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TOTALITARIAN FUTURE

THE CASE OF RED CHINA

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Abstract.

1. CHAOS AND SYNTHESIS. History makes it plain: at the turning of eras, when civilisations collide and empires fall, Barbarians assert their presence—undeniable, no longer tenable to ignore. Rising from the periphery, once unheard and unseen, they surface amidst upheaval with such force they reshape the world itself, marking the boundary between what was and what is to come.

Today, this pattern of volatile junctures takes on fresh significance and urgency. We find ourselves at what is arguably the most consequential threshold yet: the dawn of the digital and AI age. Propelled by the most powerful technological revolution ever recorded, unprecedented in its speed and scale. Boundaries of space and time blur. Real-time global communication, vast networks of video, data, and algorithmic flows unsettle the coherence of inherited structures—of knowledge, identity, and authority—by forces we are only beginning to understand. In this climate of uncertainty and extraordinary possibility, new centres of power emerge while older categories lose their hold.

Like the Barbarians of history. Who arrived not merely to disrupt but to reconfigure, and ultimately to reconcile. And just as in earlier times of civilisation, we are compelled to reorient, engage in new terms and develop modes of understanding equal to the intensity of the present. What we seek, therefore, is not a fixed doctrine but a mode of thinking; not consolation but a sense of orientation; one that acknowledges the rift rather than denying it, and works with contradictions toward reconciliation, instead of suppression.

2. SPARKS BETWEEN SHADOWS: THE DIALECTICS OF FUSION THOUGHT. It is on this ground Fusion Philosophy takes shape—a framework I am developing in response to these dynamics. A philosophy, in short, for the antinomies of our age, and a hermeneutic practice invested in making sense of contradictions. It seeks understanding through dialectics—not to suppress but to overcome and sublate

them into pathways toward goodness, beauty, and freedom—unfoldings of God, the Absolute.

3. CASE STUDY. HERDER'S BARBARIAN. A TALE OF HISTORY'S UNLIKELY AGENTS: DESTRUCTION, TRANSITION, RECONCILIATION. To illustrate this, I turn to Johann Gottfried von Herder's concept of Barbarian—a model uniquely suited to the concerns of Fusion thought. In Herder's writings, the barbarian appears in three distinct forms, I'll call them the scourge who destroys, the wanderer who unsettles, and the sculptor who transforms. These figures are not just historical archetypes. They express philosophical structures—forms inherent within the evolution of human understanding. Instances of the dialectics between order and disruption, tradition and renewal, loss and possibility. Herder's barbarian becomes thus a symbolic agent of transformation, surfacing when old forms collapse and new ones have to take shape. Through this lens, a triad of disruption, transition, and reconciliation is uncovered—a model for both historical analysis and conceptual renewal.

4. CONCLUSIONS. BEYOND BINARY – THINKING IN THE AFTERGLOW OF CONTRADICTION. Drawing from Herder's theories on barbarisms, this case study highlights how Fusion Philosophy offers an interpretive and heuristic approach, not as a rigid system but as a means of encountering and synthesising. It recognises that thought, like history, progresses not in straight lines but through fusion and emergent forms. From Herder's barbarians to the disruptive forces of today's geopolitical map, this paper explores how thinking can evolve beyond mere oppositions towards an understanding that is both fluid and generative so as to seek sense amidst intellectual fragmentation, technological revolution and post-truth menaces.
J.G. von Herder set in motion a dialectics that extends far beyond its eighteenth-century origins among the *Sturm und Drang* literary and philosophical movement, exposing faults and untapped beneficial possibilities that surface whenever the world undergoes a fundamental reconfiguration—just as it's doing now.

Keywords: fusion philosophy, barbarian, barbarianism, Herder, dialectics, hermeneutics, philosophy of history

1. CHAOS AND SYNTHESIS

Underlying the grand narrative of history, patterns pulse—rhythms of transformation and rebirth etched into the very foundations of societal structures. Like living organisms, civilisations are born, flourish, then decay, making way for new paradigms.

This sense of recurrence has held a powerful sway for centuries. From the ancients of Greece and Rome to the scholars of the Renaissance, thinkers have considered historical cycles an essential tool for understanding the past. Building on this, Giambattista Vico's *Scienza Nuova* revealed a triadic mode, comprising: 1. The Age of Gods, where fear-bound refugees huddled beneath the strong, forging the first fragile states; 2. The Age of Heroes, marked by clashing castes and the domination of nobles against plebeians; and 3. The Age of Peoples, where democracy's roots took hold—I would add—ultimately to decay as the wheel turned anew. Each phase had its own mode of thinking, code of power, distinct language, laws, and customs, all caught into what Vico called *corsi e ricorsi*—the ebb and flow of collective life through progression and regression.

Herder too saw history as an organic procession—not of heroes, nobles and plebeians, but as seasonal maturation, which Hegel later reframed as the movement of World-Spirit (*Weltgeist*) towards freedom through self-recognition. Civilisations, just like living bodies, passed from childhood (the mystic East) to youth (Hellenic splendour), then adulthood (Roman rigour), before reaching the twilight wisdom of the Germanic world, where Hegel envisioned the state's best form.

These stages were not straight paths. They curved, collided, and doubled back. History showed it clearly: at these junctures, when the centre of power cannot hold and boundary lines blur, a powerful force stirs from the periphery. Once unseen, perhaps unheard or deliberately ignored, history's unlikely authors—the so-called Barbarians—emerge, with undeniable, world-altering influence. Are they merely agents of chaos, harbingers of destruction? Or might they be the unwitting sculptors of a necessary, albeit turbulent, reconfiguration?

The figure of the Barbarian compels a reckoning with contradiction, mirroring Hegel's dialectic of recognition. Just as the slave turns into the bearer of self-consciousness, history, in its cunning, advances through its others, not by excluding them. What

was once dismissed comes forth decisively. And barbarians, this negative, become the carriers of civilisation's next iteration. Romans, labelled as "barbarians" by Greeks, later codified empire. Germanic tribes, dismissed as "savage", laid the foundations of modern Europe.

Today, this dialectic strikes with new urgency. We stand amidst the early stirrings of the digital and AI age—a technological revolution destabilising inherited structures of knowledge, power, and selfhood at unprecedented speed. Boundaries dissolve in algorithmic flows and real-time data streams. New peripheries form whilst old orders are contested. In this shifting landscape, the Barbarian returns—not with sword, but with code, disruption, and systemic unintelligibility.

Navigating this moment demands more than fixed doctrines; it requires modes of thinking equal to the intensity of the present. We need orientation, not consolation—an approach that acknowledges the rift and seeks pathways toward reconciliation rather than suppression.

From these historical echoes and present-day collisions, sparks begin to fly, illuminating the shadows so a new synthesis might be forged. It is in this convergence that Fusion Philosophy resides.

2. Sparks Between Shadows: The Dialectics of Fusion Thought

This new framework I am advancing—and which I've named Fusion Philosophy—shall serve as a mode of encounter that is both hermeneutic and practical—a philosophy of antinomies, particularly those emerging in the digital age. The aim is to guide challenging passages towards richer forms of good, truth, aesthetic resonance and liberated existence, understood as unfoldings (gradual self-disclosures) of God, the Absolute.

The concept of "Fusion" draws its lineage from Hans-Georg Gadamer's *Horizontverschmelzung*—the fusion of horizons, more precisely of historical horizons in the act of interpreting texts of the

past (Gadamer 1987 & 2006). It is a hermeneutic concept meant to reject detached objectivity. Instead, understanding is viewed as dynamic, arising when the interpreter's historical horizon (present) merges with that of the object (past), forming a shared space of meaning. Enlightenment required objectivity, reason that eliminates prejudices and, finally, exhaustivity. Well, says Gadamer, eliminating prejudices is itself a prejudice.

As Heidegger's student and torchbearer of phenomenology, he conceived subjectivity in terms of historicity (Gadamer 2006, 321-355): the temporal embeddedness of understanding and text interpretation. Highlighting that the present horizon of the interpreter is itself marked by its past culture, history, prejudices, and worldviews. The same for the author. The act of interpreting is grounded in them and directed by present-day questions and future expectancies. A "hermeneutic circle", he called it (*See* Gadamer 2006, 305). Instead of trying to eliminate prejudices, we shall capitalise on them through this fusion process: preconceptions shaping interpretation while being reshaped in return. The meaning of a text does not settle at an endpoint, but unfolds persistently within this circular movement. In a masterful demonstration of his own principle, Gadamer fused Heidegger's phenomenology with Hegel's idealism, revealing the necessity of dialectical thinking in the act of comprehension, as a means of checking and correcting misinterpretations that this endeavour might produce, or the error of interpreting towards false infinity (*See* Gadamer 1987, *Neuere Philosophie*, Cap. I *Hegel*, 3-105).

Beyond this, Fusion Philosophy traces its deeper roots back to Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, which bridged subjective reflection and sensibility with universal principles through *judgment*, a faculty capable of producing intersubjective validity despite its subjective nature (*See* Kant 2007, 321-327).

Hegel radicalises this movement. In *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, knowledge is *Erfahrung*—the dialectical experience through which consciousness becomes aware of itself by recollecting and internalising all surpassed stages (*Erinnerung*) into richer self-

awareness. As such, *Bewußtsein* becomes *Bewußt-sein*—Heidegger's interpretation (Heidegger 1963, 140-142; Heidegger 1970, 55-56): a state of being characterised by awareness (including self-awareness).

Fusion Philosophy inherits and expands this speculative dynamic: consciousness's active journey as *Erfahrung*, *Erinnerung*, *Bewußt-sein*. While Gadamer focused on interpretation, it extends syntheses to broader contexts—technological disruptions, cultural collisions, and existential crises—where contradictions demand resolution without erasure. The goal is participation within *begriffene Geschichte*, *i.e.* history comprehended in its rational unfolding.

Briefly put, Fusion Philosophy builds on key principles such as:

Temporal fusion: the present reanimates the past while anticipating the future;

Intersubjective dialogue: meaning emerges through shared historical language;

Transformative praxis: understanding manifests through the subject's altered relation to the object.

3. Case Study: Herder's Barbarian

A Tale of History's Unlikely Agents: Disruption, Transition, Reconciliation

History is not a silent ledger of events but a living process of interpretation. Johann Gottfried von Herder, one of its most nuanced readers, offered an understanding of the past that refused the simplicity of judgment from afar. The study of universal history, he insisted, must consider the uniqueness of every age. In this sense, Herder did not simply write about history—he performed a hermeneutic fusion, enacting a reconciliation between past and present through the dynamic interplay of critique and empathy, distance and identification.

The barbarian first appears in Herder's writings wearing the familiar mask of savage destroyer. In *Ideen*, he condemns the "weak and voluptuous barbarians" (Herder 1800, VIII, IV, 213), namely

those who lord over vanquished, burn widows, or devastate lands ("The barbarian dominates, the educated conqueror forms"—*Der Barbar beherrscht, der gebildete Überwinder bildet*, Herder 1800, XVI, VI, 489; Herder 1965: XVI, VI, 290). Neither Egyptians nor Romans escape this designation—their pyramids built through slave sacrifice (Herder 2002, 285); the arcs of triumph and gladiatorial arenas standing as monuments to savagery (Herder 1800: XIV, V, 430). The Byzantine Empire spread "corruption and barbarism" to neighbouring nations (Herder 1800, XVII, III, 513-514), while the Ottomans reduced "the finest lands of Europe to a desert" (Herder 1800, XVI, V, 486).

Herder's genius lies in recognising that barbarism dwells not only in distant lands but within the most celebrated civilisations. "We carry upon us", he writes, "the jingling decorations of the barbarism of our fathers" (Herder 1800, XVI, 468), though habituation renders them invisible (Herder 1800, IX, I, 229). In the struggle between Etruscans and Romans, who truly deserves the label "barbarian", asks him? Roman "civilisation" itself was established through force and plunder, lastly requiring "rude barbarians" to revitalise it with "new people, new laws, new manners, and new courage" (Herder 1800, XIV, III, 411).

This recognition initiates a dialectic toward a second, this time a startlingly positive conception of the barbarian. Against Enlightenment's reason, he champions, for instance, those whom the Spanish colonisers themselves were forced to call "los bravos"—peoples whose natural vital force remains undiminished by artificiality (Herder 1800, I, VI, 18). Unlike "civilised", they possess healthy, natural morals reminiscent of humanity's patriarchs.

In their poetry and folk songs, Herder found that kind of closeness to nature and raw passions that his world was missing: "The more savage [...], alive [...], sensual a nation is, the more lyrical must be their song" (Herder 1773, 11-12). Most provocatively, he declares the barbarian "a more real being" than the "civilised" ([…] *ein wahreres Wesen als jener gebildete Schatte*, Herder 1800: VIII, V, 222;

Herder, 1965, VIII, V, 330), who is merely "enraptured with the love of the shades of his whole species".

On this second stage resides Herder's main insight: the barbarian as agent of historical transformation. Meaning, Divine Providence—later echoed in Hegel's "cunning of reason"—works through these unaware outsiders to reawaken history when civilised forms decay.

In the organic evolution of history, moments arise when active reasoning guiding figures like Pericles or Caesar exit the stage. On the "civilised" side, it degenerates into mere formalism; on the "barbarian", it exists only as potential. Civilisations follow a dialectical cycle: peak (when passions and reason achieve perfect equilibrium), downfall (as contradictions intensify), and replacement. Precisely at these junctures, when the cultural centre undergoes self-destruction, devoid of both healthy reason and vital forces, the barbarian enters as agent.

The model resembles Leibniz's monadology—cultures interact independently yet contribute to the whole. The barbarian overthrows empires not through arbitrary destruction but by embodying history's rational direction when reason has abandoned the world stage. An unlikely shadow whose vital force restores light to a world grown dim through its own success. Destroyer becoming creator, outsider becoming centre, in the eternal dance of disruption, transition, and reconciliation.

4. Conclusions
Beyond Binary – Thinking in the Afterglow of Contradiction

At the dawn of the digital age, echoes of past upheavals resound. Like the Industrial Revolution, today's tech surge yields radical reconfigurations—yet faster and at a truly global level. Power is redistributed, influence redrawn, igniting economic realignments often accompanied—history cautions us—by violence and wars.

Sometimes through the forceful hand of conquest, sometimes by negotiated concession, at times intentionally, at others through unforeseen consequences, the coherence of inherited borders—political, cultural, epistemic—starts to erode, or blurs.

In this shifting terrain, the figure of the barbarian reappears. No longer as a sword-bearing invader, but a marginalised voice. Long excluded, ignored, or subjected to modern colonisation, now amplified through bandwidth and algorithms, leveraging digital tools and AI. Each with their unique culture, they innovate from the edges, from historical wounds, offering alternatives born of injustice and resilience, capable of reshaping identity and narrative to enrich the world.

Their presence calls for a **Fusion of History and Present**: not by petrifying memory or replaying past wounds, but fusing historical insight with contemporary challenges, transforming lessons gleaned into responses. Foremost is addressing the human violence these changes entail. Drawing upon historical precedents, we must proactively prevent its recurrence. The purpose is to meet violence not with reaction, but with active strategies that reduce hatred, promote goodness, enable dialogue across fractured lines and produce new forms of solidarity.

This also means a **Fusion of Technology and Human Potential**. Channelling the creative power of long excluded communities, whether in Eastern Europe, Africa, Asia, or from Islamic societies, requires dismantling pejorative labels and reimagine the "barbarian" as a sculptor of possibility, not as the "Scourge of All Lands", as Attila was called during the 5th–6th century, or the "Scourge of God", as 14th–15th century Hungarian chronicles glorified him. But as a wanderer whose presence demands new syntheses. The same digital and AI technology that threatens also offers unprecedented opportunities for this transformation, resisting dehumanisation, offering avenues for enhanced communication, education, empathy, and meaningful dialogue.

Simultaneously, we also face the **FUSION OF LEFT AND RIGHT**. We need to properly grasp such movements and defend against the nascent tide of manipulation, as has happened time and again in history. Ideological poles dissolve, with both sides exhibiting traits previously associated with the other. Capitalism adopts state control; liberalism masks a privileged class; and both borrow from populism. This marks a first form of fusion. Think of Karl Popper, defending liberalism but cautioning against unchecked monopolies and inhumane capitalism long before. Some of today's right factions, once defenders against communism, head towards what Marx termed the "red bourgeoisie"—now neo, an advantaged wealth-bearing tier of unchecked capitalism, with neo-Stalinist ways cloaked in liberal rhetoric.

FUSION OF POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE CONNOTATIONS. The proliferation of post-truth narratives—Oxford Dictionaries' "Word of the Year" in 2016—reflects this dangerous shift. It refers to manipulation driven by emotion and projected onto future actions, where objective facts carry less weight than emotional appeals and personal beliefs. Once confined to leftist propaganda behind the Berlin Wall, now permeates both sides of the spectrum.

Similarly twisted, terms like "globalism", once hopeful, evoking cooperation and interconnectedness, are now entwined with loss, deracination, domination of profit over people, national interests and identity. Post-truth became their prerogative.

Dialectically, as left and right coalesce, place remain free for something else—their negative. The more entrenched false discourses, the more free space is produced, so the "barbarian" rises as a challenger and bearer of the new. And, who knows, maybe Emil Cioran was right: Eastern Europe may still become a new pole of influence.

Fusion Philosophy offers an interpretive and heuristic approach to navigate this. It reads history through fracture and seeks reconciliation, not erasure. Understanding these contradictions emerges gradually, shaped by the triangulation of past inheritances, present questions, and future hopes—all expressed in an authentic,

unmanipulated language. The praxis is not to collapse them, but to think in their afterglow. Not to reiterate tragedy, but to move beyond it toward healing, synthesis, and projection. Which deepens care and orients so rupture becomes relation, and marginality becomes generative.

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INTRO

I began my last year lecture here at Kharkiv National University by addressing the tragic backdrop of war and expressing my deep admiration for your efforts to sustain education and academic dialogue under the constant threat of Russian missiles. Since then, the political landscape has shifted, but the long-awaited ceasefire has not yet arrived. Instead, the conflict appears protracted, and the attacks continue.

In this painful context—with hundreds of drones haunting the skies over Kharkiv and the Eastern Region, destroying lives, casting fear and uncertainty—I reiterate my heartfelt appreciation to our hosts and organisers, the Dean of the School of Foreign Languages, Svitlana Virotchenko; Hanna Guseva, the Head of the Department of Foreign Languages for Professional Purposes; and Julia Shamaieva, the deputy head of the organising committee of this conference and a valued member of the Advisory Board of *Brolly. Journal of Social Sciences* since its beginning, eight years ago.

Not least of all, my admiration and compliments extend to all participants in this important international symposium. The struggle continues—but so does the courage to think, teach, and communicate openly.

This ongoing global negotiation process is a dialectical one, where contradictions shall move toward synthesis, reconciliation, and a sustainable model that ensures peace. Yet, all of these unfold amidst a vast technological revolution reshaping the epoch. Fault lines and peripheries are most affected, as main powers reassert their dominance, sometimes using war itself to secure their interests and gain advantages.

Out of today's tensions, this talk turns to once-marginalised outsiders to explore how crisis can turn into a moment of synthesis and renewal.

OUTRO

Outsiders under Empire traced how history often regenerates from the tensions between centre and periphery, civilisation and so-called "barbarism". This framework takes on renewed meaning in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war, where violence persists, and negotiations unfold under pressure, delay, and strategic ambiguity. It is at such volatile junctures the marginalised—Herder's "barbarians" understood in their deeper, positive dialectical sense—step forward as agents of transformation, forcing new syntheses out of chaos.

The figures along today's geopolitical fault lines may well be the nations or perspectives of Eastern Europe, whose resilience and innovation are capable of sculpting a new equilibrium, challenging entrenched power centres.

Amidst this potential reshaping, let's hope the current negotiations do not lose sight of a moral compass guided by reason and fundamental human values—dignity, freedom, and respect for life.

May dialogue prevail over armed confrontation, leading to sustainable solutions that allow people to return to normalcy, rebuild, and heal. And may wisdom and empathy illuminate the path toward lasting peace and reconciliation in Ukraine, Eastern Europe and all conflicting regions. If new forms of understanding are to be shaped, let it be through engaging with the afterglow of contradiction, rather than its suppression.

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TOTALITARIAN FUTURE: THE CASE OF RED CHINA

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Abstract. The major point of this paper could be reduced to the following: Chinese totalitarianism merged Oriental despotism with Marxism and provides the framework for China's global predominance. The article will follow a certain outline. First, it shows why Western observers could not understand China. Secondly, it shows how Oriental despotism enjoys a lot of "socialist" features and how Marxism was finally blended with Chinese tradition. Finally, the result of this blending would be elaborated upon.

Keywords: China, USA, Francis Fukuyama, Karl Marx, state, socialism, Nikita Khrushchev, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, Gorbachev, Mao

CHINA AND THE "END OF HISTORY" AS BLACK BOX

China, emerging as the major American rival, is of great interest to Western academia, think tanks and journalism. Virtually, libraries of books and articles have been written on the subject. Still, practically all of them saw China's future in the context of two models. The first implied that China shall follow the road of political and economic liberalism, to be more and more similar to the modern capitalist West. In the context of this approach, China has achieved economic success only because of its political and economic liberalisation following Mao's death. The second approach implies that China does not imitate the West and, recently, has actually

moved in the opposite direction: the state increases its control over the economic and political life of the society. In the context of these models, China shall experience stagnation, "hard landing", or total collapse. Any signs of the opposite: the development of Chinese science, for example, is attributed to "stealing of intellectual property." The works which explain Chinese success as a result of the country's totalitarian tradition are practically absent, at least they are not known to the author of this piece. But why those works have not appeared? One could understand these only if one would elaborate on how socio-economic, political and related intellectual discourse exists in the USA. And here one could see that discourse which contradicts the mainstream could hardly emerge. These notions are hardly a novelty. It simply needs to be refreshed to understand why practically no visible alternative narrative exists.

CONSTRUCTED REALITY AS "PARTY LINE"

Those who are predisposed to the USA, seen as the embodiment of the West and, implicitly, capitalism, since the end of WW2 and especially after the collapse of the USSR, often regarded the USA as "free."

