view is shared by David Diop who sees that relinquishing the native language is an enslaving modern strategy from the part of the colonizer and an up-rooting of the natives, a neo-classical project *par excellence*:

> The African creator, deprived of the use of his language and cut off from his people, might turn out to be only the representative of a literary trend (and that not necessarily the least gratuitous) of the conquering nation. His works, having become a perfect illustration of the assimilationist policy through imagination and style, will doubtless rouse the warm applause of a certain group of critics. In fact, these praises will go mostly to colonialism which,

> when it can no longer keep its subjects in slavery, transforms them into docile intellectuals patterned after Western literary fashions which besides, is another more subtle form of bastardization. (Diop 1956)

The quote exposes the politics of an essentialist identity that is formed around opposites, colonizer versus colonized, a "conquering nation" versus a conquered one, masters versus slaves, originals versus imitation, agents versus passives and nobles versus bastards. Obi Wali joins the chorus of the exponents of nativist languages linking nativism to advancement: "the whole uncritical acceptance of English and French as the inevitable medium for educated African writing is misdirected, and has no chance of advancing African literature and culture" (*qtd.* in Thiong'o 1986, 24). Thiong'o moves a step forward and posits nativism as the very condition of liberation since "African languages addressing themselves to the lives of the people become the enemy of a neo-colonial state" (30).

In the Irish context, Douglas Hyde in his lecture "The Necessity of De-Anglicizing Ireland" "delivered to the Irish Literary Society in November 1892" which "led within a year to the foundation of the Gaelic league, a movement for the preservation of Irish" (Kiberd, 1996, 140) voices his fears of losing the Irish language. According to him, such a loss will shatter all hopes of the restoration of the "Irish race" and the "Gaelic nation" as the Irish will find themselves "despoiled of the bricks of nationality" namely their "language, traditions, music, genius, and ideas" (Hyde 1904).

Though the nativists' calls are benevolent in their intentions, the fanatic clinging to the pure language of the natives in a now-hybridized community is very intricate if not impossible. The danger is that the nativists will always seek a pure past, a pristine language and heritage that existed so to speak in the pre-colonial times, reducing the poly-vocality of the moment back into the too-familiar, too-reassuring fictions of the old days. Besides, in these calls, the all-too-omnipresent danger is the imitation of the colonizer's logic of binarism and therefore the embracing of what they claim to refute.

Ania Loomba brilliantly captures the idea warning that in "the process of exposing the ideological and historical functioning of such binaries, we are in danger of reproducing them" (104).

III. The Necessity of Using the Colonizer's Language

The practice of writing in the language of the colonizer, however, is deemed justifiable and even national for writers who believe in the inevitable reciprocity by which the experience of the colonized is bound to that of the colonizer. No matter how ironically Thiong'o refers to this idea as "the fatalistic logic", the share of the colonizer in the making of the present of the colonized is undeniable. Chinua Achebe, for example, while euphemistically acknowledging the guilt of forsaking one's native language, sees the deployment of the colonizer's language as a necessity. If abandoning the mother tongue is a betrayal, writing in English is an obligation. Achebe does not choose English, English chooses him. And he is grateful for the choice: "Is it right that a man should abandon his other tongue for someone else's? It looks like a dreadful betrayal and produces a guilty feeling. But for me there is no other choice. I have been given the language and I intend to use it" (Achebe 1975, 7). He also points to the possibility of writing about African experience in English: "I feel that the English language will be able to carry the weight of my African experience. But it will have to be a new English, still in full communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit new African surroundings". (7) The nativist writing task, therefore, turns into maintaining cultural national sovereignty while cultivating beneficial links with the English language.

Gabriel Okra speaks about varieties of English: "There are American, West Indian, Australian, Canadian and New Zealand versions of English. All of them add life and vigour to the language while reflecting their own respective cultures. Why shouldn't there be a Nigerian or West African English which we can use to express our own ideas, thinking and philosophy in our own way?" (*qtd.* in

Thiong'o 1986, 9). Coming to tolerant terms with the language of the colonizer imposes itself as a necessity for generations who have been taught the imperial language at school and can use it as a literary medium. Often knowing nothing about their own native tongue, these people find it impossible to fully present themselves in a language other than English. Furthermore, owning a completely different cultural heritage from that of the Englishman, the colonized's deployment of English naturally imposes its own ways.

IV. Experimenting with the Colonizer's Language

Back to the Irish context, the situation is complex for "the Irish writer [who] has always been confronted with a choice. This is the dilemma of whether to write for the native audience – a risky, often thankless task – or to produce texts for consumption in Britain and North America" (Kiberd 1996, 136). For Yeats, the situation seems the most complicated of all because of his Anglo-Irish background. He confesses: "the English language in which I think, speak and write... everything I love has come to me through English; my hatred tortures me with love, my love with hate. I am like the Tibetan monk who dreams at his initiation that he is eaten by a wild beast and learns on working that he himself is eater and eaten" (1980, 263).

Yeats, though aware of the Anglo-Irish crisis of identity does not believe that English as a language prevents the articulation of national identity. Although he sees eye to eye with Hyde on what makes up a genuine nationality, namely the restoration of Gaelic games, music, traditions and heroes mentioned in the latter's lecture, he wonders whether placing the Irish language at the centre of Irishness makes English-speaking Ireland "a nation of imitators" without "the power of native initiative and alive only to second-hand assimilation" (Hyde 1904):

> Is there, then, no hope for the de-anglicizing of our people? Can we not build up a national literature, which shall be nonetheless Irish in spirit from being

> English in language? Can we not keep the continuity of the nation's life, not by trying to do what Dr. Hyde has practically pronounced impossible, but by translating and retelling in English, which shall have an indefinable Irish quality of rhythm and style, all that is best in the ancient literature? Can we not write and persuade others to write histories and romances of the great Gaelic men of the past, from the son of Nessa to Owen Roe, until there has been made a golden bridge between the old and the new? (Yeats 1970, 255)

O'Brien discusses Yeats' peculiar notion of de-anglicisation, which consists of writing about Irish themes in English and believes that "Yeats is offering a way out of the closed system of essentialist Irishness" (130). This leads to his encompassing description of Yeats as "the Anglo-Irish, English-speaking de-angliciser of Ireland" (135).

Yeats's project of de-anglicisation, then, consists of endowing his English verse with an Irish spirit, imbuing it with Irish rhythm and style and introducing great Gaelic men of the past. It becomes, therefore, clear that Yeats employs English to carry what he used to call the "Irish subject", Yeats succeeds not in reversing the hierarchy English - Gaelic but in asserting that "a self could only awaken by an act of hybridization" (Kiberd 1996, 165). Yeats's intense engagement with Irish old spirits by reporting, narrating, composing, unearthing, rediscovering and reviving the heritage of his people within the confines of the English language helped the emergence of a new "mode of expression" which "was nothing other than the search for a national style" (Kiberd 1996, 116) and an intelligent exploitation of the creative possibilities of the language. The word *style* for Yeats is highly connotative both aesthetically and politically; their very fusion is what enables "the idea of a nation" (Yeats 1999, 364).

Yeats's practices amount to what is described by Ashcroft in *The Empire Writes Back*as "abrogation or denial of the privilege of 'English' [which] involves a rejection of the metropolitan power over the means of communication [and] appropriation and reconstitution of the language of the centre, the process of capturing and remoulding the language to new usages, marks a separation from the site of colonial privilege" (37). He continues: "Appropriation is the process by which the language is taken and made to 'bear the burden' of one's own cultural experience, or, as Raja Rao puts it, to 'convey in a language that is not one's own the spirit that is one's own.' (Rao 1938: vii)" (38). Declan Kiberd brilliantly captures Yeats's practices in his article's title "Revolt into Style-Yeatsian Poetics", considering style as "an agent of redemption" from English artistic as well as colonial shackles. (1996, 305)

The late Yeats moves a step forward from the simplistic form of appropriation and starts an enterprise of shattering old forms of dramaturgy by incorporating Japanese Noh techniques in an English-speaking Irish national theatre, allowing the breakthrough of a new context, post-imperial writing. From the bare stage that contrasts with the crammed space of the realistic European drama to the use of the mask and the adaptation of the concept of the anti-self which foreground the doubleness of character besides the presence of the musicians in his late plays who provide a commentary upon the symbolic events, the Japanese style of characterization and dramaturgy becomes the force by which Yeats moulds an Irish nativist lore within a foreign tradition to communicate personal and nationalistic themes. He boasts: [w]ith the help of Japanese plays 'translated by Ernest Fenollosa and edited by Ezra Pound" I have invented a form of drama, distinguished, indirect and symbolic, and having no need of mob or Press to pay its way – an aristocratic form" (1961, 221)

The enterprise is carried on extraordinarily by James Joyce who found new narrative modes that use international English rather than English English or Irish English, permitting the emergence of a cosmopolitan identity. If the national literature is but a conflict between English - the language of the colonizer and the native language of the colonized, then Joyce's literature affords an open and free space in which the relation between the two is simultaneously enacted in the text and absent from the text, jumping not only from the traditional narratives that conceive the encounter of the colonizer and colonized as antagonistic but from the more tolerant approach that sees the colonizer and the colonized as mutually constitutive to a revolutionary stance.

The issue of language is directly addressed in *A Portrait,* where Stephen ponders over his ambivalence towards English and native language alike. When conversing with the English dean of studies at his university in English, he ponders:

> The language in which we are speaking is his before it is mine. How different are the words *home*, *Christ*, *ale*, *master*, on his lips and on mine! I cannot speak or write these words without unrest of spirit. His language, so familiar and so foreign, will always be for me an acquired speech. I have not made or accepted its words. My voice holds them at bay. My soul frets in the shadow of his language. (Joyce 1992, 146)

Stephen's soul that "frets in the shadow of" English is akin to Yeats's being "eaten" by the English language. Both writers as colonized subjects acknowledge a deep-seated unrest with the use of a language that is not theirs, yet at the same time working within that language to invent a tradition. Stephen in an attempt to fight the hegemony of the English dean, "this courteous and vigilant foe" (Joyce 1992, 146), uses the word "tundish" that the latter has "never heard of" instead of "funnel" which is common in the imperial English (Joyce 1992, 145). As a matter of fact, "Irish was for [Joyce] no longer a feasible literary medium, but a means whereby his people had managed to reshape English, to a point where their artists could know the exhilaration of feeling estranged from *all* official languages" (Kiberd 1996, 331). Joyce celebrates hybridity in language and culture because it reflects the hybrid reality of modern Ireland.

Languages, besides religion and nationality "are nets flung at [the soul of a man born in Ireland] to hold it back from flight" (Joyce 1992, 157). Joyce, like Stephen, his autobiographical character, "shall try to fly by those nets" (Joyce 1992,157) "using for [his] defence the only arms [he] allow[s] [him]self to use –silence, exile and cunning" (Joyce 1992, 191). Silence invokes observation and contemplation but, above all, it is an abstention from speech, from a specific language *per se*. Exile in the Joycean philosophy is particularly interesting. His novel *Ulysses*, for example, when about Dublin is written in exile, namely in Trieste, Zurich and Paris. Linguistically speaking, Fritz Senn coins the word "Lexile" to refer to "displacement or foreignness or salient oddity… on the lexical aspect" (2018, 137). Senn details multiple techniques that Joyce uses to exile language such as deviant terms, traces of origin, aberrant catalogues, textual transfers, black holes and others. Chief among lexiles, however, is the juxtaposition of different world languages undermining the centrality of the English language but also of other languages. Senn writes:

> Stephen Dedalus is fond of recondite or foreign words, in "Proteus" particularly: German (nacheinander, nebeneinander), Latin (iniuria patiens), Italian, Greek (adiaphane, euge), French (Zut, nom de Dieu), Gipsy, cant, etc. They are plug-ins from alien, often remote, areas. In groping for the most appropriate verb, Stephen tries out a series in English, German/Yiddish, French and Italian: "She trudges, schlepps, trains, trascines her load" (U 3.392), aiming for the best effect. (2018, 141)

Cunning in a linguistic context may be equated with Senn's notion of lexile because tampering with language is a dexterous skill that Joyce masters very well. Eugene O'Brien points to Joyce's transformation of "William Shakespeare" into "Patrick W. Shakespeare" in *Ulysses*, which he sees as "name … transformed into trope, with a 'turning away' … from colonial associations into those of the post-colonial" (7) and which "is symbolic of Joyce's project, namely the redefinition and pluralization of Irish identity" (7). O'Brien later concludes that "Joyce sees the nominal troping of Patrick W. Shakespeare as a liberation from that sterile Irish-English binarism, and as a displacement of the language of the empire into the empire of language" (8). Of course, Joyce's literature is abundant in lexiles and cunning, which serve as a testimony to Joyce's cosmopolitanism.

V. Conclusion

The loss of the native language, therefore, is not a fact to be lamented. It rather demonstrates the capacity to profit from the loss in producing new narrative modes, in allowing traditionally competing narratives to some degree to mingle and to even a greater degree to annul each other and be part of a universal and cosmopolitan system. It has granted post-colonial writers the possibility of experimenting with the language of the other, experimentation whose multifarious techniques can invest the post-imperial language with extraordinary aesthetic and political power. Paradoxically, losing the native tongue marks a new departure for post-colonial literature that cuts with the colonialist form of discourse, catapulting its writers into the forefront of the modernist movements, into the modern age, and into the age of globalization.

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THE DEMON BEHIND THE ANGEL IN THE HOUSE. AN ANALYTICAL COMPARISON BETWEEN SHIRLEY JACKSON'S *DOMESTIC WRITINGS* AND HER *GOTHIC*/*HORROR* FICTION

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Abstract. As pointed out by Ellen Moers (1976), women-authored Gothic works are often the expression of anxieties over the domestic sphere. Although Moers' approach embraced especially eighteenth- and nineteenth-century texts, it might still hold true for twentieth-century women-authored Gothic works: a crucial trope of this type of literature is, for instance, the haunted house, which permeates Shirley Jackson's production. Her narratives often revolve around anti-heroines trapped in gloomy mansions, trying to escape the aggressive demands of a patriarchal society: suffice it to think of some of her most famous works, such as *The Haunting of Hill House* and *We Have Always Lived in the Castle*. Therefore, it is particularly significant how Jackson also wrote plenty of humoristic sketches based on her own domestic daily life as a wife and mother: despite their cheerful tone, these anecdotal recollections feature some of the themes explored in her more disturbing fiction. In this paper, I will try and account for these two narratological trends, by discussing excerpts of Jackson's domestic writings and comparing them with pieces of her fiction. My hope is to show how these apparently irreconcilable tendencies are actually a perfect example of the painful duality inherent to "Female Gothic".

Keywords: gothic, female gothic, Shirley Jackson, domesticity, domestic writings, housewife, family life, 1950s, America, Betty Friedan

1.

In her groundbreaking study *Literary Women*, first published in 1976, Ellen Moers defined what she called "Female Gothic": that is,

> (…) the work that women writers have done in the literary mode that, since the eighteenth century, we have called the Gothic. But what I mean – or

> anyone else means – by 'the Gothic' is not so easily stated except that it has to do with fear. (Moers 1976, 90)

As the careful reader will soon find out, most of Female Gothic heroines must usually flee from a threatening figure (be it real or imaginary) and are nonetheless trapped in a dark, mysterious castle or gloomy mansion. One could argue, therefore, that the perils the heroine has to confront in Female Gothic narratives do not come from the external world, but from an inner and supposedly safe space; a notion that subverts, in a way, the traditional definition of femininity. In this paper, I will build upon these initial insights on Female Gothic to discuss the still relevant significance of haunted-house narratives as paradigmatic of women writers' experience and struggles in their own socio-cultural context, since, as Norman N. Holland and Leona F. Sherman pointed out, "The image of woman-plus-habitation […] has changed little since the eighteenth century" (Holland and Sherman 1977, 279). To this aim, I will present as a case study the work and life of Shirley Jackson, by comparing the author's Gothic fiction set in a domestic environment to her autobiographical "family writings", while highlighting their reciprocal influence.

2.

As pointed out by Eugenia DeLamotte,

> The heyday of Gothic romance was also a time during which woman's place in society was becoming a matter of increasing debate, and a number of writers sought to clarify the issue. With some notable exceptions, […] most of these attempts to define woman were also attempts to confine her to a separate "sphere" bounded by the duties of home… (DeLamotte 1990, 150-151)

Therefore, it is not surprising how haunted-house narratives became of increasing importance in female-authored Gothic works. From a very early stage, the Gothic form constituted the narrative space in which women authors were free to express their own feelings of inadequacy, displacement and terror when facing their social condition of domestic entrapment. However, it soon became clear how the anxieties formulated by the Gothic genre could still hold true well into the twentieth century, especially regarding women's role in 1950s America. Activist Betty Friedan, author of the pioneering study *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), defined the condition that affected women during this era as "the problem that has no name":

> It was a strange stirring, a sense of dissatisfaction, a yearning that women suffered in the middle of the twentieth century in the United States. Each suburban wife struggled with it alone. As she made the beds, shopped for groceries, matched slipcover material, ate peanut butter sandwiches with her children, chauffeured Cub Scouts and Brownies, lay beside her husband at night – she was afraid to ask even of herself the silent question – "Is this all?" (Friedan 1974, 11)

"The problem" was, of course, women's overall dissatisfaction with what society was willing to give them: an unfulfilled life as daughters, mothers and wives, unable to have a career or take advantage of their college education. In the Baby Boom era, as GIs had returned home from World War II to reunite with their families, media and commercials seemed to join forces to ultimately convince women that doing housework was the most incredible experience any woman could ever ask for. As predictable, women soon started to feel burdened by this ready-made lifestyle; many began to rely heavily on antidepressants, sleeping pills and, in some cases, alcohol.

2.1

All of a sudden, women were thought of as incapable of understanding politics, science, or the general world of ideas. A manifest consequence of this was the increasing shallowness of women's magazines which, during the 1950s, came to revolve exclusively around the "housewife formula": that is, articles on how to be the perfect wife and mother paired with romance fiction

(Friedan 1974, 48). These magazines also gave rise to the phenomenon of the so-called “Housewife Writers”: a group of talented women writers who conceived of themselves as mere housewives and wrote humorously about their family life. In Friedan’s words, “Laugh, the Housewife Writers tell the real housewife, if you are feeling desperate, empty, bored, trapped in the bedmaking, chauffeuring and dishwashing details. Isn’t it funny? We’re all in the same trap” (Friedan 1974, 50).

3.

While Friedan’s remarks are certainly correct, Andrea Krafft noticed how she possibly underestimated the opportunity for empowerment inherent to many “housewife stories”. In fact, “To reject writing directed toward housewives overlooks how even apparently optimistic domestic narratives can speak to a broader interest in renegotiating domesticity and motherhood” (Krafft 2016, 106). This very concept also concerns the works of Shirley Jackson. Throughout her life, she peculiarly combined psychological horror narratives with humorous accounts of day-to-day domesticity, which were, indeed, published in popular women’s magazines of the time such as *Woman’s Home Companion* and *Ladies’ Home Journal*.

3.1

Jackson was born in 1916 in the suburban area surrounding San Francisco. In the late 1930s, she met and fell in love with Stanley Edgar Hyman, a future prominent literary critic. They married in 1940 despite their families’ objections and led a “mad bohemian” life (Franklin 2016, 128) in New York City until Shirley’s first pregnancy. Ruth Franklin reports that “For many years, Shirley maintained a running joke that she was conducting a contest between the number of children she produced and the number of books she wrote” (Franklin 2016, 159); in fact, she gave birth to a total of four children. Following the custom of his era, Stanley was a "hands-off parent" (Franklin 2016, 159), so most of the household and the parenting chores fell on Shirley's shoulders. He also made very clear that he did not believe in monogamy, and never failed to provide detailed accounts of his infidelities to his wife, who had reluctantly agreed to an open relationship. The couple's nonconformist lifestyle notwithstanding, Shirley is remembered by her children as a loving and imaginative mother. Despite the struggle of taking care of four kids practically alone, a task which left her barely no time to herself, she delighted in their thoughts and mischiefs, which "provided Shirley with a deep well of material that she would draw on many times for the comic essays she published in women's magazines" (Franklin 2016, 163), her main income source for many years. A number of these humorous accounts were collected in the volumes *Life Among the Savages* (1953) and *Raising Demons* (1957). Significantly, these titles combine the familial experience with "the 'savage' and 'demonic' elements" that were going to permeate all of Jackson's fiction and that, perhaps, as Roberta Rubenstein suggested, "laced Jackson's vision of family" (Rubenstein 1996, 311). In fact, during the last years of her life, Shirley started suffering from agoraphobia and severe depression, which she tried to soothe with psychiatric drugs, alcohol, and unhealthy eating habits. She died from a heart attack in her sleep in 1965, aged forty-eight. The "strange stirring" described by Betty Friedan in her book had finally taken its toll.

4.

According to Rubenstein, Jackson's fiction always demonstrated a preoccupation with narratives on "ambiguous houses" (Rubenstein 1996, 311); a tendency that can also be traced in her 1959 Gothic novel *The Haunting of Hill House*. The novel sees thirty-two-year-old Eleanor having spent all of her life taking care of a disabled and abusive mother, now dead. When Dr Montague, an investigator of supernatural phenomena, invites her and other two people to spend the summer at Hill House, a supposedly haunted mansion, she steals her sister's car and embarks on what she perceives to be a joyous adventure. Yet, Eleanor's quest for love and independence will be crushed by Hill House's consuming will, to the point of committing suicide after being rejected by the other occupants at the end of the novel. Jackson does not give the reader many clues on whether the strange events occurring at Hill House are a product of real supernatural phenomena or, perhaps, of Eleanor's disturbed mind; however, Eleanor does not actually seem to feel imprisoned by Hill House (Akçil 2019, 140). On the contrary, she sees her time there as her only chance for self-affirmation. Her ambivalent feelings towards the house can be traced in one of Jackson's domestic writings, titled "Here I Am, Washing Dishes Again". The story opens with Jackson's mockery of the classic "housewife formula": "If I were any sort of a proper housewife at all I'd start my dishwashing at a specific hour in the morning, duly aproned, trim and competent…" (Jackson 2015, 317). Despite her longing to be outside with "the rest of the world" (Jackson 2015, 317), the story continues with what seems to be a more content tone:

> I don't really hate these brass faucets and the complete perfect circle of the dishpan, though; I love these things, I own them, they are so essential a part of me that I like to be near them, and when I am away from home, next to the children the thing I miss most is the sight of my own dear sink. When I wash dishes, I stare into the dishpan and at my own hands, which are the only alien things in the dishwasher, the only things that don't rattle. (Jackson 2015, 317)

This passage might remind one of Eleanor's descriptions of her imaginary home when asked where she lives. She fondly lists small material possessions, which she sees as means of self-fulfilment, such as white curtains, "little stone lions", and "My books and records and pictures" (Jackson 2019, 95).

4.1

As the careful reader might notice, some of *The Haunting*'s most disquieting passages have to do with hearing. During one of her first nights at Hill House, Eleanor awakens to a banging on the wall, just like the one her mother did to wake her up the night she died:

> Now, she thought, now. It is only a noise, and terribly cold, terribly, terribly cold. It is a noise down the hall, far down at the end, near the nursery door, and terribly cold, *not* my mother knocking on the wall. (Jackson 2019, 140)

Noise is also a central element in many of Jackson's domestic writings. See, for instance, the first story of *Life Among the Savages*, where she states that "Our house is old, and noisy, and full" (Jackson 1953, 1), and also that her daughter "spoke for a long time about a faraway voice in the house which sang to her at night" (Jackson 1953, 21). As noted by Krafft, Jackson's description of her house in Gothic terms "transforms the dream of housewifery and motherhood into the stuff of nightmares"; in fact, "the language of horror" probably "signals her domestic frustrations" (Krafft 2016, 107).

4.2

As the novel unfolds, it becomes increasingly clear Hill House has chosen Eleanor as its victim. In the end, Eleanor will indeed become the very spirit haunting Hill House with its presence:

> And here I am, she thought. Here I am inside. It was not cold at all, but deliciously, fondly warm. It was light enough for her to see the iron stairway curving around and around up to the tower, and the little door at the top. Under her feet the stone floor moved caressingly, rubbing itself against the soles of her feet, and all around the soft air touched her, stirring her hair, drifting against her fingers, coming in a light breath across her mouth, and she danced in circles. No stone lions for me, she thought, no oleanders; I have broken the spell of Hill House and somehow come inside. I am home, she thought, and stopped in wonder at the thought. I am home, I am home, she thought… (Jackson 2019, 256)

Eleanor's haunting is almost mirrored in yet another autobiographical sketch, "Good Old House":

> When we came to occupy our present house, we were not at first accepted, although the neighbours welcomed us and took us in with the deep New England courtesy that is half tolerance and half humour. We shortly accustomed ourselves to trading at certain stores, and we bought our coal locally, and we found a doctor and a dentist and a dog, and we went to the local movie theatre and enrolled Laurie in the local nursery school – still, the old house had grave reservations about us and would allow us to feel only provisionally at home. Twice, the first week we were there, I awoke with nightmares of the old house shaking over me, malevolent and cruel, and after that, during our first few months, I frequently found myself awake after having walked in my sleep toward the front door, and once I found myself out between the pillars, as if running away. (Jackson 2015, 223)

Unlike Eleanor, Jackson depicts her own ambivalent feelings towards her home through the sleepwalking act of "running away", the exact opposite of Eleanor's choice. Ultimately, however, both stances reveal a fundamental uneasiness with the domestic confinement to which women were still destined in 1950s America.

5.

In Jackson's last complete novel, *We Have Always Lived in the Castle*, published in 1962, sisters Constance and Merricat Blackwood live secluded with their Uncle Julian in their mansion, after the death by poisoning of the rest of the family. This "ironic nuclear family" (Rubenstein 1996, 319) leads nonetheless a somewhat peaceful and serene life made of small domestic rituals, especially concerning food and meal preparation. Their precarious balance is disrupted by the arrival of cousin Charles, who seeks to marry Constance and inherit the family fortune. Merricat, the feral and witch-like narrator, burns the Blackwood house down not to submit to Charles' male authority. In the end, it will turn out it was her who killed the family, despite her older sister Constance having always taken the blame. The conclusion of the novel fully transforms a common trope of Female Gothic: while eighteenth-century Gothic romances usually ended with the heroine's happy marriage and, often, her return to the domesticity she had tried to escape, the Blackwood sisters end up establishing an even stronger bond with each other, inhabiting what remains of their house as haunting figures.

5.1

The sisters' isolation might stem from Jackson's own feelings of loneliness following her move to Vermont, where the family had to relocate after Stanley was offered an academic position. As one reads in "Good Old House", "Our neighbours would stand and talk interminably at the front door or the back door, but they would never come inside, and the attempts I made to invite them in for tea met with faint, but polite, incredulity" (Jackson 2015, 224-225). This passage resembles Constance and Merricat's relationship with the town-dwellers, most of which are too afraid to talk to them; only two ladies still dare to keep in touch:

> They came dutifully, although we never returned their calls, and stayed a proper few minutes and sometimes brought flowers from their gardens, or books, or a song that Constance might care to try over on her harp; they spoke politely and with little runs of laughter, and never failed to invite us to their houses although they knew we would never come. (Jackson 2009, 21)

Jackson's allusion to inviting her neighbours for tea, moreover, echoes the recurring refrain sang by the town children whenever they meet Merricat: "Merricat, said Connie, would you like a cup of tea? / Oh, no, said Merricat, you'll poison me" (Jackson 2009, 17).

On another note, the authorial obsession for food and its preparation is mirrored in Jackson's "Here I Am, Washing Dishes Again", which describes the author's relationship with the space of the kitchen:

> My husband and son, who are gadget-happy, set up for me to use in my kitchen a magnetic metal bar, about four inches long, that takes, and keeps, a violent hold on any metal objects near it, so that I have had to pry my can openers away from it and occasionally, working too near, have had fear for the fillings in my teeth, or my wedding ring, or the tips of my shoelaces. […]

> Sometimes, wandering as I do around my kitchen, I feel the magnetic pull myself, the urge to flatten myself against the wall and, until I am taken down for some practical purpose, lie there quiet, stilled, at rest.
>
> Perhaps it's the magnet that holds me to my kitchen. (Jackson 2015, 321-322)

Once again, Jackson mocks the "housewife formula" by making her resignation evident and conceiving of herself as a mere kitchen tool; which speaks both of her alienation and her affection regarding this room (see, for instance, the usage of the possessive adjective "my" when referring to the kitchen, as if it were her main defining space).

6.

I hope this brief series of literary examples served the purpose of showing how Jackson "negotiates the global and political through the domestic", by conveying women's struggle for "a room of their own" both in her domestic writings and in her Gothic fiction, "with each sphere equally configured as a space of terror" (Ingram and Mullins 2018, 342). However, as already underlined by Krafft, it is important to acknowledge how all of Jackson's writings function not only as symbols of patriarchal oppression but as tools of female empowerment, too: as observed by Gizem Akçil, both "Eleanor Vance and Merricat Blackwood take part in subversive acts of resistance to turn the Gothic mansions they inhabit into sanctuaries" (Akçil 2019, 178), which holds true for Jackson's life as well, since she always tried, despite her impending duties as a stay-at-home mom and writer, to maintain a balance between these two sides of her personality. Indeed, as stated by Franklin, "Jackson's two authorial personas, though often in tension, were equally authentic" (Franklin 2016, 15).

Perhaps as authentic as this sardonic piece of non-fiction, only a few paragraphs long, titled "The Real Me" and published posthumously in 2015:

> I am tired of writing dainty little biographical things that pretend that I am a trim little housewife in a Mother Hubbard stirring up appetizing messes over a wood stove.
>
> I live in a dank old place with a ghost that stomps around in the attic room we've never gone into (I *think* it's walled up), and the first thing I did when we moved in was to make charms in black crayon on all the door sills and window ledges to keep out demons, and was successful in the main. There are mushrooms growing in the cellar, and a number of marble mantels that have an unexplained habit of falling down onto the heads of the neighbors' children.
>
> At the full of the moon I can be seen out in the backyard digging for mandrakes, of which we have a little patch, along with our rhubarb and blackberries. I do not usually care for those herbal or bat wing recipes, because you can never be sure how they will turn out. I rely almost entirely on image and number magic. My most interesting experience was with a young woman who offended me and who subsequently fell down an elevator shaft and broke all the bones in her body except one, and I didn't know that one was there. (Jackson 2015, 357)

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"TOMORROW SEX WILL BE GOOD AGAIN". EXPLORING SEX, SHAME AND THE OPTION OF QUEER SEXUALITIES IN ALIFA RIFAAT'S *DISTANT VIEW OF A MINARET*

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Abstract. Sexuality has taken centre stage in most political and social discourses, as several laws are being passed and/or amended to respond to the call for an inclusivist approach to evolving sexualities. Previously shrouded in secrecy and considered verbal taboos, especially among women in African societies, sex and sexualities are now explored rather extensively by female writers and movie producers in contemporary Africa. Drawing on eclectic theoretical formulations, we explore the relationship between sex and shame and how it leads to the desire for queer identities using two short stories from Alifa Rifaat's *Distant View of a Minaret.* The paper reveals that the subjugation of sexual freedom and sexual starvation of females constitute critical sites for the exploration of queer sexualities as alternative means of sexual agency and being. The paper makes a significant contribution to the literature and discussions on the intersection between postcolonial literature and sexuality studies.

Keywords: *Distant View of a Minaret*, sex, postcolonial shame, queer, sexuality

INTRODUCTION

> *As women, it is our duty to ourselves and our partners to get more vocal about asking for what we want in bed, as well as sharing what we don't. Neither partner can afford to be passive and just wait to see how far the other person will go.*
> (Rachel Kramer Bussel, *Beyond Yes or No: Consent as Sexual Process*)

In *The Will to Knowledge* - where he wrote "tomorrow sex will be good again" - Michel Foucault (1976) asserts that, in order to be liberated from the repressive moralizing clutches of sex and violence, we must tell the truth about sexuality. For Foucault, sexuality must be devoid of pathologies, abnormalities and aberrations. In other words, sexuality must be free-styled with no form of conventions so that sexuality is not burdened with power dynamics. Foucault appears to suggest that rigid gender norms on how we think sex and sexuality should not be inherently segregatory but "that by saying yes to sex one says no to power". Similar to these claims, in *The History of Sexuality* (1978) Foucault again observes that to talk about sex publicly is an act of transgression. This presupposes that discourses on sex and sexual art are regarded as intimate and private. So verbalizing sex becomes a taboo, particularly within the African sub-region. One important milestone of contemporary African women writers has been their ability to venture into serious discourses, dealing with the otherwise taboo issues in patriarchal Africa. This is evident in their continued depiction of deviant female characters who are no longer peripheral as far as issues of representation are concerned. Whilst there is significant literature on gender-based discrimination in marital relationships, sexualities, politics of sex, representations of sex and resistance in female-authored works (Bower, 2000; Buehler, 2011; Drougge, 1993; Marting 1988), the literature on Rifaat's *Distant View of a Minaret* appears to be silent on the relationship between orgasmic pleasures, shame and how it provokes the desire for queer sexualities. Quite broadly, the commentary on Rifaat's *Distant View of a Minaret* has tended to focus on the function of tropes and metaphors, resistance, the intersection between religion and feminism, voice and agency, corporeality and bodily representations (Nwachukwu-Agbada, 1990; Salti, 1991; Olive, 1996; Victor, 2009; Nkealah, 2008, 2009 & Mohammed, 2018).