This freedom manifested itself in a variety of ways. One of them, they claimed, is the existence of what is usually called the "free market of ideas". It presumably works in the same way as "economic free market" or as "political free market". Both of the statements implied that the best of products survive, whereas those who could not compete shall perish. The same shall be said about the market of ideas. This is an illusion, or what could be defined as a political myth. A close look could well discover that ideological trends in the USA are often as controlled as in authoritarian and even totalitarian states.

It goes without saying subjects related to race and gender shall be approached only from the prescribed point of view. And if some facts do not fit into the prescribed paradigm, they shall be plainly

"cancelled". It is not just stuff related to such politically sensitive subjects as race and gender, which could be a cultural/ ideological minefield. Indeed, even elaborations on abstract political subjects are strictly controlled. The example would be sufficient. In 1989, Francis Fukuyama, an American politologist of Japanese descent, published an article on "The End of History." The article was soon reworked into a book. His major thesis was that the collapsing East European soviet type states and the USSR's serious troubles demonstrated the obvious: totalitarian socialism did not work, and American Capitalism is the only viable option for humanity.

The article and, of course, his book made Fukuyama famous overnight and launched his spectacular academic career. Still, one might pose the question: why no one saw the problems with Fukuyama's approach? Why does he dominate the intellectual discourse? Was he a Party leader whose dictions were propped by state censorship and apparatus of repression, which prevented others, those who did not support his view, to challenge him? The answer was no. Everyone could challenge Fukuyama either in writing or public speeches and not be sent to the Gulag. Moreover, the facts which contradict Fukuyama were in abundance. It would be wrong to assume that everybody was blind to American problems, already quite visible in late 1980th, the time when Fukuyama published his essay.

The economic problems were the most obvious. The US economy had reached its peak around early 1960th when the USA became "the workshop of the world" as it was the case with the UK century before. Still, by 1980th/ early 1990th, when Fukuyama penned his essay, the story was quite different. Already by that time, the USA had experienced the freefall of deindustrialisation, and after its next 30th year, after the publication of Fukuyama's essay, the real American economy would be in really bad shape. The decline here is not an intellectual abstraction but a reality which could be easily visible.

Those who take the train from South Bend (Indiana) to Chicago would pass through the city Gary. In the 1950th/ early 1960th, it

was a flourishing industrial hub with a productive steel mill. While some steel production still remains, most mills have closed, and large parts of the city now appear abandoned. Population shrinks and inhabited houses testify about this city's past glory. Gary is hardly an exception, and it was not surprising that Trump stated in his inaugural address that the plains of America are covered by empty buildings of American factories as "tombstones." One might state here that the USA economy declined not just relatively to global production but in absolute terms. The peak of the USA steel production was around 50 years ago, and car manufacturing around 40 years ago. The decline of overall industrial production was not the only problem. American products were increasingly of poor quality, making them non-competitive with foreign brands. Ford, for example, has been in the process of losing its ground to foreign car companies, mostly those from Europe and Japan. It could not compete well even in the USA, where the locals preferred foreign cars even when they cost more than domestic products. The increasing problems with the USA industry were reinforced by other problems. In the past, America was an epitome of efficiency, and it was not accidental that Stalin called on the Soviets to "combine American business-like behaviour with Russian drive to create something grand." All of these American ways of doing business had already passed by the late 1980th/ 1990th. Not efficiency but bureaucratic red tape and absolute disregard for results and hard work became common. While the economy was declining, the national debt rose. At the same time, the institutionalised economists, often with seemingly formidable credentials, assured the public that the US economy is rising despite all problems. The economy was not the only problem. US society suffered from serious racial tension, and there was no solution in sight.

All of these and many other problems were quite visible not just to foreigners but to native Americans. Why had no visible opposition to Fukuyama's "end of history" emerged? Those who would engage in a detailed study of American intellectual history in the future would probably find works which challenge Fukuyama's

narrative. Still, they all were published by marginal publisher houses and media outlets. And what was absolutely evident is that no authors of these publications would brag about illustrious academic careers or, most likely, any academic career at all. One might state that those who defend his/her own convictions, even when these lead to personal misfortune, shall be lauded by the public. It's a matter of fact that both Giordano Bruno's burn on stake for challenging religious dogma and Husayn Shia Saint, engaged in battle where his defeat and death were predetermined, were praised through the centuries. Still, these models do not work in the USA and increasingly in Europe due to the USA's geopolitical and cultural predominance. The USA Calvinist cum Social-Darwinian cultural framework does not recognize the notion of "noble losers", the men who suffer and sometimes die for their convictions. In the context of American culture, these people became simple "losers" in Donald Trump's fashion, and those who die for one's conviction would be seen as purely insane by the majority.

Consequently, the vast majority of Western and especially American pundits do not want to be "losers", who, with their pretension and challenge of mainstream views, in the eyes of the prosperous mainstream, were absolute idiots and deserved their fate. These imbeciles were not able to adjust their research and findings to "need of market." Not only does he/she need to adjust his/her views to the needs of "market", i.e. academic peers and government officials, but they shall also be attentive to changes in "party line." Indeed, it could change rapidly and without warning. The changes in approach to the USSR/ Russia could be a good example.

For several decades, the "party line" for those who study the USSR— and most of them were either liberals or leftists—the USSR was the embodiment of grassrooted democracy and "affirmative action empire," at least it was the case in the beginning of the regime's history. "Affirmative actions" and, implicitly, "diversity" and "inclusion" were also hallmarks of the early Soviets' progressiveness. After the beginning of the war with Ukraine, the

"party line" changed abruptly, and that has an immediate implication for studying Russia/ the USSR. It was immediately discovered that Russia has been an imperialist predator throughout its history, regardless of the regime's changes. One, of course, could ask the question why was this not discovered before? Still, no one could raise the question publicly, at least to the author's knowledge.

Once again, those who would express different views would not be arrested and sent to Gulag. He/she could even publish his views at his/her own expense. Still, no respectable and widely read mass media would publish his article, and publishers would not be anxious to publish his/her manuscript, and his/her chance for academic or government employment would be minimal. Unemployed and marginalised, he would be dismissed as a "loser" whose stubbornness and unwillingness to follow the road of institutionalised Mandarins deserved the punishment. It was not surprising that observations about these or that phenomenon, both in the past and present, are surprisingly uniform. Often, scholarly experts, journalists, etc. repeat each other's major ideas and operate in a uniform cultural framework as if they are directed by strict censorship of the "big brother" of totalitarian regimes. "Deviations" from "party lines" are usually minimal. It is true that sometimes unorthodox writings appear. Still, they usually soon became invisible under the layer of orthodox works and the views of "leading experts", who would have never been elevated to the level of "leading experts," if they were in open opposition to prevailing views. One might assume that they might not have been employed at all. The prevailing uniformity of views is not purely an American recent phenomenon.

Alexis de Tocqueville, the author of classic *Democracy in America* and Alexander Hertsen, a Russian who followed Tocqueville, support French views of the USA. Both found that societal control made the USA quite inhospitable for independent thought. Carl Jung, a Swiss who visited the USA centuries later, admitted that the notion of alleged American individualism was flatly wrong, and he admitted that finding an independent mind in the USA was not an

easy task. All of these explain why alternative views on China have no traction in Western discourse.

Oriental Tradition and Marxism as a Road to Success

The ease with which Marxism was embraced by China looks strange. Historically, China had been xenophobic and was not fond of Western creeds. The notion is now, of course, vehemently denied by the present-day Chinese elite with their goals for Eurasian and implicitly global predominance. It is true that Chinese eagerly take some foreign material; some were quite praised, such as for example, horses from Central Asia. Still, cultural, political and economic arrangements of the capitalist West were accepted with great difficulty. One might also note that Chinese diasporas are assimilated with great difficulties. But Marxism had spread quickly and seemed to be easily accepted, in its major paradigms, by large numbers of Chinese peasants who joined Mao at the beginning of his quest for power. One might state that they joined Mao for some very simple and universal reasons. They wanted division of landlord's land and did not want to pay rent. One might add here that this is the desire of each peasant in each country and each epoch. Still, it is a rather over-simplified view, and a close look at peasants' demands in different revolutions could be instructive here. Take, for example, what is usually called "classical" European revolutions—the French and Russian Revolutions.

French peasants clamour for land. These lands belong to nobles. Yet, most of this land was in the hands of peasants who worked on it. The revolution did not take land from landlords but released peasants from payment for the land. The fig leaf of formal legality was preserved. Some of leftist historians, such as for example, Georges Lefebvre, believe that peasant revolts during the French Revolution were autonomous from the general revolutionary trend, i.e. France's transition to a bourgeois country. According to Lefebvre, "peasantry was motivated by collectivist instincts" (Jones

1990, 8). In this context, peasants' premodern/precapitalist instincts were, implicitly, a seed of potential socialist transformation. And here, socialism, or at least potentially socialist *fraternité* and *égalité*, was juxtaposed to the cold bourgeois formality of "liberté". This notion was challenged, even by fellow leftists.

Albert Soboul "took pains to emphasise that, in his view, the peasant revolution developed within the framework of the bourgeois revolution and did not surpass it" (Jones 1990, 41). Soboul implied that the French peasants were members of bourgeois strata, at least in their mentality and respect for private property. As a matter of fact, some of the leading historians of the French Revolution question openly the feudal nature of the social arrangements on the eve of the Revolution, and it is not accidental that Alfred Cobban, one of them, "objected that relationship between peasants and landlords could still be termed 'feudal' in the eighteenth century" (Jones 1990, 6). Finally, Lefebvre's own statement is somewhat contradictory, and he noted that peasants "were not hostile to the principle of individual property" (Jones 1990, 18).

It is true that late XVIIth-century French peasants were basically petty bourgeoisie and sharted with the bourgeois elite basic respect for private property. It was true that they suffered from increasing taxation and other forms of payment by the end of the XVIIIth century (Jones 1990, 15). Still, their complaints would be, in many ways, not much different from that of complains of sharecroppers in bourgeois society. Finally, one could note that the revolutionary government did its best to uphold to peasants pro-capitalist attitudes.

Moreover, a considerable amount of land was confiscated from "the revolution's enemy" and became national property. After these, the land was sold, and peasants were among the new owners. Thus, some semblance of legality and implicit respect for property rights were preserved, albeit of course in twisted form. The bourgeois nature of the revolution was upheld by the fact that the revolutionary regime and implicitly the majority of Frenchmen,

most of them peasants, rejected the idea of equal distribution of the land. One might add that capitalism, with the notion of private property, was deeply entrenched in French society long before the Revolution. One might, of course, note the Socialist doctrines of various times circulated widely among French intellectuals. As a matter of fact, France was the country where major protagonists of socialist thought lived. But its influence on the majority of the lower classes, especially peasants, was quite limited, and French peasants had always been on the side of the French bourgeois government during numerous workers' revolts.

The story was different in Russia. For the entire pre-revolutionary history, peasants were not land proprietors in any form. Land belongs not to the peasant family but to the "peasant commune", the groups of peasants who lived in the same village. One could not sell his plot, and arrangements were periodically changed. One might also note that Russian peasants had been themselves property until 1861; they were serfs. It is true that the money economy was quite developed in pre-revolutionary Russia, and by the beginning of the XXth century, the Russian middle class, quite similar to that of its European counterpart, was thriving in big cities. Still, peasantry dominated Russian society until 1930th and often had an absolutely different view from those of the city's middle class. These outlooks downplay the role of private property and related "human rights", and these views exercised a strong influence over the entire society. Consequently, the presence of premodern/precapitalist arrangements made transition to "socialist" order comparatively smooth. Premodern became here transmodern, postmodern or supermodern, if you wish. While receiving land to work on, Russian peasants did not demonstrate much desire to transform land into private property in the context of capitalist legal culture.

While premodern/precapitalist elements in Russian culture helped Russia move to socialist order, it was even easier for China. China's "hydraulic" civilisation implicates the absolute patrimonial power of the leader - the "son of heaven." He enjoyed the absolute

control over "means of production" in quasi socialist way as Karl Wittfogel noted sometime ago (Wittfogel 1957). Land, as everything else, had belonged to him by definition and by the nature of a peculiar "social contract", if you wish. Those who controlled the land were not proprietors, in the Western Capitalist sense. They were not in possession of "sacred private property" and related "human rights." They were renters, and their possessions and ultimately their lives were at the mercy of "son of heaven". It is true that, following the Confucian template, the imperial "father" should use his ultimate power to benefit "family". Yet it had no legal restraints on his behaviour, and while officially the emperor was guided by Confucianism, his real northern star was Legalism, which emerged during the reign of the First Emperor of Qin. And while Confucianism insisted on moral authority of power, Legalism emphasised the sheer force.

Then, absolute power made Chinese emperors similar to Oriental totalitarian rulers such as Mao and Stalin. And similar to them, the emperor ruled through the bureaucratic web, and it was quite similar to the party apparatus. Last but not least, the Chinese emperor had been directly involved in the economy, something which capitalist states rarely do, believing in the "invisible hand of market."

Not only was the emperor engaged in the economy of the state—the building and maintenance of irrigation channels was among his major responsibilities—but planned economic activities far in the future. The Chinese economy and, as a matter of fact, everything else, was often planned ahead for years, centuries or actually even millennia. Indeed, the Great Wall of China was built and rebuilt for more than 2000 years. Imperial China looks extremely "modern"/ "socialist" in its arrangement. Their "socialist" nature is, of course, missed by the Western observers for whom "socialism" is related to democracy and the distribution of various social goodies. Marx also ignores the "hydraulic civilisation" of the East, following the views of his contemporaries like Hegel. He has defined these civilisations as those which embraced the "Asiatic mode of production" and

placed it beneath capitalism, for it was stagnant and, in a way, a reactionary system which needed to be destroyed by advanced capitalism. Indeed, Marx saw no problem in British victories over the Chinese in the Opium Wars and British industry's destruction of Indian craft, which could not stand competition. Capitalism, with all of its ugliness, was needed to develop "productive forces", the modern industry, first of all, to engender the proletariat, the "gravedigger" of capitalism.

Not only that the "Asiatic mode of production" wasn't able to develop "productive forces" leading to industrialisation, but it had the other features which put it behind Western capitalism and, even more, socialist society. The point here was that socialism, in Marx's view, shall lead to a weakening of the state, the weapon in the hands of the oppressive elite. Socialism would lead to the end of the bourgeoisie as an economic minority, which is because of the repressive power of the state. Victorious proliterate, the vast majority of the population would not need such an elaborated repressive state. Consequently, after short periods of "dictatorship of the proletariat", the state shall "wither away." And when socialism would evolve into communism, the states shall disappear completely.

Thus, the "Asiatic mode of production" with its undeveloped "productive forces" and despotic state could hardly be a springboard for the development of socialism. One might state Marx's views on the state were widely supported by his followers through the late XIXth/early XXth centuries. Vladimir Lenin, the founder of the Soviet state, expressed the same view of the state on the eve of the Bolshevik takeover. In his *State and Revolution*, a socialist state shall be quite weak, for then the state would enjoy the support of the majority (Liang 2023, 70).

Thus, according to Marx and his early supporters, the "Asiatic mode of production" was the dead end of history. They were discarding it not just for technological backwardness but also because of its socio-political organisation: despotic government. Still, the reality shows that these were absolutely wrong views.

ORIENTAL TRADITION AND CHINESE SOCIALISM

Both Soviet and Red China states, both under Mao and his successors, have been despotic and surprisingly similar to the state of "Asiatic mode of production." In both cases, the leader's power is absolute, and he ruled through the web of Mandarins/party officials. Even ideological makeup was surprisingly similar. Following Confucianism, Chinese emperors liked to elaborate on the importance of "toilers," in this case, farmers. Emperors praised them for providing food for the nation. Even some of Xi Jinping's campaigns, e.g. drive against corruption and emphasis on the cadres' morality, are also not new. A similar campaign was, for example, launched during Ming's era. Indeed, "Ming officials who bribed were heavily punished by law" and there were "records of numerous cases of punishing corrupted officials and clerks" (Liang 2023, 70).

Structural similarities between Oriental despotic states and socialist regimes were noted long ago. In the USSR, the study of "Asiatic mode of production" was stopped in 1930th when collectivization and rapid nationalization made the USSR too much similar not to that of Russia of Ivan the Terrible or Peter the Great, both were praised in 1930th USSR as "progressive" leaders, but to Imperial China or Ancient Egypt. The comparison had reemerged in 1950th/1960th after Nikita Khrushchev's revelation that Stalin seriously "distorted" socialism. Here, he, of course without acknowledgement, followed Trotsky and the Mensheviks. Khrushchev's move inspired many works and intellectual trends. One of them, implicitly neo-Marxist, indicated that the elite could dominate without direct control of the "means of production" by its members. These views were spread among Eastern European/ Russian dissidents such as Mikhael Voslenski and Milovan Djilas; the last one became a real celebrity. (Djilas was a prolific author. But there was one particular book that made him famous: *New Class*.) These approaches provide an intellectual framework for direct comparison between Oriental despotism and Socialist regime in the

USSR and China. Here, Karl Wittfogel was a prominent example of Western scholar who made direct comparisons between two systems.

The works of Russian dissidents were especially important here in reshaping the image of socialism. In the works of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, the most famous among them, the Soviet regime was a brutal rule of ideologically obsessed fanatics who enslaved the entire society. In both cases, the omnipotent leader is in full control over "means of production" or actually anything else. In all of these cases, the ruler widely used terror. Wittfogelism and related views on Red China and, implicitly, the USSR were rejected by the majority of specialists on China as more politicised caricatures rather than a true picture of what was going on in Maoist China. Indeed, the Oriental despotism implied hierarchical order and Confucian respect for authorities. At the same time, the Cultural Revolution called for "bombardment of headquarters" and a special campaign against the evil of Confucianism was launched.

Not just Chinese students but part of the Western elite, those of course on the left of the political spectrum, was also excited, assuming that "real" grassrooted socialism was emerging. Julia Kristeva, Bulgarian expat who, together with Tzvetan Todorov, also expat Bulgarian, became a part of French or, as one could assume, Western intellectual elite, shared these views, Kristeva was apparently inspired by its French intellectual environment and, of course, mood of French students whose riot in 1968 was about to bring a real revolution in France. In their views, the grey bureaucratic regime of Leonid Brezhnev's USSR was a "perversion" of "real" socialism, which shall be grassrooted and dismantle the state. Here, the leftists followed Marx. In the USSR, the rule of bureaucracy controlled the masses, whereas in China the masses finally revolted and brought about a "real" socialism. Kristeva's efforts to advertise the Cultural Revolution were noted in Beijing, and Kristeva was invited to visit China. One could assume that all expenses were paid by the host. The left was excited

by China during the Cultural Revolution, and people in Beijing resolutely discarded China's old political and cultural tradition. Still, one shall remember that Mao launched the Cultural Revolution not for upholding the power of the masses but to purge bureaucracy from potentially disloyal members. Mao had the same goal as Stalin had before. By the end of his life, Mao achieved his goal and realised the danger of an uncontrolled mob. Consequently, he employed an army to bring "control and punishment", if one would remember the title of Michel Foucault's book. The Cultural Revolution with its anarchical excess emerged here not much as the leap to another socio-political dimension, but plainly as anarchy, which finally led to reinstatement of the Oriental order and a peculiar new Chinese dynasty. The only difference was that the old and new emperor was the same—Mao. The end of Cultural Revolution led to the re-establishment of a bureaucratic structure and related repression. China had returned to itself, and Mao became implicitly Wittfogellian.

Indeed, he started to praise the First Emperor of Qin by the end of his life. Known for his brutality, he was also the ruler who unified China and made an attempt to forge the sense of unity among the different groups of Chinese plains and who actually had little in common with each other. As a matter of fact, different languages called "dialects" exist in China up to the present. The emperor launched the famous Great Wall to protect China from northern nomadic tribes. Still, he was seen in Chinese tradition as a brutal ruler. Mao was not bothered by this and saw himself, as one could assume, as the modern embodiment of the emperor, whose rule, in many ways, rested on control and punishment.

These principles were transformed by to post-Mao rulers. Those who studied Deng Xiaoping's reforms, and this was especially the case in the beginning of reforms, emphasised Deng's China cardinal differences from the Mao era. They noted that Mao not just downplayed the possessive instincts but even improved living standards. He regarded this as the manifestation of "bourgeois" degeneration, and Mao blasted Nikita Khrushchev,

the Soviet leader, for promising to make the life of the Soviet better. It looks like, at first glance that the Deng and Mao eras were absolutely different. But this was not the case: both Mao and post-Mao China preserve the same elements of socio-economic and political system. Moreover, post-Mao China became, in a way, more Wittfogellian than Mao's China. To understand this, one shall look closely at post-Mao China. To start with, the absolute power of the leader was not shaken. Indeed, after a few intermediary stages of "collective leadership" and periodical replacement of the leader, China returned to its traditional political arrangement when the single leader enjoyed absolute power. Economic changes also heed scrutiny. And one could see that not much changes happened here as well.

Some Western observers asserted that present-day China represents "state capitalism." At the same time, some of them assured that Scandinavian countries are a good example of "true socialism". The definition is mostly due to the observers' political views and their vision of socialism as alien to reality, as the views of Kristeva and Todorov, who saw the Cultural Revolution as the manifestation of true socialist reform. In the view of these Western observers, "true socialism" implied, first of all, broad social security and a rather relaxed lifestyle and income equality. Neither of these exists in post-Mao China. Therefore, it was defined as "state capitalism". Still, it is not the case. Socialism, in Marx's view, implied first of all state/societal control over "command nights" of the economy, of the means of production. It also implied the state's paramount role in defining the economic process.

All of these were preserved in post-Mao's China. It continued to be socialist and, by default, Orientally despotic. As a matter of fact, post-Mao China became more close to Oriental despotism than Mao China. Indeed, Oriental despotism did not imply that the ruler controlled the entire body of economy completely. People engaged in selling/buying and had a property. But their property and social autonomy were not absolute. They were not absolute proprietors in the context of Western capitalism, rooted in the

Roman Legal tradition. The ultimate proprietor of everything and everybody was the state. It simply "leases" property and life itself to the individual. The individual was related to the state pretty much in the same way as slaves to "dominus" [masters] in Roman tradition. Slaves, in certain cases, could acquire property and create a quasi-family. One could assume that slaves operate as an independent socio-economic entity. Still, his property, family, and he belong to the master who could take the property and kill the slave at any given moment. Property and life in these cases were "leased" to slaves.

The same model explains the relationship between proprietor, Oriental state and post-Maoist China. Property, especially the big property, was implicitly conditional, and post-Mao Chinese leaders often showed as big businessmen, especially those who tried to behave independently, who were really in control. In the Chinese case, the "disciplining" of wayward rich individuals is the way of asserting ultimate dominance of the state and not just a particular ruler, as is the case in Russia. Thus, post-Mao China is closer to Oriental despotism than Maoist China; and both Maoist China and post-Maoist China are basically socialist states. One of course could pose the question: if Oriental despotism and socialism are basically the same, why did Marx not see them as such? Why was Marx utterly contemptuous of Oriental despotism and saw its destruction as essential for economic progress?

There were several reasons for these assumptions which shall be revisited. To start with, Marx believed that the end of private property on the "means of production" would lead to grassrooted democracy. The early Marxists, such as Lenin, believed before the Bolshevik Revolution in his *State and Revolution*. Secondly, Marx saw in Oriental despotism the stagnant society, technologically backwards and unable to develop technologically. And in Marx's view, each new stage in the history of humanity is marked by a higher level of technological progress. Thus, the praise of technology. Marx believed that Oriental despotism and technological progress could not co-exist. One excludes the other.

This was not the case, and Marxism, with its emphasis on technological progress, was brought to the socio-political body of Oriental despotism, creating the modern Chinese socialism. The question could arise: why didn't this merger happen earlier?

Oriental Despotism and Technological Progress

Why did ancient China fall behind the West, especially since the time of the Renaissance? China's backwardness was really puzzling if one would remember that ancient China was ahead of Europe in invention and scientific discoveries. China, for example, had invented paper money centuries before Europeans. Some Chinese inventions, such as powder, were passed to Europeans. Chinese achievements were well documented by Joseph Needham, the British historian and the author/editor of a multi-volume set on Chinese science and technology. Besides numerous scholarly monographs, Needham was also the author of popular works, e.g. *The Genius of China: 3000 Years of Science, Discovery, and Invention* (Temple 1986).

So, what was the reason why Chinese early inventions led to nowhere, and why inventors were not praised as was the case in the West? To understand this, one shall remember that ignoring scientific discoveries was not just a Chinese phenomenon. It was quite spread in Greek/Roman antiquity. There was clear evidence that Heron, the Hellenistic Roman inventor, actually invented the steam engine or at least designed something quite close to the steam engine. But invention played no role in the ancient world. There is an explanation of this neglect.

Some noted that invention was not introduced in the economic life of society, plainly because both ancient Greece and/or Roman societies enjoyed a lot of slaves. Still, these explanations do not work. Indeed, one powerful steam engine could do what thousands of slaves could not accomplish. The disregard for machines/inventions related to production could be explained by

different reasons. Neither Greeks nor Romans were interested in industrial production. Their focus was either on agriculture or loot related to conquest. The Chinese elite extract value from agriculture and, partially, from trade, mostly silk and porcelain. Industrial production/craft—unless it was related to silk and porcelain production—was a marginal aspect of the economy. In addition, the Chinese totalitarian state, like other similar societies, emphasised the importance of social status but not the accumulation of wealth. Striving for riches was not beckoning true Mandarin who shall live comfortably but not ostentatiously. Brazen life of luxury, notions that pursue wealth, is a peculiar polluter of the human character and especially spirituality is quite old. It was not surprising that in Plato's designs of an ideal totalitarian state, the "guardians"—the rule philosophers—shall live comfortably but not be able to accumulate wealth. The same was for the Confucian template. The love of riches was an attribute of the lower classes, at least this was according to Confucian philosophy.

According to Confucianism, the love for the filthy rich and the like is an attribute of merchants and any business people who, while not producing any real value, parasite on others. Official Confucianism depicts these folks as base characters and foreigner's descriptions of Chinese merchants—the only Chinese with whom they usually interact—often confirm these bleak images. In the view of the Westerners, these Chinese merchants were people without any sense of self-respect and excessively greedy. Their image of these Chinese was similar to the image of Jews. Mandarin, with whom foreigners rarely interact, despise these greedy underclasses. The mandarin, the members of the ruling elite, strive not for material well-being but for moving along the bureaucratic hierarchy. Thinking about material improvement unrelated to social promotion was not acceptable. The despise of material goods could also be deduced from the general ethos of totalitarian oriental despotism. It implied shaping of the material by the will of the state, and corollary implied the dominance of the spiritual

over the matter. Consequently, the stress was on what we could call humanities, e.g. languages, philosophy, history, etc. Practical knowledge of technologies was always on the back burner. The imperial system, which tested one's knowledge of language, philosophy, and history, implied a considerable effort. Those who prepare for exams shall memorise literally hundreds of thousands of hieroglyphics in addition to studying ancient text, and they plainly have no energy for anything else.

Later, by the end of imperial periods, the interest in technology related to natural science and industry increased. Still, by that time, China was in the process of being transformed into a semi-colony of Western power and Japan, and neither of them was interested in China's economic development. Moreover, neither of them was actually interested in China's existence as a unified state. The situation had changed after Mar's victory in 1949.

Blending Technology with Oriental Tradition and the Birth of Chinese Socialism

There were two major repercussions of these events. First, Mao unified China and started a peculiar new dynasty. During his rule, Mao's socioeconomic experiments led to the deaths of tens of millions. One might add that from the time of the collapse of the last dynasty to Mao's victory, millions also died from starvation, disease, wars and banditry. Yet the loss of life during Mao's experiments was truly horrific. Dozens of million people possibly died during the Great Leap Forward alone. Still, Deng Xiaoping proclaims that Mao was "right" for 70% of his actions. The reason for such an assumption was manifold. But the major reason might be as follows: in Deng's view, Mao recreated a strong state which would protect China from foreign predators and reestablish basic unity of the country. Finally, his "socialist" arrangement was actually a reestablishment of China's traditional imperial socio-economic arrangement, which implied that the "son of heaven" is

the final proprietor and subjects received their property in the form of a peculiar "lease". However, Mao was not a restorationist. While restoring imperial structure and implicitly comparing himself with the First Emperor of Qin, he engaged in violent campaigns of what he regarded as remnants of old pre-revolutionary China. There was a special campaign against Confucianism. On the surface, the reason was simple: attacking what Mao proclaimed to be a remnant of a discarded past helped him to launch the "Cultural Revolution". Its quest was simple: to purge bureaucracy, actually, any elite which was not absolutely loyal to Mao. Yet, this attack on old China indicates that imperial China had a lot of negative attributes. Marginalisation of industry and hard science was, implicitly, one of imperial China's problems. Socialist regime, Marxism as ideology, implicated the development of "productive forces", technological and industrial capacities of the state. These changes shall be injected into the old body of Oriental despotism. And changes were indicated by the nature of the "Great Leap Forward". It was a disaster and dozens of millions starved. Still, it indicated Mao's understanding of the importance of the development of "productive forces". The production of steel was seen as a paramount goal in this context. It was Marxism that apparently influenced Mao to engage in frantic industrialisation. The socio-political setting of this industrialisation was essential: it was to be conducted not in the context of private property and "free market" but in the context of absolute power of the state over "means of production". In this reading, Oriental despotism became not backward but progressive for both Marxism and Oriental despotism downplay private property, Western capitalist democracy, etc. Marxism also emphasised the role of "productive forces", e.g. technology and hard science. And this stress on the development of science and technology clearly demarcated Red China from its old imperial template. The peculiar marriage between Marxism and China's indigenous traditions implied the marriage of technology to a totalitarian state. And the result was stupendous.

RESULTS

How to measure the success of the system? Those who review the program of either major contender for highest offices in the USA or those who explain the reasons for US global expansion usually appeal to democracy, the final and most precious gift to humanity. The problem here is not just that in many cases the Western capitalist democracy in its real implication is actually the rule of economic elite— and this was made clear by Marx sometime ago— but that democracy itself, the political institutions, are not of much value for *hoi polloi* if it is not directly related to economic well-being of the population or, in more general form, the well-being of society in total. The first, and in a way axiomatic, demand is security, safety from both external and internal threats. The totalitarian socialist state ensures safety from the foreign threat. Indeed, even a rudimentary nuclear arsenal protects China from foreign invasion.

The power of the state also establishes a basic order in the country. This, however, was not the only gift. Indeed, it is economic progress that is the most visible sign of the workability of the Chinese model and an economic surge indicated by the rise of real production. It is not a service "bubble" of the West unrelated to real production, but the economy which could be measured by tons, meters, etc. And if one were to measure the Chinese economy by these criteria, it achieved a lot. At present, China produces almost 30% of the global industrial output. In some areas, China dominates completely. It produces, for example, 50% of the global steel production.

The western, mostly American observer assumed that totalitarian China could not catch up with the USA technologically, and new know-how in China is the result of China's theft of Western, mostly American, intellectual property. It was this fear that led to the extensive search for peculiar intellectual spies in the leading American universities. The notion that China's technological advancement is due exclusively to "stealing" Western technological products is also false. One shall remember here that not only

imperial China, the country of Oriental despotism, was ahead of the West in many technological/scientific discoveries, but the USSR, the other totalitarian state, had made a great leap forward without any help from the West.

Indeed, as it is known, the USSR was the first in launching Sputnik and later man in Space. The very notion that a totalitarian state could achieve technological progress outside of modern Western arguments could not be accepted by Western, especially American, observers and the stream of publications which predicted China's "hard landing" proliferated. Some of them pointed to what they regarded China's economic problems without attempting to place the phenomenon in the particular socio-economic context. For example, the observers could have noted that China's housing market had lost a lot of "value." As these implied serious or even catastrophic problems. Yet to understand the phenomenon, one shall remember that observers applaud the criteria of the modern Western, mostly American capitalism, to understand China. American observers might have noted that houses in certain areas lost 30%-40% of their "value", and this is a horrible loss. Somebody might assume that these regions had suffered a horrible catastrophe. It might suffer either carpet bombing or a devastating tornado. Still, none of these types of calamities happen. The houses' value was not related to their size, quality and other measurable attributes, but to their market values, it was a bubble value which could easily pop up and explode with the same speed. While in the USA "bubble" economy "value" became increasingly postmodernist construction, the story would be different in China. Here, housing, as anything else, would be mostly measured by the actual production, e.g. building of these houses, and while fluctuation of their values might be a nuisance, it would not have serious economic implications.

And here is another example. The Western observer often noted that entire Chinese cities were absolutely empty. This is, in the view of the observers, a good example of China's totalitarian inefficiency. To start with, empty buildings/apartments can be seen in big American cities. These apartments are empty because there are no

tenants who could pay the huge rent. In China's case, the rationale is different. In the course of these or definitely next generation, most Chinese would move from villages to cities, and sufficient housing shall be built ahead of time.

While some of the Western observers acknowledged China's economic success, they noted that the present-day economic model could well reach a dead end. They noted that this present-day economic model is based on extensive export, and the markets for Chinese goods close up for a variety of reasons. In their view, China's economic and related socio-political structure shall also change. There is a good point in these assumptions. It is quite possible that the Chinese socioeconomic body would change. Those who pointed to those changes implied that only one avenue exists: China shall forsake government control over the economy and move toward "the end of history", i.e. Western liberal capitalism.

While these directions are possible and, as a matter of fact, many options exist, socioeconomic liberalisation is not the most viable option, for it entails a danger of the collapse of the entire social and political system. The most likely scenario is the movement in the opposite direction: further limiting the role of the market and increasing the role of the state with all its repressive functions, in all aspects of society's life. And here China could well follow the Soviet scenario.

Indeed, one could remember that most of those who watched the USSR in 1920th predicted that the country had no other options but to move to full restoration of capitalism, the system shall inevitably lapse to its "Thermidor", a term quite popular among the enemies of the regime at that time. "Thermidor", taken from the French Revolution, marked the end of the rule of radical Jacobins. In the context of Soviet history, it implied the end of Bolshevik rule and a complete restoration of capitalism shall follow. One shall remember that everything seems to be moving in these directions. Private business flourished, the Party was split, and revolutionary ideology was increasingly passé. Still, the opposite process prevailed, and the "revolution from above" in 1929 "orientalised" society

completely, and the wave of terror had produced absolute obedience. The same could have happened with China.

The society of Oriental despotism, even its modernised "socialist" form, could well prevail in the future. Still, it would be wrong to assume that the system is bulletproof. One shall remember that after the victory in WW2 and acquiring of nuclear weapons, the USSR was seen as an impregnable fortress. In 1970th, most Western observers believed in its final global predominance in the conflict with the democratic or, to be precise, oligarchical capitalist West. One might note that some Soviet dissidents believed that the USSR would collapse. This was, for example, the case with Andrei Amalrik. Yet, he was unable to predict the Gorbachev phenomenon and the destruction of the empire from within. For him, Brezhnev's USSR was similar to the late Roman Empire, and elite comparative liberalism was due to the peculiar ageing and feebleness of the Politeuro octogenarians. In Amalrik's view, Brezhnev's USSR looks like the Roman Empire in the last decades of its existence, where a decaying elite was not able to stand against vigorous barbarians. In the Soviet case, the threat emerged in Red China, at times in convulsions of the Cultural Revolution. In Amalrik's view, the Chinese revolutionary elite was full of bellicose elan and would finally smash the USSR. At the same time, he saw no Gorbachev on the horizon. Amalrik, as well as quite a few Western observers, overlook the fact that everything depends on the leader in "totalitarian orientalism". These attributes made the system both extremely powerful and, at the same time, extremely brittle. The point here is that this system is a system of agents, but not a structure. Consequently, the appearance of Chinese Gorbachev could lead to a speedy collapse of the system and the country and its reassembly might not be possible. Still, the strong tradition of Sinocentrism and a critical and selective approach to the political tradition of the West might be an antidote against the possible Chinese variant of Gorbachevism. The problems with leadership and tradition would be solved, and barring of course "black swans" - e.g. major wars, pandemics, etc. China would reemerge as a leading

power in the 21st century, restoring the prominence of despotic power, which Western politology had discarded in the "dustbin of history" a long time ago.

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JOURNEY THROUGH THE VOWELS OF HUMAN TIME

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Abstract. An uninterrupted flow of thoughts (images, memories, analyses, desires, etc.)—content of human time in discontinuity/continuity. The discontinuous is suspended and thus becomes continuous when it emerges voluntarily: this is effort or duration; since in human time it is necessary to be and not just to exist, unlike non-human time: a stone exists, but it is not, any more than plants and animals, which seek only to reproduce, even if they are internally adapted by various modifications. But they are not the mainspring, unlike humans, who manifest this through gestures that are both mechanical (breathing, tingling, rubbing, crossing and uncrossing of limbs, touching of the face at each external and internal interaction) and, at the same time, through selected gestures assembled into attitudes (movements that are, however, ritualised according to the action and the place where they occur) at a given social-historical *moment*.

Human Time thus seems to be a Flow, either voluntarily organised into effort and/or duration, or involuntarily into subdued passion which nevertheless manifests itself through internal gestures (to the point of gurgling, coughing, breathing more or less loudly) or external gestures (yawning, tiredness, boredom, excitement, interest, moving in a geometry of perception). The whole thing can be tumultuous; the imaginary, this very movement of floating thoughts, comes up against the symbolism of internal and, above all, external conventions; it thus consists of creating and not just acclimatising, because human persistence also wants to refine and not just be powerful, and this within three limits: motivational finality or eschatology, goal-mean or teleology, result or "form" or eschatology; but the "waters change" defy, indulge in, for example, sophistry (or negative refinement), this dispersion aimed for itself.

The aim here is to reflect on these impressions/expressions of the human Time Flow; that of a Self-given from its three angles (Conative Subject: that of differential preferences, Political Actor: creator of relationships, Social Agent specialising in a particular skill) and which, at any given moment, can/wants to juggle between persistence alone (the game of the Same within the Identical, the Same, the Similar) and refinement through change (the innovative game of the Other within the Multiple, the Diverse), according to the chosen development factor (refinement, persistence, dispersion, dissolution), in a position of

reinforcement or reduction within each action undertaken by one of these three aspects of the Self.

Keywords: human time, continuity/discontinuity, imaginary, Pierre Janet, Joseph Nuttin, Alfred Adler, Freud

PREAMBLE

Being doesn't just fold and unfold any old way

Let us take these smiles, laughter, coughing, scratching, touching of the hair, ears, eyes, winding breaths of imagination and memories as distinct (but not separate) indicators of alarm signals (or 'noise')[1] because they are rather latent echoes or resonances which go beyond their strictly physiological aspect (as pathological psychology has shown in the study of paralysis (*See* Janet relying on Charcot), whether intestinal or linked to accelerations of the heart, various "pressures" seeking to evacuate not *just* the tension of accumulated energy as with Freud (Nuttin 1980[2]) but to express the demand to be, to achieve and therefore to grow, the opposite being neurosis, for Janet[3].

In fact, even 'just' looking means doing something (Nuttin 1980), the trick being, of course, not to be satisfied with just looking, at least in a position of positive refinement, because even looking at a masterpiece refers us to other thoughts of the human Temporal Flow (internal/external, imaginary, symbolic, real interconnection) which can lead to the opposite of negative refinement, or even dissolution.

Hence, *a contrario*, the homothety of sublimations within Limits (motivational finality or eschatology, goal-mean or teleology, result or 'form' or eschatology) going rather, for example, into a position of negative refinement when they arise from the Flow towards the very political compensation of the 'pomp' of sumptuary expenditure, the display of prestige. This, however, has nothing to do with the notion of 'expenditure', such as that of the Potlach,

which aims to ward off Polemos, as Marcel Mauss has shown, and not to display sophistry or disperse itself as such. The display of a whole range of acts and objects shows the degree of development achieved in positive refinement, and not just in preservation/conservation.

Also, more 'positively', even in a position of refinement, the effort to be will need homothety, i.e. to materialise its angles of view in practices and objects: The result is a homothety that is not merely compensatory (because that would be purely negative conservation) but a translation into refinement towards this object in order to rest the Flow, to embody it in a desire for crystallisation (Stendhal), that of a request for an exchange with the designated being (if it's a courtesan, this would tip more towards negative refinement or negative conservation) or this crucible of the imaginary (confidences over a drink), or on the pillow, oscillating between refinement and negative/positive conservation), viewing a painting, a sculpture, a homothetic mediation (such would also be the function of art), associating dreams and becoming a lively act, a thirst for, a dispersal of saturated attention, a need for the immediate evacuation of tensions in the event of anger or fatigue, in impulses that can also be neurotic if they procrastinate (Janet, *supra*: neurosis as a refusal to 'grow up'; Adler, *idem*; Freud: frenetic sex as a pressure to sublimate a libido unsatisfied by its lack of self-development—specifies Nuttin for his part..

But why 'grow', why 'do', what is this selection pressure that pushes towards greater 'performance' in the context of urban competition between 'experts', for example? Or is it not the conation itself that demands it, the desire to go ever further in order to improve not only one's prestige but also one's power and wealth, whereas another conation will prefer simply to spend energy instead of concentrating it on an object; even if it means demanding it for some to avoid setting themselves up as a 'master', such as the hermit or the prophet, whose aura would increase one's power prestige and wealth and, therefore, create 'inequality'.

Or, again, the syndrome of the talented baker imposed by this fact, obviously compensated by the destiny of those well-born and, therefore, benefiting from everything, but compensating by saying the idea of obligatory sharing (the good baker giving to the bad). Sharing, however, is always insufficient for the bitter ones wanting to prevent the very source of creation from arising, speaking only of privileged production of which one hardly perceives the source for the good baker. And since their ideocratic desire is insatiable, they defend it electorally and intellectually in order to defend this position of power and prestige within the Agora, which is not without bringing some wealth to the second and third markets of Ideas[4].

In any case, all these expressions and homothetic impressions resonate like so many signposts of 'geodesic' affirmation (not just homeostatic or ephemeral 'equilibrium', but the emergence of self-development, as Nuttin also emphasises[5]), that of a force of being that is not a random 'construction' that necessarily has to be 'fragile' (as certain nihilist currents advocate[6]).

So all these micro-wraps of human time, both external and internal, are permanently and at every moment enveloped in imaginary memories, which are themselves framed by frames of reference linked to the three Limits, if they are to be strengthened and refined, not just preserved, dispersed, and dissolved. This framing is permanent, especially when they are *constituted* to emerge as *attitudes or ways of being* that shape the flow interrupted within these given behaviours. In this sense, we don't 'melt' a given gesture into any given attitude to be displayed according to the given environment and situation. In a word, these attitudes right down to posture, shoulder placement, full gaits, interweave thoughts and gestures sorted so as to appear in institutionalised behavioural rituals at individual *and* collective levels (family, various groups), and which also include their (possibly self-destructive) critics, at least according to what the Fundamental Law (or Constitution) in question allows, legitimises, in a word, rationalises, endows with meaning, or the

three Limits, which eschatologically sacralises this whole teleological mode of entelechy appearance.

A. Logic and Reason

It can do so *if, and only if*, "a" has the "right" to do so, i.e. if it "must", not only politically but also *ethically*, go so far as to want to appropriate "b" when, for example, it is itself in a relationship.

If so, then within the three Limits he would objectively switch to the functions of refinement, conservation, dispersion and dissolution in their negative, i.e. diminishing, dimension, such as negative refinement, because by pure egotistical sophistry *he*, *in* fact, breaks the supposedly exclusive eschatological bond, at least if he had previously officially granted it with his "partner". Unless, however, they are in a "libertine union". But even from this point of view, the four functions in their full positivity remain excluded, since it is assumed by morphological definition that they function in optimum, i.e. permanent durability, in the sense that one would be immediately available to the other in the event of teleological "need". This is not the case for the libertine union, which can nevertheless escape full negativity or diminishment in an exceptional case: the fact that both have been single for a long time, widowed, divorced, of a certain age, and therefore wish to preserve their sovereignty by not living together under the same roof, for example. Which means that, in this case, while they certainly attain the positivity of the functions, they cannot fully attain them, in this case that of positive refinement, because the latter includes, by morphology validated by the three Limits, the objective *and* subjective necessity of *being* together durably in the same space-time, that is to say of being there permanently in order to share a "same" temporality, if not the same, at least similar, supporting each other identically.