The purpose of this paper is, thus, twofold: to examine Rifaat's pursuit in highlighting toxic sexual relationships in marriages, particularly within the ambits of Islam and how it leads to a desire for queer identities, but also to demonstrate how her short stories typify Foucault's assumptions in *Tomorrow Sex Will Be Good Again*.

The paper will analyse two of her short stories: *Distant View of a Minaret* and *My World of the Unknown.* The analysis in this paper is guided by Foucault's notion of sexuality, the concept of postcolonial shame and insights from Spargo's queer theory. The paper is divided into four parts. The first part looks at sexualities as a continuum beginning with Foucault to Spargo. The second section discusses the quest for sexual freedom as a process of shaming within the postcolonial framework. The third section aims at interrogating how the denial of orgasmic desires constitutes a rejection of heterosexuality and, consequently, a desire for queer sexualities. The fourth section sums up the major arguments raised in this paper by way of a conclusion.

NARRATING SEXUALITIES: FOUCAULT AND THE QUEERS

Emerging in a period where discussions on sexuality and identity had taken the forefront in the social sciences, queer theory became a developing strand after lesbian and gay studies. Adapted and popularized by de Lauretis (1991), queer theory has come to encompass the study of sexualities that aim at questioning and toppling what may be described as the normal and thereby becoming "an open mesh of possibilities" within the discussions on sexuality. The notion of queer thus becomes a means of resistance towards the assumption that human sexual experiences are monolithic (Sedgewick, 1990: 110, Watson, 2005). Queer theory has been explained and developed by many scholars (*See* Butler, 1990; Halperin, 1995; Green, 2007). One popular definition, however, is what Spargo offers. He explains the notion of queer based on Halperin's (1995) insights. Spargo (1999) sees queer theory as:

> Not a singular or systematic conceptual or methodological framework, but a collection of intellectual engagements with the relations between sex, gender and sexual desire. The term describes a diverse range of critical practices and priorities: readings of the representation of same-sex desire in literary texts, films, music, images; analyses of the social and political power relations of

> sexuality; critiques of the sex-gender system; studies of transsexual and transgender identification, of sadomasochism and of transgressive desires (9).

Spargo (1999) echoes the popular notion and tenets of queer theory as a "free-floating performance which aims at deconstructing subjectivity and the oppression and categorization of sexual identities (Halperin, 2003; Green, 2002; 2007). Queer theory, however, has its methodological and conceptual basis in the works of Michel Foucault, whose singular, immense contribution to the study cannot be denied (Halperin, 1995; 2003; Watson, 2005). Writing on sex and sexuality and its usage in the subjectification of sexual desire, in his seminal paper *History of Sexuality* (1978) Foucault pursues a question which serves as the framework for the establishment of the scholarly discussion on sex, sexuality and, by extension, queer theory: "How has "sexuality" been broadly conceived, how has sexuality been used in the service of the formation of the modern self" (Green,2007). By pursuing this question, Foucault interrogates the historical notion of sex as a taboo, a subject for the inner corners of the bedroom and "captured a form of human subjectification crystallized in the creation of the modern sexual subject" (Green,2007: 29). Despite finding its root in a Foucauldian philosophy of sexuality and vision of the "possibility of using homosexual identity as a potential point of departure for an emancipatory project by means of "homosexual ascesis" — a kind of "transformative practice of the self" — that would inspire new forms of intimate relations divested of their coding within the current modern sexual regime (Green, 2007: 29). Queer theory and sexuality, however, take these insights and develop them further as Green (2007) rightly asserts:

> Paradoxically, then, queer theory inherits but disavows the Foucauldian analysis of the modern sexual subject—on the one hand, embracing the history of sexuality in *The History of Sexuality*, and on the other, working sharply against the grain of its thesis to unearth rowdy, "under coded" "bodies and pleasures" that lie beyond the social order. Standing in vigilant defiance of epistemological and methodological approaches designed for discovering the

> "truth" of the sexual self, queer theory "empties" social categories of their contents, thereby interrupting (in theory) their regulatory capacities. In this way, queer theory enters social theory as a torch bearer of Foucault's utopian aspirations for de-subjectification (29).

Following Green's argument, queer theory is inherently redemptive. It succeeds in moving away from a rigid regulatory sexual framework that permits only what is conventional. The queer theory allows the subject to redefine historical falsehoods about sexual subjects by de-emphasizing heterosexual norms and promoting self-styled sexual practices that have idiosyncratic value. For the analysis in the paper, the queer framework allows us to re-read sexual relations in the two short stories as characteristic of homoerotic desires and queer behaviours. We are interested in the ways in which failed sexual gratification constitutes sites for redemption and queer desires.

SEXUAL FREEDOM AS POSTCOLONIAL SHAME IN *DISTANT VIEW OF A MINARET*

Alifa Rifaat's *Distant View of a Minaret* tells the tale of a married Muslim lady who is intentionally deprived of sexual pleasure by her husband, who always "quickens the pace of his movements" anytime he senses the inner desire of his wife to continue the intercourse. This makes the protagonist resort to finding other means of self-pleasure (masturbation), which she gradually loses interest in as she yearns for satisfaction from her spouse. She gradually loses interest in copulating with her partner and does so in fulfilment of her conjugal duties. She consigns herself to fate till the death of her husband which astonishingly serves as a means of liberation as "she herself was surprised at how calm she was" (4). To be able to understand the effects of the denial and suppression of sexual freedom and how it leads to the disavowal of agency and the genesis of queerness in the case of the frustrated wife, and her quest for sexual pleasure, it is therefore necessary to pay crucial attention to the ways in which shame is expressed and enacted in the short story.

Reading Rifaat's *Distant View of a Minaret,* we observe an asymmetrical power relation in the sexual life of the unnamed character and her husband. Sex is used as a domineering tool and a means of exerting one's dominance. The unnamed character suffers from what we term 'sexual exclusion' and what Foucault terms 'verbal taboo', a situation of exclusion and alienation from the sexual act that ultimately oppresses her sexual desires and urges. These two means of sexual domination/slavery are challenged by the female victim, but she suffers shame which manifests itself in sexual passivity and self-blame. The narration begins with a description of sexual intercourse between a husband and wife, in an atmosphere where only one of the two participants of the sexual intercourse, the husband, plays the agentive role while the wife is only a silenced actor. The narration suggests that sexual exclusion is a frequent means of domination in the marital space of the unnamed character; 'As usual at such times she felt that he inhabited a world utterly different from hers, a world from which she had been excluded (1).

The unnamed character, realising that her sexual needs are compromised, decides to negotiate her sexuality with her husband. She is, however, challenged by the conventions of a patriarchal Islamic community. Even though not explicitly laid out in the text, these conventions succeed in silencing the female sexual partner whereas the male counterpart engages in solo sexual intercourse. The culture of silence (surrounding sexual intercourse) is explained by D'Almeida (1999) as the "historical muting of women under the formidable institution known as patriarchy, that form of social organization in which males assume power and create for females an inferior status". Rifaat reiterates the problematics of silence as far as sexual satisfaction and gratification are concerned by placing her unnamed protagonist within a circle of equally sexually starved married women, who are only able to talk about *sexual ecstasy* in hushed terms" (p. 1). She appears to corroborate Bussel's concern about the need for women to be vociferous about what they want in bed and how they want regardless of conformist ideals. She attempts to interrogate the convention of silence over sexual desires by showing how sexual exclusion and verbal taboos restrict and undermine the libidinal economy of women.

What appears to be Rifaat's contention is that the hush that characterizes sexual expression in the marital relationship succeeds in crippling female potential and, consequently, threatens the sexual sanity of women as social beings. Although we find the unnamed character's ability to defy the convention of silence by voicing her sexual desires, we find the reciprocal response of her husband the power dynamics that continue to frame sexual expression and sexualized behaviours. The resulting effect of the rejection of the unnamed character's quest for sexual freedom is the attendant shame she suffers for compelling her husband to remain inside of her by forcefully digging her fingernails into his back. The subject of shame in postcolonial contexts, particularly within the circles of female African writings, has gained prominence by virtue of the continued stereotyping of female bodies and the hegemony of structured relationships. While we acknowledge Bewes' seminal contributions to framing the notion of postcolonial shame, it is important to indicate that our conceptions of what constitutes shame, as far as the rhetorical strategies in Rifaat's short stories are concerned, are not restricted to an event or something that is intrinsic to narrating her craft. Our understanding of shame is encapsulated in the shame of women resulting from sexual exploitation, and the ethical implications of verbalizing such predicament. To quote Morgan (2008):

> Shame is a complex state, emotional and evaluative and hence psychological and ethical at once. It is reflexive and yet social, requiring that we look at ourselves and at the way others view us, at once and dialectically. And while shame is akin to guilt, the two are not identical. We can be ashamed about what we have done, just as we can feel guilty for what we have done, but in such cases, shame is about who we are for having done what we did; we are ashamed for having been the one who did what we did. Guilt is related but different. We feel guilty for having done what we did but not for being who we are (14-15).

For Morgan, shame is reflexive of being beyond the other's expectation and in opposition to established norms. This suggests that shame has an intrinsic function of reproach – one that results from being otherwise than expected and, therefore, we should read the reaction of Rifaat's protagonist to her husband's rejection as an operation of shame. As Kaufman (1992:12) observes:

> To live with shame is to feel alienated and defeated, never quite good enough to belong. And secretly we feel to blame. The deficiency lies within us alone. Shame is without parallel a sickness of the soul (12)

In Rifaat's novel, shame is conceptualized as sexual estrangement and being a woman. In other words, we find in the unnamed character's later reaction to her husband's death and her eventual passivity an effect of pleasure denied and a psychological toll of failed transgression akin to Nkealeah (2013) when she posits that:

> The calmness with which the female character responds to 'the odour of death in the room' (4) may well be seen as an external manifestation of that internal code of acceptance that governs life with her husband. When her husband pulls away from her body and turns around to sleep, he fails to respond to the muezzin's call to afternoon prayers, and ironically his sleep becomes permanent, in which case his death can be read as poetic justice (33)

The narrator describes the unnamed character's alienation as:

> Though he had made an indelible tattoo mark of shame deep inside her so that whenever she thought of the incident, she felt a flush coming to her face (p. 2).

The unnamed character is cowed into feeling guilty for making a legitimate and modest demand of her husband. Her husband plays the victim by subverting the blame to a woman who appears to be insatiable and has an unquenchable sexual thirst, always hungry and eager for more. And so, by assuming the victim status, the protagonist's husband succeeds in diverting guilt and shame.

> Thenceforth she had submitted to her passive role, sometimes asking herself: "Perhaps it's me who's at fault. Perhaps I'm unreasonable in my demands and don't know how to react to him properly" (p. 2).

In her psychological warfare, the unnamed character blames herself for the discomfort she might have caused her husband in her quest for sexual pleasure. In her frustration, she resorts to self-stimulation as a means by which she can gratify her sexual desires despite the unconventional nature of her choice. The decision to masturbate is not simply an indication of her willingness to discontinue the suppression of her sexual desires and mitigate the possibility of infidelity. It is also arguably Rifaat's way of suggesting an alternative route to sexual freedom and female agency. It is important to note that the effect of the shame she suffers is that she comes to associate herself with two forms of sexual images: the Madonna and nymphomaniac images.

In her new passive role, the character is no longer interested in sexual activity and she finds no need to continue masturbating as she has assumed the mother (Madonna means mother figure) figure in the sexual intercourse and only seeks to satisfy her husband like a mother breastfeeding her baby. She therefore loses interest in lovemaking, thereby becoming a passive agent whose interest has been killed in a dull, boring cycle of sexual dominance, one-sided intercourse and, therefore, does nothing but "stare up at the ceiling, where she noticed a spider's web" (1). This act by the protagonist reiterates Tomskin's (1963) theorization of shame as "the inhibitor of continuing interest and enjoyment" (123).

According to Tomskin (1963), shame operates ordinarily after interest or enjoyment has been activated, and it inhibits one or the other or both" (123). The feeling of shame, therefore, kills or serves as a barrier to the protagonist's enjoyment of and participation in sexual intercourse. Her interest in sexual relationships is inhibited by the continued denial of sexual gratification and orgasmic pleasure, which ultimately makes her emerge as a dominated subject consigned to a sad and constricted fate. Her eventual passivity leads to what Agamben refers to as "living death" (cited in Guenther, 2012). The feeling of shame also manifests in self-blame, as the unnamed character sees herself as a nympho: a woman who is always thinking about sex and is rarely satisfied. These two, passivity and self-blame, emphasise the shame of the unnamed character as a postcolonial subject in an unfair sexual union.

What Rifaat does in *Distant View of a Minaret*, as our argument has shown is twofold: that we should not read the story as a mere destruction of the social order, nor a rampant disruption of hegemony. Rather, we must consider her vision in this particular story as an attempt to intimate a tomorrow where thinking sex and women's desires will no longer be regarded as unusual – particularly in the face of religious considerations. She advocates for a subtle defiance within the religious contract of marriage and move to flexible expressions within sexualities. Rifaat imagines a tomorrow where sex will be devoid of patriarchal strata and becomes an avenue for women's emotional healing.

Forming Pacts, Rejecting Heterosexuality: "My World of the Unknown" and the Option for Queer Sexuality

My World of the Unknown tells the bizarre tale of a married Muslim woman who moves to a mysterious house with her husband, where she ventures into an unknown mystical world. The plot narrates the protagonist's encounter with a spiritual being (*djinn*) who visits her in her state of "semi-sleep" (61) in the form of a snake, forming a bond with the former and taking her on a journey. The protagonist tours worlds beyond human imagination: unknown but existing worlds, as well as exploring sexual fantasies as she never had in her sex-starved marriage, which makes her view her bond with her spouse as dull in comparison. She is sadly made to sever ties with her partner, as her husband ignorantly kills a snake, breaking the pact in the process.

Owing to its provocative ways of communication and its unique idea of battling imposed heterosexuality, Rifaat's short story, *My World of the Unknown* has received considerable critical attention with scholars making attempts at resisting the temptation of reading the text within the queer framework partly because of the apparent contradiction between the author's religious background and the realities in the tale (Mitra, 2010; Abdo, 2012). In an attempt to justify this seeming contradiction, some early critics interpret the protagonist's experience purely on psychoanalytic grounds – claiming that the protagonist's experience is nothing but a dream or a fantasy suppressed within her (Davies, 1983; Othman, 1993; Nadje-AlAli, 1994; Li, 1999). Current readings of the story, have however made worthy attempts at looking at the homoerotic desire that the story summons and how these may serve as a form of Islamic feminist voice and agency (Mitra, 2010; Abdo, 2012). Particularly, Mitra (2010) looks at Islamic inclusive attitudes towards women and the growing openness of the subject of sexuality using Ismat Chughtai's *The Quilt* and Alifa Rifaat's *My World of the Unknown.* Although he acknowledged differences in terms of how the two stories probe the interstices of faith to enable the recognition of female homoerotic desires (313), he suggests that Rifaat's story anticipates a world where there is no grudge against same-sex desires. Also, close to our critique in this paper is what Abdou (2012) observes when he argues that Rifaat's *My World of the Unknown* champions a lesbian affection between women. While these commentaries are insightful, there are still notable omissions in terms of how the stories intimate a connection between women's sexual stratification, queerness and the future of female sexualities.

The story begins with a narration by the protagonist, informing the reader of how she ventured into an unknown world, a world she terms "my world of love", an indication of her intense affection and emotion for this world - which she explores and beckons to its summons (61) - and how "she used to pass with an amazing speed between this tangible world of ours and other invisible worlds" (61). She, however, informs the reader of the genesis of her love and survey into metaphysical realms, a confession which may leave the reader puzzled:

> Love had its beginning when an order came through for my husband to be transferred to a quiet country town and, being too busy with his work, delegated to me the task of going to his town to choose suitable accommodation prior to his taking up the new appointment (61/2)

The protagonist draws the reader's attention to the state of her marital life; as one wherein her spouse is busy and therefore has little or not enough time for her and their life, to the extent that he delegates the search for a new home to the wife - apparently the genesis of her intimacy with the supernatural being. This revelation of her husband's unavailability then affects their marital life and, by extension, their sexual life and intimacy as a couple. As Victor (2012) observes, the protagonist is not far from a sex-starved wife who is burdened with the trouble of having to look forward to good sexual intercourse until the mediated pleasure is offered by the snake. What is revealing about the protagonist's sexual starvation is how Rifaat strategically connects the problematics of sex-starved marriages to the advent of queer desires. Rifaat exploits queer tools as a means to undo her protagonist's sexual repression and, by far, revive the emancipatory rhetoric in these desires. She appears to suggest that women's sexuality should no longer be policed and constrained by religion and patriarchy so that women do not continue to suffer disproportionately from sexual difficulties, pain and anxiety. Like the protagonist in *Distant View of a Minaret*, queer desires become convenient in breaking sexual bureaucracies and restoring the woman to having nuanced feelings as far as orgasmic frequencies and mediated intimacies are concerned. Rifaat appears to suggest that the woman's sexual pleasure should no longer be interpreted as "some secret wish" since it is an affirmation of the stereotype of women feeling unenthusiastic to request what they actually want in bed.

Rifaat envisions a good sexual relationship through the animating connection between the protagonist and the snake:

> My gaze was attracted by something twisting and turning along the tip of a branch: bands of yellow and others of red, intermingling with bands of black, were creeping forward. It was a long, smooth tube, at its end a small striped head with two bright, wary eyes… The sight gripped me; I felt terror turning my blood cold and freezing my limbs. My senses were numbed, my soul intoxicated with a strange elation at the exciting beauty of the snake. I was rooted to the spot, wavering between two thoughts that contended in my mind at one and at the same time should I snatch up some implement from the kitchen and kill the snake, or should I enjoy the rare moment of beauty that had been afforded me? I kept watching it utterly entranced and captivated. Like a bashful virgin being lavished with compliments … At last, I rose from my place, overwhelmed by the feeling that I was on the brink of a new world, a new destiny or rather if you wish, the threshold of a new love. (68/9)

The protagonist describes her dilemma as being caught between two worlds; one which is legitimate and bereft of sexual pleasure and one which affords sexual pleasure in unconventional forms. As she is caught between making attempts to kill the animal, she is beholding or continuing to admire the animal whose beauty had captivated her and held her in awe. Rifaat skilfully draws our attention to the ambivalent nature of orthodox sexualities and cautiously emphasizes the need for free-styled sexual expressions through the animated descriptions of terror and elation, exciting danger, numbness and intoxication and the captivation of the unknown of the protagonist. While Abdou (2012) argues that "the narrator's encounter with the *djinn* functions as a radical brand of Islamic feminism that challenges Arabo-Islamic cultural perceptions of sexuality as threatening"(398), we read the protagonist's enchantment with the snake as functioning initially as a process of recovering from the dark putative definitions of sexual stratification created by patriarchy and religion, and as an alternative framework of escaping hegemonic heteronormative definitions of sexualities. Indeed, while their (the protagonist and the snake) connections transcend orthodox sexual expressions, Rifaat's ultimate intention, as we argued, is to show how the deprivation of sexual satisfaction in marriage emerges as a site for rethinking queer sexualities. Rifaat clearly recognizes the possibility of sexual enchantments found outside the boundaries of heterosexuality (Mitra, 2010) and this is manifested in the woman-to-woman connection between the protagonist and the female serpent. In recognizing her growing affection for the snake, the protagonist falls in "love" with the creature - a love which is a signification of homoerotic symptoms and queer delights; one which is not simply woman to woman, but woman to a she animal and a renunciation of heteronormativity. Although Rifaat exercises a little caution in the ways in which the protagonist pauses to assess her desires, she appears to be convinced about the redemptive role of queer expression given the effect the snake had had on the protagonist:

> But how could I love a snake? And what is the secret of her beauty? I would ask myself. Was it that I was fascinated by her multi-coloured, supple body? Or was it that I had been dazzled by that intelligent, commanding way she had of looking at me? Or could it be that sleek way she had of gliding along, so excitingly dangerous, that had captivated me? Excitedly dangerous! No doubt it was thus excitement that had stirred my feelings and awakened my love, for did they not make films to excite and to frighten? (70)

Quite expected, the protagonist's self-assessment is beckoned by the regimental nature of religious norms and ethics and the binary mode of human closure, where a man is attracted to a woman and *vice versa* so that she feels apprehensive about this satisfying love that relieves her from her boring and detached marriage. Rifaat reconciles her protagonist's frustration through the mythological framework of Egyptian monarchism and the exalted image of Cleopatra.

> And yet I fell to wondering how union could come about, how craving be quenched, the delights of the body be realized, between a woman and a snake. And did she, I wondered, love me and want me as I loved her? An idea would obtrude itself upon me sometimes: did Cleopatra, the very legend of love, have sexual intercourse with her serpent after having given up sleeping with men, having weird amorous adventures with them so that her sated instincts were no longer moved other than by bites from a snake? And the last of her lovers had been a viper that had destroyed her. (71)

Rifaat further strengthens the call for free-styled sexual expression by evoking Cleopatra's "frank sexuality" that "damns her" in critics' estimations. She appears to contend that sexual pleasure is not masculine – that it is inhabited in limitless but enthusiastic amorous conditions with a penetrator and a receiver. So sexual pleasure becomes barren of machoism as well as cultural and religious restrictions. The protagonist consequently enters into a pact with the snake, who "weds her, calls her "her bride" (73) and becomes the object of her total admiration. Again, by her reference to Cleopatra, the protagonist reifies the regularity of her desires as something that is normal and likely. She appears to justify her queer desires as allowed and agreeable despite the controversies surrounding her (Cleopatra) death. The narrator's love continues to grow and she waits in eager anticipation of the fateful visit of her lover. Her wishes are however fulfilled with the *djinn*-like snake visiting her and making love to her. She closes her eyes as she hears the rustling sound which heralds the approaching presence of her lover:

> I lay back in submission to what was to be. No longer did I care whether love was coming from the world of reptiles or from that of the *djinn*, sovereigns of the world. Even were this love to mean my destruction, my desire for it was greater (72).

The narrator in her submission to the conquering presence of her lover accepts that she no longer cares about the source of the love. She acknowledges that she may not know whether her lover is a spirit as the Sheikh had informed her or was just an ordinary creature. The protagonist is ready to have an amorous affair with a snake; even before she comes to know of her gender as being her fellow woman. She finally makes love with her beloved, where she ultimately makes a pact, which results in the toppling that she earlier made with her earthly spouse:

> I felt her cool and soft and smooth, her coldness producing a painful convulsion in my body and hurting me to the point of terror. I felt her as she

> slipped between the covers, then her tiny two fangs, like two pearls, began to caress my body; arriving at my thighs, the golden tongue, like an arak twig, inserted its pronged tip between them and began sipping and exhaling; sipping the poisons of my desire and exhaling the nectar of my ecstasy, till my whole body tingled and started to shake in sharp, painful, rapturous spasms (73)

The excerpt above portrayals the narrator's sexual affair with her lover (snake). In describing the scenery with vivid imagery, however, she does so in a dual epistemic sense: the portrayal of pain mingled with pleasure. In her narration of her sexual ecstasy, she informs the reader of the pain she encounters, which produces "a painful convulsion in her body" which grips her with terror, a feeling associated with snake bites and the sighting of snakes. This feeling, however, is interwoven with pleasure as she (the snake) inserts her "pronged tip" in her vagina, an indication of sexual intercourse. This imagery, here then, is a portrayal of a snake copulating with a human, a situation which renders their affair queer and odd within the narrator's ethical-political context and society. This passage, then, is a subtle echo of Cleopatra's affair with these venomous creatures, as their painful bites and stings bring her insurmountable pleasures.

Conclusion

What we have tried to do in this paper is to examine Rifaat's pursuit in highlighting toxic sexual relationships in marriages, particularly within the ambits of Islam, and how it leads to the desire for queer identities in two short stories. The paper has shown that Rifaat radically subverts female subjectivities through unconventional renditions of sexual freedom and sexual pleasure. The paper has also demonstrated that Rifaat attempts a redefinition of shame by providing justification for queer intimacies given the typical nature of sex-starved marriages in religious contexts. Our reading of *Distant View of a Minaret* is that the unnamed character's passivity in an oppression marriage is a result of the diverted guilt and shame summoned by an irresponsible husband. We have demonstrated that in *My World of the Unknown*, the connection between sexual estrangement, queerness and the future of female sexualities is a provocative communication on the failures of heterosexual desires and an affirmation of the potential in homoeroticism.

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THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE, SLANT RHYMES, AND THE POETRY OF POLITICAL AUTHORITY

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Abstract. It has long been accepted that the American Declaration of Independence draws on British constitutional tradition to establish its authority. Nevertheless, despite the existence of many literary readings of the document, no attention has been paid to its use of slant rhymes – rhymes that have similar but not identical sounds – to achieve its goals. This article seeks to fill this lacuna, expanding our understanding of how its authors employed both visual and aural aspects of British constitutional tradition to engender the authority required for the document's widespread acceptance.

Keywords: Declaration of Independence, slant rhymes, political authority, British constitutional tradition

1. INTRODUCTION

Although there have been many literary readings of the American Declaration of Independence (*e.g.* Derrida), no attention has so far been paid to its use of slant rhymes – rhymes that have similar but not identical sounds (Hanson 310) – to help create and bolster the document's political authority. This essay seeks to fill this lacuna by setting out the problem of political authority as faced by the document's authors before showing how these authors employed the visual and aural aspects of its language — and of slant rhymes in particular — to help make good their claims to independence.

2. The Problem of Political Authority

One of the most pressing problems facing those who would found a new nation is establishing their authority to do so where authority is understood as the "[p]ower to influence the conduct and actions of others" (*Authority*). In the social contract tradition, authority is said to arise from the consent of the governed, the fact that one has consented to the government is why one is obligated to obey its laws. Hannah Pitkin has, however, argued that Lockean liberalism is actually underpinned by an often-unacknowledged affective quality. Drawing on Locke's account of prerogative – the circumstances under which the sovereign can suspend laws in the interests of the public good – Pitkin argues the citizenry's evaluation of the legitimacy of such action(s) depends not upon their consent but rather upon their assessment of the appropriateness of the sovereign's suspension of laws. It is not, that is to say, the fact that one has consented to the government that creates the obligation to obey it but rather the answer to an ongoing personal and societal plebiscite as to whether the government *deserves* consent (Pitkin 999). Such authority is established not by rational argumentation, but rather by a much more nebulous combination of factors whose exact formulation may vary somewhat from person to person: that which makes a citizen and by extension, the citizenry, *feel* obligated[1]. When that occurs, the state will have authority – something quite different from power – over those who feel the state to be authoritative. In the abstract, this formulation might seem tautological. Nevertheless, pondering the question of why the Founding Fathers sought to employ a Declaration – a key part of British constitutional tradition – against the originators of that same tradition in order to establish their own authority to secede reveals why there is more to the formulation than its tautological nature might seem to suggest.

As Pauline Maier points out, a declaration was one of three ways of addressing a monarch in British constitutional tradition. The first – an address - was by far the mildest form, usually sent to a monarch to mark a happy event, such as the birth of a child, or to express support or gratitude. The second – a petition – gave subjects a way of seeking redress of wrongs done under the authority of the monarch whom they could not sue in the regular courts. Finally, the third – a declaration – was an emphatic pronouncement whose point was to "make clear" or "to tell." Notes Maier, "Declarations were always meant to command broad public support, and both Kings and Parliament issued them during their protracted seventeenth-century struggles" (Maier 50-51). By employing a document from British constitutional tradition against King George, the Founders were, in effect, employing the considerable authority of the British constitution[2], its "[p]ower to influence the conduct and actions of others", to cultivate their own authority to separate. This reconfiguration of a pre-existing tradition is often the stuff of poetry, and there is much to indicate the careful choice of language and the persistent reworking of older texts and tropes at work in the Declaration.

3. Language and Political Authority

The most obvious appropriation of political language in the Declaration is the wholesale lifting of "a long train of abuses" from John Locke's *Second Treatise of Government*, a phrase that is itself imbued with the poetic image of monarchs pulling abuses behind them like they would the trains of their robes of state. Similarly, the document suggests the language and form of the Puritan Jeremiad, with its litany of sins and its call for a better future (O'Neill). By drawing on ideas implicit in the public culture of the time, and transforming them for their own purposes, 'making them new' in Ezra Pound's famous formulation of the poet's role (1934), the Founders repeatedly drew upon the power of language and poetic allusion to build their authority out of the authority of those ideas' origins.

In her book *Our Declaration*, the political theorist Danielle Allen observes that "[d]emocracies are built out of language" (Allen 43). The Declaration of Independence, a document that came to be central to the American democratic understanding[3], was precisely that: a source of popular authority built out of language. While much attention has rightly been paid to the various ways in which the document borrows from, transfigures, and employs older literary and political traditions, no attention seems to have been paid to its clever use of slant rhymes, both aural and visual. In British Constitutional tradition, and indeed, in much contemporary American legislation, the separate clauses within written legislation began and begin with the word "whereas," meaning "[i]n view or consideration of the fact that" ("Whereas"). This is evident, for example, in this extract from the Sugar Act, passed by Parliament in 1764:

> Whereas it is expedient that new provisions and regulations should be established for improving the revenue of this kingdom…
>
> whereas it is just and necessary, that a revenue be raised, in your Majesty's said dominions in America…
>
> whereas an act was made in the sixth year of the reign of his late Majesty King George the Second…
>
> whereas by an act of parliament made in the twelfth year of the reign of King Charles the Second… (Avalon Project).

One of the great fictions of British constitutional tradition was that the monarch's advisors, the monarch's ministers, were responsible for the sovereign's actions. Even when both parties knew that the monarch was responsible for a particular policy, objections to it were framed as though the ministers and not the monarch were responsible[4]. Thus, when the Declaration of Independence identifies King George III as being responsible for the "long train of abuses" it is a hugely significant moment: the moment at which, as in British constitutional tradition, revolution was declared. In making this claim, the authors[5] of the document drew on an allusively familiar pattern, beginning each clause with "He has":

> He has refused his Assent to Laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public good.
> He has forbidden his Governors to pass Laws of immediate and pressing importance...
> He has refused to pass other Laws for the accommodation of large districts of people…
> He has called together legislative bodies at places unusual…
> He has dissolved Representative Houses repeatedly….
> He has refused for a long time, after such dissolutions, to cause others to be elected...
> He has endeavoured to prevent the population of these States....
> He has obstructed the Administration of Justice….
> He has made Judges dependent on his Will alone...
> He has erected a multitude of New Offices...
> He has kept among us, in times of peace, Standing Armies without the Consent of our legislatures…
> He has affected to render the Military independent of and superior to the Civil power…
> He has combined with others to subject us to a jurisdiction foreign to our constitution…

Then, after a multitude of clauses beginning with the word "For" – itself seen repeatedly in parliamentary legislation such as 1765's Stamp Act – the document returns to the language of "He has":

> He has abdicated Government here...
> He has plundered our seas…
> …He has constrained our fellow Citizens taken Captive on the high Seas...
> He has excited domestic insurrections amongst us...

In employing this language, the authors of the Declaration employed a slant rhyme between the "Whereas" of British constitutional tradition, and the "He has" of their own document. The significance of this for the cultivation of political authority lay in the familiarity of the sound and sight of the words. Just as the Founders borrowed the language and institution of a declaration from British tradition to make their claim credible, they did the same with "Whereas" and "He has." Tellingly, this is a slant rhyme that is both aural and visual, with the words not only sounding almost alike but also looking like they should rhyme. Jay Fliegelman, furthermore, convincingly argues that the Declaration was a document meant to be read aloud. As such, the power of the allusive slant rhyme would have been intensified, as indeed it would by the almost hypnotic repetition of "He has," a total of eighteen times, itself reminiscent of the repetitiveness of the Jeremiad.

4. Conclusion

Hannah Arendt was, then, correct when she argued that the Declaration derives its power not "so much [from] being 'an argument in support of action' as in its being the perfect way for an action to appear in words" (Arendt 130). Thus, while some commentators have suggested that the Declaration begins with a logical fallacy, that it presupposes that which it must prove – that America is one people and the British another – Dannielle Allen's observation about language and democracy, and the authors' use of slant rhymes, both aural and visual, suggests the way in which the document is a performance meant to bring something new – broad public support for a new system of government – into the world. It is an approach that we might call poetry.

Notes

1. Its affective element lies in the evaluation of whether the government deserves consent, something that would appear to be beyond rational calculation and exist in the realm of feeling in much the same way, perhaps, that the evaluation of how long a "long train of abuses" must be to trigger revolutionary action. (Pitkin).
2. "Americans took particular pride in being governed under Britain's unwritten constitution, which they considered the most perfect form of government ever invented 'by the wit of man' – a judgment with which, they often added, every major writer on politics agreed" (Maier 29).
3. Maier offers considerable evidence that the Declaration was not considered terribly important at the time of its publication (162-163).

4. Nevertheless, during the various struggles between the monarch and parliament over the course of British history, parliament had gradually usurped the king's power, and the fiction became true, the monarch's advisors were responsible for those decisions. Complicating the matter, however, the fiction was still employed as if it *were* not true.
5. Although Thomas Jefferson is usually given credit for the Declaration, the document was actually drafted by Jefferson, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Roger Sherman, and Robert Livingston.