Let's start from another, more "obvious" scenario: should the adult take ownership of this child, even if, logically and legally

sanctioned, he or she could do so, particularly in certain countries where this is permitted by "arrangement"?

No, because even more identically than the previous case, the objective morphological analysis proper to the optimum development of the Self shows that this child has not fully reached his own freedom of maturity to be able to decide whether such a full relationship with an adult would suit him because the latter's demands imaginatively exceed those of the child, still in his dreamlike symbolic envelope where physical desire in its jouissive consecration proves to be much more abstract and is much more satisfied with adequate homotheties given by play. The child turns out to be much more abstract and is much more satisfied by adequate homotheties given by the play and consumption of sensory objects than by entering into entelechy, which means symbolizations personifying power relationships, including desires to dominate, to be admired, or to objectify the other as a purely abreacted homothety. This means that the relationship between the adult and the child is necessarily tilted towards negativity in all its aspects, since the child will not necessarily be able to understand all these upheavals, which can become structuring and, therefore, focus the child like an addiction instead of devoting himself or herself to other aspects, such as positive dispersion.

So it's no longer a question of asking whether 'the name of the rose' is indeed *the* rose or just its designation, but whether such a filling in of meaning or rationality replaces the so-called 'natural logic' that is consubstantial with its 'political' aspect in the sense that pairs of otherness such as man/woman, adult/child, truth/lies, borders/non-borders, human beings/citizens, maternal instinct/ need for a father are clearly distinguishable. Otherwise, what is the point of the criteria of right and wrong? The answer is that they are relevant in the sense that they go beyond the exact and the bad of logic: so a doctor, a priest, cannot decide as a social agent whether or not a given other, a given human being, can ignore the borders that restrict his access to certain rights. On the other hand, as citizens of a given Constitution, they can issue an ethical and

political opinion without, however, having the authority to implement it fully.

In the final analysis, let us observe from the outset that Logic and Reason are already the two sides of the *same* coin, in the sense of being the bearers of conflict, of both logical *and* ethical meaning in the broadest sense (because political and/or religious lexicons can appropriate this connotation of 'duty' within various prohibitions) personified in this double connotation of the verb 'duty' in French, unlike English (to must/have to do/to need) and German (mussen/sollen); and all this (this particularity and singularity) is translated anthropologically within the three (oligomorphic) Limits given (eschatological, teleological, entelecheia) that punctuate these various dimensions in the form of institutionalized perceptions (such as the various rituals including 'relations' towards 'oneself' and towards others, as well as politeness) in order to hierarchize their *scope* (also in the sense of Platonic mediations) within the four Factors (conservation, refinement, dissolution, dispersion). This is what we should continue to explore here, in order to get a clearer picture of these carnal links between logic and reason, perceptible in their otherness as well as their alteration, and grasped first of all in all their cosmological breadth, but also at the 'micro' or kinesthetic level that we will now address.

B. The Kinesthetic Aspect

A first, 'classic' series of observations shows that the apparently 'logical' choices of clothes, friends and objects in general, as well as the surges desire (more like homotheties or projections of impulses than abreactions or impulses) and also the juxtapositions of styles, the fortuitous or 'well-ordered' intermingling of clothes, records, books, letters and other objects used in the course of daily life, whether 'branded' or not. This means that it is possible to analyze them by studying not only their *deployment* of meaning, or logical *quantity*, for example socio-cultural, socio-psychological, to be

broken down by ethnic group, period, individual according to their sex, age, level of education, profession, "experience", but also by *rational index* of their *development* (already indicated in an earlier work[7]), which implies that the latter is not necessarily adequate to what would be possible in the absolute precisely, as we can see, for example, when it is possible to identify the presence of high IQ among a population that is nevertheless said to be "disadvantaged" (Reuchlin 1997, 191)[8].

I have noticed, for example (in introspection but also through observation over several decades), that sneezing is not just the result of a draught, but the fact, sometimes, that in the face of hesitation, the ego, not knowing in which attitude to appear, signals it externally so that the conative Subject takes note of it and, thus, becomes aware of it in order to distribute it in the operative poles of the Actor (decision) and the Agent (in search of a behavior).

The same goes for the cough, particularly the so-called 'nervous' cough, which seems to be an interface between psychic preoccupations awaiting their form, be they motivational, symbolic (referential), imitative or, in any case, in the imaginary search for an active transubstantiation: This would be the cough of the poet, of the sensitive/intelligible as an intuition of the (Pascalian) 'heart' of empathy (of the 'mirror neurons'), in any case of a preoccupation knotting indecisions within the pulmonary alveoli whose rhino-pharyngeal and cognitive links are not arbitrary. Far be it from me to go into details of any given specialisation, but to indicate interactional approaches that affect not only the political dimension at the macro level, but also at the micro level in the 'unity of action' of the Self.

Another example (we need at least two, Popper said somewhere): the left hand draws the shape of a light bulb on the face (imitation) and the body then breathes in to maintain the necessary demand for air, rich no doubt in various minerals linked to the different types of components (nitrogen, hydrogen, oxygen, etc.) and then exhales the surplus (carbon dioxide), while internally the matrixed whole

stabilizes or crystalizes in the manner of a glass shaped by the "glass-blower" (a combined part of the Self). This allows the emergence of a perception that settles "internally" (or Thought, this "ocean" carrying the "lived" to a certain extent, homeostatically and also dynamically and pneumatically). This work at the heart of thought allows the intelligence or connection itself (as Pierre Oléron points out[9]) coming from the whole 'body' (this materiality emerged, condensed here *and* deployed elsewhere, which I won't deal with here) following the lineament from capture to im/pression filtered into a feeling or regulating logic (Janet) arising in the expression of an 'idea': this 'integral' stabilizing (aggregating) its sum in a word, an image, and *therefore* a 'force' (*vis*). It creates the link between percept and concept, which, in concrete terms, will increase the points (like pixels) matrixing the vision, and thereby develop a better knowledge of the relationships linking the Self to its environment and to itself, falling back on the classical knowledge observing this new acquisition as an accumulator, which may be provisional until it has been validated over time, but can reach a certainty that enables us to move more quickly in the interaction and in the construction of an increasingly rapid rotation between intuitive capture, analytical and synthetic distribution, then crystallization or internal action, which is then propelled into external action in a given expression.

The whole of this process can be intertwined with various tingling sensations in the elbows, ribs, nose, the desire to go to the toilet, to take a break, thereby suggesting that the body in tension, including the stomach (this third brain, this Chyle, as Hegel would say[10]*) takes charge of* the following fact, summarized as follows: any reflection, any bending, requires the constitution of a 'halographic' body, including the notions of body proper and corporeity, but distinguishing itself from them by insisting on the extensive side of the 'body' taken as this integral or absorbing and also charming sum creating, for example, sympathy or antipathy or the negative/positive play: negative electrons that attract also tear away, and positive electrons or positrons that "seduce" and make beings and things *crack* in the literal sense sometimes. Thus, the wooden

furniture the cat scratches itself will reflect this movement of the "hylè" of the bodily "matter", also unfolding as space-time agglutinated, of which the couple percept/concept leans to assert the seven principal Functions with a view to carving out action.

In other words, the hypothesis is that each attitude would be a simultaneous cut, at each (nano) instant, within various animal biophysical and biopsychological and geosymbolic layers, more singularly human; and that this, in order to be displayed, should unfold to take on the features of the animal, ancestor, friend, general referent (hero), all linked to a given volume of air breathed in and out in order to withstand crystallization (like a glass breath); this is what needs to be perceived more precisely: what each of the components of the air does as a functional support when it comes to deploying an action, even if it's only a single thought that the neural tracing by MRI will not be enough to extract the configuration assembling a set of their points of force until it draws the appropriate shape.

Also, and to frame what is important here, it could be argued that the conservation of species in our *human* DNA should not be seen as residues (and the unused sequences would not be a 'dustbin' as some would claim) but as behavioral 'reservoirs', allowing a given attitude to have as its halographic support a given form of animal or even plant, except that all this metamorphoses from second to second within the traits displayed. But behavioural 'reservoirs' enabling a given attitude to be holographically supported by a given form of animal or even plant, except that all this is metamorphosed from second to second within the traits displayed, as if the body needed a kind of mnemonic support. This means that, in a given situation, a given gait, a given facial expression or even a given morphology emerges, without the need to talk too much about the much-criticized 'physiognomy' that freezes, as it were, various animal traits within the humanoid and hominid species, whereas here it is more a question of phenotypic fluidity displaying a momentary congruence between various graphs within a given schema, into as many points of perception within the overall mesh

of the 'body', this interface that is both dense, compact and atomically deployed, and therefore cosmically[11].

Let's just say here, to conclude this angle, that the "2%" that is supposed to separate us from the chimpanzee genome indicates not so much the strength of epigenetics alone— which a culture-nature feedback would fill quantitatively like a blotter or a wax or even an ectoplasm—but rather the presence of an *a priori* qualitative organization of call sequences, these requests for action-reaction at every moment. Which means we mustn't forget that these call sequences can become interactions in the manner of perpetual waves of meaning if we don't have a motif to serve as a boat. Or how thought—that is to say, all of our captures at a given moment—can only remain in the state of an ocean woven from Rimbaldian and Baudelairian transmutations. Indeed, the dream that moves the imaginary by linking past, present and future (sleep being its guardian and not the other way round, as Michel Jouvet has shown in *Le Grenier des rêves*[12]) is no longer, for example, this active sediment of positive refinement within the imaginary, but its dispersion, which can be negative if it aims at negative refinement.

C. What About the Oscillation Between Reinforcement and Reduction?

Let's add that these gestures must also be read according to the right hemisphere/left hemisphere split. Let's remember that the first hemisphere groups together the immanent source of emotional and reflexive outbursts in space and time; let's simplify the name by calling it immanent. The second hemisphere would group together the functions of language and decision-making logic; let's call it transcendental.

So, depending on whether the left hand touches the chin, an eyebrow, the nose, the eyelid, an ear or the neck, it will be a question of deducting any other incidental cause, and, in parallel, of relating what each of these organs can express in terms of meaningful

information that the left hand, linked to the right hemisphere, or immanence, gathers and/or stimulates.

What happens, for example, if the left hand touches the right eyelid? Assuming that the right eyelid is controlled by the left hemisphere, and that this hemisphere groups together the functions of language and logic (or the transcendent), and that the eyelid as such expresses both the physiological capacity to protect the eye, and also the logical capacity to count vision, it is possible to conjecture that the left hand, as a sort of immanent emissary of emotions and spatialization (right hemisphere), reminds the left hemisphere (transcendent: language+ logic), which controls the right eyelid, to take into account, or take charge, of what in the immanence of visions and emotions must be logically studied and verbalized, i.e. put under impression until eventually conceptualisation, in other words formal designation.

Or a given attitude: it can trigger, for example, a tingling sensation on the forehead, a given inhalation to knead and "inflate" the shape holding the whole together (crossbreeding of imitations that can go back to ancestral lineages) doubled by an exhalation expelling what would be "in excess" and, at the same time, there is a "call" from the sinuses to the dental roots, doubled abruptly by the crossing of the left leg (right hemisphere) over the right leg (left hemisphere). Which may mean that the sensitivity of the sensorimotor sensors (Piaget, Lorenz) allows itself to be carried away by the intelligibility of the motif sculpting the moment. When, suddenly, this breath thus *composed* and having in the moment crystallized a given attitude is broken by the alteration of another emitting an interaction in tension: a sneeze then emerges, the nitrogenous tingling to which suggests that its sedimentation into an attitude is not happening, or is happening badly: the sneeze signifying that we don't know on which "foot to dance", which attitude to display, in which humoral symbiosis (a system of Pascalian "liquors") to situate ourselves.

Why is this? Is it because of a lack of cutting (of uncertainty about this interaction under tension from others) and, therefore, of

oxygen, a vector, and therefore of hydrogen? Is it because of these shortages that nitrogen, left to its own devices as it were, exceeds its own capacities and therefore signals this by sneezing? And don't these shortcomings come precisely from a narrowing of the breath in the literal sense? In other words, the hesitation means that the volume of air is not sufficient to inflate the chosen attitude, which itself expresses a way of being, i.e. a way of reacting, of judging, of deploying oneself in (the) world?

The same applies to coughing, as has been said, and sniffing, which too hasty a judgement reduces to being, systematically, no more than a pathological symptom (whereas literature, theatre and cinema have gone much further); this does not mean, however, that it is no longer a pathological symptom in certain circumstances, such as immunological collapse which, being there, and beyond the fact of knowing whether its origin is psychosomatic, needs to be treated in a way other than by simply being aware of its significance.

Let's insist. Just as sneezing cannot be systematically reduced to the effects of a draught or a cold—because it can also be perceived as the expression of hesitation—yawning, for its part, would only signify 'purely' physiological fatigue. Fatigue can *also* be psychological, as shown by Pierre Janet in his studies on neurasthenia, and by Liah Greenfeld in *Mind, Modernity Madness*[13], when group pressure weakens the Self, pushing it to take risks with its own health.

Let's look at other examples. When the left leg (right hemisphere) rests on the right leg (left hemisphere), this may mean, for example, that the immanent relies on the transcendent to carry out a given action, because it involves counting and conceptualising. When, on the other hand, the right leg (left hemisphere) rests on the left leg (right hemisphere), this indicates that the transcendent relies on the immanent for action to take place. The immanent accomplishes what the transcendent decides, the transcendent decants what the immanent gathers.

If, for example, the right ear (left hemisphere) is scratched by the left hand (right hemisphere), this may mean that the transcendent is

not listening carefully enough or has not understood the requests for clarification coming from the immanent. Let's take the crossing of the legs again. In a conversation with another person, the fact of not crossing one's legs and leaving one's arms on the armrests, observation can show that this is a neutral position, i.e. more attentive than to attractive information, while, at the same time, emphasizing redundant information which perhaps involves both hemispheres at the same time but moderately, in the sense that neither of them needs to signal to the other the accentuation of its activity. It's a conversation that can be more technical than general or intimate.

On the other hand, when one of the interlocutors puts himself in the position described above, i.e. one of his legs crosses over the other, the observation can indicate, depending on the transcendent/immanent position of the interlocutors, what is going on between them in terms of meaning.

The analysis of gestures can go even further, to the study of organic movements, from the precise and fairly classic moment when we decide to go to the toilet before carrying out a certain action, or when we arrive in a new place (Paul Valéry used to say that if he didn't have stage fright just before ringing the doorbell of a reception, he knew that nothing would happen). Furthermore, observation of internal movements can show that the organs are not as silent as all that, or rather, that when they emerge from their silence it does not mean illness (to borrow from Claude Bernard's famous thought), or even stress, but that they come to mark out, to redouble, a certain action (like the burping, the squeaking of the spleen, of the intestines).

D. The Question of Relationships

In this way, a given thought (p) or disparate and/or ordered set of images, sounds, memories, reflections, emerges at a given moment T by mixing a given question (q) with a given exhalation *and*

inhalation of the Self (subject, actor, agent) so that the air expelled (CO2) and collected (nitrogen, hydrogen, oxygen) can irrigate the perceptive/conceptive 'moods' at play: nitrogen for kneading, oxygen for cutting, hydrogen for transporting, in order to provide or not provide the necessary stability for the elements that have been cut and connected. All of this can be translated into a set of auxiliary gestures that need to be counted (coughing, scratching, drawing fingers on the eyes, on this or that nostril). For example, what has just been written has given rise to an exhalation that creates a kind of geosymbolic stability, in other words, a perception that assembles the links of percepts/concepts, the drops of vis/ion that can be disturbed by scratching, for example, the area between the chin and the lower lip, the chin itself, the right groin—it doesn't matter here, because the point is simply to emphasize that the translated flesh also reflects energy electromagnetically, if only, for example, the link with the notion of 'appropriation' of the extension of the carnal space by smell and gastric stabilization, such as the fact of deciding, faced with a sudden question or the presence of another person, to go to the toilet at that very moment, even though your bladder is not necessarily 'full' or the liquids ingested (tea, coffee, beer) necessitate such an action. A gesture which may appear insipid, of the order of 'chance', or dismissed out of hand by the 'old' epistemology, eager to separate in theory what is nonetheless linked in practice, and which topples just as much into the order of the four Functions and their three Limits within the three aspects of the Self.

It is then the strong role of limits within the functions that makes it possible to regulate in some way this animal tension, which can be transformed into amiable discussion, friendship, without passing by its physical consumption, when this can have regrettable consequences on loved ones. But it seems that today, in certain circles, it is rather the triumph of the Negative in the sense that it is no longer dialectically creative but negatively destructive.

E. CONCLUSION

When someone like Austin asked himself, for example, "*How do you know*?" and "*Why do you believe? in* "*other minds*", in 1946 (a text that appeared at a symposium devoted to Aristotle[14]), these questions or "entelechies"—these distinct, even opposed "forms"—refer both to the "logic" of a technique or pragmatics that questions the "how" of a given "knowledge", a "teleology". And also to the 'reason' or 'meaning' of a stabilization of statements established in a given 'belief' or 'eschatology' broken down according to various levels of validation, broken down into logic (calculation) and reason, ethics and politics, but which does not have the same degree of acuity because the field of definition is not identical. For example, we can be convinced of Newtonian gravitational veracity without making it an irremovable "belief", whereas testimonies to the effect that Jesus was able to perform miracles to prove that he is indeed God, and in this case the Figure or Angle of the Son, fall into the domain of belief, in the sense of a fixity which has nevertheless been validated by these testimonies and the fact that historically the real person of Christ has been indicated (for example Tacitus). So while there is a clear distinction between science and belief, the separation is not an antinomy but rather a differentiation in the modes of validation that exist, including, for belief, for example, the whole process of admitting a miracle or elevating a person to sainthood.

Everything depends on the "relationship" established between "logic and metaphysics", as the young Hegel said in Jena (1804-1805), in the sense that while there is a distinction between the two spheres, the desire, for example, to achieve positive refinement posited as the optimum overcoming of a "metaphysics" or ontology of human development is also part of a logic (calculation) associating power (self-control), prestige (display) and wealth (internal satisfaction, ecstasy / external with a given notoriety). This also refers to Heidegger's "k" in the "e-k"*si-stance*, or the relationship of the stanza to that which moves it, but which can come up against the Limits, because where does this relationship go as the

Place/tenant of that which is supposed to "be"? All the more since we know that this question has become locked in a reconstructed origin which, far from magnifying its mystery in positive refinement, has tipped over into its negative dissolution, reinforced today by its persistence in a kind of Kantian 'negative greatness' which, far from solving the Debt that transforms the marble in itself into a statue for itself, makes it worse. Unless this headlong rush is stopped by the even stronger desire of human Living to create Builder Time: like this expanding universe (*res extensa*) creating space, not falling into something already created, in constant search of refinement and not just emancipating itself from its conservative corporeality through the quantitative intoxication of power to the detriment of its quality, this permanent objective in the interaction of daily life, at least for some conscious, even more, animated by the Mystery of Human Time.

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WOMEN POETS OF THE IRISH TROUBLES: DEFINING THEMES

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Abstract. Northern Ireland's Troubles turned the 20th century into a prolonged battleground. The country was divided by religion: Protestants versus Catholics. These conflicts led to the loss of thousands of lives and terrorism throughout the country. Male authors' writings from this period have received consistent focus. This paper seeks to explore female authors and the defining characteristics of their work as they engaged with themes of violence, nature, and individualism. Six women who lived and wrote during that period are contextualised and examined.

Keywords: Irish Troubles, women's poetry, Northern Ireland, Irish poets, political protests

Women have often been overlooked in the retelling of major historical events, including the Troubles, a significant conflict in Ireland that spanned much of the 20th century. It is equally important to give voice to the women of this time who suffered as well. They were not immune to violence. Girls who fraternised with the other side were subject to being tarred (Begoña 2010). This consisted of kidnapping young women, tying them to a pole, pouring hot tar on their bodies, and writing messages like "soldier-lover". They could be left for up to twenty-four hours before being released. Women often turned to poetry as a way of protest and catharsis. Poems written during and around The Troubles were particularly characterised by themes of violence, nature, and individualism.

This religious conflict, lasting around thirty years, pitted Catholics against Protestants in Ireland. During the First World War, a group of individuals overcame buildings in Dublin and named themselves the Irish Republic. In 1919, there was another two-year conflict between the loyalists and the British Army. Later, the Catholic community found itself at a consistent economic disadvantage, which grew into tensions. In 1969, the Apprentice Boys Derry March transitioned into three days of rioting (Imperial War Museum 2025). During the 1960s to 1970s, tensions grew to an all-time high, with the British Military forming peace walls. Bloody Sunday, 30 January 1972, 15,000 people gathered to march against the policy of internment. Some marchers clashed with soldiers who fired on them with rubber bullets. Fourteen people were killed that day (Imperial War Museum 2025). The 1970s and 1980s saw an increase in violence, with assassinations and acts of terrorism on both sides. By the early 1990s, negotiations for peace had begun with heavy losses on both sides. By 1997, both the Provisional IRA and the loyalists had called a ceasefire. These times were distinguished by death and brutality. Tensions ran high, and fights broke out across the country. Families and communities turned on each other. Outspoken individuals were subject to assassination or gun violence. In the shadow of this discord, artists vouched for deliverance.

The Troubles were a time characterised by violence and death; in reflection, so was the poetry. The poetry written by women at the time focused on the violence that surrounded them. Ruth Carr, a poet from Belfast, was born in 1953. Her poem, "Hanging Tree", focuses on the needless violence of the time, comparing the violence to the Salem Witch Trials. Allegories and metaphors for the real horrors of the Troubles were common, as direct acknowledgement could potentially put poets and other writers in danger. The "Hanging Tree" is a common symbol in literature that signifies unfair death and violence. Her poem references witches as the crows reminisce about the death of a woman. She writes,

"Tongue of a woman with healing spells" (Carr 2006, line 6). Retrospectively, it is agreed that the women hanged during that time were innocent. Carr, in her poem, is attesting to this. Women are often the unseen casualties in conflicts as they lose fathers, brothers, and husbands. They may also be the focus of violence, being less protected than their male counterparts. Furthermore, Carr's reference to healing spells further implies the innocence of the woman-healer.

Deidre Cartmill published her first poetry collection, *Midnight Solo*, in 2004. Born in Moy and later living in Belfast, she wrote the poem "The Moy Made Me", which focuses on the violence of the era, depicting graphic scenes. She wrote, "[The ghosts'] bleed through us/ and we can't begin/ to start again, to loose/ ourselves from the sins/ of our bloodiness" (Cartmill 2006, lines 20-24). Cartmill points out that the conflict continues because of the history behind it; that cultures and societies are bound to the conflict of their ancestors. Her poetry stands out for its straightforward and abrasive lines. She ends the poem with, "Our throats are cut/ and our tongues/ are buried with our bullets" (lines 38-40). This powerful imagery evokes blood and gore, reflecting the savagery that permeated the time.

Ireland is renowned for its lush forests and natural beauty. Death often brings together themes of theology and nature, which intersect in poetry. As a result, much of the poetry written by women during this time also explored these themes, marked by a strong sense of naturalism. Jean Bleakney, a poet of the Troubles, studied biochemistry at Queen's University in Belfast. Her poetry explores humanity's connection with nature. Bleakney wrote "Postcard", a poem that illustrates the culture of the time. She writes, "We count the sun among the disappeared" (Bleakney 2006, line 3). The Disappeared, in the context of the Troubles, were people stolen from their homes, often tortured, and then buried in unmarked graves (BBC News 2025). The idea of the Disappeared is a recurring theme in this poem. The sun symbolises happiness that has been lost due to violence. She says,

"In rain that is commensurate with tears" (Bleackney 2006, line 10). Again, she draws attention to the nature of Ireland and reflects the times.

Kerry Hardies, born in Singapore and raised in County Down, lived in Northern Ireland in the 1970s. Her poetry is blunt and to the point. She incorporates nature, specifically a black bird to represent the death of others. Her poem, "On Derry's Walls", alludes to the historic structure, built in the 1600s and still standing today, symbolising the enduring animosity between the Protestant and Catholic communities. She writes, "Fed off the worms that have fed off the clay/ of the Protestant dead" (Hardies 2006, lines 3-4). The blackbird, most likely a crow (a blackbird commonly associated with death), watches over the Wall. Hardies' outright acknowledges the violence of the conflict through the narrative of this bird. Later in the poem, she writes, "In the blackbird's looped entrails/ everything is resolved" (lines 13-14). She remarks that, to the birds and to the worms, the dead are the dead; nature doesn't discriminate. Her clever focus on the blackbird serves to remind the readers that lines blur and to call into question the necessity of this conflict.

The Troubles affected thousands of people, along with their culture and religion. To fully grasp the horrors, it is necessary to focus on individuals. Colette Bryce studied English Literature and Sociology at St.Mary's College. She's famous for the masterful use of figurative language in poetry. Her poem "Break" is a tragic one, as she tells of a conversation with a soldier boy. The young flirts with a girl, encouraging her to interact with his military gear. Bryce narrates, "Let me punch your bulletproof vest. *Go on, try*" (Bryce 2006, line 4). The mood is lighthearted and playful, though there is a heavy meaning overlaid. The vest is there for the danger he will face, the people he may kill. The lighthearted mood continues, "*Here's the catch and here's the trigger.* Let me look through the eye" (lines 7-8). The narrator is encouraged to hold the gun, to engage with a weapon. This interaction is not too different from a boy showing off a new toy or item to a girl. This blithe scene

juxtaposes the context. Furthermore, girls and women often got punished if found talking to the wrong man. Bryce focuses on this short scene instead of the big picture to emphasise the young people and young love lost.

Paula Cunningham explores politics and challenges the *status quo* through her writings. Her poem "Mother's Pride" uses an extended metaphor to describe borderlines and maternal relationships. The title itself is a double entendre. Mother's Pride literally is a brand of bread most common in the UK. However, the poem starts with a soldier making himself a meal. Drawing border lines with his butter knife. Mother's Pride" represents both the pride—or lack thereof—that this soldier may feel, and the impact on the mothers affected during the Troubles. The beginning lines of the poem are, "Hand with a knife/ his preferred medium/ was Mother's Pride plain toast" (Cunningham 2006, lines 1-3). The knife is assumed to be a butter knife as he references toast, but without specification, speaks to the violence of the soldier. Cunningham writes, "Which my frowning mother/ quickly buttered over/stabbing the bread" (lines 20-22). The narrative quickly shifts from the soldier to the narrator's mother, frowning at the borders drawn. Her actions are more directly aggressive as she "stabs" the bread. Cunningham focuses on this image to highlight the relationships strained during this time and the subtlety of the inescapable Troubles. Even during breakfast, war seeps into everything.

The majority of these poems include an intersection of these themes. "Hanging Tree" includes naturalism, and "Post Card" violence. Women poets during the Troubles focused on violence, nature, and individualism. Women experience the world differently from men, as their experiences are often exclusive to womanhood. During the Troubles, they lost fathers, husbands, and children alike. While they may not have been on the front lines, they were vulnerable to the violence and spoke out in the form of poetry. Though often considered the "fairer" sex, women experience the world justly in times of injustice.

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FROM TRAVELING FOR ENJOYMENT TO TRAVELING FOR EROTICISM: TRACING THE NEGOTIATION BETWEEN SEX AND TOURISM WITH REFERENCE TO SOME FAMOUS NON-ASIAN FILMS

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Abstract. Tourism is not only a form of short-term migration that involves excessive consumerism in a colonial setting, where the paying client is served in the way in which colonial elites were served, by servants whose mobilities tend to be far more limited. There's more than this, as there is religious tourism, business tourism, intellectual tourism and some other types. However, tourism bears in its consumerist excess the urge to engage in sexual experiences. Sex has been a part of tourism for a very long time. As Martin Oppermann says, "While some countries may be more renowned for the availability of commercial sex, sex tourism exists everywhere". Men (predominantly) travel from more developed countries to less developed ones in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean for sex that is either not available or more expensive or qualitatively less pleasurable at home. But this is not restricted to men, because there is now a stream of discreet travellings by affluent western women to places in the Caribbean and Africa, where sex with local men is explicitly anticipated. However, Heidi Dahles and Karon Bras also note similar relationships developing between local beach boys (who develop an 'entrepreneurial romance' style) and western women tourists in Indonesia. According to many recent analysts, sex is not motivated purely by the "consummation of commercial sexual relations", and there are "complex processes by which individuals choose to seek sexual gratification, first within prostitution and secondly as part of the tourist experience". Whether characterised as *"sex"* tourism (commercial sex with the locals) or *"romance"* tourism (commercial sex with the trappings of a "real" relationship), this practice has inspired a good deal of academic research in the social sciences and popular literature as well. This paper offers, therefore, a critical analysis of the selected films focusing on the varied motivations that

contemporary popular culture passionately pursues in its quest to gratify sexual impulses, even within the context of tourism.

Keywords: consumerism, sexual gratification, prostitution, tourism

Travel as *"displacement"* has long been associated with experimentation, growth, and transformation—possibilities of being *"Other"* to oneself. Certainly, there are aspects of female sex tourism that resonate in positive ways: empowerment (the realization of, or receptivity to, desires and subject positions that would be considered taboo at home) or its opposite (a dismantling of the self whereby power is repudiated, a more powerful impulse in male travellers) or, of course, some constellation of these and other motivations. Undoubtedly, sex and tourism are not confined to wealthy international male tourists travelling to exploit poor local women, although that is common enough. We know that prostitutes travel too and, sometimes, they are international tourists, working at conference venues, international hotel districts, casinos and resorts. In Germany, for example, "the large share of foreign prostitutes actually means that in many sex tourism settings it is the prostitute who is the business tourist, an aspect of sex tourism that deserves more attention". Oppermann also reminds us that white slavery was common well into the twentieth century, with young women abducted and sold into foreign brothels. Similarly, not all prostitution is heterosexual, and there is an enormous complexity in the diversification of sexual desires and services. Further, sex tourism is not confined to the sexual services on offer to clients: red light districts are routinely listed as attractions in most tourist cities, and this voyeuristic tourism may be a prelude to further investigation or a sexualized end in itself. In addition, there are all manner of sexual spectacles that encourage a mild form of sexual voyeurism. British author Chris Ryan suggests that Sydney's tourist-packed Mardi Gras and similar events in San Francisco and Auckland have a strong voyeuristic, sexualized quality, particularly among the largely heterosexual crowds. Nor is prostitution all of a

piece, indeed it is precisely because prostitution in some parts of the world varies from the (often) sordid *brief* and unelaborated nature of client–prostitute relations in the west that men are particularly attracted to sex-centred travel to specific places (Thailand, Vietnam and the Philippines, for example) where this is not the case (Opperman 1998, 46).

The desire for the consumption of bodies in a physically exploited colonial world has its particular history in popular culture and the entertainment industry. It does not simply emerge out of need or opportunity, but relies on images that are already burnt into our retinas. Tales about Oriental and exotic men who seduce European women were among the first box office hits of the emerging film industry in Hollywood. The silent movie *The Sheikh*, starring Rudolph Valentino, is among the earliest successful films of this genre, which, to a large extent, was as much about colonial propaganda as it was about desire and repression. The images of the colonial Other, who is characterized by his violent masculinity and boyish smile alike—the infantilized colonial Other who is sexually menacing—have continued to shape fantasies and imaginations of how exoticized and Orientalized men look and what they do for metropolitan White women: fulfill them sexually and liberate them from the tedious tasks of everyday life.

Female audiences were made to sense that there might be something far more interesting waiting for them than household work and monotonous labour. An adventurous life full of opportunities for self-actualisation was, however, not to be found where they lived but in the exotic lands of Orientalist fantasies, which by that time had utterly real counterparts in the colonised world. And like the colonised subjects in the Global South, the women in these texts had to turn into obedient subalterns (Pratt 2007, 26).

The production of popular cultural artefacts that promise similar gifts is enormous, giving way to tourism industries that promise fulfilment of these dreams. Productions such as *Eat Pray Love* have greatly contributed to an increase in tourism to specific countries or

regions (such as Bali) and resonate in a large corpus of texts. As a form of cultural mobility, such images and stories trigger specific cultural practices, social strategies, emotional reactions and economic processes rather than simply reflecting them. We have not considered these movies for our project, but only a few, which we felt were enough. Watching them again and again, we found ourselves consuming film after film in which body after body was consumed (Kempadoo 1999, 63).

We assume that without telling their monotonous stories about sex tourism, these films, all based in countries of the Global South, would not get much attention. Just as books about Africa in which no *scandalous* love story occurs would not sell well, these films receive attention only when a dark-skinned person depicts a dependent lover giving up his or her ego, language or behaviour as a result of unequally distributed power relations. The films all deal with what Skinner and Theodossopoulos call cultural-sexual tourism, which can be seen as the extreme result of *stranger fetishism*, where postmodern consumption constructs the stranger as an impossible (or unreachable) figure. Here, the consumer places himself or herself in the position of the stranger with the help of commodities, as if it were possible through certain products, e.g. coconut products. Sara Ahmed assumes that consuming a stranger involves "a transformation in the subject who consumes" (Opperman 1999, 258). This kind of transformation is the focus of all five movies that we analysed: a transformation into the exotic Other through the consumption of the exotic's body. The sexually connoted exoticization of difference is, in the sense of bell hooks, directly given in scenes of some of the movies, where the exotic Other is "eaten" or bought in relation to fine food.

All the films share the idea of showing the unequally distributed power and resources of the European sex tourists and the local lovers in order to transfer this interpersonal inequality into an international one, which automatically leaves the spectator with the everlasting argument that the support of these exploited lovers helps them more than it harms them. This dilemma has been voiced by

Foucault and is felt by many people in the West, where the "primitive" Other is the target for Westerners' own selfish pleasure. Bell Hooks points out:

> It is precisely that longing for the pleasure that has led the white west to sustain a romantic fantasy of the 'primitive' and the concrete search for a real primitive paradise, whether that location be a country or a body, a dark continent or dark flesh, perceived as the perfect embodiment of that possibility (Garrick 2005, 501).

The films that we will discuss are *Sand Dollars (2015), How Stella Got Her Groove Back (1998), Die weiße Maasai* ('The White Masai', 2005) and *Paradies: Liebe* ('Paradise: Love', 2012) all of which take place in settings that are favourite destinations for female sex tourism: the Dominican Republic (*Sand Dollars*), Jamaica (*Stella*), Kenya (*The White Masai* and *Paradise: Love*). All these movies are well-known, and some of them have gained considerable critical recognition. *Sand Dollars* was selected to be screened in the Contemporary World Cinema section at the 2014 Toronto International Film Festival. The film was selected as the Dominican entry for the Best Foreign Language Film at the 88th Academy Awards. *Heading South* won the Marcello Mastrioanni Award and CinemAvvenire (Cinema For Peace) Award at the 2005 Venice Film Festival. *How Stella Got Her Groove Back* received the Best Film award, and its actresses, Angela Bassett and Whoopi Goldberg, won the Best Actress award at the 1999 Acapulco Black Film Festival. *Patong Girl* received the Grimme Prize 2016 in the category *'Fiction/Special'*. Nina Hoss, the leading actress in *Die weiße Maasai*, received the Bavarian Film Prize. *Paradies: Liebe* was awarded Best Film Production at the Austrian Film Awards, as well as winning the categories of Best Director and Best Actress (Margarethe Tiesel).

WATCHING SAND DOLLARS (2015)

It starts with common images. Tropical scenery, a bit sad. Some actors speak Spanish, for which subtitles are provided. This creates

a feeling of authenticity because this is the language of the people. We watch players in the sex tourism business in the Dominican Republic, embodied by Geraldine Chaplin as Anne, the older woman, tourist and client, and Yanet Mojica as the younger one, Noeli, a sex worker. There is also Yeremi, Noeli's lover, who wants to live with her. Noeli is pregnant and Anne is in love (with Noeli). Anne wants both of them to travel to Paris. But Yeremi and Noeli cheat on all their clients and leave them heartbroken.

In a great colonial house, Anne and the other wealthy tourists talk about how everything was grander in the past. This scene crucially shows Anne's desperation by making use of specific language practices and discussion topics. The elegantly dressed White elite, who constitute the new colonisers in the Dominican Republic, spend their evening discussing the economy and politics of the land, which they claim to know so much more about than the Dominicans themselves. While Anne tries to keep up appearances, the neocolonial discussions fade, and Anne's true problem, her love for a Dominican girl, emerges as the focus of the film. The language used in this short scene is a highly elaborated political lexicon which is used to display the great gap between the White elite and the Black working class.

Besides language, gifts create connections between people. A tourist gives Noeli a necklace as a token of his everlasting love. She takes it to the pawnbroker for 400 dollars. Bodies do not have this power: they are delicate, thin, worn out, old and vulnerable. When the pain and the lies become unbearable, Anne phones home. She speaks French, a soliloquy on the phone. Nobody talks to her, except for her grandson, who is telling her about his faeces. Her connection to the world of her descent is trapped in children's language, talk about excrement and silence. French language, however, remains. Yeremi asks Noeli about what Anne does to or with her. Noeli's gaze is all we see. In this lesbian love story, which is also a story of exploitation, some things remain unspeakable. Bodies collapse, everything is ruinous. Anne meets an old friend. They talk in English. He shows her photographs of a man whom

both of them once loved. Now this love has come back. Anne discusses her problem with her friend and tells him that she wants to stay forever. But Noeli does not phone. Problematically, Anne's decision about staying is not rooted in herself but rather in Noeli's behaviour. In a short dialogue with her friend, Spanish is made into the language of emotional blackmail. Spanish, Noeli's language, the language of the suppressed, is used to linguistically emphasise the situation of suppression in which Noeli finds herself. The friend tries to win Anne back to the life they once had together by using French, the language in which Anne converses with her son and grandson.

> Anne: But, you know, if she doesn't phone, *na voi* …
> Friend: Well, that's good news
> Anne: *Me marcho*
> Friend: Good idea, you need to leave. *Changer les idées.*

Sad White gaze, wounds that do not heal. The exploitation of southern bodies. Sadness in a luxurious home. American English articulates ancient rights. That the past was better is a topic that needs French. A business call needs English. Personal matters too: "I'm very much in love with a Dominican woman". And life goes on.

After the necklace, Noeli receives a visa in her passport. Another token of everlasting love. But she will not wear red shoes on the Champs-Élysées. She leaves with Yeremi on a motorbike. This is the end of the film, and it is a relief: it is good that everything falls into ruins so that Noeli and Yeremi can raise their child away from late capitalism and neocolonialism.

WATCHING HOW STELLA GOT HER GROOVE BACK (1998)

> *I didn't come all the way down to Jamaica to become a slut*
> How Stella Got Her Groove Back

Stella is a romantic comedy about a highly successful, self-sufficient African American woman, played by the stunning Angela Bassett,

who has lost her "groove". She books a trip to Jamaica (based on a television commercial featuring an alluring Rasta man cavorting on the beach), where she meets a very attractive and much younger Jamaican man who enables her to get it back. The film is a full-blown Hollywood fairy tale, complete with a seriocomic turn by Whoopi Goldberg as Delilah, the homely but irrepressible sidekick. The movie does not, of course, raise the spectre of racism, but neither does it worry the issue of class. Rather, it negotiates alterity on the basis of exoticism. What begins as romance tourism, however, turns into the real thing. The "groove" that has been lost (and found), while cast in terms of "having a man in your life", has much greater implications in terms of Stella's self-definition. In its simplistic idealisation of ethno-sexual intimacies, Stella foregrounds only the age difference between her and Winston (Taye Diggs), whom she meets at a posh resort in Jamaica. His status as a desirable—but in no way taboo—"exotic" is established by implicit comparison with a couple of goofy African American athletes on holiday in the same hotel. That status also imbues him with a certain authenticity and wisdom against which Stella's mere common sense and worldliness are bound to fail. Winston's "difference" may be understood in terms of stereotypes that cast the Jamaican (even when he is bound for medical school at Stanford) in a series of binaries that valorise his superiority, not only to the boys from home, but to Stella as well. It is Winston who encourages Stella to follow her bliss (building furniture) rather than returning to her high-powered job in finance.

When Winston first approaches her in the hotel's outdoor café (over breakfast, not late-night cocktails), our expectations naturally prepare us for a hustle. It turns out that, far from being a hustler, he is staying there with a friend and seeking legitimate work. Having just graduated from university, he is resisting his father's wish that he attend medical school and thinks, instead, he might want to be a chef. The film takes great pains to distance Winston from any association with the common "trade" while preserving the sex stud aura glimpsed in the television commercial that first lured Stella to

Jamaica. Not content merely to allow Winston a "natural" nobility, the film stages an awkward meeting between the couple and his arch and disapproving aristocratic parents in their stately mansion.

Winston follows Stella to New York and surprises her at the funeral of Delilah—another sign of his preternatural sensitivity. Yet their relationship does not unfold seamlessly in the States, for he is childlike and enjoys watching simple television shows and playing video games with her son. She is at first reluctant to introduce him to her family. He feels hurt. One wonders, though, despite their physical attraction, what they might possibly have in common. Stella suggests as much. Winston proposes; she hesitates; he has been unable to convince her that age does not matter. He complains that she always wants to be in control. At last, he gives up. He tells her he is returning to Jamaica to attend medical school (this will realign him with the patriarchal imperative). Maybe it's his decision, finally, to "man up", but at the last possible moment, the camera cuts to Stella awaiting him at the airport escalator. This is pure Hollywood schmaltz. They embrace, and the film ends with her parting question**:** *"Ever hear of Stanford"?* No state schools for Winston!

What is the nature of the "groove" that Stella gets back? The early expository scenes make this clear. The film opens to a scenic panorama of wooded hills at dawn, but almost immediately zooms in on a jogging woman and then abruptly cuts to an office sequence in which that same woman—Stella, smartly dressed in a black business suit—is seen impressively fast-talking her way through a series of lucrative financial deals. She moves briskly and competently through these scenes. The film then cuts to a male colleague who appears to be envious and who must, a few shots later, plead for her services to do some damage control on his behalf. At first, she says she's too busy, but then relents. The next sequence finds Stella in an austere-looking spa where women sit in identical seats with identical robes and mudpacks on their faces, soaking their feet in identical tubs. This is where we meet Stella's sisters, who provide us with some necessary information. She is divorced and has a son; she works too hard (which we already

know), and her sisters believe she needs a man. One of them is planning to fix her up with a judge. Stella says she doesn't need a man. Sure.

The next sequence is at the airport; Stella is seeing her son off. He will be spending two weeks with his father. The boy reluctantly turns back to face his mother. She asks what's wrong. He implores her to "have some fun". Following this, the camera pans to a highway out of the city into the hills, and we are introduced to Stella's magnificent home, spacious, with glass walls, immaculately appointed. The glass windows are important because they allow us to see it is raining outside. Stella is alone in the great room, tinkering on a grand piano. The house is a metaphor for Stella, beautiful but incomplete. She turns on the television set and sees a travel ad for Jamaica, portrayed as a sexy and romantic getaway, into which she projects herself. As she admires a close-up of a comely man in dreads, the phone rings, and it is "Judge", the man Stella's sister wants to fix her up with. Indeed, he is an occupation rather than a person. His dry, effete voice and dialogue are juxtaposed with scenes of the Rasta man. We know who wins out. Stella calls her best friend, Delilah, who lives in New York City, to propose a trip to Jamaica. Delilah does not answer, so Stella leaves a message. She immediately calls and leaves another message telling her to forget about the trip; she can't get away. Cut to Stella in another area of the house, a greenhouse/potting shed. It is still raining. Stella reaches for an empty pot as Delilah calls back and convinces her to take the trip. Just as this sequence juxtaposes Judge and the Rasta man, so too does it force the viewer to contemplate the difference between the idealised Stella and the endearing but decidedly funky Delilah (who is later killed off with much pathos). Beauty is rewarded, homeliness punished or, perhaps, punished so beauty can be sufficiently domesticated.