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AFRICA AND ASIA INVADED! CULTURAL MOBILITY EXCHANGES AND INTERCULTURAL ENCOUNTERS. CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY ENABLES GLOBAL NORTH POLICY TRANSFER

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Abstract. This paper provides a conceptual theoretical review discussing how foreign direct investment (FDI) from overseas government and private investors, results in cultural exchanges and intercultural encounters. This paper describes how Global North corporate social responsibility policies are intended to protect low-income countries from exploitation. The effect of corporate social responsibility is profound upon countries in the Global South, especially impoverished countries in Africa and Asia. This paper uses Africa as a case study to articulate key points. However, as foreign investments begin to pay dividends, the culture of the local areas where the business venture is based significantly changes. Policies begin to change as people realise the benefits of education, healthcare and social protection. As people from Global North countries settle temporarily in local villages, they bring with them their mobile phones, satellite radio and television. These digital devices enable continuous access to Western culture of popular music, news and sports. Local people come into contact with global north cultures, as they are employed by foreign investor intermediaries in the factories which have been built. This enables intercultural encounters. Indigenous cultural art, dance, rituals and theatre performances begin to wane, as more people are influenced by Western culture. Cultural mobility and exchanges take place on a social level, as overseas workers interact with local people at work and domestically. Corporate social responsibility requires good communication, learning to speak the local workforces' language, becomes a prerequisite in business and sharing cultural practices together. This ensures continuous cultural exchanges and intercultural encounters in conversation and social activities. This paper posits that corporate social responsibility policies from FDI and overseas investors have enabled policy transfer from the Global North. Environmentally sustainable foreign investment business practices in low-income are in the ascendency. Too is recognition: traditional cultural practices by Indigenous populations in Asia and Africa must be protected by overseas government and corporate sector investors.

Keywords: Africa, corporate social responsibility, cultural mobility, cultural exchanges, intercultural encounters, United Nations Global Compact

INTRODUCTION

This paper discusses the main causal factors which have resulted in a diminution of the saliency of corporate social responsibility (CSR) in Africa. The period considered is the 21st century from the year 2000. The business activity detailed in the taxonomy below appeared regularly in the literature review. Business and sustainable development (Wirba 2023, 4); business regulations (Ntoutoume 2023, 4; Vogel 2005, 3); corporate citizenship and environment; corporate responsibility; environment, social and corporate governance (ESG) (de Souza Barbosa 2023, 5; Bolger et al. 2021, 25); responsible business practices and virtuous corporate behaviour (Hartvigson and Heshmati 2023, 491-92; Forstater et al. 2010, 5).

CSR is a complicated multi-headed beast having numerous definitions. There are three broad themes which act to signpost the main issues which CSR initiatives should try to address (Marti et al. Harvard Business Review, 24 March 2024; See also Nardo et al. 2021, 7). *Environmental and social safeguards:* CSR schemes to identify and reduce negative social impacts, and mitigate environmental damage. (Camoletto et al. 2022, 1123). *Policies and investments to enable community development:* CSR projects self-sustaining local schemes; local job creation in agriculture, fishing and roof making. Local procurement of food and supplies to build local institutions. Deliver local training and capacity building so local people are empowered to fight corruption (Gajadhur and Nicolaides 2022, 166). *Local governance revenue transparency:* Establish local institutions which are locally run, and deliver low-level negotiation with government officials to develop stakeholder partnerships (Arenas-Torres et al. 2022, 3). Helping to agree on local partnership work between businesses on their agreed set of rules (Fayolle, African Business 24 February 2024; Gupta and Kumar,2022, 113).

CSR is a concept developed originally in the global north, which has acted to transport social values to the global south, including Asia and Africa (Stanislavska et al. 2023, 3; Association of Corporate Citizenship Professionals, 25 February 2024). CSR policies are a vehicle that transports Western cultural ideology of values which should be protected, during commercial trade and/or international development in developing countries. Policy transfer takes place of global north social values and culture onto developing countries, due to the well-intended nature of state-sponsored and private-sector FDI. CSR policies from Western corporate companies investing in Africa and Asia, change the culture of these countries due to the quasi-conditionality aspects of their foreign investments. This can be a force for good, especially in global south countries with patriarchal societies, for example, Ethiopia (Africa) and Nepal (Asia) (Degefa and Getachew 2022; UNICEF ROSA (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund Regional Office for South Asia) 2022). Government or private sector companies can apply CSR policies in their work to engender gender equality in their operations. Foreign investors can refuse to invest in countries where patriarchal inequality is a cultural norm. Where CSR policies can be damaging in the global south, is when they transfer global north practices of excessive deforestation or mineral mining. There is also CSR policy failure when foreign companies distribute local produce for free distorting local markets. Here Western capitalism changes the culture of the social relationships of small African and Asian villages on each other, in each continent respectively. The unintended consequences of well-intentioned but inappropriate implementation of certain CSR policies could result in inter-tribal rivalry or civil war (Rouget, Control Risks, 19 December 2023; See also Perdomo-Ortiz et al. 2017, 36).

This paper provides a critical review of how the CSR development sector in Africa has been diminished since the year 2000. A working definition of CSR are private sector initiatives, designed to operationalise sustainable development; by changing business processes so they are less damaging to society (Fatima and Elbanna 2023, 105; see also Ye et al. 2021, 1). The CSR concept was about businesses working with stakeholders who live in the area where they trade; to improve the quality of life of the community and make a profit. In context, international development agencies should integrate their projects to work with the private sector, so that businesses can deliver societal needs profitably (Prasad et al. 2022, 8). What has happened as we enter the third decade of the 21st century, is that the best intentions of CSR have been dumbed down due to a number of causal factors. There was a large-scale financial crisis in the global north in 2007-08. This reduced the global north's financial ability to fund international development projects and concordantly; a reduction in the political impetus for the private sector to invest in and nurture CSR initiatives. Many CSR projects in low-income countries which include African and Asian nations were cutback, now seen as a luxury not as a social political necessity (Gajadhur and Nicolaides 2022, 159). In 2020 the COVID-19 global pandemic arrived coronavirus lockdowns began in earnest. This was an exogenous shock which reduced global economic activity, by more than 50% in the early 2020s across the board. Once again this was another exogenous shock to many populations globally. Global North government spending was targeted to address immediate needs internally to keep each country's economies afloat. This meant there has been much less global north government tax revenue to spend on international overseas sustainable development. As a result, CSR in low-income countries including Africa and Asia has been dumbed down (see also Bueta 2022, 86[1]; Nikiema and Asiedu 2022, 24568); no longer the cool right buzzword for a business activity, which the private sector wanted to be associated with. Foreign investors, key partners in large international development partnerships, have followed the global north governments' lead. Overseas private investors have also chosen to curtail their international CSR activity until later in the 2020s (World Economic Forum (WEF), 12 January 2024a; see also

UNCTAD (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development) 2021b, 70). Africa has been invaded and then abandoned. International supply and value chains have been seriously affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. There may be mid-2020s opportunities to re-ignite the CSR concept as a viable business option; by designing schemes which ensure an agreed amount of African agriculture is consumed overseas at an agreed price. The pre-arranged price will factor in any additional costs of sustainable production, resulting in environmentally responsible consumerism in the global north. Many global societal problems could begin to be addressed by re-visiting CSR (Kim 2022, 362). African rural village fishermen could be utilised to supply their produce, which has been manually caught using human-powered boats. In these scenarios an international sustainable development, private sector CSR stakeholder group would be (Hannah et al. 2023, 4): Contributing towards reducing environmental damage of coastal areas and freshwater natural habitats; preventing the overfishing of fish stocks; maintaining fishing skills of Indigenous African populations; contributing towards an African country's COP28 compliance, as there are no harmful CO2 emissions from human powered boats (see also Amnesty International, 31 May 2023)[2].

UNITED NATIONS GLOBAL COMPACT 2021-2023

The overarching global policy framework for CSR related to sustainable business and development is the United Nations (UN) Global Compact (UNGC). "It was announced in 1999 at the annual World Economic Forum in Davos with the purpose to promote sustainable business" (Ditlev-Simonsen 2022, 61). The UNGC principles (FIG 1) provide a 21st-century global international development policy template. The ethos of the UNGC is clear, the corporate sector, civil society and local communities must work in partnership, to deliver sustainable business and development (Berlin School of Business and Innovation, 25 March 2023; Heerden et al.

2022, 14). Table FIG 1 details the main international development issues the UNGC addresses, they closely align with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (UN 2021, 8-25). The UNGC acts to identify the policy areas where international CSR should apply to foreign business operations, to be non-socially damaging in African countries (UNGC, 24 February 2024; UNGC 20 September 2021, 13). The UNGC also acts to enable policy transfer of global north values during partnership work with local communities in Africa and Asia. Cultural mobility takes place when people from local villages are accepted and promoted within overseas business operations. Such local people are invariably bi-lingual, best able to explain the benefits of overseas-owned factories to their local communities. Foreign investors will not invest in African and Asian countries, if there are signs of human rights abuses, child labour usage or government corruption. Overseas developers will wait for independent verification from UN observers of compliance with the UNGC principles before they make the decision to invest. The UNGC principles are in essence a quasi-conditionality instrument, enabling policy transfer of global north values to African and Asian countries.

Fig. 1. The Ten Principles of the UN Global Compact
(UNGC, 26 February 2024)

Human rights

Principle 1: Businesses should support and respect the protection of internationally proclaimed human rights and;
Principle 2: make sure they are not complicit in human rights abuses.

Labour

Principle 3: businesses should uphold the freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining;
Principle 4: the elimination of all forms of forced and compulsory labour;

Principle 5: the effective abolition of child labour and;

Principle 6: the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation.

Environment
Principle 7: businesses should support a precautionary approach to environmental challenges;
Principle 8: undertake initiatives to promote greater environmental responsibility; and
Principle 9: encourage the development and diffusion of environmentally friendly technologies.

Anti-Corruption
Principle 10: Businesses should work against corruption in all its forms, including extortion and bribery.

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (CSR): HISTORY, SOCIETAL JUSTIFICATION AND POLICY EXPLAINER

CSR began in the post-war period, in the 1950s, when critical observers linked profitability with the social responsibility of business owners (Dash 2024, 85; Carroll 2016, 1). In the 60s and 70s, there was also a lack of regulatory concerns regarding some FDI. There were visible reports in the media of exploitation of people in least developed countries (LDCs) including African - nations, by foreign companies (Petkoski and Twose 2003, 20). LDCs tend to have weaker regulatory and legal frameworks, which enables the exploitation of low-income populations, working in dangerous conditions that reduce business productivity costs. There was growing recognition of the argument profit from foreign investment is acceptable: provided those profits are not obtained by the exploitation of impoverished nations populations, who see little of the fruits of their labour (Hohner and Potts 2007, 53-54). The corporate sector should also reduce environmental damage and remove any pollution caused by their business operations in foreign countries. The corporate sector should put something back into economically weak countries where they have made a profit. This can be manifested as a hospital or school building program, or as a scaled-down education or healthcare covenant for the low-income country (Avadhani 2024, 235 and 243; see also Atlantic Methanol, 30 April 2022). This line of thought provides a pragmatic working definition of CSR, from the initial conceptualisation in the 1950s. The business case aspect of CSR began to gain political impetus in the 1980s, as an economic interface with international development (Zhao 2021, 2; Agudelo et al. 2019, 6-7). The 1990s recognised an increased interaction between CSR and corporate performance, which heralded business strategies consisting of effective corporate social investment. Initially, when the 21st century arrived in the year 2000, business involvement in CSR was still going strong. As the 21st century progressed, the business case for CSR was buffeted by the global credit crisis of 2007-08 (WEF, 26 January 2024b). Then, in 2020, there was another global emergency, this time in the form of the COVID-19 pandemic. These two global events resulted in a decline in business productivity, consumption and economic growth in the 21st century. Suddenly there is less headroom. Less expectation that corporate social investment to deliver CSR whilst still making a profit is an effective business approach (Gupta and Kumar 2022, 113).

Benz (Prowly, 4 April 2024) and Vogel (2005, 1-2) provide us with some examples of how large corporate giants have implemented CSR initiatives in the past: Google have an extensive computer, data centre and laptop remanufacture program, which recycles computers, helping to sustain the environment. Levi Strauss had a Worker Well-being initiative which creates a more sustainable supply chain, the programme was worker-driven and locally owned. The Levi Strauss initiative delivered a yield of 4.1% on company investment in some areas. British Petroleum has significantly reduced its carbon emissions. Citibank has designed CSR-driven criteria, to consider the environmental impact of its operations, particularly its ending decisions. Chiquita has adopted sustainable environmental practices which its banana suppliers must adhere to.

Home Depot no longer uses wood from ancient sources or endangered forests. Ikea insists its rug suppliers do not employ child workers. They also provide financial loans which help reduce children having to work (Bartlett 2012 [orig. 2006], 3). McDonald's franchise has applied the European Union's (EU) restrictions on growth hormones in farm produce, for its supplier's beef and chicken in the United States (US). Nike closely monitors the working conditions in the factories of its suppliers in LDCs. Pepsi has withdrawn its investments in Myanmar due to human rights concerns. Shell has designed policies to address environmental and human rights concerns, perceived to be caused by its investments in developing countries. Timberland enables its employees to work one paid week a year for a local charity in the area where they trade (See also Cheruiyot-Koech and Reddy 2022, 9). For a long time, Starbucks sold coffee which is ethically sourced and responsibly grown with the Fairtrade logo. Liaison with Fairtrade delivers CSR by ensuring that coffee suppliers, many of whom are African countries, receive and retain premium prices for their produce (Raynalds 2022, 716; Banga et al. 2020, 29). In the early 2020s, this began to change in some international markets, for example, the United Kingdom (UK). The change in Starbucks' relationship with Fairtrade, is an exemplar of the diminution of international CSR in Africa in the 21st century (Saker-Clark, The Independent, 17 February 2022).

The exploitation of African and Asian populations by overseas business practices has been rampant, and the implementation of CSR has brought some of the worst examples to an end (Shayan et al. 2022, 10; see also Seriki 2020, 2). Global north corporate bodies have incentivised cultural mobility and intercultural encounters with local people, to provide transparency and to gain soft power. Visual images of impoverished African and Asian local people, relatively well-fed and well-dressed after foreign investment, garner societal buy-in of Western values and policy transfer. Traditional cultural languages are forgotten in favour of Western languages, most notably English; especially after cultural exchanges from Africa and

Asia to the overseas business owner's homeland. Due to English being the global language of, for example, business, the creative industries and international trade licenses, English is culturally absorbed (Deloumeaux 2022, 163; see also Schneider 2023, 121). In this sense CSR represents an existential threat to many African and Asian countries due to its potential ability to enable 'language extinction' (Vermillion, National Geographic, 25 July 2022). CSR can act to undermine intercultural encounters, replacing such interaction with colonialist-laden forms of cultural mobility. Potentially due to CSR, cultural exchange can become derailed, a pale imitation of what is meant to be and fortunately often achieved. Many African and Asian people could be motivated to disown their cultural heritage, in favour of global north values; especially if their birth languages have been erased by their own national governments, who have prioritized the pursuit of overseas investment alongside CSR policies (Walton and Truong 2023, 394)[3]. Here, CSR is a causal factor of both cultural extinction alongside language extinction.

Reducing CSR in Africa and Asia, Resulting in Limited Intercultural Encounters

Globalization has continued apace throughout the 21st century while CSR has receded (Dash 2024, 86; see also Tengblad and Ohlsson 2010, 653). Globalization complete with global supply chains, often keeps African country's workforces waiting for work and income, this tension clashes with the ethos of CSR (Hickel et al. 2022, 8; see also Gorg et al. UNIDO (United Nations Industrial Development Organization 2018, 5). This power relationship situation can be described as "weaponised interdependence"; "a condition under which an actor can exploit its position in an embedded network to gain a bargaining advantage over others in a contained system" (Qobo and Mzyece 2023, 38). Internationally there has been an exponential growth in world trade and investment since the post-war period. Many countries, including weak African nations, have a private sector, which has been able to decide its own business, employment and trade rules and regulations (Azampo 2023, 86; see also Ward et al. IIED (International Institute for Environment and Development), 2008, 2). Often the business rules align with other countries in trading blocs whose members cooperate with each other, on economic, trade and working conditions deregulation. There is little in the way of governmental or non-state governance of business practices, so CSR has taken a back seat in recent times. Without the accountability and scrutiny agency of CSR, due to globalization, intercultural encounters between Africa, Asia and the global north are limited (Kim and Koo 2022, 370). Cultural mobility has only regularly occurred in Africa and Asia for business purposes.

CSR regulations in many countries are voluntary, in numerous other countries where they are mandatory, the legislation is barely enforced; in such cases CSR becomes symbolic, part of political posturing and greenwashing (Warren 2022, 170; see also Lin 2021, 434). CSR matters much more in the 2020s for advanced economies with digitally connected educated masses, which is simply not the case in many African and Asian countries. Increasingly large corporations find themselves the most powerful entities on the international stage, private enterprises that are a law unto themselves. Due to their global scope and influence, there is little national governments can do to control the business activities of these corporate giants (Wenqi et al. 2022, 3; see also Harrison and Coussens 2007, 84; Tamvada 2020, 4). One policy response has been to grant large government subsidies to foreign investors and international companies. This is in the hope large conglomerates will implement effective CSR policies that are environmentally sustainable, whilst conducting business in their country. In practice the profit motive comes first, African and Asian cultural practices take a back seat.

Large corporate bodies can threaten to leave a country if they feel changes are going to be introduced which would negatively affect their profitability. Similarly, international countries could use the threat of defaulting on government loans to influence trade policies in the host country (Do 2022, 2). The threat that members of a nation's corporate sector could choose to leave a country is very powerful even in advanced economies. African nations have little chance of resisting the effect of globalization on their trade climate and the opportunity to apply CSR in business (Mamo et al. 2023, 3; see also Zueva and Fairbrass 2021, 637). Global supply chains are kept moving by African governments and workers, who are too weak to insist on ethical, sustainable business practices (Shourkaei et al. 2024, 1479[4]; see also Villena and Gioia, Harvard Business Review, March-April 2020). Due to globalization, the corporate sector pays the government its taxes, alongside the wages for many families' food, accommodation and heating fuel. It is with this economic power that essentially the corporate sector alone, decides if they will indulge in CSR or not. African and Asian nations must comply with the terms demanded by private-sector corporate giants, or they will pay their taxes elsewhere. This enables the corporate sector to enable favourable policy transfer and prevent the exchange of cultural ideas, which are not conducive to their business. Such corporate practices put the investment destination host African or Asian country, in direct contravention of Article 6 of the Paris 2005 UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), Convention where: "each Party, may adopt measures aimed at protecting and promoting the diversity of cultural expressions within its territory" (UNESCO 2022, 299).

The lack of effective governance of the international corporate sector by African governments, is another causal factor which has reduced CSR activity in Africa (Bezzola et al. 2022, 4; see also Boidin and Ballet 2020, para. 28). Media images are another causal factor. When people became aware of corporate giants using sweatshop child labour working ten hours a day and more; alongside children losing their fingers or a limb in dangerous machines, there was public outcry, brand boycotts and more negative media attention (Sabates-Wheeler and Sumberg 2022, 47). Once exposed, exploitative corporate sector giants quickly released media statements, which included CSR responses to deflect public attention from worrying revelations. African nations hardly get any global media attention, so the business impetus to implement CSR initiatives is nowhere near as strong (Madanaguli et al. 2022, 452). Lack of governance with little to no oversight can result in Africa being abandoned, with a critical explanation of its social needs dumbed down.

From the start of the post-war period, Africa's transformation to having fewer countries correctly classed as LDCs is ongoing in the early 2020s (Vickers et al. WEF, 22 April 2022). Issues of clean water supply, African people not having access to affordable, unrationed, electricity and digital connectivity throughout the day impede international development. Sound political and economic reforms, underpinned by democratic principles, market-driven productivity and consumption are facilitating Africa's transformation. Widespread poverty caused mainly by illiteracy, and unhealthy social lifestyles including child mothers and children being required to work; impedes the development of a significant number of independent African states (UN, 5 February 2024; see also UNESCO 2021, 143). The poorest quintiles of individual African countries, often benefit last and least from any economic growth in the country. Poverty and inequality go hand-in-hand with political instability, creating societal uncertainty, which increases the risk of any CSR activity operating in the country (Sharma and Sathis 2022, 85). This means that political instability is a causal factor resulting in less international CSR in Africa.

The main approach to poverty reduction in Africa has been through accelerated economic growth, through the export of agriculture and minerals to overseas markets (Bjornlund et al. 2022, 853; see also UNCTAD 2021a, 33). In the 1990s globalization demanded the integration of African economies into the global economy. Globalization focused on profitable business with little thought of the economic, environmental and social consequences of its actions. African international development used to focus on the challenge of poverty reduction for all its population by 2030. This was in keeping with SDG 1 (UN 2021, 8). CSR governance requires and can contribute towards political and social stability in a region, which is essential for long-term economic sustainable development. Equally without international CSR and economic development, poverty reduction, political and social stability in Africa will be non-existent or short-lived (Bertelmann Stiftung, BTI Djibouti Country Report 2022, 5; see also Gebregziabher and Massarongo, World Bank, 2 June 2022). That's the failing international development cycle which many African nations are facing in the 2020s, exacerbated by the reduction of CSR by foreign investors. Effectively, Africa has been invaded by globalization, not being offered sufficient COP28, UNGC or UN SDGs complying alternatives, in favour of profit. Africa's international CSR sustainable business initiatives have been dumbed down.

Corporate bodies have to assess all their business practices whilst trading in a region or foreign country and interacting with the local community. The assessment needs to balance profitability, with the socio-political impact of the business operation whilst generating those profits. In the 1990s numerous corporate bodies had a requirement to participate in CSR with actions, which "must be beyond the firm's direct economic interest" (Cheruiyot-Koech and Reddy 2022, 2). From 2000 this focus changed, many in the foreign investments corporate sector in Africa, felt little need for the social impact of business activity assessments. Buffeted by globalization and intermittent political instability in numerous independent African countries, they simply would not practice international CSR. Corporations regularly conduct general assessments of business strategy, which can consider CSR schemes. During such general assessments, a corporation is often required to conduct a due diligence assessment, of the effects of its business practice. During this period, evaluation of CSR initiatives could take place to respond to potential concerns raised by general business strategy assessments. Once the evaluation of potential CSR practice reaches a certain value, corporate decision-makers particularly risk-averse

CEOs, are less likely to approve implementation. Effectively the requirement for CSR "due diligence" in the corporate sector, acts as a policy driver, reducing international CSR in African countries (Camoletto et al. 2022, 1124). ESG disclosures would have a similar effect, influencing corporate decision-makers to cutback or embark on CSR programmes. CSR implementation which would depend upon the business, economic, political and social climate at the time (Nugroho et al. 2024, 2; see also Thacker, The CSR Journal, 15 December 2021). Cultural mobility and intercultural encounters seem to operate in a separate sphere from business. With cultural artistic trends and doctrines only being recognised when it suits the dominant ideology, the international corporate sector and the host national government do so. CSR ameliorates this process, often acting to protect cultural heritage, whilst ensuring that FDI results in global north and global south company profit.

COVID-19, Global Supply Chains and International CSR in Africa

International supply and value chains in Africa, have been seriously affected by the COVID-19 global pandemic (Panwar et al. 2022, 12; see also Banga et al. 2020, 11). Food inflation has risen, staple food price rises have dramatically increased, speculative hoarding and food market cartels can form acting to push up prices (Thukwana Bloomberg, 11 March 2024; see also OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) 2020, 8). International CSR can be coordinated between competing corporate bodies, to source the ventilators African countries need to get through the ongoing pandemic. Individual or corporate partnerships can set up a chain of food banks at the rural village level to help reduce food poverty.

As part of international CSR, foreign investment banks can defer payments and freeze interest during COVID-19 (UNEP FI (United Nations Environment Programme - Finance Initiative, 21 April 2022). Corporations can supply small mobile COVID-19 clinics, to get as many African people vaccinated as possible. Tourism could also be supported by international CSR provision of independently verified tour guides, who can show people around the towns and cities in Africa. Final and intermediate goods for export from or import to Africa have been disrupted by COVID-19 (Usman et al. 2024, 14). This has led to delays, cancellations, and financial late delivery penalties, all of which have resulted in price rises for manufactured goods in Africa. A cross-border CSR initiative between numerous countries could temporarily lower some of the regulatory checks required, to remove blockages due to COVID-19. This can happen in parallel with the next phases of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) (Sun et al. 2022, 8; OECD, 2023, 4).

An unintended consequence of COVID-19 is that it has provided an early 2020s opportunity, to re-ignite CSR initiatives in business activities in Africa (Omidire 2023, 23; see also GOV.UK, Policy paper, 14 November 2023). Some corporate enterprises switched from transporting heavy goods to COVID-19 protective equipment. In the UK, the telecommunications corporate giant Vodafone increased the amount of internet data for existing users; and provided free access for new users. African countries where Vodafone has a presence could do likewise, as part of CSR in response to COVID-19 (Hannah et al. 2023, 3; see also He and Harries 2020, 177). African nations who are tea and/or coffee suppliers could organise groups of volunteers to call on households where elderly vulnerable people live. This would be to offer support in shopping, general home keeping and companionship to combat social isolation during the pandemic.

Many global societal problems could begin to be addressed by re-visiting CSR. African rural village fishermen could be utilised to supply their produce, which has been manually caught in human-powered boats (Peters University of Birmingham, 14 July 2023[5]; see also Smith and Basurto 2019, 13). An international sustainable development, private sector CSR stakeholder group would be: Contributing towards reducing environmental damage of natural habitats; preventing the overfishing of fish stocks; maintaining fishing skills of indigenous African populations; and contributing towards an African country's COP28 compliance, as there are no harmful CO2 emissions from human powered boats (Sahara and Sahel Observatory 2022, 122; see also Ditlev-Simonsen 2022, 221). These are just a few international CSR initiatives, which are currently or could be relatively easily developed in Africa in the mid-2020s. All this suggested or actual international development activity in Africa will herald a profitable return for foreign corporations utilising international CSR in business. Adherence to COP28, the UN SDGs and the ten principles of UNGC 2024, will enhance ethical international CSR practice substantially.

Conclusions

The EU, a transnational actor in the global north, has a policy of "strengthened cultural diplomacy" towards developing countries, for example, Africa and Asia. The EU's policy is clearly to use cultural diplomacy to transfer its own democratic values to other countries it engages with (Serodes 2022, 71; see also Shiferaw and Di Ciommo 2023, 4). In this sense, the EU implements exchange diplomacy, intercultural dialogue and international broadcasting, as part of its policy towards cultural relations. The EU could extend its "Partnerships with universities" initiative, alongside the 2018 China-Africa Co-operation scholarship scheme, which has been successful in advancing cultural diplomacy (Serodes, 2022, 70; see also El Allame et al. 2022, 43). Chinese and African students were professionalised beyond work in the cultural sector, enabling the circulation of ideas between the two. One way to reverse the anti-international CSR trend in Africa since 2000 would be, for international development agencies, to work with the corporate sector on profitable business ventures (Yu et al. 2022, 5; Alizadeh, 2022, 2). The corporate body benefits from such partnership arrangements, being seen to be involved in CSR participation, which will then help build trust in African communities. Local regions can see that international development aid workers and corporate sector people are working together to deliver societal needs. Local governance revenue transparency type CSR can be implemented, so local African people become enabled to think and act independently. African populations should have the capacity to be consulted with, and then make decisions (Wu et al. 2023, 3; see also Bolger et al. 2021, 25 and 36). With the help of international development organisations, corporate bodies will feel that business risks have been reduced. This will give the African corporate sector the social space in the 2020s, to revisit CSR with profitability as they did in the 1990s. Effectively instead of Africa being invaded then abandoned, international development policy would come full circle to what is intended by the UNGC principles.

NOTES

1. Bueta's (2022) study is regarding how a circular economy can enable the adoption of plastic waste reduction policies. Bueta (2022, 90) discusses a form of cultural exchange, in the 'A policy shift alongside a cultural and societal shift' section of his study. This is manifest in Bueta's (2022, 90) indication, that 'education and information campaigns' are important to engender societal buy-in of plastic waste reduction in developing countries. Such countries including Africa and Asia have changed culturally, to be more environmentally aware of plastic waste disposal after global north foreign investment. The circular economy concept is complementary with and can be implemented using the ethos of corporate social responsibility for environmentally sustainable activity; both become dumbed down if there is a lack of political will. There is a paradox regarding Bueta's (2022) study, policy transfer has been enabled in Asia by utilising a circular economy, a concept that became popular in China in the 1990s. China can be considered to be both a global north and global south country developmentally and culturally.
2. Amnesty International's (2023) article describes the effect of illegal, unregulated, unreported fishing in Gambia. The article has duality, providing a critical comparison of the damage foreign investment can inflict upon vulnerable countries, for example, Gambia, if there is no consideration of corporate social responsibility.

3. Walton and Truong (2023, 391) discuss the "minority model myth", which is a causal factor that can result in people from ethnic minority communities, choosing to abandon their language as part of societal assimilation.
4. Please note, Shourkaei et al. (2024) use Patagonia a South American country as a case study.
5. This Peters (2023) one-page article provides a summary of a sustainable cooling and cold-chain project, which is targeted at African countries. Human-powered fishermen in Africa can benefit from refrigerated vehicles.

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ONE CANNOT BE COLORBLIND AND EMPATHETIC

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Abstract. This paper borrows Jose Medina's discussion on colorblindness and argues colorblind ideologies are inconsistent with empathy. Empathy is a game changer when dealing with highly diverse situations. It allows one to understand, adapt, and integrate more effectively. Colorblindness is when someone claims not to see color despite prejudice and racialization still playing a significant role in the lives of marginalized people in America. Colorblindness is a form of structural white ignorance. Structural white ignorance is a systemic ignorance permeating through societies and deeply entrenching itself into traditions and thought. This form of ignorance is used to push away responsibility for past injustices and responsibility for addressing and correcting those injustices. Colorblindness opens up people to continued violence, racism, prejudice, and testimonial injustice. If one is colorblind, he is unable to fully integrate marginalized peoples' testimony of injustice and, therefore, ends up harming subjects by allowing these injustices to perpetuate. If one is to be empathetic, one must acknowledge someone's racialized identity as a way to understand their lived experience.

Keywords: colorblindness, empathy, white ignorance, structural ignorance, racial injustice

INTRODUCTION

Someone cannot be "colorblind" and empathic at the same time. In this paper, I argue that colorblind ideologies are logically in conflict with the practice of empathy, so someone is not able to "not see color" and be empathetic towards racialized people. To be colorblind is to claim not to see their racial identity, which means they are not to be seen in totality. This dramatically decreases one's understanding of that person. If someone cannot see that race plays a role in people's lives, such as African Americans, they are lacking in empathy. This sight requires seeing color and all it entails. Seeing color does not mean someone has to engage in prejudice; it only allows people to see things like oppression, injustice, poverty, and other features that relate to one's racialized identity. Colorblindness is when a person claims not to see someone's racial identity; privileged groups primarily take up this stance. When one engages in colorblindness, they dismiss aspects of their subject relevant to their lived experience. Dismissing one's racial identity within the context of the United States opens up subjects to both epistemic and social injustices, such as testimonial injustice and the perpetuation of structural ignorance. If a person cannot acknowledge one's social identity, they do not truly understand the subject; therefore, one opposes empathy.

EMPATHY

Empathy is understanding or perceiving another person's view, emotions, and attitudes from their perspective (point of view). (Barker 2003, 141) Empathy is a game changer when engaging with people beyond our perspective. Empathy is crucial because it allows us to understand beyond our perceptions, which is highly important in our diverse society. There are many different perspectives and backgrounds in American society, and if we lack empathy, then distortions and misunderstandings can be derived more easily from subjects. These misunderstandings and distortions take the form of stereotypes, prejudice, micro-aggressions, racism, and other assumptions of group behavior and dynamics. Empathy can also help bridge gaps between systems of thought, such as the sciences, philosophy, or religion. The empathetic listener can engage with conflicting systems in a way that reduces bias, making their interactions more authentic and less distorted. This can aid in finding objectivity since objectivity requires us to examine many different angles of the same subject to be sure we have the correct interpretation. If I look at a table, for example, from one angle, I could miss things like dents, legs, how it exists in three-dimensional space, and many other features of that table. If someone goes shopping for a table, they rarely look at it once or accept one picture of the table; they either walk around it or ask for multiple photos to gain the best understanding of the object from multiple points of view. Requiring multiple views to form understanding is true of the sciences, people, places, and things. The best tool to engage with differing points of view is empathy. Empathy does not require us to adopt foreign beliefs or attitudes; it only requires that we engage with as little bias as possible by assuming the subject's position before assessing perspective. A similar analogy would be walking a mile in someone else's shoes. By walking the mile, we gain a more prosperous and deeper understanding of the subject that goes beyond the superficial and provides us with more objective truth. Objective truth would say that race, whether biologically real or not, affects people in real ways that pertain to their identity and everyday living, making it socially real, and to view that person without race is to view them out of context and, therefore, in a distorted sense. This distortion does not match the reality of many racialized Americans. People's willful ignorance of injustice perpetrated based on race does not erase these systems of race that we use, and simply forgetting them does not correct the harm they have done to many Americans, past and present.