We do not need to know much more in order to understand how "romance tourism" will figure here. Stella's world is materially showy but lacking in romantic love. Too much self-sufficiency, it is

suggested. What is more, as a successful woman—and an African American one at that—she is upsetting the natural order of things. She likes to be in control. A hint of a more "womanly" Stella is revealed in the potting room; this presages her later admission to Winston that her true passion is building furniture, with its resonance of nesting and nurturance. It is significant that she does not wish to study architecture so as to build houses themselves. Stella is out of touch with her "inner woman". Even her young teenage son is wiser than she is—a prescient reminder that age (even life experience) is not a signifier of sagacity. A similar juxtaposition—that between the sexy Rasta on television and the "judge"—points toward a valorisation of the primitive exotic as against the educated and more "appropriate" professional. Finally, the natural beauty that surrounds her home is dampened either by her highly disciplined jogging feet or a soaking rain. Stella's "groove", then, might be her unacknowledged desire to return to a *more "natural"* (*i.e.* patriarchally sanctioned) feminine ideal. Motherhood, apparently, is not sufficient; however, it does further enhance her womanly credentials, especially as contrasted with the characters in *Heading South.*

Stella relies on several twists to what we might consider the "dominant" narrative of female sex tourism. Though we might imagine, and the research suggests as much, that many female sex tourists travel to places like the Caribbean because sex is hard to come by "up here", Stella implies no such thing. Stella's "problem" is not related to her age, except to the extent that it has allowed her to achieve a tremendous amount of professional and financial success and raise an adorable and precious son. She is forty-something, but she's a knockout. The camera is not shy about lingering over her many attributes. What Stella needs to do is to recast her life, and she does so under the romantic tutelage of a man young enough to be her son. At the same time, the film does not permit her to engage in casual sex (other than with Winston, but by that time the film has established him as a serious love interest) or cavort with common "beach boys", because that would be

disruptive to the patriarchal ideal she is to embody. Hence, her love object needs to be an almost appropriate mate. (The "almost" is what drives the romance plot.) Of course, he is too young for her, but this, the movie argues, is his strength. Of course, his class credentials are impeccable. Of course, he will become (in the happily ever after, it is strongly suggested) a prosperous doctor who will take care of her, even as she takes care of future clients by helping them to "feather" their own nests. (Clearly, she is prosperous enough to effect this lifestyle change on her own.) So what's the more disturbing takeaway? Between, let's say, an uptight and fun-challenged beauty, on the one hand, and a witty and charming plain Jane, on the other, the beauty will always come out on top. It gets better. Between a highly successful and mature career woman and a barely post-adolescent boy from the island of Jamaica (this is not Paris or London we're talking about), who's going to be dominant? The boy, of course! Between an age-appropriate professional man from home and that same barely post-adolescent boy, who's going to get the lady? The boy, of course! And these outcomes are all glowingly endorsed by the film.

Stella's departures from McMillan's novel are telling and underscore the extent to which the movie seeks to more subtly align its main characters with patriarchal ideals and soften Stella's black particularity. In the first place, McMillan's Stella is a far saltier character than her film counterpart, both in terms of her language and behaviour. She's not convinced that being a "slut" in Negril is the worst thing one could do. Unlike the Angela Bassett character, she does not avoid black vernacular speech. What is more, she has some problems with "feminine odour" and, from time to time, opts to forgo 8/19 the panties when dressing for the evening. Finally, she's commodity-driven, an over-the-top exemplar of rampant consumerism. Evidently, the writers felt she needed some cleaning up. Here's how they did it. The novel kills off Delilah before the narrative begins. So, the movie, by keeping Delilah alive for a while, allows her to embody Stella's racially distinct voice and gutsy personality. (Whoopi Goldberg's presence saves the movie from

terminal blandness.) This leaves Stella free to inhabit a more idealised (and ladylike) persona. Delilah's presence in the movie, moreover, is a constant reminder that outer appearances are aligned with inner worth. This becomes clear on the first morning in Jamaica when both characters stand side by side on the beach in preparation for a run (which Delilah, by the way, forgoes). Beauty wins out every time. The movie also remakes Winston; in the novel, he is poor, despite having a doctor for a father. More importantly, he rejects medical school in favour of becoming a chef. Evidently, a humble chef-hero was not found to resonate in quite the same way as an aristocratic doctor-hero would in terms of patriarchal imperative.

WATCHING THE WHITE MASAI (2005)

We begin with a beach and a voice that speaks about memories of a holiday. They should have left it that way: a beach upside-down and a voice that babbles along. Why not? But the voice belongs to a woman who is on vacation at a Kenyan beach resort and, unfortunately, wishes to stay there to live with a man. Therefore, we have to leave the beach.

The man is Jacky Ido, who pretends to be a Samburu warrior, and the woman is a revenant of Leni Riefenstahl: tall, blonde, big eyes, although the author of the autobiography is dark-haired and average-sized. The beach resort is the Africana Sea Lodge in Diani Beach, now closed. It is as it is, and the babbling Leni-woman goes shopping for dope with her dopey fiancé. "Look, a Maasai!", he shouts, as we see Jacky in his first scene in the film. There he is, the Maasai, in the very typical pose of the Maasai warrior that can be found in each and every travel guide.

The couple have some problems in Mombasa. Chased by three Kenyans who probably want their money, the chased and the chasers run through the crowded streets of Mombasa without being

observed by any of the Mombasan people around. Just as if they were extras from another movie, they are not included in the action of the film. It is then that the two Maasai show up in the middle of the food market as the saviours, the phoenixes. The Maasai-Jacky says, "Jambo. Any problems?" The fiancé says, "We are a little lost. Which way to the ferry?". Big eyes. Subtitles throughout, translating English into German. Then there are gazes. The Maasai-Jacky turns to his fellow Maasai and says something hard to understand. Now there are no subtitles. We can only guess that this is Maa for "Let us show them the way to the ferry". More gazes. Many Africans on the ferry, but they do not talk to the strangers, again, as if they were not there. Just as they do not seem to be there in Likoni, where the couple are again overburdened by their environment and do not ask anybody for the matatu to Ukunda. The Maasai warriors return to the plot as the saviours and guide the couple to the matatu.

The woman, fiancé and the Maasai take the *matatu* from Likoni to Ukunda, and are dropped off right in front of their hotel at Diani Beach. This is ridiculous, because in reality no matatus go to Diani Beach. The woman says, "Wanna come with us for a drink?", and Jacky asks his co-Maasai something that is hard to understand. The resort photographer says, "Picture please. Smile please. Thank you. Karibuni". The resort security guard says, "Stop! Residents only". The woman says, "Sie sind meine Gäste! They are my guests!" – "Sorry, residents only". – "Wait, wait". – "It's ok, […]" (something that is hard to understand).

While one wonders why somebody should take the Likoni ferry forth and back, wearing Maasai folklore working gear in a Mombasa market, the film goes on. They go to a bar, which they say is the Bush Baby Disco, even though it looks like the Shakatak, a disco that really exists in Diani. "Do you wanna dance?", the woman asks. Jacky replies something hard to understand. The DJ plays E-Sir featuring Brenda, "Moss Moss: slowly, slowly we will get there".

The heat of the night and the music cast a spell on the woman and the others. The dopey fiancé appears and starts a fight with the Maasai. He pushes the Maasai away from his woman and says

something hard to understand. We assume that this is Maa for "Hands off". But it is too late.

The woman decides to leave her fiancé and stay in Kenya. Had she decided to stay in Thailand instead, she could have seen how the pattern of her film also existed elsewhere, as a repetition of colonial tropes of love and greed and passion, a globalised plot. Just like the take of the fiancé in bed, mosquito net around him. Will we not see this yet again in *Paradies: Liebe?* But it is as it is. She goes back to the Bush Baby Shakatak Disco and meets people whom she can ask about the whereabouts of the Maasai. He went home, they tell her.

"Where is home? – Barsaloi, in Samburuland. – How do I get there? – Take a bus to Nairobi. – Nairobi. – In Nairobi, you ask a bus to Maralal. – Maralal. – In Maralal, you ask for Elisabeth. – Elisabeth". Kenya is a really smooth country to travel in. It seems as if nothing can hinder a tourist from getting around with the only three landmarks that are necessary to find one in a million. Nairobi, Maralal, Elisabeth. The prospect of ending up in a far-away place needs the help of the last landmark, a European lady who can help to find the intended goal: Barsaloi and the Maasai, who is actually a Samburu.

So she leaves: the beach, the resort, her life, everything. And finds the bus and rides on it all night. Next to her sits a woman who is sick. "Are you ok? – Malaria. Very bad. – Oh. – Are you a doctor? – No". The stereotype jumps out of this scene and grabs our throats and we are depressed, just as we were when we were connected to *Hitler,* the *Oktoberfest, Sauerkraut* and *Heidi Klum*.

Maralal is not mentioned in the guidebook. It does not matter. It seems as if the woman has been travelling without a travel guide anyway. And without a visa. Her flight has left her fiancé as well, and the first part of the film leaves an aftertaste of sex tourism that should not have been. It should have been the feeling of wildness, love and liberty. This feeling is transmitted through gazes out of the bus window, where we again find the already familiar pose of the Maasai warrior. We switch off the TV set and go out for lunch.

WATCHING PARADISE LOVE (2012)

While Teresa is on her way to a well-deserved holiday in Kenya, everything is prepared for her. Men clean the pool, and a bus waits for her and the other newly arrived guests. A tour guide introduces them to the local language, Swahili: "Jambo! Hakuna matata". As Teresa repeats these magic words, the bus reaches the gate of the Flamingo Beach Resort at Shanzu. Staff members sing the song Jambo Bwana for the new guests. Long, symmetrical, static takes give it a disastrous ambience. Then the room, the view, a monkey on the balcony: this is paradise.

Love comes next, as Teresa takes a drink at the bar. She sits with a friend. "This is crazy. The air. One feels different. The smell of it all". Her friend has been there before, she knows how it is: these black bodies, how they smell of coconut, how one wants to bite this skin. The biting of black coconut skin can be seen throughout the film: biting of skin while sitting on a motorcycle, biting while dancing. Beautiful bodies with large genitals. She has taught her Kenyan lover some German: "geiler Bock" – "horny ram". Shrill laughter. Foreignness is tempting, and it is quite often flavoured with the teaching of completely unspeakable words, which are not unspeakable due to their taboo meaning, but rather to the unbelievable foreign combination of consonant clusters without any vowel to fix the linguistic problem. Austrian words like "Speckschwartl" – "bacon rind" or "Blunzengröstl" – "roasted black pudding" contradict Swahili phonology. These words are used to expose the Other, in this case, Josphath the waiter, who gets ridiculed. More shrill laughter. And Josphath is unable to pronounce the words. We are unable to bear the shrill laughter.

Later, they talk about their pubic hair. They will not shave themselves because here, in Africa, anything wild and natural will be appreciated. "They take you as you are". And the friend leaves, with Musa, her lover, on the motorbike she gave him. Teresa goes to the beach and meets Beach Boys. "Karibu, komm here -

Welcome, come here - Willkommen Afrika - Welcome to Africa - Hakuna matata - No problem.

Later, dancing in a small café and making an attempt to have sex. As long as no language is involved (dancing, gazing), the paradise is intact. Once language comes in (at the bar, during sex), it is spoilt. "Let me give you my gift". Teresa meets another man, Munga, whom she provides with a sentimental education. But even then, everything is ruinous, love and money, this cannot work. Teresa goes to a small bar and meets another Beach Boy. He is concerned: "Ich kümmer mich an" – "I care on you". She replies, "Ich kümmer mich an" – "what is this supposed to mean?" You'd better speak proper German".

Stereotypes and clichés are consciously transferred. In probably the most cringe scene, when a hired male sex worker dances for the four Austrian women, the scene is made even more cringe through its verbal exaggeration of spoken clichés. There are scenes in which the women yell, "We want an African dance!", "This is Africa! This is being wild! Is this foreplay?", "Look, like a carnivore!" and "Mombasa express!".

Sex, lies, sadness, greed. A display of colonial cruelty, bodies possessed by others, the colour of the skin as the dividing principle.

Rudolph Valentino's last words are said to have been, "Don't worry, chief, it will be alright".

Conclusion

There is much debate about whether reality precedes representation or it is just the opposite. Studies examining the links between sex tourism in representations and reality have explored a variety of topic areas, and report that it is the representation, *i.e.* the "production of desire" or, more precisely, the films which draw people to specific destinations in the pursuit of sexual pleasure. Other studies also find that sex has always been there in the "social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each

other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of dominion and subordination, like colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out across the globe today" as Mary Louise Pratt, in her groundbreaking study *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (Pratt 2007, 59), points out. At a general level, we can say that if tourism comprises an important part of ritual life in late modernity, then we should not be surprised to find sexuality so ingrained in the aspirations and practices of tourists, because a heightened sense of sexuality and playfulness typically accompanies human rituals. In the case of western societies that have generally surrounded sexuality with all manner of taboos, injunctions and rules, it is little surprise that for most of the history of tourism, sexual encounters were widely hoped for and encouraged. We can say that, throughout the world, sexual taboos are often stringent, freedom of sexual access is often obstructed and difficult, and the attainment of sexual pleasure is often blocked by social, economic or physical interventions. At the same time, the media and cultural forces of globalisation pour out a steady stream of suggestions and images that sexual pleasure, fulfilment and fantasy are not only desirable but also properly attainable, healthy and good. Here is the Dionysian impulse being projected onto a global screen, and all forms of repression and denial of the body are being eroded.

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WHITE GIRL IN ASIA: MOBILITY AND SELF-REALISATION IN JUST JAECKIN'S "EMMANUELLE" (1974)

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Abstract. From time immemorial, mobility has always played an important part in the lives of individuals. Some have migrated for health issues, some for various social and political ones, and some for a change in their daily routine. In this process, travel has not only fulfilled their primary aims but has also gifted various experiences which have helped them to relook, relearn and reconstruct their identity. Generally, when a Western traveller's encounter with Asian destinations gets portrayed in the media, many issues arise. Issues like 'Otherization', representations, or the Eurocentric gaze create huge buzz among the audience. Especially when the traveller is a female, these issues become more problematic. Things like Voyeurism and male gaze increase the list. Just Jaeckin's *Emmanuelle* (1974), loosely based on an autobiographical erotic novel by Emmanuelle Arsan, portrays these issues.

The plot of the book and film features Emmanuelle, a young, rich, and lonely housewife who undertakes a journey from Paris to Thailand and explores different spheres of sexual pleasures. Emmanuelle's journey is twofold. Firstly, it refers to her sexual mobility, from innocence to experience. Secondly, it shows her spatial journey, her transition from Paris to Thailand, from a studio-like, lonely apartment to the busy markets and a countryside villa. This article attempts to read how mobility transforms Emmanuelle, and how the interaction between global and local has been represented in the movie.

Keywords: Emmanuelle, mobility, transformation, Asia, cosmopolitan, local

EMMANUELLE'S SEXUAL MOBILITY: FROM INNOCENCE TO EXPERIENCE

The film starts with a melodious song composed by Pierre Bachelet. It describes the lonely life of Emmanuelle and suggests

that she is young, twenty years old, almost like a child. She has only one lover, that is her husband. The song further suggests that her experience in relationships is not sufficient, and to be wise, she must explore the long journey of love with different lovers. The song shows the idyllic, luxurious life of Emmanuelle, whose day passes by making tea, snacks, reading magazines, and evaluating her nude photographs. She boards a flight to Bangkok, and her experiments with lovers begin. Her husband, Jean, a member of the French Embassy in Bangkok, is an advocate of polygamy and always encourages his wife to experiment with different partners. Emmanuelle's life starts transforming the moment after she leaves Paris. On the flight, she makes love with two strangers. After coming to Bangkok, she gets introduced to the elite lifestyles of the wives of foreign officials, their extramarital relationships, gossips, clubs, etc. There she meets Marie-Ange and Ariane. Marie-Ange initially helps her to come out of the guilt and hesitations regarding her interaction with the strangers on the plane. She introduces Mario to her, who plays a suggestively important role in the climax scene. In one of the parties, Emmanuelle gets attracted to Bee, an architect. This brief bond is probably the only relationship where she gives her everything to impress her. She leaves her costly villa, dress, high heels, sports car and happily accompanies Bee in her rural workplace. After spending two days in the lap of nature, Bee confesses to Emmanuelle that she likes her but does not love her. Emmanuelle's first time experiences rejection, cries her heart out in the rain and returns to Jean. After the heartbreak agrees to meet Mario to become an expert in lovemaking. But Mario takes her to unusual places like opium dens, gambling shops and forces her to physically interact with the natives from lower-class backgrounds. He even instructs two natives to rape her. Emmanuelle's adventure reaches its climax when, in the last scene, she is shown naked before the mirror, applying bold, exotic makeup with confidence. The makeup suggests her emotional maturity, and her understanding that in order to give pleasure to the body, she should not stop the quest

of making love. Pleasure and sexual partners should not be restricted to any phenomenon of class or gender. Alexander J. Klemm, in his article, "The Legacy of Emmanuelle: Oriental Desire and Interracial Encounters in European Films Set in Thailand 1974-1980", comments on this scene:

> The final impression indicates that Emmanuelle has grown as a person. She is now liberated from social conformity, taboos, and male definitions of her body and character. She has taken full control of herself and her future. In the spirit of the 1970s sexual liberation movement, Emmanuelle was viewed as an affirmation and a celebration of the female body. (Klemm)

This way, the film suggests Emmanuelle's mobility. Her journey from innocence to experience. However, this journey presents many questions for the audience. Although Just Jaeckin, on the one hand, shows how one must explore all kinds of love for sexual fulfilment, he also criticises this attitude through the character of Bee. All the elite women, except Bee, do not do any work. All of them are financially dependent on their rich husbands. They spend time in spas, clubs, and others' beds. Bee, on the other hand, does not have time for these adventures because she has to work and has tight schedules. She ignores Emmanuelle's initial advances and rejects her proposal. As she is a working woman, the elite ones, except Emmanuelle, do not like her. Through this conflict, is it not the director suggesting that such sexual adventures do not possess any practicality in reality? Is not he suggesting that such explorations are limited only to a certain section of society, especially to those who do not have any work in their lives? Klemm goes on to comment that the entire film can be a dream sequence of Emmanuelle as it opens and closes, showing her in front of her mirror (Klemm).

Emmanuelle's Spatial Journey: Voyeurism, Gazes and Interactions between Cosmopolitan and Local in Thailand

Voyeuristic male gaze refers to the practice of gaining sexual pleasure from watching others when they are naked or engaged in

sexual activity. Laura Mulvey, in her essay *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, has discussed this phenomenon in detail. In the section "Woman as Image, Man as Bearer of the Look", Mulvey says that traditional film narratives represent the female body as an exhibition. The body thus becomes an object whose function is to provide visual pleasure to the subject, the looker. She decodes three mediums of looks that penetrate the female body on screen- the gaze of the camera towards the object, the gaze of the audience towards the object, and the gaze of the characters towards each other. While male gaze, in simple terms, refers to a male (subject) gazing upon a female (object), tourist gaze refers to a tourist gazing upon the exotic 'other'.

The film *Emmanuelle* is set in Bangkok, infamously popular for being a hotspot of sex tourism. These destinations generally cater the western male tourists. They gaze and consume the 'inferior' exotic female other. Now, the problem is that the protagonist, the tourist in this film, is a woman. As the films fall under the erotica genre, creators have made a profitable negotiation. They have obviously shown the 'exotic others' as objects, but have also included the European heroine's slender, white body in the package to enhance the sensational appeal of the final product. The solo traveller heroine is given some 'adventures' as well, which are designed to entertain the male audience or specifically the voyeuristic male gaze.

Emmanuelle's experience in Bangkok presents the conflict between the cosmopolitan and local from the very beginning. In one of the initial scenes, John and Emmanuelle visit a local market to buy some flowers and a huge group of local children are seen begging to Emmanuelle with their chaotic voices. The men cutting the head of the chicken from its body scare her. She nearly faints and, in her hallucination, sees the huge crowd making faces at her, ready to attack. She says, "Let's leave. It's horrible. This boy with the chicken. This bagger! I hate this country" (Jaeckin 8:34). The comment shows her hypocrisy and racial attitude towards the locals. She can visit a foreign country, can lead a high-class lifestyle,

and can have various food items made of chicken. But she cannot tolerate the way it is done. She cannot tolerate poverty!

John and Emmanuelle are shown to be open to extramarital affairs. This can be interpreted as an intentional attempt to show the liberal attitude of the European men in contrast to Asians. This becomes clearer in the first sexual encounter of the film between John and Emmanuelle. When the couple seems making love in their white bed, surrounded by a mosquito net, the native servants Ap and Noi peep through the window and enjoy the scene. The native man gets prompted by Emmanuelle's white figure and tries to take advantage of the female maid. The idyllic sensuality in the white, beautiful bedroom however vanishes and the scene takes a tensed turn when Ap chases Noi with all his power and goes on to rape her in an open jungle. The camera again focuses on the female maid's breast and genital but with a sheer contrast to the first one. Although the woman with her shy expressions and chasings seems interested in doing the intercourse, the man gives her no scope to open up. He is not interested in foreplay or anything. Rather he roughly torns her clothes with all his power and rapes her. The scene is a clear indication of the director's attempt to show that locals, more specifically Asians, are 'savages'. The scene also shows how women from the third world developing countries have a sharp contrast with the women of the European countries in terms of pleasure. And how their abilities depend on money, class and status.