RACIALIZATION IN AMERICA

Color in America has many implications and realities that willful ignorance cannot erase. For example, my grandmother was alive during the end of Jim Crow and experienced segregation. These living conditions affected her and many other people of color. Colorblindness ignores these truths and ignores the harm done to these people. How these harms are ignored is because if we claim to see someone without their racial identity, we become blind to racial injustice. The store attendant following a black man is no longer racist or racially motivated through a colorblind lens, so the injustice goes invisible. The colorblind individual thinks that not seeing color would correct this injustice. However, I argue that not seeing this person's racial identity would not protect the subject from the store attendants' prejudice and also make the colorblind individual someone incapable of being an ally. The correction for this is not to have people not see brown skin but to diminish the assumptions and prejudice that brown skin can elicit. Seeing color is not the issue; it assumes color is tied to behavior. The behaviors that we see within racial groups are a product of environment, prejudice, shared trauma, and other social factors. When someone claims not to see someone's color, then they are not seeing shared trauma, social environment, and acts of prejudice or racism perpetrated towards people in context. Context enhances and is pertinent in understanding the subject in reality, a crucial feature of empathy, which is understanding the subject within their own given context and view. There may be people of color who say they do not see color as an attempt to erase the idea of race because the thought is that if race did not exist, neither would racism. However, that is an ideal; racism does exist, and we cannot ignore it and hope it goes away. So, for me, even if I were to subscribe to being colorblind, it would not erase how others perceive me and how society is structured down to its legislation to oppress me. Empathy requires that we seek to understand a person through their perspective, and while some people may believe they do not see color, many still do and want people like me to know what color we are. As long as racism still exists, then colorblindness becomes ignorance, leading to harm instead of liberation; an individual may claim not to see color, but for the person of color, this individual proclamation does nothing to secure their dignity or safety in the face of the still existent prejudices in the deep south and the northerners "silent segregation" (red-lining). This argument is consistent with Jose Medina's assessment of the issues of colorblindness; colorblindness dismisses our reality, and racism as a system cannot be overridden simply by willful ignorance. Colorblindness means one does not see injustice perpetrated towards racial groups but also dismisses the concept of privileged racial groups. (Medina 2013, 41) The dismissal of race altogether is negligence on the part of the listener/observer that leads to a distortion of reality that is non-reflective of the lived experience of racialized people.

Issues With Colorblindness

One facet of colorblindness that becomes problematic is that there is no accountability for privileged individuals to rectify or seek justice for minority groups. If someone claims not to see color, then they do not see the harm perpetrated towards minorities as a racial problem and also do not see the perpetrators as racially motivated to commit this harm. Colorblindness inherently puts minorities at greater risk of injustice while simultaneously attributing to white privilege and protecting people who occupy racial groups that hold social power and use it as a weapon toward the social groups they view as outsiders. Lack of empathy is still consistent even when we have a minority viewing a privileged person, however. For example, I may say to a white man that I do not see race, but then I am dismissing social realities that affect people based on the merit of their whiteness. For example, white men hold one of the higher rates of people affected by depression who wish to take their lives. If one empathetically evaluates this claim, we could come to find that one reason this is the case is that while white men hold social power, many white men feel as if they are powerless. This sense of powerlessness comes from the unrealistic pedestal our society has put white men on, so when a white man falls outside the bounds of power, prestige, wealth, health, or other stereotypes, they can feel feelings of failure and low self-worth. Empathy allows us to see that race in our society harms all that are part of it in some facet. This does not diminish the actors' roles in this society, meaning the ones who play either oppressor or oppressed are still responsible for their actions. However, it is crucial to see and understand even the social realities of your oppressors for reasons that do not always directly pertain to liberation or justice. Some aspects of empathy and understanding are cultivating better skills to operate as a human in a wildly diverse environment. Now, I have written previously that empathy does not mean sympathy. One does not need to feel bad for their oppressors because they are under high amounts of social pressure to be in control per se. However, they should acknowledge this social reality so that their oppressors can understand them better, their motivations, and the relationship between the subject and the listener.

Another reason we should acknowledge people's racial identity is to avoid epistemic harm. If I (A black man) were talking about my experiences of racism or prejudice in our society and someone replied, "It is okay, I do not see color," is there no harm being perpetrated to the knower? The listener has dismissed the reality of this harm and, in some sense, justified these instances in an egocentric way; their ability to not see me as black somehow overrides systems of racism and prejudice that pressure me daily. All the spokesperson hears is someone who claims firstly not to see them as a whole but is also incapable of seeing the knower's hardship. Suppose one cannot see prejudice or racism using the lens of those negatively affected. In that case, they are, in turn, not utilizing empathy and, therefore, are further from understanding.

STRUCTURAL & SYSTEMIC IGNORANCE

Colorblindness is a system of ignorance. A tool used to diminish accountability and dismiss injustices perpetrated based on race. James Baldwin and Spelman speak about this system of oppression in *The Fire Next Time* and *Managing Ignorance*. The heart of colorblindness ties to this quote by Baldwin powerfully, "White America remains unable to believe that Black America's grievances are real; they are unable to believe this because they cannot face what this fact says about themself and their country." (Baldwin 1985, 536) People who claim not to see race typically hold positions of power.

A structuralist view of ignorance would account for why colorblindness is more common in white people. Structuralist ignorance is an account that takes into consideration the history and building of systematic ignorance in societies. (Martin 2021, 872) Historically, white people in America are taught that they are saviors towards people of color, rescuing them from their savagery. Now, initially, people in our society saw color, so how does colorblindness systemically aid white people? It aids them by diminishing responsibility and avoiding negative consequences for their actions. The idea is that the people alive today were not the ones who enslaved Africans. Therefore, the responsibility is not theirs, and the ones who are responsible for it are dead, so instead of helping to lift these people out of poverty, it is easier to say that color does not matter, and now things are equal. Races are, however, not being treated equally with respect to law, education, and housing. Black Americans still make $56 for every $100 a white family makes. (Martin 2021, 864) Another feature is that 17% of black Americans are in poverty, whereas 9% of white people are in poverty. Poverty and income inequality are a direct result of generational trauma and oppression for blacks and generational wealth and ownership of economic means of production for whites. Colorblindness allows white Americans to dismiss these statistics and avoid rectifying these injustices. Part of this may be that people today have no clue how to rectify such a gross injustice that slavery and Jim Crow were; this, however, is the heinous legacy passed down to whites.

As we see, ignorance is relationally relevant when discussing colorblind ideologies. For example, a colorblind person commits testimonial injustice. For example, a black man may be speaking about how they were racially profiled in a store and followed by a store attendant the whole time they were there; the colorblind person may respond, "Well, hey, it's okay. I don't see color at least". The marginalized persons' experiences go unseen and, therefore, invalidated and uncorrected. For example, a colorblind person has no motivation to confront the store attendant with their response and attempt to correct the injustice; they simply wave it off as a past experience and think their blindness makes up for others' prejudice. Their inability to access the knowledge of people of color creates an environment where marginalized people have a more challenging time escaping the social sanctions impacted by their race.

When the colorblind person addresses a person of color, however, another aspect of this person's ignorance is their need for more awareness of the social landscape. (Silva et al. 2023, 226-228). For example, one can claim they do not see race, but their statement is either egocentric or lacks social awareness; egocentric in the sense that they may believe their view supersedes society's view of race or lacks awareness that race plays a significant role in marginalized people's experience. The colorblind persons' lack of sight does not save our black man from being racially profiled in a store, and his claims then feel dismissed; they are unseen as well. This leads to inner harm and outer harm; inner harm to the mind and spirit, and our harm such as prejudice, profiling, and violence. We can see more clearly that colorblind ideologies lack empathy because empathy would fulfill this missing social awareness. Empathy would also entail seeing color because the black man sees themself as colored due to the way society treats them. They do not view themself as colorless because that can be unsafe in highly prejudiced areas.

Racial Power Dynamics in Context

White people tend to adopt colorblind attitudes because race does not affect them to the same degree, so not seeing it is an easier task. What if a white suburban woman tells a black man they do not see his color; they see him as an equal? Are the power dynamics of the social environment still at play? The power dynamics are still at play because the white woman does not just become a woman and not white, as in the only role at play is her woman; intersectionally, her whiteness affects that dynamic. For example, back in 2014, I knew a man who was close friends with someone who had wanted to go to a school dance with a white girl; this resulted in the teen's body being found in wrestling mats. The official news report never mentioned race as a factor in this boy's death, but the person I knew said that it was still an unspoken rule in many southern areas; he was from Georgia, and down there, a black man was not to mingle with a white woman still as a type of social more; a *more* is a sociology term that refers to essential functions of a community that are quite like unspoken rules. Now, a suburban soccer mom would likely say she is a victim of oppression, and because of this, she can relate to race, but they are different. To Kill a Mockingbird is the prime example of the power white women hold over black men; that story is simply a retelling of similar stories like the one mentioned earlier, which is more recent, or cases like Emmett Till, where a white woman's testimony let a child murderer go free. The suburban mom is still oppressed concerning their identity as a woman. Black men are not seen as full men since they are not white; therefore, white women in the suburbs do not need to answer to them in the same way they would white men because they hold racial power.

COLORBLIND & MARGINALIZED

Now, there are instances of minorities also taking this stance; however, their social positioning means that those who do engage with this stance would be considered oppressed and colonized. Colonization has an assimilatory effect on people, which pressures them to adopt specific beliefs that help to reinforce and uphold that society's oppression. So, those who are minorities and adopt this stance are, for the most part, indoctrinated, and their testimony becomes non-representative for those trying to resist oppression. The privileged individuals who take this stance are also actors hammered into their roles as oppressors. However, they have more motivation to support colorblindness because the point of view aids in the oppression of people of color; it hides oppression and denies colonization, meaning there is nothing to repair or fix. When there is nothing to repair or fix, then those in power need not do anything but treat people justly; moving forward, they do not need to answer for injustices perpetrated prior to the erasure of color. If we were not to see color as a society, there would be no need for reparations because, in this idealized world, people would be treated justly despite looking different. There would be no need for social justice regarding race because race would no longer exist. Some expect we can just move past race, but let us consider the black person who has been racialized their whole life; racialization has shaped their identity and experiences both negatively and positively.

Erasure

Colorblind individuals may think that they are liberating people of color by not acknowledging or seeing their race, or they may be trying to justify their reality; I argue that they are simply adding to the trauma and erasure of these people's identities as a way to defer responsibility and introspection. African-Americans, for example, have worked hard to build culture and identity here despite being stripped of their heritage and past, and it was recently that African-American culture was crafted and supported in mainstream media. From someone who comes from the community, the colorblind mentality feels like an erasure of identity but not on the terms of my people; the colorblind perspective would say my people are neither white nor black; they are simply human. This is nice in theory, but it does not represent me. Being biracial, both white and black, one may think that being colorblind would be okay since social group membership is for both groups. In American society, however, my social group membership is more contingent on my outward appearance. What this means is that I have never been able to claim I am white and reap those benefits; the world sees me as black and treats me as such.

How Do We Guage Empathy?

Empathy cannot be seen or touched, so how do we know whether someone engages with empathy? Let us examine kindness as a parallel. Some may say empathy has no measure or way of examining what it is because it is relational. We have defined empathy as when someone is engaging with a subject from their emotional and attitudinal perspective; how do we measure this component of the definition? Like acts of kindness, actions, and language can help us determine whether someone engages with empathy. For example, if someone were to hold open the door for anyone they saw and make efforts to make people feel happy, these are kind acts. Now, this does not mean that every action they do is kind, but it does highlight that that person in those moments is being kind. The measure depends on examining the practitioner of kindness and the recipient of kindness; by examining the act, we look for the intent: Was this person aiming to help, aid, or enhance a person's experience? If so, it is kind. Was the act meant to deter, harm, or have no thought for others? If so, this person is not engaging with kindness. Now, can an act be kind without engaging in kindness? Let us say a person holds the door open only because they need to stop and say something before leaving. As they do, someone walks through the door. Was this an act of kindness? The act is kind, but this person is not engaged in kindness. Empathy is similar to this laid-out logic. We can measure whether someone is engaged with empathy by looking at the interpersonal relationship in which someone uses empathy. Like our kindness example, empathy requires two players: someone to use and receive empathy.

Let us say a black man is speaking to a white man and talking about an incident in which police racially profiled them. The black man talks about how scared he was about the demeanor of the cops, saying they seemed standoffish and that because of this, he has lost respect for the police. The non-empathetic listener hears this and responds, "Well, if you follow their instructions, there is nothing to worry about. I have never had an issue with the police, so I am sorry that happened. The police were just doing their job, though you should not disrespect law enforcement; the job is hard." This response does nothing to validate the speaker; it dismisses the speaker entirely and makes their worries and attitudes seem unfounded. The person responding is speaking in such a way that the speaker may feel as if they misinterpreted that whole experience, challenging their view. This is the key to why it is non-empathetic. The listener is responding to the speaker using their experiences and understanding; they do little to engage with the speakers' experiences and understanding. So, the empathetic response would attempt to understand what the speaker is saying using their emotions and attitudes. This does not mean you must agree, but an empathetic response may look like this; "That is very scary. Were you feeling any other emotions outside of fear? Was this the first time you have been stopped like this? If you do not mind me asking, I am genuinely curious about what indicators cops give off during their profiling so I can be more aware. I am sorry, and they should have been more receptive to you. I have never had that happen to me, but I figure that is likely because I am white." As we see, the two responses are starkly different.

One seems to downplay and dismiss the speaker's claims, and one validates and asks further to seek a richer understanding of that speaker's emotions and perspective on the incident. Through this, we can see a measure of empathy, which requires us to examine the exchange between the speaker and the listener. If one is to ask questions and not first dismiss someone's claim before trying to understand the attitude and emotions of the speaker, then they are engaging in empathy. Engaging in this empathy, though, brings about a deeper and richer understanding, which can enhance one's knowledge. In our example, the non-empathetic response shuts down the conversation, leaving little room for the speaker to add more and flesh out that experience of prejudice. Non-empathetic responses, in turn, mean the listener now has no better understanding of racial prejudice and has committed testimonial injustice, which is an epistemic injustice towards the speaker by not acknowledging this racial prejudice. The empathetic response firstly does not contribute to epistemic injustice, and it makes it possible for this listener to understand prejudice from a minority perspective, which in turn can illuminate their social positioning better and increase their knowledge of the social landscape in America. When someone asks those types of questions and attempts to respond using someone's perspective, they are engaged in empathetic dialogue and fostering empathy interpersonally.

EMPATHY, IGNORANCE, AND COLORBLINDNESS - THE LOGICAL RELATIONSHIP

Being empathetic does not guarantee that one is not ignorant; it does help in moving one away from ignorance, however. Ignorance is a lack of knowledge and awareness, and as we have seen, it is a self-preservation tactic for oppression; empathy is accessing someone's awareness and emotions to better process and understand their knowledge. The processing of knowledge is not guaranteed. One can be engaged with empathy and still arrive at false conclusions because processing the information requires first that a person views things through the subject's lens, a skill cultivated through social interaction. Think about children; when it comes to social interaction, they are most ignorant since they have so much to learn. We give them grace as they say rude things, cuss, and use inappropriate language because we acknowledge their ignorance. A child can walk up and say, "That hat looks bad on you," we are far more likely to laugh it off than when an adult does it because we assume the adult has been socially trained to know that those words can be hurtful. Much like a child, the listener is an infant who listens to the speaker's perspectives and norms. This means they should be offered grace as they learn, but similarly, the listener has been taught at some point and must be held accountable for integrating those teachings. The listener is bound to fail when they first attempt empathy, which is okay; through practice and discourse, the listener will increase their overall understanding and knowledge of the subject as long as they are aware and open to it. Knowledge attainment is, therefore, a product of awareness in empathy, making awareness more towards the forefront of combatting colorblind ignorance.

(CB = Colorblind) (I = Ignorant) (E = Empathetic)
(A = Have Awareness) (K = Have Knowledge)
(P = Have Perspective)
(U = Understanding)

$(CB \supset I)$ (CB) (I) $(I \supset (\sim A \wedge \sim K))$ $(E \supset (A \wedge P))$ $((A \wedge P) \supset U)$ $(K \supset A \wedge P \wedge U)$ (E⊃~CB)

This logical formula outlines the current discussion and how empathy is inconsistent with colorblindness. Furthermore, it highlights the importance of empathy as a knowledge producer through awareness and perspective, which are critical features of the definition and attainment of knowledge.

Conclusion

If we claim to be understanding and empathetic, then we cannot dismiss and unsee color and what it has done to many Americans and people across the globe. Empathy requires us to see those injustices and to attempt to feel and resonate with the harms perpetrated based on race. Colorblindness is a form of ignorance, meaning we lose knowledge and awareness; if we accept this ideology, injustices will go unnoticed and unaddressed, and harm will not be mitigated nor corrected. One can claim not to see race, but the harms of race are still prevalent in today's society, and turning a blind eye to this makes it impossible to solve these injustices. The empathetic person sees race but also understands the subject being racialized through their lens as a human and not lesser. The empathetic listener sees color, especially when the subject experiences color.

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MARXVAD AUR RAMRAJYA. CONTESTATION, CONVERGENCE AND MICRO-PHENOMENA OF GOVERNANCE OF POLITY AND ECONOMICS

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Abstract. Karpatriji, who authored *Marxvad Aur Ramrajya*, adheres to the ancient Indian political philosophy tradition. It includes governance as an annealed part of the *troika*, philosophy, politics, and economics. Genesis of *Hindu* political philosophy owes to *Kautilya* and *Shukracharya* to show the Indian integration of the milieu of the three disciplines in unison, *i.e. Neeti-shastra*. *Chanakya,* also known as *Kautilya,* offers a doctrine of the *mandala*, known as spheres of influence, in foreign policy; *mandala* philosophy finds resonance and tacit presence in the book *Marxvad Aur Ramrajya* amongst discussed subject matter. Karpatriji illustrated the embeddedness of *dharmic* phenomena[1] in the governance framework of *Ramrajya* and presents a thesis on *Dharmic* perspectives in the post-modern world. The book is a magnum opus on a comparative view of Marxism and *Dharmic* proposition on governance, having veracity of themes and topics discussed in the work. It details Marxism not as a standalone *Vad* or alternative view on social theory, but instead depicts Marxism founded on a well-developed foundation of Western philosophy, classical Greek philosophy, and Western political thoughts of his time.

Vad can remain a theory in the *Dharmic* tradition until subject to rigorous testing and validating outcomes through distinct stages of showing a *Siddhanta*or - a doctrine. In *Marxvad Aur Ramrajya*[2], Karpatriji begins with a background of the idea. The author then shows the principal argument of the opponent, called *Purvapaksa;* later dismantling the proposition through logic, using established notions and new notions, to support or add to the established concepts, and eventually instituting the *Siddhanta*, the alternative view accepted by the *Purvapaksin*. The work reinforces the method of *Purvapaksa* and offers a detailed exhibition of the development processes of an argument within *Siddhanta.* The contestation and convergence of *Marxvad Aur Ramrajya* happened so distantly. *Ramrajya* says that just governance must fulfill the micro-phenomena of ethics and

virtues; *Sukracharya* explains in *Neetisaar*that *Ram* the epitome of ethics, intrinsic worth, and integrity like no other king in the past nor would bear in the future.

Ram told *Laxman*, "A king must not exhibit any atrocity on its citizens, thinking about personal selfish happiness of prosperity; else the victims may destroy the unruly king and his kingdom". It finds a subtle micro-resonance with the collective virtue of the labour class in the Marxist philosophy of uniting and raising the voice against capitalist injustice and exploitation.

This paper aims to examine the following from Karpatriji's work *Marxvad Aur Ramrajya.* It also includes a political philosophy analysis in European and Indian contexts -

- *Purvapaksa* doctrine, a methodological tool relevant in the post-modern world;
- A brief comparative epistemological analysis of *Marxvad Aur Ramrajya*.
- Micro phenomena of governance in contestation and convergence of *Ramrajya,* Marxist-Economics, and the philosophy of Karl Marx.

Keywords: (post)modernity, political philosophy, Economy, Europe, India

INTRODUCTION

Marxvad Aur Ramrajya is a treatise on *Hindu* political philosophy which also integrates ancient *Sanskrit* literature (Macdonell 2016) and vernacular texts - *Ramcharit Manas* (Vedalankar 2017). *Marxvad aur Ramrajya* - first published in 1956, in the era of Marxist ideology - made waves all over in response to an age when, in post-independent India, Marxist economics shaped the discourse and policy implementation. Karpatriji also looked at Western ideas thoughts and philosophers, especially the European Enlightenment era (1680 -the 1780s). An era of a scientific surge and rationality in Europe led to a belief in the ability of humans to challenge and reject traditionalism, obscurantism, and the authority of the church in socio-political life. *Marxvad Aur Ramrajya* offers a valid argument in favour of *Marxvad*, a coherent socialist European theory; shows that the work of Marx is of genuine pedigree, innovative, seminal, and academic prowess in the field of political philosophy and history of Europe. Karpatriji analyses what *Marxvad* must visualize in the history of ancient Western philosophy (Masih 2017), the Darwinian theory of evolution, and post-Newtonian Europe. E.H. Carr states that Marx 'imposed himself on history, with all the sheer force of a unique and dominant idea' (Claeys 2018, 243).

Marxism integrated with Confucianism, socialism, and later capitalism in a totalitarian China yielded positive economic indicators[3], alienated abject poverty, and uplifted middle-class people. Whereas in the rest of the world, the Marxist economic model is dwindling thick and fast. The question arises of the circumstances and the degree to which Marxism works. Marxism works only in a particular timeline of a nation[4] or society. Marxists may argue that they implemented Marxism in letter and its spirit within these nations. Marxist scholars have addressed such challenges, especially for new readers of contemporary capitalism (Athreya et al. 2011). The Marxist economic model has, thus, these two polarities in the post-modern world; like any other profound ideology, Marxism needs specific conducive and critical ground to affect in practice, such as the form of governance. Democracy has quite different representations and institutions within the developing, developed, and underdeveloped nations, from Eastern Europe to Western Europe and Nordic and Scandinavian countries to the Americas to Africa. It is not a uniform model right from the type of democratic institutions, and their functioning to the fundamental notion of their respective democratic functioning, viz, presidential form to parliamentary and quasi-monarchic democratic profiles. Marxism, the dominant idea, lacked a micro response to the hyperlocal civilizational milieu of India. Micro phenomena of the Indian system of *Purushartha; Dharma, Artha, Kama, and Moksha*, find *Marxvad*c contrasting in the light of *Hindu* political philosophy and its post-modern avatar of Karpatriji's *Ramrajya*.

CONVERSING THE CONTRAST

It is so ironic that the significant portions of the manuscript of the book *Marxvad Aur Ramrajya* were authored in jail, as do Marxist literature, either in jail or in dire situations and in hostile conditions. Marxist history and Marxist works of literature written in Europe and in the USSR inside prisons. While living in an inhuman and anti-human environment, Maxim Gorki's 'Mother' is a classic example of the era. Indian thinkers like Bhagat Singh, Gandhi, Savarkar, Nehru, and others have found the seclusion of their stays in jail to profound creativity and joy of writing. A scientific discovery like Newton's was published around the unfortunate plague tragedy in the UK; Einstein and other scientists of the Nazi regime also found shelter in other parts of Europe and the USA and contributed to science. It continues astonishingly and it would be proper to mention that German scientists produced seminal work before World War II and won Nobel prizes. Marx also did not find solace from his plagued life until he died in 1883, from his trying years in European countries before reaching Paris and eventually settling in the United Kingdom. Marx remained besieged financially and socially until his death. Karpatriji compiled the work while coming in and out of jail and remained discreet. The result is a journey of a saint, author, and utmost revolutionary passion for putting forward the *Purvapaksa* to assemble his *Uttarapaksa* of governance, i.e., *Ramrajya*. The analyses compellingly remind the confrontation between Marx and Hegel. The manuscript can be partially inconsistent due to Karpatriji's frequent arrest and release and other social commitments, like organisation building and speaking engagements. He also founded *Ramrajya Parishad*, a political outfit, in response to the upheaval of Marxism in the socio-political and economic landscape of post-independent India.

The paper does not aim to analyse *Marxvad* based on anti-theistic political philosophy, but instead on the governance of polity and economics and the foundational philosophy behind *Marxvad*.

Veda is one large corpus. the *Vedic scholar Veda Vyasa, fo*r better understanding, classified it into four *Veda*[5] and further sub-divided it into *Samhitas*, *Brahmanas*, *Aranyakas*, and *Upanishads* to promote learning (Wilson 2021). *Bhartiya Darsan* has begun out of one source, i.e., *Veda*. Chronologies of *Veda* and *Sanskrit* texts are always a matter of ongoing research. However, governance and the roles and accounts of the micro-phenomena are apportioned in texts: *e.g., Krishna* deals with individual duty, *Dharma* in politics, and *Gita in warfare*. The epics of *Mahabharata, Ramayana*, and other *Sanskrit* texts, *Panchatantra, Dashakumarcharitra*, and *Dhanurveda*, are especially rich in the subject matter of politics. *Yukti-Kalpa-Taru*, by King *Bhoja*, also gives an account of the micro-level phenomena in a royal court.

The two political philosophies in *Sanskrit* texts, *Arthashastra* of *Chanakya and Shukra-neeti,* or *Neetisaar* of *Sukracharya*, deal with the following macro-level phenomena: duties of princes, functions of the crown prince and other state-officials, characteristics of friends and allies. *Neeti-shastra offers* the art of understanding micro-level phenomena as a study of applied psychology in political science. Theoretical knowledge and perspective of the micro-phenomena of Indian political philosophy may offer deliberations in times of crisis. Politics in Aristotelian logic may have an equivalence to *"Neeti"* and *"Shastra"* in the Indian context. It forms ethics, morality, and science of politics at every level, i.e., Macro, Meso, and Micro levels of political functioning and statecraft. The Indian political philosophy derived from *Vedic* and *Upanishadic* wisdom and adapted to the changing times. The micro-level phenomena are indebted to the more extensive spiritual pursuit of self-realization, the non-embodied self. It has utmost importance in India's philosophical systems; individual rights and duties, called *Dharma*, are offered as a solution for decision-making in times of crisis and challenges. The individual is at the centre of ancient Indian deliberations, whether aims for social, political, economic, or the goal of spiritual knowledge. The individual-level perspective of Indian political philosophy may offer habituated roles and the idea of individual freedom. It helps us move away from the silos of notions of just personal freedom instead of accepting the rights and duties and individual freedom, an all-inclusive solution in the post-modern world.

Karl Marx was the integrator of the social-political and non-religious philosophy in Europe. Political science scholars may disagree that Marx has anything to do with religion; we must not forget that disputing religious beliefs offered a churning in Europe. Religious reforms surfaced in this context in continental Europe and later in the United Kingdom. *Marxvad* delves into various macro phenomena like union and socialism of materialistic well-being in a Marxist welfare state but lacks a leader's micro attributes; whereas *Ramrajya* offers details and thematic representation of the leader, who would voice and execute the governance and policy in a welfare state (Valmiki 2014).

The Marxist welfare state and Karpatriji's *Ramrajya* model[vi] have contrasting welfare state ideals, not discussed here in detail as the paper is restricted to the micro-phenomena.

PURVAPAKSA DOCTRINE

The *Purvapaksa* doctrine can have different notions of *Adhikarna*; for this paper, the etymology and purport of the word "a*dhikarana, adhikaraṇa, ādhīkaraṇa*", in *Purvapaksa,* is understood in the *Mimamsa* school of philosophy. *Adhikarana* is a five-fold exegesis of biblical interpretational context[6]. *Purvapaksa* enumeration begins with *Visaya-Vakya,* with a noting of the scriptural subject matter under discussion; the second fold *Samsaya* - devising the raised doubt into a structure, making sense of *visaya-vakya* and emanating the specious interpretation of the opponent. This forms the foundation for the next fold, *Purvapaksa*, which is to exhibit the *elenchus* of the opposing school. The refutation of the former position and demonstration of reasoned elucidation of interpretation finally manifests as the alternative view and meteorically into a *Siddhanta*, called the *Uttarapaksa*. The couched attribute of *Purvapaksa* doctrine results in the final fold*, Nirnaya,* a culmination of the process, argument of the conclusion reached and accepted by both the *Paksha.*

PROFIT INTENT, PROFIT-MAKING AND PROFITEERING IN POLITY

A scholar of *Vedic* canon, G.C Pandey suggests that the *Vedic* view is not confined only to socio-economic centrality. Rather than a *Samskaric*-based system (Pandey 2019,231), economics and socialism emerged out of the *Samskaric* attributes of *Purusha*. *Purushsukta* of *Rigveda* emphasises the subject matter, *i.e.*, *Purusa*, the combined consciousness of *Isvara* and Humans (Sinha 1999): the evolution of the *Hindu* political philosophy of *Vedic* centrality of *Samskaric* notion into a *Neeti* combined *Hindu, Dharma-Sutras* and *Dharma-shastras* (Hiltebeitel 2011), *Smriti-shastras*, *Arthashastra* and *Neeti-shastras* (Sarkar 1918, 489). *Vedic* corpus states that the fair price of the raw material may well be in accordance and checked for an unaccounted increase in the business owner's wealth. The wage agreement alludes to after consultation between the worker and the owner - *mulyen yah karma karoti sa britakah [Marx. Aur Ram.,* pp 453 ,Yag. Smriti, Mita. Vya. 183].

Marx put forth the diminishing contours of profit and profiteering and claimed that intrinsically capitalists would exploit labor due to profiteering. The causal effect of profiteering and exploitation and strange entanglement between workers and owners. Profit intent is inherently embedded in a private entity; unlike government-run institutions, the government can print and regulate currency, and its default nature would remain in the social welfare of the people. *Marxvad* hardly finds any coherence between the 'welfare state' and the government's aim to stay focused on the 'welfare of the citizens'. *'Kalyankarirajya'* of Karpatriji, contrasts with the Marxist economic order. Karpatriji advocates for the *shastra-dharma* - audited governance which includes citizens' participation, cooperation, and interest in day-to-day governance. *Ramrajya,* a synthesis of ideas on polity, economy, and philosophy (suggested in *Sanskrit* texts: *Manusmriti, Arthashastra, Naradsmriti, Brihaspatismriti, Gunaratnamkatyansmriti, Padmapuran, Sukraneetisaar* and *Yagyavalkyasmriti*).

Karpatriji reasoned for our limitation of senses for the principle of reality. In the book, he mentions *samkhya* - a materialistic *darshan* in Indian thought on the issue of things and the perception of reality (Ishwarkrishna 2011, 44). Kautilya, in *Arthashastra,* is for payment of salary linked to the "weaver's skill set", and increments and rewards are offered for excellence and meritocracy of the worker.

Kautilya mentions the outcome of the assigned work and wage decided beforehand by the owner and the worker. The extra job is done either to please the owner, in ignorance, or for another reason. It is futile and condemned as a non-ethical practice, not encouraged in the worker-owner relationship. Eighteen heads of dispute were enumerated (Kaundinayan 2018). Manu suggests the grievance redressal mechanisms of such legal conflicts, which include the issue of non-payment of wages, are of utmost priority to the daily duties of the king. The king must address and find justice for the parties involved.

MARX, MARXISM AND MARX-PHILOSOPHY DIDACTIC

On the idea of who leads whom: the proponent and whether a person's surroundings sprout the seed in a person are early signs of questions invariably raised for people of exceptional intellect, those who have left indelible impressions on society. Marx is one of those who left the world with an ineradicable mark in the nineteenth century and continued to the twenty-first century. However, researchers raised that Marxism, in recent times, does not offer an alternative[7] to liberal capitalism (Goel 2015, 114). Marx was born on 05 May 1818 in the catholic city of Rhineland near the French border. The resident city was copious, but the revolutionary flavour was sweeping into the educated citizens of the town. Marx's father, a Rabbi, converted to a protestant just a year before the birth of Marx, in 1817. During the 1830s, the socialist fervour and schemes must have impacted the formative years of the young Karl Marx (Claeys 2018, 13). Marx was acting at his age and on the impressions of the surroundings of immediate society. He read classics like Homer and Ovid in his school days. He also had a school principal who sympathised with Rousseau and Kant, and he heard the stories of the French Revolution of 1789.

The French Revolution was a modern praxis of European enlightenment, formed on two principles: liberty and egalitarian - a society based on fraternity. or commune. The influence of those profound epoch events manifested in his first writings and works. Marx insisted that choosing a profession must be catalyzed via "the welfare of humanity and our perfection; the happiest person is 'the man who has made the greatest number of people happy" (Claeys 2018,14). The profound statement of a seventeen-year-old is probably a glimpse of the 'non-empirical self' or intrinsic happiness while doing good for others, self-enhancement, and satisfaction.

Marx conferred his doctorate and dissertation on "The difference between the Democritean and Epicurean philosophy of Nature". The influence of Epicurean philosophy is felt along with the later Hegelian idea of self-consciousness, termed as 'the highest divinity'. Hegel's absolute idealism, which is grounded in pure concepts, is devoid of any dualism of mind and nature. The amalgamation of European Enlightenment, Epicureanism[8] and Marx's confrontation with Hegelian absolute idealism and this collision eventually influenced Karl Marx's *Bourgeois society*.

Ironically, *Marxvad* emerged out of a disagreement with Hegelian materialism and Hegel's critique of Indian philosophy stating that "real philosophy" begins only in Greece, and also the attempt to eliminate Indian thoughts from the historiography of philosophy (Halfbfass 1990).

The Hegelian approach of steering the *Uttarapaksa*, negating the Indian philosophy without setting the *Purvapaksa*, in this case, Indian philosophy stands defeated and untrue. In contrast, *Adi-Shankaracharya* established his *Uttarapaksa, Vedanta*. He first epistemologically formed the *Purvapaksa* for *Samkhya* and other concurrent philosophies of that time in India and founded the school of *Vedanta* (Larson 2018, vii).