The portrayal of the 'exotic other' should also be taken into consideration. All native women shown in the movie are either massage girls, bar dancers or maids. Native men are either drivers, servants or opium addicts. At the go-go bar, the local dancers undress themselves and the camera, again, pans around and zooms on their breasts, butts and genitalia. The most disturbing one occurs when, in the ping pong show, a woman penetrates a cigarette into her vagina several times to show the trick and 'entertain' the audience. Sylvia Kristel, in her book *Undressing Emmanuelle: A memoir,* has described how the infamous cigarette

scene was introduced by the producer, much against Jack Jaeckin's wishes, to attract wider attention from the audience, to include a 'shocking scene' like in *The Last Tango in Paris (*Kristel 141).

Leila Wimmer, however, in her article "Forever Emmanuelle: Sylvia Kristel and Softcore Cult Stardom", sees Bangkok as an empowering space. Wimmer says that "She begins her sexual and moral liberation from Western society's sexual taboos once she has travelled to the foreign space of Orient and is thus distanced and removed from home" (199). Although she fears the Orient—nearly fainting, hallucinating, and perceiving its people as 'others'—the final scene, in which Emmanuelle engages in a passionate encounter with a native Thai man, suggests the director's attempt to depict a union between the cosmopolitan and the local.

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"Bringing off a Successful Swindle": The Educational Climate and Its Capitalist Discontents in Orwell's "A Clergyman's Daughter"

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Abstract. Compared to George Orwell's best-known works, *1984* (1949) and *Animal Farm* (1945), his earlier fiction has attracted significantly less critical attention. Yet, these novels deserve attention for the way Orwell draws on his own life, lending them some autobiographical quality, and for their exploration of many of the same socio-political concerns that preoccupied him as a journalist and essayist. One such concern is his representation of the lower tier of the private school system—an interest shaped by his experience as a private school teacher. This essay examines how Orwell's second novel, *A Clergyman's Daughter* (1935), reflects the capitalist ethos that was present in the educational climate of fourth-rate schools. By tracing the milestones of the protagonist Dorothy's teaching career, I argue that her failure to reform the curriculum and her powerless resistance to Mrs Creevy, the proprietress of Ringwood House Academy, expose deeper structural flaws within the educational institutions of suburban London in the 1930s.

Keywords: Orwell, A Clergyman's Daughter, education, capitalism, suburban London, 1930s

Unlike *1984* (1949) and *Animal Farm* (1945), George Orwell's best-known works, his early fiction has received less attention from critics. As Orwell biographer Bernard Crick points out, in the case of *A Clergyman's Daughter* (1935), Orwell's second novel, this can be attributed to the belief that *Clergyman* "has some good parts but, overall, is embarrassingly bad" (Crick 2019, xxi), an opinion held by Orwell himself (Orwell 1990, v; cf. 1968, 141), who did not want it translated or reprinted after his death (Crick 2019, 214). The

argument presented in this essay is based on the conviction that Orwell's early fiction is just as worthy of attention as his later, more widely read novels (cf. Smyer 1975, 36). The interest of these early fictional works lies in how Orwell drew inspiration from his own life, making them autobiographical to some degree, and how he explored many of the same socio-political issues that he was preoccupied with as a journalist and essayist[1]. Among them, I shall focus on Orwell's representation of the lower segment of the private school system, through a close reading of the fourth chapter of *Clergyman*, which is based on Orwell's experience as a private school teacher (Crick 2019, 215; cf. Pearce 1992, 383). In 1932–33, he taught at two all-boys' schools in west London and began writing the novel after the end of his short-lived teaching career. The main character, Dorothy Hare, having experienced an attack of amnesia followed by a series of tribulations, takes up a job at a fourth-rate all-girls private school. It is here that Dorothy "begins to feel that at last she has found a career that will give some meaning and direction to her life" (Smyer, 1975, 31). As Richard I. Smyer also points out, the undercurrent to Dorothy's life story is that "modern civilisation […] is now committed to a worship of money which divides and alienates men from their fellows" (1975, 31; cf. 1975, 37). Following this line of thought, the present essay shall examine how this novel depicts the capitalist sentiments pervading the educational climate of fourth-rate schools. Through the examination of the milestones of Dorothy's teaching career, I argue that her failure to reform the curriculum and her futile opposition against Mrs Creevy, Ringwood House Academy's proprietress, exposes the fundamental institutional flaws in the educational system of suburban London during the 1930s.

While she comes to grow into her role as schoolmistress, initially Dorothy is reluctant to take the offer of what is to be her first proper job since having regained her consciousness on New Kent Road. When her cousin Sir Thomas announces that he has secured the position, she points out that "[t]here isn't a single subject [she] can teach. […] You have to be properly qualified to be a teacher"

(Orwell 1990, 196). Sir Thomas, however, dismisses her worries, saying that "[t]eaching's the easiest job in the world. Good thick ruler—rap 'em over the knuckles. They'll be glad enough to get hold of a decently brought up young woman to teach the youngsters their ABC" (*Idem*). He trusts Dorothy's ability to handle the job, both due to her middle-class upbringing and because he knows that the school she is to teach at is a fourth-rate one, not a prestigious institution concerned with the maintenance of high educational standards. The narrator's remark is a clear indication of how, despite Sir Thomas' assertion, or perhaps because of it, Dorothy remains distrustful: "what kind of school it could be that would take on a total stranger, and unqualified at that, in the middle of the term, Dorothy could hardly imagine" (1990, 196).

Ringwood House Academy for Girls is located on Brough Road, in Southbridge, "a repellent suburb ten or a dozen miles from London" (1990, 197)[2], which is "pullulated with small private schools" (1990, 198). Upon her arrival, Dorothy's initial suspicions are confirmed: her heart sinks at the sight of the "mean, gloomy house" (1990, 198), and she is dismayed to meet the proprietress, the gaunt-looking and taciturn Mrs Creevy, "a person who would make use of you and then throw you aside with no more compunction than if you had been a worn-out scrubbing brush" (1990, 199)—this description might be seen as foreshadowing the brevity of Dorothy's employment. It soon becomes apparent that Mrs Creevy attributes great importance to keeping up appearances. For example, she likes to employ degree holders because, according to her, although most parents probably do not know what "BA" stands for, the presence of "a few letters" after the teachers' names makes the prospectus more appealing (1990, 200). Mrs Creevy's cold mannerisms and commanding presence also manifest themselves in her philosophy of running the school. She lectures Dorothy on how it is "the moral side" that counts most with the parents and suggests that Dorothy will not get on well with the girls if she has "a weak nature" (1990, 200).

Even more important is the capitalist logic that is behind Mrs

Creevy's methods, and which the narrator describes in detail. Mrs Creevy lives in fear that the smallest incident might threaten the future of her institution: for her, the school functions as a business venture[3], which, although twenty years have passed, is still in line with Orwell's own recollection of the way schools were run in the 1910s, when he was a child (*See* Pearce 1992, 378)[4]. In *Clergyman*, the narrator states that Mrs Creevy's profit-oriented mindset is common—she "merely [says] aloud what most people in her position think but never say" (Orwell 1990, 239). Mrs Creevy explains the logic behind her educational philosophy as follows: "There's only one thing that matters on a school, and that's the fees. […] It's the fees I'm after, not *developing the children's minds*. […] The fees come first, and everything comes afterwards. […] [I]t's the parents that pay the fees, and it's the parents you've got to think about. Do what the parents want—that's our rule here" (1990, 235—italics in the original). While some lower-rate private schools offer education that is reasonable for their tuition fee (1990, 240), as the narrator remarks, "there is the same fundamental evil in all of them; that is, they have ultimately no purpose except to make money" (1990, 239). Although Mrs Creevy is proud that she has never finished a book in her life (1990, 215), her attitude is only symptomatic of how anyone is able to open a school without prior qualification as an educator (1990, 239–40), due to the lack of government regulation and inspection of schools that are not "recognised" (1990, 241)[5]. From a structural point of view, the capitalist microcosm of these schools entails that the parents are customers, whose "puritanical suspiciousness" (Smyer 1975, 33) of the quality of education has to be navigated between each paycheck, especially considering how, as the narrator remarks, "the parents of children at fourth-rate private schools are utterly impossible" (Orwell 1990, 226). The parents themselves are heavily implicated in the capitalist economy of the school system—"they look on 'schooling' exactly as they look on a butcher's bill or a grocer's bill" (1990, 226). The education provided at Mrs Creevy's institution is superficial at best, and useless at worst: the production of appealing

handwriting (1990, 210), "the parroting of read-made French phrases" (1990, 210), and the decoration of homework with "applauding comments" (1990, 223)[6] are all "cheap and easy ways" of impressing the parents, who are "willing to swallow an almost unlimited amount" of lies (1990, 223). That "everything that the girls had been taught was in reality aimed at the parents" (1990, 210; cf. 1990, 223) takes Dorothy only a few days to realise. The importance attributed to the parents also manifests itself in how the daughters of those who Mrs Creevy has categorised as "'good payers'" receive better treatment at dinner (1990, 213), resulting in unequal treatment among the students. Finally, as the narrator remarks, in third-rate and fourth-rate private schools, there is "a sort of privacy going on" (1990, 263): as in capitalist economy at large, teachers are constantly competing with one another, aiming to convince parents and, in this way, "steal" students from rival schools (1990, 263). Thus, in the capitalist world of fourth-rate private schools, if the parents are the customers, the children are the products.

Dorothy is put to work immediately after her arrival, teaching a class of twenty-one girls of various ages, capabilities, and backgrounds. "[C]atching and holding attention starts when a teacher first meets a class" (Dennis 2007, 63), therefore her first task consists of winning over the girls, who are well-behaved but prejudiced towards their new teacher. Dorothy begins with assessing the girls' knowledge in various school subjects, discovering that although she feels herself underqualified—like an "impostor" (Orwell 1990, 207; cf. 1990, 214)—she does possess knowledge of everyday facts that she can teach the girls (1990, 207–208). To her despair, the girls "knew nothing, absolutely nothing" (1990, 208), and "were so unused to being questioned that it was often difficult to get answers out of them at all. It was obvious that whatever they knew they had learned in an entirely mechanical manner, and they could only gape in a sort of dull bewilderment when asked to think for themselves" (1990, 209). The key to her success as a teacher appears to be how she realises that all these girls have ever known are "the mind-deadening pedagogic rituals" (Smyer 1975, 32–33)

favoured by Mrs Creevy, which, similarly to the methods that have been already in use during Orwell's childhood, are based on rote learning (Pearce 1992, 378). As Dorothy also realises, the only subjects that have been seriously taught are handwriting and arithmetic, the former practised via "a dreadful routine called 'copies'—copying things out of text-books or off the blackboard" (Orwell 1990, 210). The result is that some of the girls "seemed barely able to read and write", and one of them "could not even count" (1990, 210), which makes Dorothy "amazed and horrified" and feel as if she had "stepped back into the mid-nineteenth century" (1990, 211). At the end of Dorothy's first day as a teacher, the children express their appreciation by putting together their money to buy her a flower bouquet (1990, 213), making "a feeling of loyalty and affection" spring up in her heart (1990, 214): "This school was *her* school; she would work for it and be proud of it, and make every effort to turn it from a place of bondage into a place human and decent. […] [S]he would do her best; she would do whatever willingness and energy could do to rescue these children from the horrible darkness in which they had been kept" (1990, 214—italics in the original). While Dorothy's efforts are genuine, at this point she still regards the children as a personal project that can give her purpose after having been forbidden to return home.

Mrs Creevy's educational approach is not uncommon for the time the novel is set in. It is, however, somewhat ambiguous, considering how, beginning in the 1920s, there were reform attempts in English and Welsh educational policies, led by Sir Henry Hadow. The 1931 Hadow Report urged for education conceptualised "in terms of activity and experience, rather than of knowledge to be acquired and facts to be stored" (Hadow 1931, 139) alongside "an adequate amount of 'drill' in reading, writing and arithmetic" (140). Dorothy's approach is in many ways similar to the methods proposed by the Hadow Report—she "[breaks the girls] in to the habit of thinking for themselves" (Orwell 1990, 220), and feels that it is her job to provide her students with the kind of education that would be more applicable later in life. In fact, she

appears to be a natural teacher: she discovers project-based teaching on her own when she gives the task of creating a map of Europe in plasticine (1990, 220), a project so popular with the children that there is talk of creating a map of the world using papier mâché (1990, 222), and she also has them create a chart of historical events by hand (1990, 222). All of these projects are possibly inspired by her previous costume-making endeavours in her home village (1990, 58). Soon afterwards, Dorothy begins to identify with her teaching job: "This was more than a mere job; it was—so it seemed to her—*a mission, a life-purpose*. Trying to awaken the dulled minds of these children, trying to undo the swindle that had been worked upon them in the name of education—that, surely, was something to which you could give yourself heart and soul" (1990, 226—italics mine). For Smyer, this is the defining moment of Dorothy's teaching career: "the children's eagerness to come to grips with history, the enthusiasm they feel in making history, as it were, instead of merely learning about it in a superficial, mindless way, is matched by Dorothy's readiness to embrace teaching as a life-long career" (1975, 32; cf. 36). Her commitment to providing the girls with a proper education is also visible in how she spends her own meagre salary to acquire textbooks (Orwell 1990, 219; cf. 1990, 222), which, she feels, are better suited than those 19th-century, outdated books that are approved by Mrs Creevy (1990, 211–12)[7]. Finally, Dorothy is so absorbed in teaching that she is ready to ignore Mrs Creevy and the unfavourable circumstances of her life as a whole: "She saw quite clearly that Mrs Creevy was an odious woman and that her own position was virtually that of a slave; but it did not greatly worry her. Her work was too absorbing, too all-important. In comparison with it, her own comfort and even her future hardly seemed to matter" (1990, 218–19).

Dorothy's teaching philosophy might be interpreted in yet another gender-oriented way. A board on the front of Ringwood House Academy advertises that "music and dancing [are] taught", as opposed to the nearby boys' school that specialises in "book-keeping and commercial arithmetic" (1990, 198). The gendered

nature of the curriculum is typical of the period the novel is set in, the 1930s. Despite having achieved suffrage, women's opportunities were still in many ways limited when it came to education and participating in public affairs. In light of this, Dorothy might be seen as a feminist figure: she wishes to prepare the girls for life outside of school by providing them with an education that falls outside of the scope of what at the time was believed to be the only useful knowledge for young girls—the knowledge of music, dancing, and French. Key parts of Ringwood House Academy's curriculum, all these subjects are seen as useful for when, after school, the life goal of many lower-class girls is to entice potential—financially better-off—husbands, and, once married, entertain them at dinner parties[8]. In this way, Dorothy might be seen as embodying another aspect of the educational system imagined by the Hadow Committee, who already in their first 1923 report argued for the improvement of the education of science subjects in girls' schools and of English in boys' schools (see Gillard 1998; cf. Hadow 1923).

Although Dorothy "finds teaching to be an emotionally rewarding way of life" (Smyer 1975, 32) and would prefer to remain at Ringwood House Academy, Mrs Creevy finds her methods unsatisfactory: "From now on I'm going to have things done *my* way, not *your* way. […] I dare say you and me can get on all right if you'll drop these newfangled ideas of yours" (Orwell 1990, 235—italics in the original). The main reason Mrs Creevy has Dorothy return to the original curriculum is that Dorothy's efforts run counter to the school's capitalist, profit-oriented model. Religion also plays a central role in shaping the school's climate. This becomes especially evident when Dorothy is reprimanded by Mrs Creevy in front of a group of nonconformist parents, who are offended that she read aloud a passage from *Macbeth* in class containing the word "womb". Gerald Gould, Chief Reader of Victor Gollancz, the publisher of several of Orwell's works, found the school scenes "quite ludicrous as a representation of what could possibly go on today" (Gould qtd. in Crick 2019, 212), which, as Crick writes, Orwell "was firmly to deny" (2019, 212). If, as Crick

implies, Orwell did not intend his work to be a caricature, it might be argued that through the figure of Mrs Creevy he provides a powerful critique of the lower segment of the private school system. Importantly, as in the world of the novel, Mrs Creevy is the figurehead of these institutions, and Dorothy's attempt to implement innovative teaching methods might be seen as going beyond a professional and personal conflict. Rather, the conflict should be seen as the clash of two different, seemingly irreconcilable ideologies, in terms of teaching, capitalist sentiment, and religion. Additionally, in a Dickensian vein, Dorothy could also be seen as embodying basic human qualities in the face of adversity. The clash comes to a symbolic end via the return to the pre-Dorothy state of affairs—"the reassertion of Mrs Creevy's authoritarian and reactionary control over Dorothy's classroom" (Smyer 1975, 36)—even while Dorothy is still employed at the school. The irreconcilable nature of the conflict is formulated in explicit terms once Dorothy—who is already in a precarious position due to being employed without a written contract—is fired without notice (Orwell 1990, 226).

While Dorothy accomplishes a temporary breakthrough at Ringwood House Academy through the adoption of more child-friendly, practical skills-oriented, and project-based teaching practices, she is unable to make any lasting changes on the scale of the whole system. Due to Mrs Creevy's influence, Dorothy's anti-capitalist and potentially feminist reforms go unappreciated by parents, who desire frivolous results instead of the acquisition of more versatile knowledge. The fact that this chapter of *Clergyman* closes on a bleak note might also be seen in light of the themes of Orwell's next novel, *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* (1936), a work that is highly critical of the worship of the "Money God" and the advertising industry. It appears that, at the time of publishing these two novels, in 1935–36, Orwell did not expect capitalism-permeated English society to take a turn for the better.

NOTES

1. "Underlying Orwell's continuous attacks on specific examples of economic exploitation, journalistic lying, and political bullying is a suspicion, which gradually hardens into certitude, that Western civilisation has for some time been moving toward moral and social calamity" (Smyer 1975, 33; cf. 1975, 36).
2. Orwell had trouble publishing Clergyman due to his publisher's fear of libel. One of the schools Orwell taught at, Frays College in Uxbridge, fit the description of the location of Dorothy's school (Crick 2019, 212).
3. Although it is beyond the scope of the present essay to examine the wider implications of the novel's critique of capitalism, it should be noted that it is possible to interpret Mrs Creevy as a distorted mother-figure for Dorothy. Alternatively, she can be regarded as the counterpart of Dorothy's capitalistic father, "whose concern for his own investments and material comforts blinds him to his parishioners' spiritual needs" (Smyer 1975, 37), just like how the stingy Mrs Creevy ignores her students' educational needs.
4. Orwell wrote about his childhood memories, including the time spent at St. Cyprians, a preparatory school, in his extended autobiographical essay titled "Such, Such Were the Joys" (1952). According to Robert Pearce, Orwell's resentment towards St. Cyprians, and possibly towards private schools in general (1992, 384), might have been one of the motivating factors behind this work. In fact, "[t]he venom of his animosity against the school is written into almost every line of his memoir" (1992, 383). This might be viewed in a wider context: as Nel Noddings points out, Orwell is one intellectual figure among many who "found school boring and unsupportive of their creativity" (2003, 216).
5. "Only the tiny minority of 'recognised' schools—less than one in ten—are officially tested to decide whether they keep up a reasonable educational standard. As for the others, they are free to teach or not teach exactly as they choose. No one controls or inspects them except the children's parents—the blind leading the blind" (Orwell 1990, 241). The end of the quote refers to how the parents of children attending fourth-rate private schools "have only the dimmest idea of what is meant by education" (1990, 226). The aforementioned parts of the text might be viewed as examples of *Clergyman*'s "journalistic passages", where "it's difficult to distinguish between Dorothy and Orwell himself" (Halliburton, 2012).
6. As Rachel Halliburton writes, *Clergyman* "comes back to social comedy" in the chapter about Dorothy's time as a teacher. One example is when the narrator remarks that "[a]ll the children in the school, apparently, were forever 'making great strides'; in what direction they were striding was not stated" (Orwell 1990, 223). The quote might also recall the style of Charles

Dickens, in whose works depictions of schools in literature often find their origin.

7. The children buying flowers for Dorothy and Dorothy buying textbooks for the children are moments which are significant also in that they fit into the wider capitalist economy that is present in the narrative.
8. This future-orientedness might also be viewed as a kind of "aims-talk". As Nel Noddings writes in her 2003 book, "[u]ntil quite recently, aims-talk figured prominently in educational theory, and most education systems prefaced their curriculum documents with statements of their aims" (2003, 74). Ringwood House Academy is such an institution, as visible in the care with which Mrs Creevy compiles the prospectus: "there's a whole lot of subjects that we can't actually teach, but we have to advertise them all the same. […] It all looks well on the prospectus" (Orwell 1990, 237; cf. 1990, 200).

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PEDAGOGICAL ASPECTS OF THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION IN THE 2020S: THE PRACTICALITIES OF INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE, EDUCATION AND FAITH STUDIES

PART II

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Abstract. This paper is part of a two-paper series. This second paper discusses the role of interreligious dialogue, interreligious education and interreligious studies in theological education. The paper discusses interreligious education and how its collaborative approach enables theology students to learn the dynamics of different religions by being taught by teachers from differing religious faiths. Religious education with school children also benefits as key differences between similar religions being taught in local communities can be understood. The paper explains how, at the societal level, religious tolerance of someone else's religion becomes embedded as a universal right. The second section of this second paper discusses interreligious multi-faith development work. There is a strong emphasis on how theological education should be of value to the local community where the learning takes place, alongside using a partnership approach to deliver public goods. Multi-faith education concentrates on a collegiate approach to development, which in practical terms is local regenerative work. Another societal benefit of interreligious multi-faith development work is more nuanced. In an interreligious approach, harmony and trust are built up by differing religions, not trying to compete. The focus is on collegiate interreligious theology education and partnership development work in order to deliver social goods.