CONCLUSION

In the post-modern world, *Marxvad Aur Ramrajya*, a comparative work, witnesses as a treatise on the study of *Purvapaksa* doctrine and micro phenomena of social and political philosophy. *Purvapaksa* doctrine inheritably considers that authors explicitly make their respective viewpoints, irrespective of their standpoint beforehand. The foreseen challenge could be whether the readers would accept such a pragmatic approach in the post-modern world. Let the well-informed reader exercise their post-reading views on *Purvapaksa* and *Uttarapaksa*. The literature on Marxism also illustrates that Marx and different schools of Marxism do not converse in a singularity of thoughts as 'Marxism'. The utopian critique of Marx's philosophy in the European context does not stand firm; however, the utopian characteristics of Marxism do appear when seen in contrast with both ancient *Hindu* political philosophy and Karpatriji's *Ramrajya* model of governance. *Ramrajya* and its philosophy of governance of polity and economics is not parallel to Western capitalism. Meritocracy, transparency of governance and the leader under scrutiny from public life are factors micro-phenomena that find resonance with the *Hindu* political philosophy of *Kautilya, Shukracharya* and Karpatriji's doctrine of *Ramrajya*in. Gram-Swaraj[9] (Kakati 2021) and *Antodaya* -Integral Humanism (Upadhyaya 2018) integrated into a *Ramrajya* model can be foreseen. It may not be possible to achieve the governance model of *Ramrajya* without incorporating technology in the governance of polity and economics in the twenty-first century.

The future world, its sheer size and scale, and the advent of disruptive technology may offer a more effective functioning and adaptation of the governance model of Karpatriji's *Ramrajya*. The *Ramrajya* governance may need interdisciplinary research with ancient *Hindu* political philosophy in the age of artificial intelligence and machine learning. The impact of *Marxvad* in Europe and the global south was undoubtedly profound and stayed foundational even in cases of ethics in European polity, if not in economic policy, though fading in Latin America. *Marxvad*, although had a global appeal, was an endogenous phenomenon in Europe. *Marxvad* lacks a micro response to the hyperlocal micro phenomena of the Indian socio-economical system of *Purushartha*. *Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha* hence paving the way forward for the post-modern avatar of *Ramrajya*. The doctrine of governance in Karpatriji's pivotal work, *Marxvad Aur Ramrajya*, may reach the standing of either the ancient *Ramrajya* or the level of acceptability to that of *Vedanta* in Indian philosophy. *Ramrajya* doctrine of Karpatriji must accommodate the post-modern myth and realities to be an effective governance model in ethics.

In conclusion, Marxism of Marx and *Ramrajya* of Karpatriji represent a coherent theory of ideas in Western and Eastern development of thoughts and represent the endogenous phenomena of Europe and India, respectively.

NOTES

1. Karpatriji, in another work (Maharaj 4), *Vichar Piyush,* reasoned the intricate tri-partite relationship, the state, king, and the citizens. Micro-phenomenon of King's individual relation to the institutions of the state and his ministers, based on a democratic process. King performs his state duties in consultation and is a humble catalyst of harmony between his cabinet and the Army, as stated in Atharvaveda – *sabhyah sabham mein pahi ye cha sabhyah sabhasadah* [Atharvaveda 19.55.5].
2. The edition of the book used for this research paper (Maharaj, *Marxvad Aur Ramrajya*).
3. Quality of Life: India vs. China (Sen), though economic indicators a decade ago and understanding of the quality of life and subjective well-being has undergone a paradigm shift (*e.g.,* climate crisis, post covid-19 world order).

4. Venezuela and Cuba, these two nations, both saw steep rise and fall of Latin nations, the success and decline of Marxist economics.
5. Chapter 3, *Visnu Puran* divided Veda into four portions, by *Vyasa* in every *Dvapara* age.
6. Source: Srimatham. *Mīmāṃsa* - The Study of Hindu Exegesis.
7. Claim of historical analysis, Marxism, an alternative to liberal capitalism – "It is, or at least should be, obvious that as a political approach, Marxism has failed as a historical alternative to liberal capitalism…. after the rapid demise of the Soviet Union in 1991" – *Tom Rockmore teaches Philosophy*, Duquesne University, Pennsylvania (*Karl Marx Most Influential Philosopher of the Modern World 113-114*).
8. Konstan, David, "Epicurus", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Summer 2018 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2018/entries/epicurus/).
   Epicureanism - the philosophy of atomistic materialism: societies evolve due to naturalistic laws and human endeavours, free from any fear and punishment, would unleash human potential.
9. Gram Swaraj -its relevance in present the present context.

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MATERIAL LIVE THRESHOLDS IN HUMAN'S PATH: THE MOON IS A MIRROR. A MULTIDISCIPLINARY REVIEW OF SCOTT HESSELS' DIGITAL ARTWORK

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Abstract. This paper examines "Art, History and Digitality" in their interrelation by showcasing the technological and cultural dynamics of the mirror as artwork and the phenomenon of mirroring.
In the Introduction, we interrogate definitions of digital art as part of art history to be launched in the age of art democratisation and media–archaeology.
In the main part, I focus on the case of the digital artwork *The Moon is A Mirror* (2014) by Scott Hessels by venturing a multidisciplinary interpretation and analysis via ancient Greek aesthetics drawn upon Parmenides' "Heliophotism", Lucian's *Moon as a Mirror* and Plato's *The Cave Myth*, digital archaeology, as well as Gustav Klimt's art of painting in the *fin-de-siècle* Vienna.
Instead of a conclusion, I reflect on the contemporariness of Nature and its physical materials transformed into the new socio-economic essentials in the newly built world.

Keywords: Hessels, media-archaeology, moon-mirror, Plato, cave-myth, Klimt, nature

INTRODUCTION. DIGITAL ART - DEFINITIONS

Digital Art emanates from Computer Art, Multimedia Art and Cyber Art (mainly from the 1960s through the 1990s). Digital Art and New Media Art terms appeared at the end of the 20th century (Paul 2016, 1).

Digital Art and New Media Art converge in their meaning and applications but, sometimes, New Media Art functions as a "subcategory of a larger field of digital art that comprises all art using digital technologies at some point in the process of its creation, storage or distribution". Digital Art made by digital technologies, is exploiting its key tools as a medium.

Computer and Digital Art constantly drew scientists' concern between the 1950s and the 1960s. Going back to the second half of the 19th century, photography was highly used by experts who struggled to be creative and productive through technology. At the beginning of the 20th century, cubism in art considered time and space in an unconditional way. Then Futurism, Cubo-Futurism, Constructivism and Suprematism existed as the predecessors of Computer Art.

Digital Art is linked to the traditional one and adopts several of its characteristics. For instance, the historic genealogy that correlates Digital Art with kinetics and the optical artworks which use movement, light etc. appeared for the first time during the 1960s and the 1970s. Digital Art became widely known during the 1990s. Predecessors of Digital Art such as Dada, Fluxus, and Conceptual Art examine Art in its interrelation with the audience; the concept and its aspects in opposition to the view of Art as an *Entity* cover all the artistic preoccupations of humankind that prevailed also during the *fin de siècle* (Paul 2016, 6). Later, in the 1970s and the 1980s, Post-Media in the Post Digital Era exploits material objects (sometimes natural) in terms of a digital representation or the opposite: the real material world is re-born through digital technologies in a way that materiality and digitality co-exist interchangeably within the digital world (Paul 2016, 3). In 1948, Norbert Wiener introduced the word 'cybernetics' (deriving from the Greek word *κυβερνήτης*) to discuss Control, Communication and Feedback and their importance in people's lives. In the 1990s, artists worked within academia due to the low demand and popularity of Digital Art in the market. In 2005, social media celebrated individuality giving way to the rise of common non-expertised people dealing with software moderation and administration (Paul 2016, 6).

DECIPHERING THE DIGITAL ARTWORK "*THE MOON IS A MIRROR*"

In Hessels' artwork, titled "The Moon is a Mirror" there are five LED door- windows constructed by organic elements switched on with natural power. It is about five different embossed surfaces natural in origin that are conceptualised in a digital environment. The artwork mediates between the use of nature's ingredients and their exploitation in computing. Translucency is achieved technically over the moving scene. A human figure passes back and forth to each of these five thresholds. His movement elucidates every single surface while he walks across it. The moving scene is recurrent. The artist admits that he draws on sustainable cinema to give his artwork a natural moving sense via sustainable organic materials instead of artificial media equipment. The latter makes the artwork disruptive in terms of traditional modes of representation. We can see here an oxymoron: the traditional modes here pertain to New Media mediums. In opposition to a post-digital era where we do not conceive digital creatures after their birth - in that case, the creatures are inherently digital in a way of a new form of materiality- since the innovation occurs from the introduction of physical elements in an evolution process of the digital form. In this context, the new digitality retrospects to antiquity to convey a new perception of reality via technology.

It is worth noting that the title of the artwork is not mentioned by the artist in his artwork description. The term 'Mirror' can be justified by the translucency of these organic materials under the LED lights. 'The Moon' is a hidden term. One can presumably think of the patterns on the surfaces as tiny moon figures that are entwined in million grids over the entity.

THE DEMOCRATISATION

The digital era promotes scenes instead of words, and cinema instead of philology. This way, it contributes to the democratisation of art while it increases public involvement. It's easier for common people to react to a scene than to a text. Then, cinema through scenes and moving images expands creativity because it is easier to make a series of pictures than to write an extended text in words. On the other hand, people can barely react to a text even in terms of viewership or spectatorship. Scenes encourage people to engage and participate in their description, decoding, deciphering, and interpreting or re-creating them because scenes and moving images imitate life's pace. Sustainable cinema can revive community structures, make people find their inner - selves in their contact with natural elements and get inspiration from what they see and how these are played and organized. *The Moon is A Mirror* is an artwork that reflects all these principles being satisfied via the democratisation process and intrigues people's fantasy to conceive their digital creations after nature.

The artwork affects the dynamics of the relationships among various stakeholders in the art world. It contemplates the field of Sustainable Cinema, Installation Art and Media Archaeology. (Kelly 2008, 6).

Posing the Question "What is Media Archaeology?"

Media archaeology has its origins in twentieth-century intellectuals Michel Foucault and Walter Benjamin and, then, the New Film History in the 1980s and other research capabilities built during the 1990s. Media Archaeology, according to the latest review, searches for its potential in Modernity, Cinema and New Media. Modernity recommends a new perception of history, trying to launch the literary and artistic aesthetics of the past with a new sight. Cinema explores the findings of "archival work and discovery of new films and material as well as the cinema theories concerning spectatorship, power and gender as well as psychoanalysis theories". Nowadays, Erkki Huhtamo's and Siegfried Zielinski's works examine the new thinking in media by questioning its diversity. Huhtamo introduces the idea of *topoi* as areas of media culture that are recurring phenomena and discourses. Zielinski deals with the new quality of media by introducing what he defines as *psychopathia medialis*, supporting pluralism and the hybrid through the concept of *variantology*. Zielinski does not favour a linear passage of time. He asserts a non-temporal perception of media where there is not a connection between the past and the present (Parikka, 2012, 5 – 12).

THE NON-TEMPORAL PASSAGE OF TIME AND THE PHYSICAL ELEMENTS AS *MOON – MIRRORS*

Hessels in this work seems to promote an analogous non-temporal passage of time where there is not an explicit mention of the seasonal change. One can claim that some elements resemble the winter while others resemble the summer season or the autumn. In fact, there is not a direct correlation to these motives while the marbled door windows are five. It might be assumed that the warm or the cold silver tones are related to the different emotional stances that the walking persona faces every time he walks across each of these five thresholds. The persona does not change his body stance during his walk even if he finds different colours and lower or more intense transparency passing by different materials. One can suggest that he is not influenced by these elements. He seems that he does not meet them in his path either. Or that he is set in a non-temporal universe where there is no interactivity or real life to feel happy or apologise. The persona adopts his own way without being interrupted by the virtual environment of the physical elements that are placed immobile in a parallel universe. One could say that these marbled door windows are just a setting, but they are not. While the persona moves towards them, they change their transparency so that they react to the moving body.

As physical elements are static, the persona in motion provides them with new qualities. The motion of the persona switches on their illumination – the physical elements are brought into life every time the persona passes by each other and then they hibernate again when he leaves. The persona signifies life change through motion. Motion cannot be reproduced through the physical elements. As Maria Gerolemou argues:

> In antiquity "motion rather points to the constancy of the body's natural transformation and to metabolic change in general. This becomes obvious shortly thereafter, when Apuleius, who desires a commemorative medium to capture his image, chooses a mirror image instead of an immobile statue or a painting based on the assumption that other artistic materials affect, or rather limit, the mimetic procedure and its outcome (clay, bronze, stone, wax, paint)". (Gerolemou 2020, 160).

Only the persona can be in motion. He provides their qualities in a different sense, that of lightness and translucency while his appearance illuminates them, but he still appears as a shadow to the viewer. The persona interacts with the physical elements which give him the form of a shadow as a reflection. In a symbolic view, physical elements resemble moon mirrors. Like the sun that illuminates the moon and appears through the latter as a shadow to the viewer on Earth, the persona appears as a shadow to the external viewer through his mirroring on the physical elements that function like the moon.

INTERDISCIPLINARY PARMENIDES' *HELIOPHOTISM*, LUCIAN'S *MOON AS A MIRROR*, GUSTAV KLIMT'S DRAWING *FISHBLUT* AND PLATO'S *THE CAVE MYTH*

The aesthetics promoting the idea that the Moon reflects light from the Sun derives from Antiquity and Parmenides who defined this phenomenon as "heliophotism" (Mheallaigh, 2020, 167). Then the Moon is compared to the mirror-like water (Mheallaigh, 2020, 168). In Classical Athens, the Moon was already observed as a symbol since the "circle of the Moon is curved - round just like mirrors" (Mheallaigh, 2020, 167). In the same bibliographical source, one can read about the magical trick by magicians in the imperial period that transforms the Moon to appear indoors (Mheallaigh, 2020, 167).

With the author of *True Stories*, Lucian, one can see the mirroring of the world over a well (Mheallaigh 2020, 165-174). The well due to their physical qualities intensifies sound. The physical elements in the digital artwork "The Moon is a Mirror" function like the well and disperse the sound to the space. This way, Mirroring turns to be endowed with one more sense, that of acoustics.

Another interdisciplinary approach has to do with "The Cave Myth" of Plato. Socrates calls his interlocutor, Glafkon, to draw a picture in his mind: In a cave, there are people prisoners, tied with chains. They can only turn their heads right and left while they cannot see behind them. There is a light that bathes the objects other people carry. Prisoners can see only the shadows of these objects, considering them as real. "An uncanny picture", Glafkon observes, as "uncanny are and the prisoners". "They look familiar to us", Socrates answers and extends the narrative, setting free a prisoner. To stare at the light does not give him any pleasure. The light is painful to his eyes, and he starts to realise that what he thought was real, is not. The prisoner gets out of the cave. He observes the things around him. Then, he looks at the sun, and the pain in his eyes gets more intense. Then, he realises that the sun is the reason for all he sees around. He now does not want to go back while all his life he was a prisoner. "If", Socrates asks, "this man wanted to go back, how would other people consider him?" The allegory of the cave for many centuries was open to many interpretations and analyses. The myth is always a modern one. In this case, the persona can only see his shadow through the transparency of the five-door windows as he walks by and thinks of himself as that. The moon patterns of the physical elements are like mirrors to his figure. He can only see that and consider that as real. The Moon is a Mirror that makes him feel like the prisoner in the cave, as in Plato's allegory (The *Cave Myth* of Plato as described in Greek at: http://www.philenews.com/f-me- apopsi/paremvaseis-ston-f/article/626810/platon-o-mythos-toy-spilaioy).

One can also find potential interdisciplinary aesthetics by looking back to late 19th-century Vienna. During that period, Sigmund Freud was working on the *Interpretation of Dreams* as a doctor and Gustav Klimt was in a similar situation as an artistic researcher. (Schorske 1980,208). Between 1895 - 1900, the protracted political crisis in Vienna highly drew Freud's attention. During these last five years of the 19th century, the Austro-Hungarian Empire seemed to live its socio-political disintegration that was foretelling Europe's future (Schorske 1980, 184, 185). In his works, Klimt depicts the atmosphere of the same socio-political situation in which the psychoanalysis of Freud emerged (Schorske 1980, 209).

He was the leader of the *Secession* in modern art (the Austrian counterpart of *Art Nouveau*), a movement which declared the lifestyle of the modern man (Schorske 1980, 209), where ancient Greek aesthetics were proved noticeable. In a series of paintings, Klimt tried to capture the sense of femininity. In the painting *Musik* he tries to accumulate and record the aesthetic of *Ecstacy*, a major feature in European Aestheticism.

In his drawing *Fishblut* (1897-1898), Klimt celebrates feminine sexuality more actively. The happy iconic creatures are set free to the water and follow their fatal path in a sealed aquatic environment. We can see here the main preoccupation of Klimt – the one that he shares jointly with other artists of *art nouveau*: the female hair. The curly locks intervene with the bodies in the powerful flow of the water. The women of Klimt feel at home in an aquatic world, where men have no power. The threat of these seductive mermaids is imminent. Men cannot resist and finally drown (Schorske 1980, 220-224).

We can now see, in parallel, the artwork "The Moon is A Mirror" by trying to conceive the physical elements (stone, marbles, fibres, wood, skins) of the door- windows as paintings. The natural materials resemble this drawing of Gustav Klimt. They also resemble the *water serpents* as depicted in the paintings of Gustav Klimt. These elements imbued with natural power are imbued with a sense of femininity. Earth is the Terra-mater. Thus, the physical elements of Earth and its products are the basic elements of the universe and retain the Earth's life and its balance. Human figure intervenes in this cycle by giving them a new scheme and aesthetics in contemporary life. He connects Earth and her elements to the new groundwork of humankind, to Digitality. Due to their female nature, these elements are never gone. They re-birth, are recycled and re-produced as versatile creatures of Nature. The physical elements never die, and the process is never-ending. This fact justifies the recurrent passage of the persona across these five natural door windows. The procedure adds to them a sense of paganism. The title of the artwork "The Moon is a Mirror" reflects religiosity. The physical elements tend to resemble the 'Moon' and its transparency while it moves forward the sun to get its lightness. Thus, these five elements are the Moon - made and their transparency makes them a 'Mirror'. The passing persona is mirroring through them and introduces the Moon-like virtual images to the material world.

INSTEAD OF CONCLUSION

The culmination of Digitality with the use of new technologies acquires a new face through the exploitation of natural resources. The electric grid follows now a non-directional flow of energy. We have the smart use of metering and other smart grids. Transparency and her exploitation are the future of Digitality while the image prevails against the word to finally subjugate it. The sense of Being is cultivated through image, which tends to absorb all the other criteria of the Senses and Aesthetics. With the image, we can now observe, perceive, feel, and live our experiences in an increasingly visualised world. Transparency, then, becomes a palimpsest where all the traditional norms of artistic expression are recorded to be implemented in the digital era. The physical materials conserve their vividness via their visualisation in the digital world. The financial benefits are multiplied and open new bridges for the promotion of natural materials through their adjustment with digital means. The new digital era does not abolish Nature but puts her at the centre of the Technological Evolution Process, as a lever of economic and cultural development in contemporary cities. Smart societies put Nature at the centre of their preoccupations and define their role anew in the newly built world.

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"I'LL LEAP UP TO MY GOD: WHO PULLS ME DOWN?" THE THEATRICS OF THE FALL IN CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE'S *THE TRAGICAL HISTORY OF DOCTOR FAUSTUS*

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Abstract. The article underpins the theatrics of the tragic hero's fall in Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*. Theological concepts related to sin and damnation are applied to interpret the ironic inversions leading to the downfall of Faustus. The choice of "spectacle of blindness" emphasises the link between theatricality and irony. The concept of metatheatre is used to portray the fall of Faustus. Irony reaches grandeur thanks to the interweaving of metatheatre and the carnivalesque. The research legitimises the existence of the concept of the theatrics of irony. The research delves into the intricate layers of irony woven throughout the play as the titular character embarks on a fateful journey from humanity to damnation. Faustus' relentless pursuit of perceived divine imperfections, his portrayal as a shrewd manipulator of thought, and his refusal to acknowledge the true nature of his transgressions are meticulously crafted into a dramatic spectacle by the playwright. Marlowe's adept use of irony is exemplified through intentional inversions and deviations from the play's source material, *The English Faust book*. Embracing irony as a spectacle of blindness, the analysis reveals the amalgamation of carnivalesque elements, comedy, burlesque, and metatheatre in the play's theatrics of irony. Faustus' tragic downfall unfolds as a nuanced interplay between serious, tragic consequences and moments of buffoonery or carnivalesque revelry. The analysis positions *Doctor Faustus* as a distinctive work, departing from traditional interpretations and venturing into new theatrical aesthetics, emphasising the spectacular and the metatheatrical.

Keywords: carnivalesque, damnation, irony, Doctor Faustus, metatheatre, theatrics of irony, the spectacle of blindness

INTRODUCTION

The idea of the fall in *The Tragical History of Doctor* Faustus[1] (1588) is not about the collapse of the body since the tragic force of the play is not derived from any physical suffering.

Doctor Faustus is a mental tragedy, even a tragedy of both mind and soul. Undoubtedly, Faustus is the pitiful victim of his proper ambitions and desires. The play's protagonist experiences agony because of damnation and not by the burning flames of hell. Additionally, the play is not only about irony but also about the theatricalised spectacle of blindness. Hence, one can use the expression of the theatrics of the fall to qualify the protagonist's tragic journey from glory to collapse. The term *theatrics* is related to playing and acting exaggeratedly. It mingles exaggerated action with a message to deliver beyond mannered, overacting, and parading performances. In theatrics, spectacles are enhanced, and a theatre within a theatre is performed. The downfall of Faustus is significant because it is ironic and theatrical. The intermingling of both concepts triggers the dynamics of theatrics in the play. The coming analysis will, consequently, investigate the manifestations of dramatic irony in the play in one separate section before demonstrating, in a second one, how irony is metatheatrical. The significance of the study resides in the departure from the idea that Faustus's suffering is physical. Most importantly, the research will attempt to demonstrate that the descent of Faustus is a metatheatrical spectacle intrinsically related to the notion of irony. Faustus's choices are of a performative dimension. Consequently, the use of the expression theatrics reinforces that the actions of Faustus are not the consequence of some supernatural forces but rather manifestations of an exaggerated performance.

Many interesting articles dwelled on the notion of irony in Marlowe's play. One of them is Tom McAlindon's "The Ironic Vision: Diction and Theme in Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*" (1981), where he displays significant insights into Marlowe's use of irony and its impact on the tragic elements of the play. His article traces the dreadful trajectory of the protagonist and the symbolic dimension of his decisions and deeds, focusing on the idea of bondage to desire. Though McAlindon's analysis is text-based, his article did not explore the notion of dramatic irony in the play; his analysis is more focused on situational irony and some theological concepts that point to the tragic flaw of Faustus. One can also mention "Irony and Privilege in Marlowe" by Richard F. Hardin (1989), which reflects the dual nature of irony in Marlowe's drama. The author concludes that Marlowe is a deliberate ironist who introduces ambiguity, misdirection, and threat to add complexity to his plays. However, Hardin does not explicitly explore dramatic irony or the theatricalisation of the concept; instead, he offers a broader examination of irony as a complex literary element in Marlowe's plays. Recent research on *Doctor Faustus* acknowledges the presence of irony in the play without thoroughly examining the matter while focusing on other issues, such as religion[2], or other areas of interest, such as magic[3], friendship[4], and trauma[5].

From another perspective, Faustus's moral choices and deeds have been dealt with from a diametrically opposite perspective, which is scepticism. William Hamlin's essay "Casting Doubt in Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*" analyses the concept of scepticism through the lens of Early Modern England's historical context and proposes that this philosophical backdrop moulds the character of Faustus. As for metatheatre, playacting, and the comedic burlesque aspects in *Doctor Faustus,* Robert Ornstein's article "The Comic Synthesis in Doctor Faustus" (1955) investigates the comic elements in the play, challenging the interpretations that focus primarily on its tragic aspects. Ornstein displays the crude buffoonery in Doctor Faustus and suggests that the play implies several layers of comedy. His analysis concentrates on the comedic aspects of the play. However, he does not touch upon irony in his discussion of the play. Additionally, he does not explicitly focus on theatricality and playacting. One of the most brilliant acknowledgements of the metatheatrical qualities of Christopher Marlowe is the introduction to the *Shakespeare Bulletin special* issue in 2009 by Pierre Hecker and Roslyn L. Knutson[6]. The authors propose Marlowe as a "filthy playmaker" (2009, 2) and stress that the playwright is a man of theatre. They also introduce the essays included in the special volume, which cover aspects of Marlowe's plays and their influence. Further, there are discussed Marlowe's use of boy actors, kinaesthetic theatricality, the properties of knives in his plays, and the continuation of his influence in the repertory of the companies that held his plays into the seventeenth century. The introduction sets the stage for a comprehensive exploration of Marlowe's identity as a playwright, contemporary reception, and lasting influence on theatre and performance. However, none of the articles discusses metatheatre in *Doctor Faustus* and its relation to dramatic irony.

One of the most pertinent articles dwelling on the role of the comic in *Doctor Faustus* is "Marlowe's Literary Double Agency: *Doctor Faustus* as a Subversive Comedy of Error" by Suzan Last (2000). Her research investigates the interplay between the serious and the comic aspects, emphasising the subversive dimension of the middle section that challenges the coherence of the tragic theme. The author suggests that the play's heteroglossic nature and metatheatrical elements, including magic, self-conscious theatricality, and parodic material, allow multiple interpretations, allowing the challenge of power orthodoxies. Despite focusing on comedic aspects, the article does not explicitly mention dramatic irony. Still, the analysis implicitly suggests that elements like self-conscious theatricality contribute to the play's overall sense of dramatic irony, enhancing its theatrical impact.

The insights provided in previous articles are pertinent and intriguing. Nevertheless, this present article distinguishes itself on several fronts. Primarily, the textual evidence derived from the play under consideration diverges significantly from that discussed in the works above. The in-text citations used in the research primarily differ from the textual evidence in previous research. Secondly, while the articles surveyed in the literature review broadly address irony, they fall short of a comprehensive investigation into dramatic irony. Furthermore, the focus on irony[7] and metatheatre in isolation is a noteworthy characteristic of the existing literature. However, this article seeks to fill a crucial gap by intricately exploring the intersection of dramatic irony and metatheatricality. The article does not claim to explore untrodden research areas; its significance and originality come from the combination of dramatic irony and theatricality. The analysis presented herein will unfold across two principal sections. The first section will, consequently, scrutinise dramatic irony, delving into its various manifestations within the play. In the second section, the exploration will shift towards the theatricalisation of irony, establishing a critical link between dramatic irony and metatheatre.

Dramatic irony or "the spectacle of blindness" (Muecke 1982, 10), as D. C. Muecke calls it in his book *Irony and the Ironic*[8], is a notion that includes different definitions of Irony: Verbal[9], Situational[10], etc., within the realm of the theatrical and the dramatic. Defining irony with its ramifications is an arduous enterprise which has been undertaken by researchers like Douglas Colin Muecke, who, apart from his book mentioned above, published The *Compass of Irony,* where he affirms that he does not know "of any book or article [...] or of any European or American dictionary or encyclopaedia which presents a classification of irony one could regard as adequate" (Muecke 1969, 40). Working on the concept of Irony, Norman Knox has attempted in his article "On the Classification of Ironies" to build a taxonomy of ironies with a focus on four factors:

> In the classification of ironies, four variable factors are significant: (1) the field of observation in which irony is noticed; (2) the degree of conflict between appearance and reality, ranging from the slightest of differences to diametrical opposites; (3) an inherently dramatic structure containing three roles_victim, audience, author; (4) the philosophical-emotional aspect (Knox 1972, 53).

No matter how thorny and complex the definition or the taxonomy of irony is, the focal point of the present analysis will be dedicated to dramatic irony as a spectacle of blindness in Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*. The link between the idea of dramatic irony and theatre is, thus, a necessity to demonstrate the spectacular dimension of irony. Patrice Pavis, in the *Dictionary of the Theatre: Terms, Concepts, and Analysis* displays the idea of dramatic utterances in theatre with a focus on "primary obvious sense" versus the "deeper, different [...] opposite meaning (antiphrasis)" (1998, 189). Pavis ascertains that:

> Dramatic irony is often connected to the dramatic situation. It is perceived by the spectators when they can perceive elements of the plot that remain hidden from the characters and prevent them from acting with full knowledge of the facts. Dramatic irony is always perceptible to the spectators to the extent that the egos of the characters, who appear to be autonomous and free, are subjected to the central ego of the playwright (Pavis 1998, 189)[11].

Dramatic irony is central to the action of *Doctor Faustus*; it is expressed subtly and nuancedly. Irony is related to theological precepts of sin and damnation, which were familiar to the audiences of the period. In this vein, Lawrence Trudeau states that *Doctor Faustus*'s theme is "explicitly religious" (1991, 10), where sin and blasphemy are dramatised. Agnus Fletcher states, "Many of the play's key features—from the doctor's rejection of heaven to the comic garb of its stage devils—have suggested a robust doubt at orthodox Christianity" (2005, 188). Despite the importance of the religious dimension in the play, our focus will not be on singular, one-sided theological or metaphysical interpretations of the play, as several studies have opted to do so[12]. The choice will be directed to the spectacle of blindness in the play, which is explained by the importance of theatricality and the acknowledgement of a performance/audience binary while dealing with irony. From that perspective, the concept of metatheatre will be employed in combination with dramatic irony. Additionally, the study will explore the interweaving between metatheatre and the carnivalesque in the play and their connection to dramatic irony. The combination of modes reinforces irony and heightens the tragic fall of the protagonist.

False Rebellion and Half-Truths

The suffering of a damned soul contains implicit irony. Marlowe exploits it dramatically by building a coherent process that ends in Faustus' punishment. Once confronted with a moral choice of either yielding to God or rebelling against him, the sinner chooses utter detachment from the divine power. His deeds distance him from the heavenly world and provoke damnation and eternal anguish. The damned soul of Faustus is punished; damnation causes his soul to remain in the very condition that the protagonist chooses. Christopher Marlowe uses irony as a quintessence of justice. He reinforces the theatrical dimension of irony by emphasising that Doctor Faustus deliberately chooses to abhor divine precepts and accepted morality codes.

The play displays a protagonist who is obstinate in his desire to shun God and court evil. His egotistical ambition to reach a divine standing is visible in all his declarations and deeds. In the opening scene of the play, the Chorus describes Doctor Faustus and his fatal choice:

> Till swol'n with cunning of a self-conceit,
> His waxen wings did mount above his reach,
> And melting, heavens conspired his overthrow.
> For falling to a devilish exercise,
> And glutted now with learning's golden gifts,
> He surfeits upon cursed necromancy.
> Nothing so sweet as magic to him,
> Which he prefers before his chiefest bliss. (*Chorus*, 1969, 20-27)

The allusion to Icarus, an Elizabethan self-destruction figure, symbolises Faustus' career. Marlowe, alongside eminent writers like Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Milton, drew inspiration from the fall of Icarus. Icarus' story, warning against complacency and pride, parallels Faustus' narrative, emphasising both the moral and emotional logic shared. Faustus must choose between "cursed necromancy" and his "chiefest" bliss, making a deliberate decision. The Chorus, a theatrical spectacle icon, opens the play, inviting the audience to witness Faustus' fall akin to Icarus'. Marlowe dedicates the first scene to Faustus' exhaustive exploration of various erudition disciplines, dismissing them all as they fail his expectations: philosophy, medicine, law, and theology.

Doctor Faustus harbours no quest for truth but seeks superhuman powers, aiming for absolute control over life and death. His core discontent echoes in the lament, 'yet art thou but still Faustus and a man' (1.1.23). He craves the eternalization of human lives and the resurrection of the dead, intending to parody Christian miracles. Rejecting divinity due to its association with sin and morality (1.1.39-48), he scorns God and pledges allegiance to Satan with the declaration, 'What will be, shall be, Divinity adieu' (1.1.48). Despite ostensibly prioritizing his will, Faustus' choice leads him ironically to damnation. The syllogism's sophistry, 'if we say that we have no sin/we deceive ourselves, and there is no truth in us' (1.1.43), serves as a fallacious pretext for Faustus to pursue his true aspirations.

> Oh, what a world of profit and delight,
> Of power, of honour, of omnipotence,
> Is promised to the studious artisan!
> All things that move between the quiet poles
> Shall be at my command. (1.1.52-56)

Marlowe's use of dramatic irony here pertinently enables the Elizabethan audience to see that the hero's future differs from his claims. The audience also knows that Faustus' speech is taken from the *Geneva Bible*[13] (1 John 1: 8) and that it is followed by:

> If we acknowledge our sins, he is faithful and just, to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. (1 John 1: 9-11)

The playwright reveals that his protagonist, at this stage of his career, only perceives divine imperfections without acknowledging any chance for redemption. Faustus' self-imposed blindness resembles the argumentation used by the devil to lure the knight in Thomas Becon's *The Christian Knight and an Homily against Whoredom* (1546)[14]. It resembles Despair's display in his efforts to tempt the Red Cross Knight in Edmund Spenser's *The Faery Queene* (1590)[15].

Doctor Faustus rejects divinity due to his witty manipulation of reason and partial interpretations of theology. John Calvin divides human knowledge into earthly matters and heavenly ones[16]. Faustus uses Calvin's distinction to glorify human reason solely. He forgets that Calvin argues that reason without God's grace is imperfect. Considering this idea, one can assert that Faustus' syllogism is superficial. Marlowe's power of irony lies in how he depicts, in the play's opening, a Faustus who manoeuvres thought and reason, a Faustus whose knowledge is to serve sin. Indeed, Faustus aims to be more than human:

> A sound magician is a demi-god.
> Here, tire my brains to get a deity. (1, 1, 61-62)

One can conclude that Doctor Faustus willingly forges the link between himself and Lucifer. By aiming at being a God, he chooses the non-god. The irony of sin is fundamental in the play. Faustus rejects the Scriptures to study his magic books. Marlowe reiterates Faustus' choice by crystallising the ironic nature of his deliberate preference. Good and evil angels are introduced; their dramatic presence embodies the conflict between two diametrically opposite alternatives that continue to assault Faustus. At the same time, they theatricalise and make the competition within Faustus a staged one. Again, the main protagonist wilfully opts for material power. He is blind to the extent that he ignores the evil angel's presence; therefore, he confirms again that his choice depends on his own will.

One could even claim that the angels in the play have the same role as the Ghost in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* (1599) and interpret their dramatic presence as a product of Faustus' internal debate, which leads to his ultimate choice of evil over good the same way the Ghost of Caesar was just the fruit of a Brutus in agony in the Shakespearean play. Faustus' desires are soon exalted by the visit of Cornelius and Valdes, who embellish a marvellous and exotic future in which they see themselves "canonise [d]" (1.1. 119) by all nations.

Marlowe emphasises Faustus's obstinate, ungracious willingness to admit the nature of his sin and its consequences. Unlike the *English Faustbook* (1592)[17], the discussions between Mephostophilis and Faustus occur before the pact's signature (1.3.65-86). Marlowe confers a powerful ironic effect on the dialogue (verbal irony). Hence, the devil's warnings are more potent than the good angel's admonishments. It seems surprising to see what is acknowledged by Christians as the thief of souls, the devil, exhorting Faustus to save his (soul). Nevertheless, the protagonist's arrogance leads him to mock such warnings. The paradoxical nature of the dialogue between Faustus and the Angels illustrates how the central character consciously rejects the Christian moral codes taken for granted by believers. Hence, from a Christian perspective, his tragedy becomes a "spectacle of blindness" since his fall is theatrical. Faustus refuses to see the demonic appearance of the devil; he asks Mephostophilis to parodically disguise himself in the clothes of a monk. Undoubtedly, the demonic nature of the pact seems challenging to bear for Faustus. These two examples underscore Faustus' moral myopia from a religious Christian perspective. They also accentuate his responsibility for the transgression and his ethical blindness[18], which has become a natural spectacle in the play.

INVERSIONS AND THE SPECTACLE OF BLINDNESS

In theatre, inversions and parody significantly influence the dramatic experience. Through inversions, the playwright introduces a deliberate overturning of conventional roles and expectations, injecting a sense of tension and curiosity into the narrative. The departure from the expected prompts the audience to reevaluate familiar themes and characters in a fresh and thought-provoking manner. Concurrently, parody allows for a clever mimicry or exaggeration of established genres, characters, or situations, often infused with humour. In theatre, comedic situations entertain and serve as a vehicle for critical commentary on the original material.

In Doctor Faustus, Christopher Marlowe's employment of inversion and parody challenges prevailing notions of morality, divinity, and the human condition. The play unfolds as a dynamic spectacle by subverting expectations and humorously referencing established ideas. The irony unfolds during the ceremonial signing of the pact. It resides in great dramatic inversions of Christian values acknowledged by the playgoers of the age. Christopher Marlowe intends irony to function on stage during the performance via the audience's reaction to Faustus's deeds and utterances. The playwright deliberately implemented inversions to create audience/actor dynamics; they are meant to set the rules of the spectacle, involve the audience, and, thus, break the fourth wall. In Act 1, scene 5, Faustus' soliloquy becomes an ironic inversion and a possible parody of the conventional soliloquy of the Renaissance. The soliloquy fails to elicit sympathy or infuse human depth into Faustus, lacking the cathartic impact typical of Renaissance soliloquies. Irony emerges as Faustus, anticipating canonisation, paradoxically worships Beelzebub, revealing his dedication to the devil. Blinded, Faustus unwittingly admits his enslavement to the deadly sin of appetite, praying solely to Beelzebub, a truth escaping his awareness. This stark revelation unfolds as the audience witnesses Faustus's ironic descent into devilish devotion, a testament to his misguided pursuit of power. Ironically, Faustus' soliloquy before Mephostopheles' appearance evinces how the protagonist is ready to worship the devil the same way a pious Christian individual worships God. Faustus is so blinded that he expects "canonisation" but ironically worships Beelzebub, the devil and promises him devotion and pagan sacrifices. At the same time, Faustus recognises that his appetite is the only God he serves. The audience could easily perceive that Faustus is not even aware that he utters the harmful truth of being a slave of a deadly sin, which is appetite, and that his total concentration and sole prayers are directed to Beelzebub:

> The God thou serv'st is thine own appetite
> Wherein is fixed the love of Beelzebub.

To him, I'll build an altar and a church,
And offer lukewarm blood of new-born babes. (1.5. 11-15)

When Mephostophilis appears on stage, Faustus extols his virtues and praises his words as celestial. Ironically, by rejecting God in his attempt to be divine, Faustus reduces himself to the devil's slave. He subverts the Christian God and undermines his power only to become the devil's slave. Faustus' transformation is not emancipatory; it is instead a path towards servitude and dependence. Ironic inversions become more evident at this level: all that is "backward" (1.5.5) to him is forward to a devout Christian:

What boots it then to think on God or heaven?
Away with such vain fancies and despair,
Despair in God and trust Beelzebub.
Now go not backwards/ No, Faustus, be resolute. (1.5.1-4)

Inversions continue, Faustus calls the demons to bring him good news from Lucifer like the Biblical Magi Kings in the *Gospel of Matthew* brought presents and the good news of Jesus's birth. By doing so, he inverts the *New Testament* angels' terms when they announce Christ's birth. As Mephostophilis goes off stage to bring a chafer of coal to clear the hero's congealed blood, Faustus is given one last chance to repent. Instead, he blasphemously utters the Latin phrase "*consommatum est*: this bill is ended" (1.5.73)[19], which is the exact phrase that Jesus Christ uttered before his crucifixion.

The diabolical pact with the devil is the culmination of the central character's moral and physical blindness; it is also the fundamental turning point of his life. The discrepancy between his aspirations and his present position is massive. Marlowe's use of irony at this level of the play exhibits a highly impotent Faustus. Once the contract is signed, the play's hero asks for sexual pleasure with women since he is "wanton and lascivious" (1.5.145). One may wonder how he can be a demi-god when he cannot be well-established emotionally and sexually. After the pact's signature, Faustus becomes trapped; the devil is neither ready to bring him a sexual partner nor able to give him satisfactory answers about astronomy. A mixture of fear and vain pleasures henceforth characterises his life. Anti-Christian spectacles that parody morality plays, such as the Seven Deadly Sins, are displayed to assuage his desires. Impiously, Faustus compares his joy to Adam's at his first sight of Paradise: "That sight will be as pleasant to me as paradise was to Adam the first day of his creation." (2.1.108).

THE THEATRICS[20] OF IRONY. THE CARNIVALESQUE, METATHEATRE AND PARODY

In *Doctor Faustus*, carnivalesque elements, metatheatre, and parody collectively heighten theatrics and enrich the audience's engagement. The carnivalesque, characterised by its subversion of norms and celebration of chaos, manifests in Faustus' rebellion against conventional morality. Metatheatre, evident in scenes where characters acknowledge their performative roles, adds layers to the theatrical experience. It encourages the audience to reflect on the nature of the play and its implications. They are often employed through Faustus' actions that mock religious and moral conventions; parody introduces a comedic dimension, creating a dynamic interplay between tragedy and humour. Theatrical devices entertain and serve as tools for Marlowe to challenge values, inviting the audience to participate in a thought-provoking exploration of morality, power, and the consequences of unrestrained ambition.

Given the incongruity between Faustus' aspirations and his current situation, one may acknowledge his destiny's ludicrous nature. The playwright incorporates burlesque scenes to accentuate this effect, closely tied to irony within the play. These serve as reminders of Faustus' illusory magical abilities and highlight the ultimate decay and ruination of his once grandiose dreams. Instead of being the world's master, Faustus becomes a simple court jester. The fervent scholar limits himself to playing tricks on the Papal court. The man who wishes to control life and death is reduced to a magician who builds castles in the air and puts on spirit performances in the form of significant historical figures[21]. The scholar who desired spirits "fly to India for gold/Ransack the Ocean for Orient pearl" (1.1. 81-82) begs them to bring grapes to the Duchess of Vanholt. The man who wanted to "levy soldiers/and chase the Prince of Parma/And reign sole king of all provinces" (1.1. 91-93) uses his fake power to grow horns on knights' heads and strike dumb innocent peasants. Ironically, Faustus' life becomes full of buffoonery and foolishness; it has nothing to do with his original claims, his desires are masturbatory, and the knowledge he had after the pact has become chimaera that he will be even trapped by demoniality[22] later in the scene of Helen of Troy. W. W. Greg suggests in "The Damnation of Faustus" that the sin of demoniality occurs from the moment Faustus longs to have intercourse with the spirit of Helen, who is nothing but a devil (106)[23]. Marlowe graphically draws a repulsive unison between Faustus and the devil, pointing to bodily intercourse between both: "Her lips suck forth my soul: See where it flies" (5.1.100).

Marlowe does not limit himself to tainting Faustus' actions with irony; simultaneously, he refines and exudes his use of this concept through the intermediate scenes. Some seemingly surprising dramatic carnivalesque scenes undermine Faustus' apparent greatness despite their contrast with the play's tragic nature. As Bakhtin has coined, the carnivalesque is a literary mode that subverts the world and turns it upside down; truths are tested and contested, opposites are mingled grotesquely, and assumptions of dominant figures are mocked through humour and chaos. Bakhtin emphasises the idea in *Problems of Dostoyevsky's Poetics* (1963) that within the carnivalesque mode, opposites mingle, and solemnities and pieties are profaned. The presence of the grotesque and the carnivalesque serves irony in *Doctor Faustus*. It enhances dialogic and heteroglossic overtones and voices of endless diversity. It serves comic relief by injecting the text stock characters with melodious, farcical and rich folk stories, idiolects, dialects and swear words. Hence, the carnivalesque treats the antinomies of life and death in a lighthearted and grotesque mode. *Doctor Faustus* has a magnificent intermingling between the carnivalesque and "theatricality"[24]. Wecan talk about the theatrics of irony through play-acting and metatheatre. At the same time, the carnivalesque heightens the tragic retribution that Faustus will experience by the end of the play and gives irony a more profound impulse.

The irony is reinforced thanks to the combination of the carnivalesque and the metatheatrical. The Parade of Vulgar Demons is a reminder of the famous Renaissance Pageants. The daring sexual overtone of the scene amplifies laughter. Audiences are introduced to a staged farcical spectacle where farcical demonic characters not only point to the vanity and the hollowness of the values of Faustus and his world but also heighten metatheatre and emphasise the power of performance in staging irony. During these carnivalesque scenes, irony becomes a spectacle of blindness since the buffoons of Marlowe and their mimicry not only point to the vanity and hollowness of Faustus but also accentuate the illusory nature of theatre and the world it presents. Phyllis Gorfain, in "Towards a Theory of Play and the Carnivalesque in *Hamlet*", introduces how mixtures between forms, registers and modes in a dramatic work undermine dogmatic and overconfident discourses. She asserts that:

> Through stories, role-playing, parodying discourses of others, performing a play (including a dumb show) and a speech extracted from a play, songs and other prefabricated forms of speaking, citational texts and scripts, characters find speech and performance genres with which to express, displace and reshape their anger, griefs [...] subversions and containment of others. (Gorfain 1988, 156)

In *Doctor Faustus*, carnivalesque manifestations take a form either at the level of characters as theatrical beings, as agonising souls, or at the text level. Concretely, the absurdity of both the clownish devilish characters and Faustus points to his illusory aspirations in his quest for fame and eternity and reminds the audience how he has forgotten the cruel reality of death and damnation awaiting him. Metatheatre, thus, as a spectacle, acquires a powerful dimension from the moment it intertwines with the carnivalesque. The Demonic parading devils mock the dogmatic Faustus, underly his vanity but also that of humans and bring to the fore a brilliant combination of the grotesque and the theatrical in a comic, burlesque and ironic spectacle.

The intermediate ironic scenes, parades or pantomimes on stage are manifestations of metadrama[25] or metatheatre. The expression metatheatre maintains that the intermediate comic demonic parades in the play put forward a particular mode where actors, playwrights and audiences share a perception of drama as a fictional and theatrical construct. The awareness of the scene as a theatrical construct accentuates Doctor Faustus's illusory absurdist and ironic fate. The demonic Parade heightens the metatheatre and emphasises the power of dramaturgy[26] and performance. The Parade of the Demons is an autonomous performance which displays a theatrical reality, a form of anti-theatre[27] that lays bare the absurdity of the outcome of Faustus' pact with the devil. Consequently, anti-theatre in *Doctor Faustus* is a counter-performance, a parodic one that aims to show that Faustus has become a laughable puppet who takes himself for a hero, and that is how irony functions in the play. All in all, metatheatre puts the accent on the illusory and the chimerical; it stresses not only the idea of the reflexivity of theatre but also its artificiality and, consequently, the triviality of life and humans as Lionel Abel stresses in his book *Metatheatre*:

> Metatheatre is a convenient name for the quality of force in a play which challenges theatre's claim to be simply realistic, to be nothing but a mirror in which we view the actions and sufferings of characters like ourselves [...] It may end by making us aware of life's uncanny likeness to art or illusion by calling attention to the strangeness, artificiality of the life we live. (Abel 1963, 133)

Consequently, the absurdity of clownish characters points to the illusory aspirations of Faustus and his artificiality. Metatheatre, as a spectacle of blindness, acquires a powerful dimension since it intertwines with the carnivalesque. Silenced voices from the margin mock; thus, Faustus underlies his vanity and brings a brilliant combination between the grotesque and theatrical in a remarkable spectacle of blindness. Rafe, the clown who steals Faustus's magic books, is not less lascivious than his master since he is eager to make maidens "dance stark naked before [him]" (3.4. 3-5). Many other examples, such as the fourth scene of the first Act and the comic episodes performed by Robin and Dick, can be given. Common characters speak in blank verse in those burlesque scenes: "What Robin, you must come away and walk the horses" (2.2.4).

In these sequences, simple-minded characters can play the same tricks as Faustus by vulgarly using a stolen magic book. They also need prostitutes; the same way Faustus wants courtesans. For example, Nan Spit takes the place of Helen of Troy. These comic low marginal characters steal things from the tavern as Faustus did from the Pope's banquet, and like Faustus, they are tyrannised by the devil. Those secondary satires complete the most sophisticated irony touches in the play. They also accentuate the vanity of magic. The Parade of the Seven Deadly Sins mentioned earlier is another grotesque example where we have a metatheatrical scene par excellence that exposes the atrocity and the absurdity of Faustus' sins in a vulgar and blatant way. Faustus himself, for a while, becomes aware of the bitter taste of his "damned art" (5.1.35). Dramatic tension heightens with Faustus' possibility of repentance. However, he does not appeal for God's mercy; he instead asks for Lucifer's:

> I do repent I e'er offend him.
> Sweet Mephostophilis, entreat thy Lord
> To pardon my unjust presumption,
> And with my blood again, I will confirm
> The former vow I made to Lucifer. (5.1.75-79)

Thus, Faustus renews his contract with the devil. In his plea for Lucifer's mercy lies an ironic inversion. The three-fold structure of Faustus' beseeching of pardon is a parody of the three-step procedure of Christian repentance: Faustus recognises his sin, begs pardon and renews his vow not to offend his Lord anymore. Mephostophilis becomes, accordingly, the demonic substitute of the Father Confessor. One should remember that he is already disguised in the clothes of a monk.

Marlowe's ironic inversions are demonstrated further when Faustus asks Helen of Troy to be his lover. Paradoxically, he considers her a divine celestial figure: "that heavenly Helen I saw of late" (5.2.91). The allusion to Helen is of paramount importance both owing to its poetic effect and because it gives a lie to Faustus' dreams. The passage in which Faustus describes his zeal for Helen is one of the most ironic records of dramatic literature. It is worth noting that Elizabethan writers considered Helen of Troy a symbol of lethal beauty and forbidden pleasures. As usual, Faustus appreciates all that is satanic. Helen comes to crown his illusory bliss:

> To glut the longing of my heart's desire,
> [...]
> Whose sweet embraces may extinguish clear
> Those thoughts that do dissuade me from my vow. (5.1.89, 92-93)

What Faustus sees in Helen differs from what the audience may see in her. The scene's context, imagery, poetic style, and absolute tone of felicity betray Helen's perverted reality and Faustus's worthless passion. Helen's beauty that causes Troy's destruction will also cause Faustus's. The immoral kisses of a demonic lover are not tokens of demonality; as previously mentioned, they guarantee eternity in hell and not in Paradise. The soul sucked by the devil will not be given back. It is a hell that offers its lips and not Paradise. The flames of Jupiter that dazzle Semele are the very flames of Helen's last resting place and the ones that will destroy the unfortunate Faustus. Like Arethusa, the wanton Faustus would hold the burning bright sun without being burned (5.1.97-116). The imagery of the above passage is not arbitrary. Marlowe's skilful manipulation of language conveys powerful theatrical allusions. The cutting-edge blade of irony performs very sharply in this passage. Like the simple but ironic references to fire that characterise Dido's speech at the pinnacle of her glory in *Dido, Queen of Carthage* (1593)[28], those more complex images pave the way for the protagonist's final destiny. The scene in which the satanic Faustus kisses the demonic Helen is the summit of the disordered union between Faustus and hell. The consummation of such a union is short in coming.

THE FALL AND IRONY

Even in his last hours, Faustus remains arrogant; he refuses to acknowledge the possibility of mercy:

> But Faustus' offence can ne'er be pardoned,
> The serpent that tempted Eve may be saved,
> But not Faustus. (5.2. 43-45)

Faustus' hyperbole conveys the degree of his despair. Hell is no more "a fable" (1.5.130) for him, as he claimed in Act 1, scene 5. Despite his suffering, which is a mental one, he does not change his behaviour from the beginning till the end of the play. In the first scene, he is staged alone in his study, complaining about the time limits, and so does he at the end of the play. Instead of praying, he desperately begs the stars to "stand still that time may cease and midnight never come" (5.2.146). His sighs and screams are more ironic and desperate than ever: "*O lente, lente, currite noctis equi*" (5.2.152) (O slowly, slowly run, ye horses of the night). This quotation from Ovid's poem *Amores* (16 BC) seems displaced in such a grave sequence; in the quoted verse, the lover wishes Aurorus, the goddess of dawn, never to come so that he could stay with his mistress forever. However, the connotations of love that the lines of Ovid bear add an ironic dimension to Faustus' speech. This dimension contradicts the last line, "Faustus may repent and save his soul" (5.2.151).

Faustus' appeal to nature is, as usual, impossible to accomplish. When he finally realises that his bids are fruitless, he desperately moves to God and sees Christ's blood: "Oh, I'll leap up to my God: who pulls me down?" (5.2.158) Doctor Faustus, who refuses to learn from the warning of his congealed blood and who has previously spoken Christ's words "*consummatum est*" to conclude his Act of damnation, belatedly understands the message of redemption. When the devil "pulls him down" (5.2.155), he repeats the incomplete repentance phrase. He calls Christ, but the devil tears his heart: "Ah, rend not my heart" (5.2.158), and his last imploration is for Lucifer's mercy: "Oh, spare me Lucifer" (5.2.159). Undeniably, the final ironic downfall of Faustus will serve other Renaissance playwrights, namely John Webster, who, in the *Duchess of Malfi* (1612-1613)[29], uses the same logic through the words of the Cardinal[30], who, in Act 5, shows his total incapacity and his ironic dependence on the devil:

> On God, whom Faustus hath abjured? On God, whom Faustus hath blasphemed? Oh my God, I would weep, but the devil draws in my tears. Gush forth blood instead of tears, yea, life and soul. Oh, he stays my tongue. I would lift up my hands, but see, they hold them, they hold them. (5.2.58-62)

Faustus does not succeed in creating a transcendent or healed new self like Prince Hamlet or King Lear[31]. His fall is ironic; it goes beyond a blatant plain reading that follows the religious paradigm of damnation and perdition with a preview of Faustus fasting in fires as the Satan of Milton does. After his death, Faustus is nicely remembered by scholars who intend to hold a convenient burial for him. In Act 5, scene 3, the Second Scholar announces the following:

> As every Christian heart laments to think on,
> Yet, for he was a scholar once admired
> For wonderous knowledge in our German schools,
> We'll give his mangled limbs due burial,
> And all the students clothed in mourning black
> Shall wait upon his heavy funeral. (5.3. 15-20)

It is undeniable that Doctor *Faustus* addresses the hero's wish to see time stop so that he can save his soul; it is also clear that Marlowe, for religious reasons, presents on stage with blood, pain and suffering and even the desire of the protagonist to see his body disintegrate, melt and dissolve as the Hamlet of Shakespeare does. However, the irony in the last moments accompanying the fall of Faustus serves the purpose of the spectacular, the theatrical and the cathartic. Whether the soul of Faustus is damned or not, he remains cherished by his fellow scholars.

While dealing with the tragic fate of Faustus, Christopher Marlowe gives a challenging twist to the concept of irony and makes it a spectacle by implicating the audience. Indeed, the positions and utterances of Faustus in his interweaving with the devil are dialectically related to the audiences' response and reinforced by their knowledge of his choices' ethical and religious implications. D. C. Muecke insists on the importance of the audience's position while dealing with irony. He claims that:

> In the theatre mainly, the quality of the irony depends very much on whether the audience already knows the outcome or actual state of affairs or learns of these only when the victim learns. In the former case, the irony is a spectacle of blindness. It can be further enhanced if the victim's utterances are applicable not only to the situation as he sees it but also to the situation as the reader or audience knows it to be (1982, 54).

Muecke also borrows the term "discrepant awareness" (54) used by Bertrand Evans in *Shakespeare's Comedies* (1960) with a description of different situations where either the audience or some characters on stage can grasp "the full import of what is said" (1982, 54). The definition of Muecke corresponds exactly to *Doctor Faustus* since the audiences have a "discrepant awareness" and know the outcome of Faustus' absurd choices and his involvement in a complete spectacle of blindness since the audiences' religious background enables them to know in advance the result of the hero.

CONCLUSION

Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* unfolds as a captivating exploration of irony, theatrics, and the spectacle of blindness. Marlowe challenges conventional notions of morality, divinity, and the human condition through deliberate inversions and parody. The dramatic spectacle created by Faustus's ironic descent into devilish devotion, the carnivalesque elements, metatheatre, and the interplay between tragedy and humour contribute to the richness of the audience's engagement. Faustus's journey, marked by ironic inversions and a pact with the devil, is a powerful commentary on the consequences of unrestrained ambition. The juxtaposition of Faustus's aspirations with his ultimately futile and absurd fate highlights the discrepancy between desire and reality. Theatrical devices, such as burlesque scenes and metatheatrical elements, emphasize the illusory nature of Faustus's grandiose dreams, reducing him from a world master to a simple court jester.

The carnivalesque and metatheatrical aspects heighten the dramatic tension and serve as a means for Marlowe to challenge prevailing values. The Parade of Vulgar Demons and other ironic scenes expose the vanity and hollowness of Faustus and his world, adding layers to the overall dramatic experience. The intersection of carnivalesque elements and metatheatre underscores the artificiality and triviality of life, contributing to the overall irony that permeates the play. Faustus's ironic downfall, refusal to repent, and final moments of despair add a cathartic dimension to the theatrical experience. The audience, equipped with "discrepant awareness", witnesses Faustus's tragic fate, emphasising the spectacle of blindness. Even in his last moments, Faustus remains a complex and intriguing character, challenging the audience to reflect on the broader themes of morality, ambition, and the consequences of one's choices.

The present inquiry has sought to delineate the manifold expressions of irony across the various phases that Faustus traverses in his trajectory from humanity to damnation. Faustus' dogged proclivity to apprehend nought but divine imperfections, his depiction as a sagacious manipulator of thought, and his ungracious obstinacy in recognising the true nature of his transgression are meticulously orchestrated in a dramatic spectacle by the playwright. Christopher Marlowe's adept handling of irony is showcased through his deliberate utilisation of inversions and intentional deviations from the play's source, *The English Faust book*. Primarily, Marlowe treats irony as a spectacle of blindness, intertwining elements of the carnivalesque, comedy, burlesque, and metatheatre. This constitutes the demonstration of the theatrics of irony. In his quest to ascend to godhood, Doctor Faustus inexorably paves the way for his demise and damnation by choosing the non-divine. The tragic narrative unfolds as a spectacle of blindness, entailing a discernible interplay between the overt and the covert—an artful fusion of grave, tragic consequences and retribution and moments of buffoonery or carnivalesque revelry on the other. The profundity and lucidity of these thematic explorations render *Doctor Faustus* distinctive among its contemporaneous tragedies. In a departure from conventional interpretations of the play, Marlowe transcends the classical ecclesiastical pattern of medieval morality plays. Instead, he pioneers new theatrical dynamics and aesthetics with a dedicated emphasis on the spectacular and the metatheatrical.

NOTES

1. Marlowe, Christopher. *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus*(Penguin et al. Library, 1969).
2. See Parker, Barbara, L. 2011. "'Cursèd Necromancy': Marlowe's *Faustus* as Anti-Catholic Satire".
3. See Jandl, Ingeborg, Susanne Knaller, Sabine Schönfellner, and Gudrun Tockner, ed. 2017.
4. See Hunt, Maurice A. 2016. "Friendship in Marlowe's 'Dr. Faustus' and 'The Jew of Malta' ".
5. See Scott, Mark James Richard. 2020.
6. Hecker, P., & Knutson, R. L. 2009. "Introduction: Marlowe the Play-maker". *Shakespeare Bulletin*.

7. As an example, Zied Ben Amor, in his article "When Doctor Faustus Fails, Irony Prevails: The Spectacle of Blindness in Christopher Marlowe's *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus*" (2003), explores uniquely dramatic irony without combining it with metatheatre. Moreover, in another article titled "They willfully themselves exile from Light" (2023), the same author discusses the use of metatheatre in comedy plays without focusing on the link between metatheatre and dramatic irony.
8. Douglas Colin Muecke, in *Irony and the Ironic*, dwells on different variations of irony, including "irony as rhetorical enforcement" (Muecke 1982, 8), "ironic naivety", "unconscious irony", "self-betraying irony" (10), "romantic irony" (18) among others; he also uses the phrase "dramatic irony, or the spectacle of blindness" (10) concerning the Shakespearean play *The Tragedy of King Richard the Third*(1593) and precisely from (3. 2. 62-67), (Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2008).
9. While dealing with verbal Irony, Muecke claims that "the simplest form of 'high relief' verbal irony is the antiphrastic praise for blame, for example, the 'Congratulations!' we offer to the 'smart Alec' who has let the side down" (Muecke 1982, 56).
10. Muecke compares situational and verbal irony by advancing the idea that "verbal irony implies an ironist, someone consciously and intentionally employing a technique. Situational irony does not imply an ironist but merely a 'condition of affairs' or 'outcome of events' which is seen and felt to be ironic" (Muecke 1982, 42).
11. The definition of Pavis is interesting since it focuses on the position and the attitude of the spectators who know more than what happens on stage. Pavis also focuses on two types of communication: an on-stage communication between characters and an offstage one, which is linked to audiences and contributes to the transgression of the fourth wall principle (Pavis 1998, 189).
12. The religious dimension of the play takes its roots from the long tradition of medieval morality plays. Aspects of total depravity, sin and damnation, making a pact with the devil, hope, perdition, and despair are at the play's heart. The literature review has focused intensely on the matter. To investigate the religious dimension of the play, see Webb, David C. 1999. "Damnation in *Doctor Faustus*: Theological Strip Tease and the Histrionic", Heroand Kiessling, Nicolas. 1975. "Doctor Faustus and the Sin of Demoniality", and Webb, David C. 1999. "Damnation in *Doctor Faustus*: Theological Strip Tease and the Histrionic Hero".
13. *The Geneva Bible* states: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and truth is not in us." (1 John 1:8). (Greydon Press, 1998).

14. "Wherefore goest thou so oft unto the church? Why hearest thou so many holy sermons? For what cause prayest thou so fervently? In all these things thou labourest in vain; for 'God heareth no sinners' ". (Beacon 2005, 5).
15. In Book 1, canto 9, Despair skillfully uses his power of persuasion and tries to convince the Red Cross Knight that life is not worth living and that death ends a life of sin.
16. Calvin, John*, Institutes of Christian Religion*, trans. John Allen, 7th American ed., (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1963).
17. The British Library collection items online give an account of *The English Faust Book* on the following link: https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/the-english-faustbuch-1592.
18. Ethical blindness from a Christian religious perspective.
19. "consummatum est" means "it is finished". The Penguin Classics edition of *The Complete Plays of Christopher Marlowe*states that these words are "the last of Christ's words from the cross. John, XIX, 30." (281), (London: Penguin English Library, 1986).
20. Zied Ben Amor defines the term "theatrics" in his article "Staging violence in William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*: From the theatrics of the mind, the image and the stage to the creation of the meta-self" (2023) as follows: "The term theatrics refers to the various techniques, conventions and elements used to create a dramatic performance, such as acting, stage design, costumes, lighting and sound. Theatrics includes the use of gestures, facial expressions and body language to convey emotions and actions; the use of stage design and props to create a believable environment; the use of costumes and makeup to create believable characters; the use of lighting to create mood and atmosphere; and the use of sound to enhance the overall experience of the performance" (Ben Amor 2023, 41).
21. At this level of the play, Faustus is still blind since he unwarily tells truths: "These are but shadows" (4.2. 55). (London: Penguin English Library, 1986).
22. Nicolas Kiessling advances in "The Sin of Demoniality" that "Faustus commits the sin of demoniality, that is bodily intercourse with demons" (206), *Studies in English Literature*, 1500-1900 15, no. 2 (1975): 205–11.
23. "Helen then is a spirit, and in this play, a spirit means a devil. In making her his paramour Faustus commits the sin of demoniality, that is, bodily intercourse with demons" (106)., (1946), 97-107.
24. Pavis defines theatricality as follows: "Theatricality is that which is specifically theatrical, in performance or in the dramatic text" (395). Theatricality, according to this definition, enhances the role of the audience and lays bare the importance of the spectacular during performances. (Pavis 1998, 395).

25. In *Drama, Metadrama, and Perception* (1986), Richard Hornby enumerated six types of metadrama. He has mentioned sub-components of dramatic performances: the play within the play, the ceremony within the play, role-playing within the role, references to literature and real life within the play and self-references within the play. In that vein, the Parade of the demons included in *Doctor Faustus* could fit with the classification of Hornby since we have the fake ceremonial in the Parade with demons dancing and the concept of role-playing within a role with a devil playing the role of Helen.
26. The link between dramaturgy and performance at this level of the analysis is necessary since, as Patrice Pavis mention: "Dramaturgy is based on an analysis of actions and their actants (the characters)" (125). In *Doctor Faustus*, the link between the playwright, his art of composing the play, and the characters of his play is sealed thanks to irony and the injection of metatheatrical stances.
27. Patrice Pavis defines anti-theatre as a "term used to designate a dramaturgy and an acting style that negate all the principle of theatrical illusion [...] anti-theatre is characterised by a critical and ironical attitude toward artistic and social tradition" (26). (Pavis 1998, 26).
28. Marlowe, Christopher. *The Complete Plays*., (London: Penguin English Library, 1986).
29. In *The Duchess of Malfi* the last words of the Cardinal in Act V show his total incapacity: "I would pray now: but the devil takes away my heart / For having any confidence in prayer." (5.4.31-32); they are reminders of the Faustus of Marlowe: "Oh, I'll leap up to my God: who pulls me down?" (Marlowe 5.2.158) or: "Oh my God, I would weep, but the devil draws in my tears. Gush forth blood instead of tears, yea, life and soul. Oh, he stays my tongue. I would lift up my hands, but see, they hold them, they hold them." (5.2.58-62) In the same fashion as the Faustus of Marlowe, who, in his last moments, invokes Lucifer instead of God "Oh, spare me Lucifer" (5.2.159), does the Cardinal of Webster evoke demons: "I am puzzled in a question about hell, / He sales, in hell, there's one material fire. / And yet it shall not burn all men alike" (Webster 1900 5.5.1-3)., (New York: Dover Publications, 1999).
30. For further details about the comparison between Marlowe and Webster, see Ben Amor, Z. (2022). Demonism, damnation, and Salvation in John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*: Christian and Manichaean manifestations. *The International Journal of Literary Humanities*, *20*(2), 1-15. https://doi.org/10.18848/2327-7912/CGP/v20i02/.
31. Zied Ben Amor develops the notion of the *transcendant* meta-selves for the above-mentioned characters in his article "From Illness to Meta-selves in William Shakespeare's Hamlet and King Lear: New Identities in the Time of Disease" (1923).

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THE ABSURD PERSISTS. A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF EDWARD ALBEE'S *THE AMERICAN DREAM* AND TAWFIQ AL-HAKIM'S *THE TREE CLIMBER*

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Abstract. This article endeavours to delve into the existential profundities inherent in the Theatre of the Absurd, employing a meticulous comparative examination of Edward Albee's *The American Dream* (1961) and Tawfiq Al-Hakim's *The Tree Climber* (1966). Drawing upon the seminal study of Martin Esslin, this research aims to scrutinize the shared thematic as well as stylistic tapestry characterized by the bareness of the stage, the portrayal of matrimonial constructs, the eloquent utilization of silence, the stagnation of linguistic faculties, and the recursive nature of narrative structures. By navigating through these quintessential elements, this article seeks to illuminate the labyrinthine corridors of the human psyche and the intricate absurdities woven into the fabric of existence as elucidated by these two distinct yet thematically resonant theatrical oeuvres.

Keywords: theatre of the absurd, Edward Albee, Tawfiq Al-Hakim, existentialism, comparative literature

INTRODUCTION

The Theatre of the Absurd, a groundbreaking literary movement of the mid-20th century, burgeoned as a radical departure from established dramatic conventions, heralding a renaissance of existential inquiry into the human condition. Coined and elucidated by the erudite Martin Esslin, this epoch-defining genre congregated an eclectic ensemble of dramatists unified by their shared scepticism toward the teleology of life within a cosmos bereft of inherent meaning. Edward Albee's *The American Dream* and Tawfiq Al-

Hakim's *The Tree Climber* stand as epitomic exemplars of this audacious literary tradition, distilling existential angst into a potent elixir through their idiosyncratic narrative idioms and thematic poignancy. This discourse aspires to embark upon a discerning analysis of these seminal works, weaving together the strands of shared existential leitmotifs while unravelling the cultural and linguistic nuances that imbue them with unique resonance.

INTRODUCING THE ABSURD

Drama critic Martin Esslin first used the term Absurdist Theatre in his 1961 book *The Theatre of the Absurd*. The phrase describes a group of dramatists who emerged in the middle of the 20th century, particularly in the years between 1940 and 1960. Esslin lists the essential characteristics that all absurdist plays have in his book. The notions that man lives in a godless cosmos, that existence is pointless and without purpose, and—most importantly—that communication has broken down are all heavily emphasized by the Absurdist dramatists. This avant-garde style of dramatic writing challenges the idea of the "well-made play" and upends established play norms. Annette J. Saddik claims that mid-twentieth-century drama was characterized by "the increasing prominence of post-Second World War experimental plays that resisted traditional narrative plot and discursive language in favour of strikingly non-rational structures and a more minimalistic style of dialogue" (7). Therefore, the traditional confidence in the coherence of dialogue and the unity of narrative is rejected in absurdist plays, which first appeared in Europe following World War II.

Esslin explores the theatre of different writers, including Harold Pinter and Samuel Beckett, in *The Theatre of the Absurd*. Esslin claims that the playwrights of the Absurd employed several avant-garde methods and literary styles that represented their idea of how alienated humans are from a world that is collapsing. According to him, those writers subverted the coherence, unity, and logical continuity of the dramatic text to embody in their plays the issues and challenges that Man confronted during the post-World War II era. Esslin asserts that the absurdist works "are essentially concerned with conveying their author's sense of mystery, bewilderment, and his despair at being unable to find a meaning in existence" (44). Therefore, by employing an unusual style, the Absurdist playwrights expressed their sentiments of alienation and loss as well as their disillusionment with the erosion of values in a disintegrating world.

STAGING THE ABSURD IN ALBEE'S AND AL-HAKIM'S PLAYS

Although Esslin did not consider any of the Arab writers in his book as Absurdist playwrights, a close reading of Tawfiq Al-Hakim's *The Tree Climber* would clarify that he employs in this work many thematic and linguistic aspects often associated with Absurd Drama. Al-Hakim is a prominent figure in Arabic literature, particularly known for his contributions to Egyptian theatre. While Tawfiq Al-Hakim's work centres on existential themes and experimentation with form, he is not typically categorized as a playwright of the Theatre of the Absurd in the same vein as Western authors like Samuel Beckett or Edward Albee. His play explores existential questions, human nature, and societal issues, and tends to reflect a blend of Absurdism, symbolism, and nonsensicality characteristic of the Theatre of the Absurd. In *The Tree Climber* (1966), a detective, a lizard, a time-travelling dervish, and a magic tree all help to turn the quiet life of a married couple upside down. The retired Bahadair Effendi and his spouse, who have each immersed into a world they have constructed for themselves, are weird figures. The only creature entirely born of the East is the dervish, who stands for the unconscious forces, the understanding that the illogical and the "absurd" are inescapably a part of life.

The second work is a one-act play, entitled The *American Dream*, which was published in 1960 and debuted in the United States at the

York Playhouse in January 1961. Mommy and Daddy are shown in the play's opening moments waiting for a plumber to fix the toilet. Mama begins narrating a tale about purchasing a hat. Then, Grandma shows up with a few boxes and begins to gripe about how poorly elderly folks are treated. A while later, Daddy and Mommy are having a talk with Mrs. Barker, the fourth character. Grandma shares with Mrs. Barker a story of her parents' adopted child that occurred twenty years ago. She says they killed the infant after disfiguring it. Mrs. Barker, Mommy, and Daddy return after a while. Mommy notices that Grandma is missing and Mrs. Barker tells her that the van man carried her. Another character, Young Man, enters the stage as Mrs. Barker leaves. He claims that he is looking for a job and is ready to do anything for money. Grandma labels him the American Dream and realizes that he is the twin of Mommy and Daddy's first child. He is described as a superficial human who has been drained of feelings and constructive energy, standing for "the satiric embodiment of the American Dream" (Roudané, Understanding Edward Albee 57). The curtain closes after Grandma entered the stage and addressed the audience.

Numerous commonalities align the two plays within the paradigm of the Theatre of the Absurd, and one such hallmark is the stark minimalism of the stage setting. Albee's deliberate portrayal of a sparsely furnished stage in *The American Dream* exemplifies this characteristic. From the play's outset, the audience is confronted with a scene devoid of ostentation, where the playwright meticulously delineates the setting:

> A living room. Two armchairs, one stands toward either side of the stage, facing each other diagonally out toward the audience. Against the rear wall, a sofa. A door, leading out from the apartment, in the rear wall, far stage-right. (8)

The bare stage setting in Edward Albee's *The American Dream serves* as a potent symbol of existential emptiness and isolation. With only two armchairs and a sofa occupying the space, the audience is immediately immersed in a world stripped of extraneous distractions. Every action and interaction unfolds within the confines of this barren environment, heightening the sense of confinement and claustrophobia inherent in the absurd human condition. Moreover, Albee's deliberate omission of any specific temporal markers further accentuates the existential ambiguity of the setting, blurring the distinction between past, present, and future.

Similarly, Tawfiq Al-Hakim's *The Tree Climber* embraces the ethos of the Theatre of the Absurd through its stark portrayal of a bare stage. Al-Hakim's sparse setting, devoid of any furnishings, mirrors the desolation and existential barrenness that pervade the narrative. The absence of fixed temporal references plunges the audience into a timeless and abstract realm, where events unfold in a liminal space beyond the constraints of conventional reality. Through these shared stylistic choices, both playwrights imbue their works with a palpable sense of existential unease and disorientation, inviting audiences to confront the fundamental absurdity of human existence. Al-Hakim states that:

> There are no scenes in this play and no distinctions between times and places. Sometimes, the past, the present and the future all are found at the same time…
> Everything is mixed in everything… and there is no fixed furniture. (45)

The minimalist stage design is a hallmark of the Theatre of the Absurd, reflecting the barrenness and emptiness of the human condition. In both *The American Dream* and *The Tree Climber*, the stage is stripped of extraneous details, leaving only essential props and furnishings. This deliberate choice serves to underscore the characters' isolation and existential alienation, emphasizing their futile attempts to find meaning and purpose in a world devoid of inherent significance.

Beyond the minimalist stage design, both *The American Dream* and *The Tree Climber* prominently feature married couples as central figures, underscoring the universal themes of existential angst and interpersonal conflict. In Albee's narrative, the characters

"Mommy" and "Daddy" emerge as the linchpins of the drama, initiating and steering the discourse within the play. Their omnipresence underscores their pivotal role in driving the narrative forward, as they navigate the absurdities of familial dynamics and societal expectations. Similarly, Al-Hakim's protagonists, the husband and wife, assume a similar centrality within the dramatic framework of *The Tree Climber*, with their actions and dialogue serving as the fulcrum upon which the plot pivots.

Moreover, the conspicuous absence of children within both couples serves as a poignant motif, emblematic of the barrenness and futility that pervade their respective existential landscapes. In *The American Dream*, the titular characters, "Mommy" and "Daddy," despite their appellations hinting at familial roles, remain childless - a fact underscored by Grandma's poignant revelation:

> The woman, who was very much like Mommy, said that she and the man who was very much like Daddy had never been blessed with anything very much like a bumble of joy [a baby]. (48)

We can infer from Grandma's talk that the couple does not have babies. "These names," contends Ramandeep Mahal, "are short of any personal intensity because they are plain caricatures of a black comedy, which is a usual characteristic of the Absurd Theatre" (160). This absence of progeny serves as a metaphor for the characters' existential void, their lives devoid of the traditional markers of fulfilment and purpose. Similarly, in *The Tree Climber*, the husband and wife navigate their existential crises in the absence of children, their union marked by a profound sense of incompleteness and desolation. This facet becomes evident in the play through a dialogue exchange between the detective and the maid:

> The Detective. Do she and her present husband have children?
> The Maid. No, she got married when she was fifty… since nine years, she could not bear any child. (48)

The characters in both plays manifest as mature couples, having embarked on their matrimonial journey later in life. Thus, the shared motif of childlessness underscores the existential isolation and disillusionment experienced by both couples, epitomizing the overarching themes of existential malaise and societal alienation within the Theatre of the Absurd.

In brief, central to both plays are married couples who serve as archetypal representations of the human condition. In *The American Dream*, Albee presents the characters of "Mommy" and "Daddy," whose mundane existence revolves around superficial desires and societal expectations. Similarly, Al-Hakim's *The Tree Climber* features a husband and wife trapped in a cycle of existential despair and marital discord. Through these characters, both playwrights explore the inherent absurdity of human relationships and the futile quest for fulfilment in an indifferent universe.

The quintessential hallmark of the absurd pervading both Albee's *The American Dream* and Tawfiq Al-Hakim's work lies in the deliberate and recurrent utilization of silence. In *The American Dream*, this silence manifests in multifarious forms, subtly punctuating the dialogue with pregnant pauses and explicit stage directions invoking the absence of sound. Notably, the playwright employs ellipses as a poignant symbol of silence, effectively conveying the palpable weight of unspoken tension and existential disquietude within the narrative fabric. For instance, consider the following excerpt:

> Daddy. And if you need help… why, I should think you'd apply for a Fulbright Scholarship…
> Mommy. And if not that…why, then a Guggenheim Fellowship… (42)

Here, the judicious placement of ellipses imbues the dialogue with an eerie sense of suspended animation, evoking the profound existential void that permeates the characters' interactions. Similarly, in *The Tree Climber*, silence becomes a recurrent pattern throughout the whole play, taking the forms of pauses and silence such as in the stage direction "A deep silence between the couple" (60). Silence emerges as a central motif, weaving its enigmatic tendrils throughout the narrative tapestry. Through meticulous stage directions and strategic pauses, Al-Hakim orchestrates a symphony of silence that reverberates with existential significance. This is exemplified in the following exchange:

> The Maid. There is no one except for police…they are extracting the corpse from the garden…
> The Milkman. ?...
> The Servant. Yes, in the prison…
> The Milkman. ?... (48)

Here, the pregnant pause and the ellipsis serve as powerful conduits of silence, accentuating the ineffable nature of human experience and the insurmountable chasm of existential isolation. In essence, the recurrent use of silence in both plays serves as a potent device for evoking the existential abyss that lies at the heart of the human condition, inviting audiences to confront the profound mysteries and absurdities inherent in the human experience.

Silence emerges as a powerful motif in both plays, symbolizing the breakdown of communication and the inability to connect with others on a meaningful level. Albee and Al-Hakim employ pauses, ellipses, and stage directions to convey the weight of unspoken words and the existential angst that permeates their characters' lives. This pervasive silence serves to highlight the absurdity of human existence, wherein language fails to bridge the gap between individuals and the world around them.

The incorporation of silence within the narrative fabric of both Albee's and Al-Hakim's works engenders a palpable stagnation in the linguistic discourse, compounding the existing deformity and incoherence endemic to the characters' interactions. Indeed, language in these plays emerges as a fractured and unreliable conduit of communication, beset by fragmentation, disjointed speech patterns, and a conspicuous absence of grammatical coherence. This linguistic disarray underscores the profound existential disconnection between the characters, accentuating the futility of linguistic expression in elucidating the complexities of human experience.

In *The American Dream*, Albee astutely portrays language as a flawed means of communication, fraught with ambiguity and misinterpretation. "The language of Mommy and Daddy in *The American Dream*, like the functional claims of their names, denied action, is evacuated of meaning, conventionalized to the point at which it becomes self-annihilating" (Bigsby, *American Drama* 130). Through the use of fragmented dialogue and disjointed syntax, Albee elucidates the characters' struggle to articulate their thoughts coherently, as exemplified by Grandma's poignant lamentation: "I don't know if that's what I meant or not. It is certainly not what I thought I meant" (32). Here, the dissonance between intention and expression underscores the inherent inadequacy of language in conveying the nuances of subjective experience, amplifying the characters' sense of existential alienation. The stagnation of language, which is characterized by incoherence and fragmentation, may also be detected in Mrs. Barker's conversation with Grandma when she says:

> I can't tell, yet. I'll have to… what is the word I meant?... I'll have to relate it… that's it…I'll have to relate it to certain things I know, and…draw… conclusions. (55)

As this short exchange shows, the unproductive repetitions and focus on the same matter make the speech itself fragmented and language overused. The play as a whole "is riddled with clichés, advertising slogans, non-sequiturs, the dead language of consumerism. In the upside-down world of Albee's America, language is dangerously empty, unreliable, and contradictory" (Kolin 30).

Likewise, in Al-Hakim's work, language assumes a similarly disjointed and fragmented form, reflecting the characters' profound estrangement from one another and themselves. Through the absence of grammatical rules and the prevalence of incoherent speech patterns, Al-Hakim underscores the limitations of language as a vehicle for genuine communication; thus, language becomes meaningless like in this conversation between the husband and his wife:

> The Husband. Of course, you were somewhere…because you cannot be in non-place…but what is this place?... your kinsman's house?...
> The Wife. No…
> The Husband. Your friends' house?...
> The Wife. No…
> The Husband. It is a house anyway?...
> The Wife. No… (167)

The resulting linguistic chaos serves as a poignant metaphor for the characters' existential predicament, as they grapple with the ineffability of human experience in a world devoid of inherent meaning or coherence. In essence, the use of silence in conjunction with linguistic deformity and incoherence serves to underscore the fundamental absurdity of human existence, highlighting the insurmountable barriers to genuine communication and connection within the absurd universe depicted in the play.

The recurrent use of fragmented and incoherent language in both plays serves as a potent reflection of the characters' profound struggle to communicate effectively with one another. Within the Theatre of the Absurd, language itself becomes a fractured and disjointed entity, mirroring the existential dissonance and alienation experienced by the characters. In *The American Dream*, Albee deftly employs repetitive and clichéd dialogue to underscore the characters' superficiality and their inability to engage in authentic communication. Through this linguistic stagnation, Albee unveils the hollowness of human interaction, revealing the characters' futile attempts to forge meaningful connections in a world devoid of inherent meaning or purpose.

In *The Tree Climber* too, Al-Hakim employs fragmented language and banal exchanges to highlight the absurdity of verbal communication and the inherent limitations of linguistic expression. The characters' dialogue becomes a cacophony of disjointed utterances, devoid of genuine emotional resonance or existential significance. Through this deliberate linguistic fragmentation, Al-Hakim underscores the characters' existential alienation and the inherent absurdity of their attempts to navigate the complexities of human existence.

Ultimately, the use of fragmented and incoherent language in both plays serves to illuminate the profound meaninglessness of human existence within the absurd universe depicted by Albee and Al-Hakim. Language, once a tool for communication and connection, becomes a barrier to understanding, highlighting the characters' inherent inability to grasp the true essence of their own existence. In this way, the Theatre of the Absurd interrogates the very nature of language and its role in shaping human consciousness, inviting audiences to confront the profound absurdity of the human condition.

Lastly, it is essential to note that both *The American Dream* and *The Tree Climber* eschew conventional plot development, opting instead for a narrative structure that revolves around a few central events and themes. In Albee's play, this is exemplified by the pervasive use of clichéd language and the repetition of trivial issues, which imbue the plot with a circularity that reinforces the characters' existential stagnation. *The American Dream* clarifies Francoise Grellet, is perceived as "a harsh satire of the vacuity of family life with a surrealistic plot" (282). A prime illustration of this circular structure can be found in the following exchange between "Mommy" and "Daddy":

> Mommy. I said I went to buy a new hat yesterday.
> Daddy. Oh! Yes…Yes.
> Mommy. Pay attention.
> Daddy. I am paying attention, Mommy.
> Mommy. Well, be sure you do.
> Daddy. Oh, I am.
> Mommy. All right, now. I went to buy a new hat yesterday and I said "I'd like a new hat, please … (100)

The recurring narrative motif of the hat within the dialogue between

"Mommy" and "Daddy" in Albee's play contributes to a pervasive sense of monotony, reflecting the characters' futile attempts to find meaning in the mundane. Similarly, in Al-Hakim's work, the repetitive discourse surrounding the absence of the wife serves to cement the plot in a state of immutability. This fixation on repetitive themes and motifs underscores the characters' inability to transcend the confines of their existential predicament, resulting in a narrative that remains fixed and unyielding. This phenomenon is exemplified in the following conversation:

> The Husband. Yes you, where have you been all this time?
> The Wife. I went as you know…to buy a thread…
> The Husband. For half an hour?...
> The Wife. True…
> The Husband. But you did not come after half an hour… you came after three days…
> The Wife. Three days?... are you sure?...
> The Husband. Absolutely. (161)

In the discourse between the husband and wife in Al-Hakim's play, the recurrent theme of the wife's absence engenders a palpable sense of stagnation within the dialogue. What begins as a trivial issue gradually assumes a disproportionate significance, becoming the focal point of their interactions. Moreover, the pervasive use of clichéd language further exacerbates this sense of stagnation, as the characters rely on familiar phrases and expressions to navigate their existential quandaries.

This reliance on clichés and the repetition of the wife's absence serve to perpetuate a circularity within the plot, rendering it impervious to change or evolution. In this dramatic work, Albee "uses the techniques of the Theatre of The Absurd such as corrupted language, fragmented dialogues, degenerated speeches, clichés and so on" (Yasar 768). Much like the repetitive narrative surrounding the hat in Albee's play, the fixation on the wife's absence in Al-Hakim's work solidifies the plot in a state of inertia. Consequently, both plays become ensnared in a self-perpetuating cycle, wherein the characters' attempts to grapple with existential concerns are repeatedly thwarted by the constraints of their own circumstances.

Thus, the repetition of these thematic motifs in both plays not only underscores the characters' existential entrapment but also contributes to a broader sense of circularity within the narrative framework. In this way, both Albee and Al-Hakim employ repetitive narrative devices to explore the inherent absurdity of human existence and the cyclical nature of life's trials and tribulations.

In a word, both plays eschew traditional narrative structures in favour of circular, repetitive motifs that emphasize the cyclical nature of human existence. In *The American Dream*, Albee employs the recurring theme of buying a hat to underscore the characters' fixation on trivialities and their inability to break free from societal norms. The repeated reference to the same topic throughout the first pages of the dramatic text creates a circular movement within the plot. Actually, "though much happens," argues Anne Paolucci, "the action is static" (*From Tension to Tonic* 37). Similarly, Al-Hakim's *The Tree Features* a repetitive narrative thread centred on the wife's absence, highlighting the characters' sense of ennui and existential despair. Through these circular narratives, both playwrights explore the futile nature of human endeavour and the inescapable repetition of life's absurdities.

CONCLUSION

In a nutshell, Edward Albee's *The American Dream* and Tawfiq Al-Hakim's *The Tree Climber* serve as poignant reflections of the existential quandaries inherent in the human condition. Through shared thematic elements such as the stark bareness of the stage, the portrayal of married couples, the pervasive use of silence, the stagnation of language, and the circularity of the plot, both plays delve deep into the heart of the Theatre of the Absurd.

Despite their disparate cultural and linguistic origins, both Albee and Al-Hakim masterfully capture the essence of existential angst, inviting audiences to grapple with the fundamental absurdity of human existence. The minimalist stage design in both plays serves as a metaphor for the barrenness of the human soul, while the portrayal of married couples underscores the universal struggle for connection and meaning amidst the chaos of modern life.

Moreover, the recurrent use of silence and the stagnation of language within the dialogue further accentuate the characters' existential alienation, highlighting the inherent limitations of communication in conveying the complexities of human experience. This linguistic dissonance is mirrored in the circularity of the plot, wherein the characters find themselves trapped in an endless cycle of existential despair.

Ultimately, both *The American Dream* and *The Tree Climber* compel audiences to confront the unsettling truths of the human condition, challenging preconceived notions of reality and inviting introspection into the nature of existence itself. Through their shared exploration of the Theatre of the Absurd, Albee and Al-Hakim beckon us to embrace the absurdity of life and find solace in the search for meaning amidst the void.

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Unveiling Nonsense in the Theatre of the Absurd. Exploring Eugene Ionesco's Craft to Incorporate Invisibility as a Theme in "The Chairs"

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Abstract. This paper is a modest attempt to unveil the deliberate deployment of nonsense in *The Theatre of the Absurd* by means of exploring Eugene Ionesco's craft of incorporating *"invisible characters",* as a theme in his Absurdist *"tragic farce"* play *"The Chairs".* The ontological question that might haunt avid readers is "What is the possible interpretation, as well as the relevance of a series of invisible guests in the play?". However, this is the beauty of the *Theatre of the Absurd* as it leaves so much open to interpretation and makes one wonder and ask questions without giving an answer but, at the same time, helps one find them. As Ionesco himself rightly puts it, *"It is not the answer that enlightens, but the question".* At first sight, the invisible guests may appear to be useless and nonsensical in the eyes of the audience. They are hardly shown to function throughout the whole play. Rather, they are an assembly of a cross-section of humanity arriving one by one at Old Man's house who has arranged a seemingly ceremonial gathering in order for his message or meaning of life to be delivered to humanity. The audience comes to the theatre and watches the play, but cannot conquer what they thought they could. Much to everyone's surprise, the Orator elected by the Old Man to speak on behalf of him could not utter even a single word as he was a deaf-mute. But it is a firmly held belief that everything possesses a meaning, be it a gigantic statue or a small pebble. Hence their potentiality of bearing an underlying significance. As Ionesco himself rightly states, "If one does not understand the usefulness of the useless and uselessness of the useful, one cannot understand art".

Keywords: absurdism, invisible characters, nonsense

We are more closely connected to
the invisible than to the visible.
Novalis

There is not an iota of exaggeration in the following words of Albert Camus, when he stated: "The irrational, the human nostalgia, and the absurd that is born of their encounter —these are the three characters in the drama that must necessarily end with all the logic of which an existence is capable". Primarily centred in Paris, the theatre of the absurd was a momentous movement that broke out in Europe immediately after the fin of World War II, as a direct reaction and transformation from the naturalist and realist theatre and as a reverberation of the existential school of philosophy. This atypical phenomenon was basically instituted as a protest against man's apocryphal existence during the politically portentous phase of the 1950s and to "confront the public with a bewildering experience, a veritable barrage of wildly irrational, often nonsensical goings-on, that seems to go counter to all accepted standards of stage convention." Historically speaking, the root of the theatrical tradition of the absurd drama lies in two twentieth-century philosophical artistic movements of expressionism and surrealism, which "propose to distort external reality, such as the use of dreamlike images and an alternative ordering of logic which defies logic, space, and time, are found in many plays considered to be expressionistic as well". The term was first coined by Martin Esslin in his 1961 book "The Theatre of the Absurd", where the critic defined this category of theatre as something that "strives to express its sense of the senselessness of the human condition and the inadequacy of the rational approach by the open abandonment of rational devices and discursive thought". Often labelled as "anti-plays", they are characterized as theatre that strives to present the absurdity of individual's existence in a purposeless world by strange or improbable means. The absurdist playwright questions "the nature of human existence by presenting a world without logic or morals, and without the using conventional dramatic language, plot and narrative". In fact, these plays directly deal with the "basic issues and problems of our age, in a uniquely efficient and meaningful manner, so that they meet some of the deepest needs and unexpressed yearnings of their audience" (Bennett 2009, 11).

Major proponents of the mid-twentieth century such as Samuel Beckett, Jean Genet, Arthur Adamov, Harold Pinter, and Eugene Ionesco are often labelled as producers of Absurdist literature, which is essentially an offshoot of the Existential philosophy imbibed with modern man's overwhelming sense of meaninglessness, anxiety, crisis and, of course, alienation. Ionesco himself is of the opinion that "All history is nothing but a succession of Crisis - rupture reputation resistance (...) and of attempts to return to positions that have been abandoned". Such crisis in Ionesco's era was to a large extent the result of World War II and the threat of Nuclear annihilation that generated feelings of hopelessness and futility. Therefore, the question of human *"Existence"* pervaded in literature and also in Ionesco's works like "The Bald Soprano", "The Lesson", "Jack, or the Submission" and "The Chairs", but significantly with variations and richness.

The ontological question that might haunt avid readers upon an initial lesson of the absurdist "tragic farce" play "The Chairs" is "What is the possible interpretation, as well as the relevance of a series of invisible guests in the play?". However, this is the beauty of the Theatre of the Absurd as it leaves so much open to interpretation and makes one wonder and ask questions without giving the answer although, at the same time helps one find them (Esslin 1980, 106). As Ionesco himself rightly puts it, "It is not the answer that enlightens, but the question". Maybe this is the meaning of life, searching for the answers and questioning the world around us, refusing to yield to the dogmatic thinking that our society sometimes tries to impose on us. The theatre of the absurd is a reflection of the author's personal world, it is deprived of objectively credible characters, and it is also radically apolitical, unlike the theatre of existentialism. The aesthetic concept of absurdity is based on the idea of alienation, the inability of man to establish real contact with himself and the world that leads to their deprivation, their inability to react in their own name. Although the play is absurd, it is at the same time absolutely, completely and totally brilliant, but not for everyone. To see past the *absurdity* behind Ionesco's assigning these invisible characters in the play, one should have a vision. In the words of Jonathan Swift, "vision is the art of seeing what is invisible to others" (Ionesco 1997, 68). Ionesco feels it unacceptable for his plays to be analyzed and to tear down their integrity at the expense of rational truths. From mystics, we know that all miracles that exist in the darkness of the unconscious and are taken out in the daylight of reason will become a cartoon image. Ionesco's plays are irrational in nature, and he is against any attempt at clarification or interpretation that tries to close it in a foreign and distorted world. "Once the world is unable to understand me, I'm waiting for someone to explain me" - words about the initial failure of "The Chairs".

Ionesco's craft of incorporating invisibility as a theme is subject to many good interpretations. Much like the trams in Samuel Beckett's "Waiting for Godot" and the old couple in Beckett's "Happy Days", Ionesco's "The Chairs" centres two characters in their 90s known as Old Man and Old Woman who are seen frantically preparing chairs and getting into their make-belief play of greeting a horde of invisible guests. The invisible guests are a cross-section of humanity, implying *everyone* in the world - a Lady, a Colonel, a Belle, a Photo-engraver, an Emperor and a handful of newspapermen - all of whom are shown assembling together to hear an orator who is supposed to reveal the Old Man's discovery - his meaning of life. The Old Man says, "I have a message, that's God's truth, I struggle, a mission, I have something to say, a message to communicate to humanity, to mankind..." All of them are invisible to the audience and are indicated by empty chairs placed on stage for them to occupy, and by the speech and gestures of the Old Man and the Old Woman.

As readers, we may draw some interpretations of the invisibility of the guests in the play. One important implication is that this is a post-apocalyptic world, as the location and timing of the play suggest that their house is surrounded by water on all sides. In a house on the island, they pass their time with private games and half-remembered stories. The Old Man, for example, also speaks of the destruction of Paris. The old couple has a nostalgia for a vague utopian past, "when all Paris was like a garden". Perhaps an apocalypse has destroyed the earth, leaving nothing behind. They say that there is no Paris anymore and talk about an old memory repeatedly. The invisibility of the guests implies that the Old Man and the Old Woman are the only ones left in the world. The empty chairs might symbolize their long-lost friends. As guests arrive, the two characters speak to them and reminisce cryptically about their lives. The discussion goes on as the couple indulges in the invisible guests, wherein the audience only hears dialogues such as "Yes, yes, yes. Not at all.", "Yes?", "No!?". This also showcases the lack of understanding, considering that the audience is only introduced to one side of the conversation (Suthar 2016, 3).

A major interpretation of the invisibility of the guests is the difficulty involved in conducting effective communication with each other. The complete loss of the touch of the world is presented both literally and figuratively through the invisible guests. Visually, the play communicates the message that guests sitting in the chairs are invisible, thus seeding the natural conclusion that guests are mere figments of the imagination of the Old Man and the Old Woman. The old couple act like they are having the time of their life by expressing their emotions through gesticulating, moving and giving a speech. The Old Woman has a discussion with the invisible guests wherein she states: "Do you know, my husband has never been understood. But, at last, his hour has come". This line clearly reflects on the fragmented speech and communication of the Old Man, as well as subtly hints at the Old Woman's lack of comprehension. They both have a human face but are empty of real human content. They are not personalities for whom we construct an image of their behaviour. They do not have their own will. The alienation has deprived them from within, and the effect of this inner void is the destruction of their relationship with the outside world. The reactions of the old man and the old woman are mechanical, deprived of the thrill of life. Behind them are not real people. There is no causal relationship between them. The ultimate display of splintered language is seen in the orator's final speech: *"Mmm, Mmm, Gueue, Gou, Gu. Mmm, Mmm, Mmm, Mmm." as* well as Ionesco's final stage directions that clearly display the inadequate representation of thoughts, shattered language and communication making it a dominant theme in the play (Patel 2021, 287).

Another explanation is that imaginary guests are real people but with an absent mind. Perhaps because they do not want the truth or they cannot handle the truth. They are there but at the same time not. However, despite being invisible, they seem more alive than the strange Orator who seems more like a robot than a human being. In this reading, the invisibility of the crowd represents an audience without a mind relying upon the critics (the Orator) who are themselves incapable of understanding an artist like Ionesco (the Old Man) who tries to break free of mainstream conventions.

There are other interpretations of the invisible characters in the play. The need to be remembered is easy to identify with. No one wants to be forgotten forever. When finding the meaning of life or whatever discovery the Old Man has made, will guarantee it. Perhaps the chairs occupied by invisible guests symbolize the importance of not forgetting people. Or perhaps the couple might have dementia. Or being prisoners, bored and wanting to entertain themselves, the Old Man and Old Woman have just played an illusory game of treating a series of invisible guests as if they are real and in doing so the couple might have tried to re-construct the past events corresponding with the reality to influence public perception and attitudes about the past as well as public responses to it (Naz 2018, 3).

Through invisible characters like the lady, the colonel, etc. Ionesco has challenged our capacity of "willing suspension of disbelief". As readers, we would find all characters including the old couple imaginary. As spectators, we were set the task of participating with the playwright in building characters out of our own imagination. It may also have been a paltry trick played on us: a recreation of the playwright's desire for a roomful of people to hear his message with the result being an inevitable disappointment. The play can also be interpreted in contemporary times. In the digital age, it is not difficult for us to imagine a room filled with invisible guests virtually present, nor to conceive a sensual relationship without the physical presence of a partner (Pounders, 92). The exaggerated characters in "The Chairs" play a vital role in contributing to the absurdity and futility of human existence. Their over-the-top behaviours and absurd dialogues create moments of humour and satire, highlighting the meaningless and futile nature of communication. By presenting characters that are larger than life, Ionesco emphasizes the absurdity of human interactions and the inability to convey meaningful messages.

Though finding meaning is a vein attempt in the case of any absurd drama owing to the paradox, the last is formulated as two answers are possible— the absurd silence and an empty talk. In an absurd drama, the very logical structures of speech are negated - meaningless, whereas in Chekhov they still exist, even though the first beginnings of a total decline are noticed. *Nonsense* and *absurd* are used throughout the text to signify that the normal laws of language and logic have been suspended. In this play, Ionesco anticipates the modern and post-modern fascination for the volatility of language and its inability to express specific meanings. He is able to articulate these anxieties through the guise of comic absurdity and *nonsensical* narratives. However, linguistic nonsense and absurdist comedy are more than simple tropes used to amuse an audience. Comic absurdity and nonsense language function to destabilize fundamental concepts of logic, linguistic structure, and stable identity that are the very foundation of a sense of the self and its relation to society (Ionesco 2014, 2).

This storyline makes "The Chairs" a play about the failed life of two elders or, in a broader understanding, a play about failure at all, the absurd, the futility of existence. The play is titled "The Chairs" and what Ionesco wants to express is related not to the event that is played and seen with the spectator's eyes, but to the view of the many empty chairs that are its true heroes. This emptiness, the sense of nothingness, suggests what Ionesco seeks to achieve with metaphors. About "The Chairs", Ionesco said that he just had the idea of an empty room that would be filled with unoccupied chairs. The chairs that come at full speed and faster, constitute the central picture, an ontological emptiness, a kind of whirlpool of the empty. This first intrusive idea infuses the story of two old men who are on the brink of nothingness, and who have had trouble all their lives. But their story is only designed to maintain the initial, basic picture that gives meaning to the play.

To conclude, it is the beauty of Ionesco's absurdist play "The Chairs" that casts a bunch of invisible characters - one side angry and offended, the other cheering and applauding, while the third may ask themselves "What just happened?" with a huge question mark above their heads. "The Chairs" is one of those works in which the reader discovers something new with each repeated reading, as it is full of symbolism and a great testament of the 20th century to the new generations.

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"Survival is Insufficient". A Critical Exploration of Optimism and Nostalgia in the Postapocalyptic World of *Station Eleven*

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Abstract. This paper presents a detailed analysis of Emily St. John Mandel's 2014 novel *Station Eleven* within the context of post-apocalyptic literature. The study commences with exploring the world-building exercise undertaken by *Station Eleven*, focusing on investigations into the post-apocalyptic social order. The text portrays the recurrent consequences of the breakdown of civilisation, the collapse of modern technologies, and the dispersal of society into small archipelagos of survivors. The paper then examines the novel's unique temporal and spatial structure, offering a nuanced discussion of the three distinct time frames and geographical settings that constitute the narrative. It situates *Station Eleven* within a contemporary understanding of the apocalypse that emphasises human survival amidst the ruins of the old world. It also examines the novel's negative portrayal of religion and capitalism, challenging prevailing interpretative frameworks. Contrary to the prevalent depiction of brutal struggles in post-apocalyptic literary narratives, *Station Eleven* tactfully navigates the portrayal of violence, leaving critical aspects to the reader's imagination. The study concludes by elucidating the thematic significance of culture and memory in the novel, emphasising the redemptive role of cultural activities in a post-apocalyptic world and its central message of fostering optimism in the face of catastrophe.

Keywords: post-apocalyptic, humanity, nostalgia, survival, modernity

Introduction: An Apocalyptic Literary Landscape

Contemporary fiction and cinema are replete with narratives depicting the culmination of the world as we perceive it. These post-apocalyptic works envision existence in a world ravaged or profoundly altered by climate-related disasters, zombie uprisings, or global pandemics. Within the realm of climate fiction, colloquially termed 'cli-fi,' literary works such as Claire Vaye Watkins's *Gold Fame Citrus* (2016), Edan Lepucki's *California* (2014), and Paolo Bacigalupi's *The Water Knife* (2016) portray the United States as an inhospitable desert, where water scarcity transforms it into a contested resource. Concurrently, mainstream cinema explores analogous desert landscapes due to water scarcity, as evidenced in films like *Mad Max: Fury Road* (2015) and *The Book of Eli* (2010).

While cinematic portrayals share thematic elements with literary works, the catastrophic consequences of global warming often manifest as immediate and expansive calamities. Examples include the abrupt onset of an ice age in *The Day After Tomorrow* (2004), the literal disintegration of the Earth in *2012*(2009), and the worldwide surge of severe weather disturbances in *Geostorm* (2017). A distinct subgenre within post-apocalyptic productions revolves around the zombie apocalypse, as showcased in films such as *28 Days Later* (2002), *I Am Legend* (2007), as well as in comedic interpretations like *Shaun of the Dead* (2004) and *Zombieland* (2009). Noteworthy in this category are the widely acclaimed AMC television series *The Walking Dead* (2010-2022) and literary works such as Colson Whitehead's novel *Zone One* (2011). A third thematic thread in end-of-the-world narratives involves worlds depopulated in the aftermath of pandemics or nuclear conflicts. Emily St. John Mandel's novel *Station Eleven* (2014) and Margaret Atwood's *Maddaddam* trilogy that includes *Oryx and Crake* (2003); *The Year of the Flood* (2009); and *Maddaddam* (2013) depict a North America bereft of human presence following fatal plagues. Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* (2006) delves into the struggles of a few survivors navigating a post-nuclear war landscape for dwindling resources, while the television series *The Last Man on Earth* (2015-2018) humorously explores the largely benign aspects of solitary survival in a sparsely populated world.

While concise and not exhaustive, this literary catalogue serves as "evidence that popular contemporary narrative is haunted by dreams of a future that is a place of ruin" (Tate 2017, 2). The surge in popularity of post-apocalyptic narratives can be contextualised by recognising that apocalypse reflects particular anxieties rooted in specific temporal contexts (Doyle 2015, 100). This heightened interest aligns with the multitude of acute challenges confronting the global community, encompassing global warming, political instability, international terrorism, large-scale migration, epidemics like the Ebola virus, Coronavirus pandemic and rapid technological advancements, among others. These challenges engender uncertainties that manifest in pessimistic visions of the future. Post-apocalyptic fiction functions as a vehicle for imaginative extrapolations of current trends into future scenarios, thereby serving as a cautionary medium for potential outcomes if prevailing trajectories persist. Moreover, it presents conceivable alternatives to the contemporary situation at a juncture where transformative change remains feasible. In a less sanguine interpretation, post-apocalyptic fiction also serves to acclimatise readers to conceivable future scenarios, potentially normalising outcomes that may be deemed inevitable.

In Emily St. John Mandel's *Station Eleven* (2014), a notably successful and distinctive post-apocalyptic narrative, the focus diverges from the conventional themes of survival, conflict, and struggle. Instead, the novel scrutinises the potential and necessity of cultural expression within a post-apocalyptic milieu, underscoring the significance and value of art and memory amid challenging circumstances. Depicting the aftermath of a global pandemic, the Georgia Flu, and life two decades thereafter, the novel embarks on an ambitious, multi-genre exploration of humanity's capacity for creation and the pursuit of meaning through art, storytelling, and communal bonds. This exploration is manifested through various narrative elements, such as the Travelling Symphony—a group of actors and musicians traversing an emptied-out North America to stage Shakespearean performances for survivors—and the Museum of Civilization, which curates and displays artefacts from the pre-pandemic world, now rendered obsolete except as poignant relics of a lost past. By "celebrating the beauty of the present, flawed world"

(Tate 2017, 22), *Station Eleven offers* an unusually optimistic and hopeful vision of an otherwise bleak future.

STATION ELEVEN: THE POST-APOCALYPTIC NARRATIVE

Within the post-apocalyptic genre, *Station Eleven* encompasses distinctive elements, many of which essentially characterise this literary classification. These include the occurrence of an apocalyptic event, the portrayal of a post-collapse society, and a narrative structure seamlessly intertwining the pre-apocalyptic past with the post-apocalyptic present. At its core, the genre mandates the presence of an apocalypse, exemplified in *Station Eleven* by the advent of the Georgia Flu—a highly lethal and rapidly spreading virus described as a "flu that exploded like a neutron bomb over the surface of the earth" (St. John Mandel 2014, 37). This catastrophic event prompts societal upheaval, with television newscasters cautiously referencing an 'apocalypse' as the city and the world grapple with the sudden and devastating impact of the flu.

The emergence of the flu is observed primarily through the perspectives of two characters, Jeevan Chaudhary and Clark Thompson. Jeevan, forewarned by a friend about the contagion's swift spread, strategically secures provisions and retreats to his brother's apartment in a Toronto tower. From this vantage point, he witnesses the pandemic-induced havoc, noting the city's gradual descent into silence: "Toronto was falling silent. Every morning was deeper, the perpetual hum of the city fading away" (St. John Mandel 2014, 177). In contrast, Clark remains oblivious to the catastrophe until significant damage has transpired. Fortuitously avoiding virus exposure during his journey to Toronto, Clark's redirected flight leads him to Severn City Airport—a site untouched by the flu and subsequently evolving into a permanent refuge for him and his fellow stranded passengers.

Within their protected enclaves, Jeevan and Clark manage to endure the ramifications of the Georgia Flu and the subsequent societal collapse. The global dissemination of the virus precipitates a disintegration of societal fabric, evoking an ominous unravelling of human society as we knew it, with nations sequentially descending into darkness. The hallmark of the modern period is the globalised nature of the world, and the deadly pandemic struck at the very core of modernity, that is at the globalised, interconnected nature of the modern world— "no news out of Moscow, then no news out of Beijing, then Sydney, London, Paris, etc." (St. John Mandel 2014,177). Television, a crucial information source for the characters, undergoes a gradual breakdown, serving as a disconcerting signal of societal disarray. Concurrently, the novel underscores the multifaceted breakdown of essential services— television and the internet cease to function, and the supply of electricity and water dwindles after thirty days of the pandemic outbreak.

The narrative unequivocally underscores the significance of these transformative events, with characters acutely cognisant of the profound alterations to their lives and their surroundings. Jeevan, recognising the Georgia Flu as a defining divide, foresees that it will demarcate a profound shift: "was going to be the divide between a *before* and an *after*, a line drawn through his life" (St. John Mandel 2014, 20). This sense of a before and an after is also palpable in Clark's perception, as he intuits an impending calamity upon witnessing crowds gathered beneath Severn City airport TV screens. Despite his uncertainty, Clark contemplates the gravity of the situation before confronting the unfolding news, signifying a poignant recognition of the impending transformation: "This is the last time I'll stir milk into my tea without knowing what happened, he thought, wistful in advance for the present moment, and went to stand with the crowd beneath a television that was tuned to CNN" (St. John Mandel 2014, 233).

Following this apocalyptic portrayal, the narrative propels itself two decades forward, meticulously constructing a compelling representation of a depopulated world post-pandemic. *Station Eleven* adeptly fulfils a second characteristic of the post-apocalyptic genre by vividly illustrating settings marked by "decay, disaster, and ruin" (Doyle 2015, 101). The evocative depiction encompasses cinematic imagery of gridlocked streets, dilapidated holiday resorts overgrown with neglect, and remnants from the bygone world strewn ubiquitously. The narrative intricately describes a road winding towards a distant lake, bordered by miles of permanent gridlock, with trees sprouting between stationary cars and a skeletal figure in the nearest vehicle. In another scene, resort hotels along the lakeshore stand in dereliction, their broken windows reflecting the sky, while trees push through parking lots amidst rusted cars. The detritus of the pre-collapse society, rendered mostly obsolete, manifests in rusted car husks and discarded remnants—crumpled chip bags, pizza box remnants, and obsolete electronic devices with buttons and screens. These evocative images trace the profound transformations in the world since the demise of the early twenty-first-century capitalist, globalised society, constituting a substantial component of the novel's resonant impact.

Station Eleven engages in a comprehensive exploration of world-building, extending its focus to the intricacies of the post-apocalyptic social structure. While diverse narratives portraying apocalyptic scenarios manifest in varying forms, their outcomes exhibit noteworthy similarities. Within St. John Mandel's portrayal of a post-apocalyptic milieu, the absence of governmental structures, infrastructure, and motorised transportation becomes evident. As the narrative unfolds, the survivors, compelled by the degradation of gasoline, transition from nomadic journeys into small-scale settlements, acknowledging the impracticality of perpetual movement: "because the gasoline had gone stale by Year Three and you can't keep walking forever" (St. John Mandel 2014, 37). Consequently, the prevailing societal framework transforms into "an archipelago of small towns" (St. John Mandel 2014, 48). As Benjamin Kunkel observes, these consequences invariably encompass the disintegration of societal order, the collapse of advanced technologies, and the fragmentation of a once interconnected community into smaller groups of survivors:

> In almost every case […], large-scale social organisation, including the state, has disappeared; the cumulative technological capability of century upon century has collapsed to the point that only agricultural knowhow, if that, is retained; and the global society we know has shattered into small tribal groups, separate families or couples, and helpless solitary individuals.
> (Kunkel 2008, 93)

In *Station Eleven*, the terrain is navigated by the Travelling Symphony, a collective of actors and musicians that has been traversing the altered world's archipelagos of settlements "since five years after the collapse" (St. John Mandel 2014, 37). Spanning primarily across Michigan and Southern Ontario, their movements delineate the post-apocalyptic landscape in the novel, with journeys extending "along the shores of Lake Huron and Michigan, west as far as Traverse City, east and north over the 49th parallel to Kincardine. They followed the St. Clair River south to the fishing towns of Marine City and Algonac and back again. This territory was for the most part tranquil now" (St. John Mandel 2014, 37). Taking inspiration from the itinerant theatre companies of the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods, the Travelling Symphony stage Shakespearean performances in the scattered settlements they encounter. Carrying the vestiges of a bygone civilisation, their caravans, once pickup trucks, are now drawn by teams of horses on steel and wood wheels. Similar to medieval and Renaissance theatre troupes, they employ makeshift stages and painted sheets as backdrops: "The caravans were parked end to end, the *Midsummer Night's Dream* backdrop—sewn-together sheets, grimy now from years of travel, painted with a forest scene—hung on them" (St. John Mandel 2014, 55). In their quest, they also pursue rumours of a "Museum of Civilization" *en route* to the settlement at the Severn City airport. However, their journey is shadowed by the presence of a character known as the prophet, introducing an element of peril to their world. As "there are always sects, conflicts, and dangers" (Doyle 2015, 103) in post-apocalyptic fiction, this notorious leader of a messianic cult instils fear in the Symphony, orchestrating the abduction and murder of several of its members.

A third pivotal aspect of the post-apocalyptic genre pertains to the narrative structure, a facet meticulously explored in *Station Eleven*. The novel unfolds across three distinct temporal frames: (i) the events involving the Travelling Symphony and the Severn City airport twenty years after the apocalypse; (ii) the night of the flu's onset and its immediate aftermath; and (iii) glimpses into Arthur Leander's life in the decades preceding his demise, particularly focusing on his relationship with his ex-wife, Miranda. The flu's arrival coincides with a stormy winter night in America, marking the same night actor Arthur Leander succumbs to a heart attack during a production of *King Lear* in Toronto. This event serves as the frame narrative, dominating the initial and concluding chapters and recurring throughout the novel. Spatially, the narrative threads of Arthur's life span locations such as Toronto, New York, London, and a small island near mainland British Columbia. The once-globalised realm of accessible air travel undergoes considerable contraction following the collapse of the infrastructure essential for navigation. The Travelling Symphony, navigating the terrain by foot and horseback, confines its journey to the relatively modest expanse between Lake Michigan and Lake Huron. The narrative oscillates seamlessly between various temporal and spatial settings, featuring five protagonists across the novel's nine chapters, culminating in a complex narrative structure. However, the reader's experience remains lucid and unambiguous, given the meticulous introduction of each change in scenery, ensuring clarity regarding the current setting and focal character.

The diverse narrative strands coalesce through the central figure of Arthur Leander, whose heart attack initiates the exploration of events spanning the past and future of characters intimately or tangentially linked to him. Kirsten, a central character in the novel's post-apocalyptic segment and now a member of the Travelling Symphony, witnessed Arthur's death as a child actor in the *King Lear* play production. At the novel's conclusion, she encounters Clark, the second protagonist in this time frame, at the Severn City airport. Clark, once Arthur's closest friend, had become estranged long before Arthur's demise. Jeevan Chaudhary, the third protagonist, maintains a more distant connection to Arthur as a former paparazzo and entertainment journalist. Present in the theatre when Arthur dies, Jeevan leaps onto the stage to administer first aid and later becomes a focal character in scenes depicting the societal breakdown after the flu's onset. Although Miranda, the fifth protagonist, does not survive the flu, her role in Arthur's life remains pivotal. As Arthur's former wife and creator of the *Dr. Eleven* comic, Miranda's relationship with Arthur receives extensive narrative attention, resonating into the future, particularly through gossip magazine clippings collected by Kirsten about Arthur.

Through the character of Arthur, the years following the flu are intricately connected to the pre-collapse world, establishing narrative links between events that, in isolation, appear unrelated to the subsequent catastrophe. Such connections, bridging the pre- and post-apocalyptic settings, are characteristic of the genre, where "novels have narratives that move back and forth between a past world before the catastrophe happened, however, they imagine that event, and the wasteland of the present. This contrapuntal narrative structure gives a narrative richness to the novels that their more diagrammatic future worlds prohibit" (Christ 2015, 152). Notably, Arthur's final performance of *King Lear*, revisited throughout the novel, emerges as the pivotal moment in *Station Eleven*. In this moment, "we are presented with a microcosm of the post-apocalyptic genre; the simultaneous movement forward and back encircling the moment of Armageddon" (Smith 2016, 290). As the novel concurrently alludes to the world's demise and heralds the commencement of a profoundly transformed future, the post-apocalyptic mode becomes integral to the novel's narrative structure.

The Optimistic Post-Apocalyptic Vision of *Station Eleven*

Established unmistakably as a post-apocalyptic text, *Station Eleven* prompts an exploration into the underlying motivations inherent in adopting what Jacques Derrida identifies as the "apocalyptic tone" (Derrida 1992, 53). This prompts the essential question posed to those who assume such a tone: "to what ends" do they declare "the end of this or that, of man or the subject, of consciousness, of history, or the West or of literature" (Derrida 1992, 51)? Commonly, post-apocalyptic narratives find grounding in two explanatory frameworks—eschatology and critiques of capitalism. A potential third framework involves science, often pivotal for humanity's salvation or its impending demise within this genre. Yet, within the context of *Station Eleven*, its role appears too insignificant to warrant further discussion.

Eschatology aligns with the tradition of biblical interpretations of the apocalypse, interpreting it as "revelation," with the etymological roots signifying "to uncover" or "to disclose." This mode, rooted in biblical eschatology, continues to exert significant influence on texts that may otherwise be construed as "secular" or even atheistic (Tate 2017, 12). Sarah Dillon's examination of *The Flood* (2004) exemplifies how a post-apocalyptic novel can both engage with and depart from the Judeo-Christian apocalyptic tradition. She notes how it "produces a contemporary apocalyptic narrative of consolation and revelation," yet simultaneously "breaks with this tradition in its refusal of final judgment and in its intimation that justice remains to come" (Dillon 2007, 375). *Station Eleven*, engaging in "eschatological preaching (predication)," entails the act of telling, foretelling, or preaching the end, the extreme limit, and the imminent last, according to Derrida (Derrida 1992, 47). However, by prominently featuring the world two decades after the catastrophe, the novel asserts that the apocalyptic event is not humanity's ultimate demise. As a post-apocalyptic text, *Station Eleven* does not adhere to a teleological endpoint but aligns with Briohny Doyle's notion of "a contemporary modification of apocalypse which withholds revelation in favour of playing out scenarios of human survival in the ruins of the old world" (Doyle 2015, 100).

Furthermore, the role assumed by the Bible and religion within the novel takes a distinctly unfavourable turn. The Bible surfaces prominently only in connection with the prophet, the chief adversary of the Travelling Symphony. This self-proclaimed prophet leads "a messianic doomsday cult that enslaves those it captures" (Christ 2015, 153) and governs through "a combination of charisma, violence, and cherry-picked verses from the Book of Revelation" (St. John Mandel 2014, 280). His presence underscores that, in the novel's context, religion does not offer solace or comfort; instead, his character accentuates the harmful potential inherent in religious thoughts and actions. Alternatively, post-apocalyptic fiction can be interpreted as a critique of neoliberal capitalism. In this vein, narratives unfolding amid the remnants of contemporary civilisation serve as examinations of capitalism's breakdown: "the explorations of the post-apocalyptic imagination are properly explorations of the various breakdowns of capitalism itself" (Doyle 2015, 101). Given the widely recognised aphorism that "it is easier to imagine the end of the world than to imagine the end of capitalism," Frederic Jameson proposes that post-apocalyptic texts facilitate envisioning "the attempt to imagine capitalism by way of imagining the end of the world" (Jameson 2003, 76). Furthermore, post-apocalyptic settings implicitly convey a critique of the prevailing neoliberal conditions, leveraging their alienating effects to underscore the negative facets of the present world we inhabit.

While *Station Eleven* can be scrutinised for these critical perspectives, framing the novel as an overtly anti-capitalist text may not be entirely persuasive. In portraying a future where people reside in small rural settlements devoid of electricity, the narrative seems to evoke a certain yearning for a pre-capitalist pastoral existence, envisioned as harmonious with nature. The novel also subtly hints at positive repercussions arising from the breakdown of modernity, acknowledging the end of the "era of light pollution" (St. John Mandel 2014, 251) and the absence of countries with unmanned borders. Additionally, *Station Eleven* may be interpreted as alluding to "the apocalyptic logic that underpins capitalism itself" (Doyle 2015, 101) by emphasising the virus's heightened impact facilitated by global connectivity. While the characters marvel at the miracle of planes, air travel simultaneously accelerates the contagion's spread. Nevertheless, the novel is permeated by a profound fascination with, and even a gentle nostalgia for, elements of the vanished modern world, encompassing the allure of air travel, the internet, and the sounds of electric guitars. This pervasive nostalgia complicates the consideration of the novel as a thorough critique of capitalism. The wistful yearning for the pre-collapse society is notably evident in a concise chapter that essentially comprises a list of lost elements:

> No more cities. No more films […]. No more screens shining in the half-light as people raise their phones above the crowd to take photographs of concert stages. No more concert stages lit by candy-coloured halogens, no more electronica, punk, electric guitars. […] No more flight […]. No more aeroplanes […]. No more spacecraft rising from Cape Canaveral […] burning paths through the atmosphere into space. (St. John Mandel 2014, 32)

Station Eleven's catalogue of lost objects reveals a proclivity for lamenting the loss of amenities and pleasures of the early twenty-first century rather than critiquing the excesses and destructive effects of the capitalist system that facilitated these indulgences. The novel refrains from directly addressing the array of issues associated with neoliberal capitalism, encompassing prominent concerns such as environmental destruction, global warming, and global inequality and conflict, which conventional buzzwords inadequately encapsulate. If the novel portrays the end of capitalism, it does so not with the aim of identifying viable alternatives but rather to envision the experience of the collapse of civilisation from the perspective of those who derived the most benefit from its comforts and pleasures. Consequently, interpretative frameworks grounded in biblical or anti-capitalist perspectives prove to be of limited utility in comprehending *Station Eleven*. Instead, the novel adopts a positive stance toward the post-apocalypse, presenting a vision characterised by nostalgia, hope, and optimism. This optimistic outlook, setting it apart from other post-apocalyptic works, is communicated in two primary ways: it manifests a positive view of humanity and underscores the importance and value of culture and memory.

Typically, narratives set in a post-apocalyptic milieu convey a pessimistic outlook on humanity, portraying a world post-catastrophe characterised by violence, where human survivors grapple with the challenges of mere survival. Although *Station Eleven* unmistakably incorporates the conventions of post-apocalyptic fiction, it stands as an exception within the genre due to its distinctive perspective on mankind. Notably, the narrative refrains from attributing the pandemic, a mutated and highly perilous strain of the bird flu, to any specific anthropogenic activity. Moreover, it deliberately steers clear of providing detailed portrayals of the breakdown of civilisation and the tumultuous years that ensue. Instead, it presents the initial days of the flu through the lens of characters safely ensconced in sheltered environments. Subsequently, the narrative leaps forward by two decades to a period where the world has become markedly less hazardous than the preceding years, deliberately bypassing the violent interlude that characterised the journeys of many survivors. The "first unspeakable years" (St. John Mandel 2014, 37), marked by struggles against ferals, the burial of neighbours, shared experiences of living, dying, and enduring the blood-drenched aftermath of the collapse, are alluded to but not explicitly depicted.

The divergence of *Station Eleven* from other works in the post-apocalyptic genre is evident in its deliberate avoidance of explicit depictions of violence. In contrast to McCarthy's *The Road*, which portrays the initial post-apocalyptic years in a bleak and gruesome manner, *Station Eleven chooses* not to delve into the extremes of brutality. McCarthy's world is depicted as scorched, lifeless, and covered in ash, creating a Hobbesian state of nature where survivors contend fiercely for dwindling resources. The characters in *Station Eleven* appear to have endured similar nightmarish circumstances, yet the narrative remains reticent about the specifics. Unlike other post-apocalyptic texts, such as *The Road* or *The Walking Dead*, which extensively detail the challenges and conflicts faced during the early years on the road, St. John Mandel's novel treats this period as a half-suppressed memory.

Kirsten, a character who spent her early years on the road, acknowledges her inability to recall the worst aspects of that time, stating, "I can't remember the year we spent on the road, and I think that means I can't remember the worst of it" (St. John Mandel 2014, 195). She is also hesitant to discuss past atrocities, like the two people she killed, represented by knife tattoos on her arm. Even in an interview with a rudimentary newspaper, she explains the symbolism of the tattoos but insists on remaining off the record to avoid being remembered for those actions. Consequently, *Station Eleven* sketches a post-apocalyptic world where inhabitants are acquainted with struggle and violence but are not defined by it. While their lives may lack complete safety and peace, as illustrated by the conflicts with the prophet in the narrative, Kirsten perceives the world as "much less dangerous than it used to be" (St. John Mandel 2014, 114) twenty years after the apocalypse. This shift is highlighted in an encounter with a man carrying a rifle, emphasising the calmer age of Year Twenty. The novel takes the risk of proposing that an ethical and cooperative society is achievable, suggesting alternatives to the notion that the future is predetermined. This optimistic portrayal of the post-apocalyptic future might be the central objective of *Station Eleven*, declaring the end of modern society while presenting a more positive outlook.

SURVIVAL, MEMORY AND CULTURAL RESILIENCE AS INTEGRAL CORE OF HUMANITY

Given the absence of a postapocalyptic state of nature in *Station Eleven*, where survival is not the sole focus, characters find the latitude to engage in cultural pursuits. Unlike depictions in *The Road* or *The Walking Dead*, which emphasise struggle and conflict, St. John Mandel's novel proposes that humanity, even in the constrained circumstances of a postapocalyptic world, can redeem itself through cultural endeavours. Early on, as the virus spreads globally, characters draw on their cultural familiarity to interpret their situation, drawing parallels with disaster movies: "They'd all seen the post-apocalyptic movies" (St. John Mandel 2014, 256). While the song is not explicitly named, Jeevan has REM's "It's the End of the World as We Know It (And I Feel Fine)" (1987) stuck in his mind, a fitting soundtrack for a world that is ending as he knows it: "it's the perfect song" (St. John Mandel 2014, 176).

Notably, the sections of the novel set two decades after society's collapse prominently feature the Travelling Symphony's journey, engaging in cultural activities such as performing plays like *King Lear*, *Hamlet*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in diverse settlements. Shakespeare emerges as a pervasive motif in the novel, particularly anchored in the pivotal event of Arthur Leander's death during a production of *King Lear*, Shakespeare's apocalyptic play. Twenty years later, the Travelling Symphony's performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* symbolically signifies that the "world was softening" (St. John Mandel 2014, 133). As Smith presciently observes, if "*King Lear* heralds the apocalypse, then *A Midsummer Night's Dream* heralds the possibility of rebirth" (Smith 2016, 294). Shakespeare's timeless relevance and profound impact align with his own historical context marked by the plague, with which *Station Eleven* draws parallels. The novel accentuates the connection between its postapocalyptic world and Shakespeare's era, noting that during Shakespeare's lifetime, "plague closed the theatres again and again, death flickering over the landscape," mirroring their own situation in "a twilight once more lit by candles, the age of electricity having come and gone" (St. John Mandel 2014, 57). The symbolic resonance between the Georgia Flu and the plague in Shakespeare's time, as represented in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, is emphasised in *Station Eleven*. Despite acknowledging the limits of these parallels, considering technological advancements, the Travelling Symphony performs Shakespeare because it resonates with audiences: "They'd performed more modern plays sometimes in the first few years, but what was startling, what no one would have anticipated, was that audiences seemed to prefer Shakespeare to their other theatrical offerings" (St. John Mandel 2014, 38).

The rationale behind the Travelling Symphony's commitment to traversing the country, rather than settling down, is elucidated by the value they ascribe to their work, even if it is deemed a "difficult and dangerous way to survive and hardly worth it" (St. John Mandel 2014, 119). They possess the ability to "cast a spell" (St. John Mandel 2014, 151) on their audiences, momentarily diverting them from the toils of survival. In moments of transcendent beauty, despite having lost "almost everything, almost everyone," they find solace in the enduring beauty of their performances, such as *A Midsummer Night's Dream*in the peculiar town of St. Deborah by the Water, with Lake Michigan glistening nearby (St. John Mandel 2014, 57). Beyond these elevated experiences, the Travelling Symphony functions as a surrogate home, providing a sanctuary where music and theatre render their post-apocalyptic existence tolerable. Culture, in this context, assumes a crucial role in imbuing lives that might otherwise be reduced to mere survival with meaning. Kirsten encapsulates this ethos by adopting the slogan "Survival is insufficient" from a *Star Trek: Voyager episode*, which is not only tattooed on her arm but also prominently displayed on the lead caravan.

The cultural landscape within the novel extends beyond Shakespeare and the Travelling Symphony's musical repertoire to encompass various artefacts. Kirsten carries a snow globe and *Dr. Eleven* comic books, seemingly impractical items that, nevertheless, connect her to the past. These items forge links with Arthur, who gifted them to her, and his ex-wife Miranda, who created them. The comics, set in a future world on a space station named Station Eleven, serve as a mise-en-abyme, underlining their narrative importance. The comics convey a nostalgic sentiment towards the vanished world, articulated in the central sentence: "I stood looking over my damaged home and tried to forget the sweetness of life on Earth" (St. John Mandel 2014, 42). Contrary to the expressed desire to forget, *Station Eleven* is fundamentally a novel about memory.

Memories hold significance, encompassing characters' recollections of their pre-apocalyptic lives, childhoods, and relationships. Kirsten frequently reminisces about her interactions with Arthur Leander and questions the accuracy of her memories: "Nothing in Kirsten's collection suggested the Arthur Leander she remembered, but what did she actually remember?" (St. John Mandel 2014, 41). Childhood memories, though recurring, are acknowledged as elusive, akin to dreams: "memories from before the collapse seem like dreams now" (St. John Mandel 2014, 195).

The paramount importance of memory is epitomised in the Museum of Civilization at the Severn City airport. This institution symbolises the collective desire to preserve the pre-Georgia Flu pandemic world. Clark initiates the museum, emphasising the importance of remembering when it becomes evident that a return to normalcy is improbable. Two decades later, the museum is replete with artefacts that serve as poignant reminders of the old world:

> There seemed to be a limitless number of objects in the world that had no practical use but that people wanted to preserve: cell phones with their delicate buttons, iPads, and a selection of laptops. There were a number of impractical shoes, stilettos mostly, beautiful and strange. There were three car engines in a row, cleaned and polished, a motorcycle composed mostly of gleaming chrome […] There were the passports or the driver's licenses or sometimes the credit cards of people who had lived at the airport and then died. Clark kept impeccable records. (St. John Mandel 2014, 258)

Demonstrating a wistful yearning for the world before its collapse, the museum not only reflects this nostalgia but also embodies the imperative to perpetuate memories. The act of preserving the recollections of the deceased emerges as a form of survival strategy, aligning with one of *Station Eleven*'s recurrent themes: "physical survival and the record of existence are intertwined – that artefact, information, and, above all, texts serve as proof of the individual having existed" (Smith 2016, 296).

CONCLUSION

Culture and memory, as portrayed in the novel, function as instrumental tools for rendering the past applicable to the present. By the conclusion of the narrative, various indications suggest the potential for a partial return to the antecedent state. Initiatives such as attempts to "find" the internet using pedalled power or the establishment of newspapers and the upkeep of libraries underscore these efforts. The apex of these endeavours to reconstruct, albeit in a rudimentary manner, the past, occurs when Clark guides Kirsten to view distant lights from the airport's tower at the novel's denouement: "pinpricks of light arranged into a grid. There, plainly visible on the side of a hill some miles distant: a town, or a village, whose streets were lit up with electricity" (St. John Mandel 2014, 311). These lights evoke thoughts in Clark of a potential future amidst the ruins, a return to a world that might regain many pre-collapse amenities. Yet, due to the significantly reduced population, it could exist without some of the negative consequences associated with economic growth and technological progress. Clark contemplates the possibilities, questioning, "If there are again towns with streetlights, if there are symphonies and newspapers, then what else might this awakening world contain?" (St. John Mandel 2014, 332). His contemplations epitomise the perspective of *Station Eleven*, which, unlike other post-apocalyptic narratives such as *The Road*, "appears to show more faith in the sparks of ingenuity that create civilisations" (Tate 2017, 133), finding beauty even in a postapocalyptic setting. As Emily St. John Mandel finds beauty to cherish even amidst ruin, desolation and despair:

> A few of the roofs had collapsed up here, most under the weight of fallen trees. In the morning light, there was beauty in the decrepitude, sunlight catching in the flowers that had sprung up through the gravel of long-overgrown driveways, mossy front porches turned brilliant green, a white blossoming bush alive with butterflies. This dazzling world. (St. John Mandel 2014, 296)

Consequently, *Station Eleven* - despite depicting a pandemic causing the demise of the majority of the global population and subjecting its surviving characters to post-apocalyptic tribulations - presents an optimistic narrative. The prospect of electric light two decades after the modern world's collapse symbolises a vision of rejuvenation and a new beginning in this post-apocalyptic imaginary.

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