Keywords: theological education, interreligious dialogue, interreligious education, practical theology, interreligious studies

Introduction

For many teachers, theological education is a moral endeavour designed to enable students to develop with the acquisition of social and spiritual human capital (Sosler: *Christian Scholar's Review*, 12 March 2021). Teaching is a complex task requiring the observation of nuanced relational information and continuous assessment of evaluative judgements (Madden 2020, 125). To perform this vital task, theology practitioners must engage with theological continuous improvement professional development (CIPD) to explore the complexities of learning and teaching (Di Cara et al. 2019, 4). Ongoing professional learning also performs another function of importance to teachers, which has a particular resonance with religious educators. Theological CIPD enables teachers to discover beliefs and/or assumptions they have about certain religions, which could be influencing their pedagogical choices. For teachers of any religious persuasion, theological self-understanding encourages religious educators to seek out new approaches to teaching theology, such as hermeneutical communicative pedagogy (Madden 2020, 126). Hermeneutical learning is based on three pillars of a hermeneutical task. These are interpretations of religious texts, the social context surrounding the learning and the biography, finally, the lived experiences of the student (Pollefeyt 2020, 1; *See* also Hintersteiner and Pranger 2019, 5). This pedagogical approach utilises dialogue, enabling students to contextualise their faith perspectives to understand the meaning of what are some societies' sensitive issues. There are protracted religious debates globally about, for example, being allowed to remarry, gender equality during religious services and/or pro-abortion or pro-life (Dozier *et al.* 2020, 7). Theology practitioners, being better equipped to make pedagogical choices, introduce new challenges. How do religious or educational institutions support teachers in their enlightened role? A theology educator's role, which must be understood and delivered in an ever-changing, global, pluralistic social landscape, is often quite challenging (*See* also Vikdahl and Skeie 2019, 120).

INTERRELIGIOUS EDUCATION

There are numerous interreligious and intercultural divides in many societies globally. This is why the Council of Europe (2020) recommends the inclusion of "the religious dimension of intercultural education" in its teacher training module (Council of Europe 2020, 5). Primary school children, typically aged 6-10, and secondary school children, 11-16, need to be mandated and equipped to provide an inclusive curriculum of education. The interreligious education must enable school children to mutually understand and respect people with different religious beliefs, recognising that all religions are equal (Elf and Kwaku-Odoi 2019, 15). Learning a language would be very useful at this time. Allowing school pupils to engage with other religiously diverse students can help prevent children from being poisoned by stereotypical attitudes and prejudice (Gill and Marshall: G20 Interfaith Forum 2020, 6-7; ter Avest 2021, 8). Interreligious education tends to enable class discussion on social issues from different religions' perspectives, engendering multiple faith learning. Theological education enables pupils to develop critical thinking skills and complex personality aspects. For example, empathy, open-mindedness and an inner calling to embrace religious diversity.

> The involvement of religious leaders and faith/interfaith actors and communities in inclusive curricula, enabling students of different religions, faith traditions, and beliefs to become more conversant with diverse religious and cultural narratives, positive values and humanising practices. (Gill and Marshall 2020, 7)

The Netherlands has a progressive approach to religious education. Article 23 of their Constitution ensures that all people have the right to establish a school providing an education which reflects their religious beliefs. People's "pedagogic educational convictions" are also equally enshrined (Kienstra *et al.* 2019, 594-595). A process of contemporary secularisation has provided a religious education impetus to support more cultural and religious diversity. Religious education of young children from multi-faith backgrounds may

require multiple pedagogical approaches in the same classroom (Ahs *et al.* 2019, 216). After appropriate classroom observations, theology educators may consider the following techniques to facilitate learning. Gauge the perspective of the pupil, take account of local conditions, giving opportunities for face-to-face learning, this will help garner family and community support. Make contextual links with lived experiences of the learner, provide relevant examples of religious teaching and how they may apply to the pupil's life (ter Avest 2021, 12). This will give the student the opportunity to demonstrate their ability to appraise their understanding of different religions. They would also be able to describe any commonalities and key differences between one religious practice and a different set of beliefs (Maheshwaran and Sier 2019, 26; Tamir et al. 2020, 10).

A large proportion of students at a confessional or non-confessional school are likely to be non-religious. The reason being primary and secondary school children attend their particular school for reasons of, for example, atmosphere, convenience, identity, location and quality of education (ter Avest 2021, 3). Religious doctrine was hardly one of the main reasons pupils attended the school they were at (Kienstra *et al.* 2019, 595). Many denominational schools have a large culturally, ethnically and socially diverse population, a significant body of which have no interest or understanding of religion. The presence of a pluralistic classroom population challenges religious education teachers in numerous ways. Interreligious teaching often involves teaching students without knowing their religious commitments (Kienstra et al. 2019, 596; Luby 2019, 129). To maintain a sense of neutrality, interreligious education should not have an impetus to change a student's perspective or religious belief. The religious education should provide contextual examples to enable the student to make their own choices about religion. The religious education should also provide the scaffolding to enable students to be able to make comparisons in their own lives and/or that of others. The emphasis on neutrality in theological education is important. One critique of

religious-related or interreligious dialogue is that it conveys individualistic views of a particular religion without discussing the broader picture (Vikdahl and Skeie 2019, 121).

The UK have a societal grouping category called BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) which is proving problematic. There are similar concerns in the US, with the grouping African American. Some people object to being referred to as BAME or African American, as they feel such groupings fail to recognise their individual cultural identity (*See* Aspinall 2020, 87). In theological education, such pluralism can act as a barrier, preventing multi-faith group formation, strain community relationships and create tutor group tension. A critique of pluralism is that it can fail to recognise, individual members of an ethnic group might practice different religions. Pluralism, if mismanaged, can homogenise all people in a societal category as belonging to the same religious doctrine (See Berling 2020, 4).

Religious didactics expresses the scientific relationship between teaching and learning in research, whereas the term religious education is predominantly an English-speaking phrase. Due to the reality that the majority of issues regarding RE are considered in English, the phrase religious education is value-laden. The reference to the English term RE, by definition, carries a certain amount of baggage in terms of power relationships and a dominant ideology (Rothgangel and Riegel 2021, 1). The societal benefit of conducting research into religious didactics is that it might identify learning aspects which influence the effectiveness of theological education. There could be communication issues, particular pedagogical approaches, teacher or student attitudes or motivations, which affect the embeddedness of the religious learning (*See* also ter Avest 2021, 2; Sosler 2021). Curricula content or design could be skewed for or against the inclusion of classical interpretation, compared to the secular interpretation of religious texts. Research into religious didactics could discover that participatory learning pedagogy in majority Christian faith settings results in increased acceptance of other religions. Whereas active learning pedagogy might result in

students with negative entrenched mindsets, in predominantly Buddhist, Hindu or Islamist settings, or vice versa (Maheshwaran and Sier 2019, 26). This is a practical application of the nine tasks typical in the scientific discourse as described by Rothgangel and Riegel (2021, 3).

There appears to be a knowledge gap regarding research on the effect of practising a 24-hour Jewish religious Shabbat or a Catholic Christian Sabbath. This excludes observation of experiential learning in Sabbath, or Shabbat, which detailed any homiletics or clerical work which was done during the period. Most research has barely considered Sabbath, or Shabbat, as an embodied religious experience, on being internalised and educating the practitioner (Carter 2020, 2). The failure by Catholicism manifests as making little attempt to fully understand what Shabbat means to followers of Judaism, perpetuating ongoing division. The lack of impetus towards a multi-faith pluralism, a meta-conjoining of Christianity and Judaism, reveals an inter-religious blind spot which weakens Jewish-Christian relations. There would be real benefits in conducting comparative theological research of Christianity's Sabbath and Judaism's Shabbat. Carter's (2020) articulation of this failure of Catholicism is quite stark. This theological deficit caused by Christian policy failure must be addressed.

> In view of this gap in the research, I suggest that if Christians are serious about learning about the Sabbath, and how it is lived, what is needed is the incorporation of empirical research into Christian theological reflection—a practical theological reflection examination of the Sabbath. (Carter 2020, 2)

The student affairs approach to theological education has an in-built focus upon capacity building, community concerns, democratisation and social justice. Interreligious tutorship should enable students to apply creative, innovative solutions alongside trained practical intelligence to resolve particular social problems (Glanzer *et al.* 2020, 35). The student affairs mission statement continues, articulating that societal problems will be resolved by

religiously educated, developed individuals, mobilised to effect social improvements. Theological education needs to adopt extensive use of democratic methods, providing a firm base, manifest as contextual scaffolding utilised to enlighten belief in democracy. "In an increasingly pluralistic higher education system, the ends of promoting democracy and secular psycho-social understandings of developments were all ends on which all Americans could potentially agree" (Glanzer *et al.* 2020, 35; *See* also Trotta and Wilkinson 2018, 18). Interreligious education along the lines of the student affairs tradition has clear community empowering, democratising benefits. Its American origins as an offshoot of theological education create a critical cautionary question encapsulated as follows. Does the student affairs emphasis on pluralism translate into effective functioning, multi-faith active community participation work? ('holistic development', Dotsey and Kumi 2020, 352; 'social action', Maheshwaran and Sier 2019, 29).

There is an expectation that theologically educated people are able to perform the administrative tasks required at their place of worship (Lawson and Schreiner 2021, 12). This means multi-faith religious higher education needs to include training on the commerce required, consistent with the religious make-up of tutor groups. As part of increasingly pluralistic religiously diverse university campus enrolment, higher education religious teaching needs to have flexible curricula (Roy et al. 2020, 5). Many multicultural multilingual people, who practice recognised faiths, need to be catered for. These enrolled students should receive key parts of their training, the administrative paperwork in their religion's native language, often this will not be English. Many higher education theology degree courses have made learning a second religious language a mandatory requirement. "This basic equivalence of faiths as political theology allowed them to easily add Judaism to their accepted religions, which they have all studied in high school as part of civics or civil religion" (Epafras and Brill 2020, 18).

INTERRELIGIOUS MULTI-FAITH DEVELOPMENT WORK

Multi-faith groups are often called upon to mediate conflict resolution and transformation activities to bring armed conflict to an end. Minority followers of certain religious groups' feelings of discrimination or social inequality are contributory factors to military action or social conflict (*See* Muggah and Velshi, *World Economic Forum*, 25 February 2019). Theology graduates need to be equipped to avoid the community transformation pitfall of engaging with faith groups as a default option. Conflict resolution groups do not need to have religious representation *per se*, nor is there any necessity to have only a secular peacebuilding response (Trotta and Wilkinson 2019, 11). One of the reasons why this might happen in conflict negotiation, or in an urban regeneration community transformation setting elsewhere, has particular resonance. A religious leader of any faith is unlikely to be immediately accepted by the local area. There will be a perception in some quarters they only represent their own religious followers in the area, not the whole community (Trotta and Wilkinson 2019, 11). Theological education will enable students to assess the risk of such an interpretation gaining traction and devise action plans to address the challenge. This is why it is imperative theology students work with multi-faith groups to obtain community buy-in of leadership arrangements. Interreligious educational role play can be used to demonstrate the benefits of shared discourse, from people from different faiths supporting a common purpose. Multi-faith intra-generational older people and youth forums can be developed to transfer digital literacy and traditional skills between people of different ages and religions (Sandberg 2020, 422). Globally, interfaith groups can help resolve tensions regarding climate change, environmental, health and other United Nations Sustainability Development Goals (SDGs). Multi-faith integrated programming across different sectors can help devise and implement effective, holistic low or no-cost interventions, for instance, water purification tablets (Trotta and Wilkinson 2019, 17). Interfaith initiatives need to

ensure they reach marginalised people, especially Dalit women, who suffer constant gender discrimination.

A public theology approach to religion is beneficial to a community as it provides a political justification of religious education. Another justification is that public theology acts to teach and understand religion from a local political perspective. This is a very useful utility to have for multi-faith work in often poverty-stricken areas, working for people with very limited life chances. Public theology can be defined as multi-faith engagement in public debates, where multi-religious values provide an alternative approach to complex societal issues (Herbst 2020, 30). The concept of public theology is very diverse in its effects, being able to be active in multiple contexts. Theological education using this concept would have a particular focus on recognising community sensitivity for the prevailing local conditions in play during engagement. Using public theology, multi-faith religious students would practice civil religion, coupled with liberal and political theology, effectively the constituents of a public theology practice troika (see Herbst 2020, 30). There must be practical theology, which concentrates not on conceptual ideals, but on the service delivery of community content for the people. Public theological education highlights the importance of a multi-faith approach to partnership development work, for instance, coordinating a response to the COVID-19 global pandemic (Corpuz 2020, e237). There will be theological differences between faiths these need to be openly aired and welcomed. Different religious representatives should support and enrich each other, without one faith standing in opposition to another, preventing community progress. Students trained in a public theology practice troika tradition will be enabled with dialogical skills to obtain societal buy-in to deliver community remits.

The interreligious dialogue aspect of theological education also explains the need for social justice in religious practice (Berling 2020, 8). Some of the people the clergy or their multi-faith equivalents in other religions meet are some of the most marginalised people in their community. This marginalisation may

be due to multiple intersecting inequalities, for example, class due to income, gender and race (Crenshaw 1989, 141; 1991, 1245). These people could be asylum-seekers, disabled, LGBTQIA+, homeless, displaced, elderly, mentally ill, poverty-stricken, sex workers, who need help from interfaith groups (Elf and Kwaku-Odoi 2019, 16). Theological education, practised as a 'sacrament of the stranger' encounter, is particularly beneficial to cope with helpers' feelings of taking a risk (Suna-Koro 2020, 63). Practical theology needs to be rooted in interreligious dialogue, community activities, inequality eradicating, and sociology of justice regardless of a person's religious beliefs (Maheshwaran and Sier 2019, 28). The G20 Interfaith Forum provide further justification of religion's remit to help the most marginalised members of society, for instance, by using multi-faith educational initiatives (Welsh: *Devex*, 19 November 2020).

> By engaging with religious leaders and faith/interfaith actors, G20 leaders, national governments, and their international partners can strengthen the 2020 G20's vision of "global cooperation to forge mutually beneficial solutions, face challenges, and create opportunities for all" (Gill and Marshall 2020, 2)

The social impact of theological education is quite complex. When considering social impact, should the focus be on what work was delivered by the theology graduate organised community group; or has social impact and changed the way the theology student views other religious beliefs; or is the social impact the student has become much more enlightened, much more community transformative, a changed agent. This list is not exhaustive. (Magezi 2019, 114). There are significant benefits in theological education which induce students to become agents of change, also personally transforming the practitioner for multi-faith work. The affinity with practical theology is clearly apparent; a reliance on pragmatism does not mean that the value of education lies in its utility value (Sandberg 2020, 418). In this sense, a social impact of practical theology is a conceptual tool which can be used to resolve a particular problem. This is much more pragmatic than practical theology, being a

philosophical tool with which to critique an alternative approach. Such a use of practical theology would be a negative outcome of social impact, more akin to an abuse of the educational process. Another social impact of religious education is it enables theology students and young adults to identify what their motives are. This is a realisation of the usual social justice issues, which can animate theology learners to want to help marginalised communities and people (Manley-Tannis 2020, 163). Occasionally, a certain type of theological education does not cut through with a particular tutor group. This might indicate a need for pedagogical change so that students are able/motivated to engage with theology. Another social impact of theological education is that whilst internally transforming students, it can also simultaneously be reshaped by the process itself (Sandberg 2020, 419).

CONCLUSIONS

Theology teachers are aware of the importance of faith formation and practice development whilst delivering their calling, or an interfaith equivalent. Religious educators acknowledge they have a dichotomous position of being both a theological learner and teacher at school (Madden 2020, 137). A theological educator requires self-awareness (Palmer 2007, 42) to realise their limitations and/or their positionality, conscious or subconscious, regarding certain religious practices. This theological self-awareness helps in identity formation, openness to different faith perspectives and courageous contemporary communication skills (Mikva 2020, 134). Contemporary in the sense of being able to know when and how to challenge a student, who might be misinterpreting their religion. Courageous in the sense of coming to terms with new religious languages and practices, to transfer knowledge in pluralised, secular and sometimes disrupted settings (*See* also ter Avest 2021, 9). Practical theology, interreligious dialogue and learning in the

community, religious educators are supported in all three by ongoing theological CIPD (Madden 2020, 137).

It has become evident that the widely held intention of developing more interreligious dialogue is not an issue just for theological specialism. Religiously related dialogue is crucial for the critical enabling of pupils, so they have a generic scaffolding by which to learn from lived experiences. Regardless of a pupil's religious beliefs, group work, forward planning, problem-solving, and reflection are essential skills for all stakeholders interested in theological education (Vikdahl and Skeie 2019, 127).

Interreligious studies would help theology teachers consider abstract or philosophical thought, for instance, what it means to be dead (Pollefeyt 2020, 6). Pedagogical approaches could include performative texts, for example, ancient Greek epics, poems and stories. Other faiths also have deeply embedded beliefs and customs when a member of their community dies. There is visual culture, interfaith tutorage must educate religious teachers in the meaning of death, which may be artistically present in monuments and sacred sites (Osewska 2019, 354). Interfaith education will encapsulate various concepts of afterlife: Christianity preaches Heaven and Hell; The Muslim faith believes life is temporary, coupled with a Day of Resurrection; Buddhism has a concept of rebirth, reincarnation, so death isn't the end of their existence; which is quite the reverse of atheism, who see death as the ultimate end of life, full stop (Wheaton, *Marie Curie*, 29 January 2021).

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ASSESSMENT OF ENTREPRENEURIAL ASPIRATIONS AND CHALLENGES IN BUSINESS EDUCATION.
CASE STUDY: ADAMAWA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract. The main purpose of this study is to assess the entrepreneurial aspirations and challenges of business students in Adamawa State. Three specific objectives were used, research questions were formulated to guide the study. The theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) was adopted. The researchers adopted a descriptive survey design. Multi-stage random sampling technique was used to sample the respondents. The targeted population was the whole tertiary institution in Adamawa State. In stage one, 6 tertiary institutions that offer business education programs were target namely: Modibbo Adama University, Yola (MAU), Adamawa State University, Mubi (ASU), Federal College of Education, Yola (FCEY), College of Education, Hong (COE), Federal Polytechnic, Mubi, (FPM), and Adamawa State Polytechnic, Yola (ASPY). In stage two, in each of the tertiary institutions, 20 students were randomly sampled, which gave a total of 120 students. The data obtained were analysed using simple percentages. Findings reveal a complex view of entrepreneurship that extends beyond traditional business creation, encompassing elements of social innovation and personal fulfilment. Students displayed a generally positive attitude towards entrepreneurship, influenced strongly by their involvement in practical entrepreneurship-related activities and their familial backgrounds. However, they also identified significant barriers, including financial constraints, fear of failure, and a lack of practical experience, which hinder their intentions to pursue entrepreneurial ventures.

Keywords: entrepreneurship, education, entrepreneurial aspiration, challenges, perceptions

INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship is about taking a risk; it is the process of creating a new venture that did not previously exist; it is the practice of starting a new organisation, especially a new business. It involves the making of new wealth through the implementation of new concepts (Paul 2015). Entrepreneurship education has become a cornerstone of business education training programs across the globe, aiming to equip students with the necessary skills to launch successful ventures. Despite its growing importance, a detailed understanding of how business education students perceive entrepreneurship and the specific challenges they face remains underexplored.

This study seeks to fill this gap by examining the entrepreneurial aspirations and barriers encountered by business education students in Adamawa State, providing a contemporary perspective on the educational and practical realities they navigate. Recent shifts in the global economic landscape, including technological advancements and changing job markets, have reshaped entrepreneurial opportunities and challenges. However, there is a lack of comprehensive research focusing on how these changes affect business education students in Adamawa State at the undergraduate level, particularly in terms of their intentions to perceive entrepreneurial careers and the obstacles they perceive. This research aims to assess the entrepreneurial aspirations of business education students in Adamawa state, Nigeria and identify the challenges these students perceive as most significant to their entrepreneurial ambitions. This deals with theories from educational psychology and business studies and the role of education in shaping entrepreneurial mindsets and capabilities. The literature on entrepreneurship education suggests a multidimensional approach that encompasses not only the impartation of necessary business skills, but also the development of a proactive and innovative mindset essential for navigating the multifaceted business environment (Fayolle 2017). Research

highlights a gap in understanding the specific educational needs and aspirations of business education students at the undergraduate level within the context of rapidly changing economic conditions (Rodrigues 2023).

Purpose of the Study

This study contributes to the literature by focusing on three important areas:

1. To assess the impact of entrepreneurship education on the ability of Business Education students of Adamawa State to establish a new business.
2. To determine their perceived barriers to entrepreneurship aspirations.
3. To identify the level of confidence of students in their entrepreneurial aspirations.

Research Questions

1. What is the impact of an Entrepreneurship Education on the ability and aspirations of Business Education students of Adamawa State to establish a new business?
2. What are the perceived barriers to their entrepreneurial aspirations?
3. What is the level of confidence of students in their entrepreneurial aspirations?

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the theory of planned behaviour, one of the several competing theories used to examine the relationship between entrepreneurial intention (EI) and its antecedents,

propounded by Ajzen (1991), extended by Schlaegel and Koenig (1981). Later referred to as the Entrepreneurial Event Model, this sees business creation as the interaction of initiative, ability, management, relative autonomy and risk. The model indicates that entrepreneurial intention stems from perception of feasibility and desirability, which is shaped by cultural and social context, as well as exposure to entrepreneurial activity.

Entrepreneurship Education

The role of entrepreneurship education in higher learning has expanded significantly over recent decades, reflecting broader economic and societal shifts that value innovation and self-driven careers. Entrepreneurship programs aim to equip students with essential skills such as opportunity recognition, risk management, and innovative thinking, which are crucial in today's dynamic business environment. According to Kuratko (2020), the purpose of entrepreneurship education extends beyond merely teaching students to start businesses; it fosters a proactive, innovative mindset necessary for success in various professional domains. This educational approach helps students adapt to market changes and cultivates skills like critical thinking and problem-solving, which are highly valued in any career path. Globally, higher education institutions have increasingly integrated entrepreneurship into their curricula, a trend highlighted by the 2024 Global Entrepreneurship Monitor report. The report suggests a strong correlation between comprehensive entrepreneurship education and heightened entrepreneurial activities among graduates (Hill et al. 2024). According to Bae et al. (2018), practical components such as workshops, incubators, and live project engagements are particularly effective in enhancing entrepreneurial intent and capability among students. In addition, the role of entrepreneurial education and its impact on creating entrepreneurs has been questioned, *e.g.* Remeikiene et al. (2018).

Perceptions about Entrepreneurship

The perception of entrepreneurship among business students is multifaceted and influenced by various cultural, educational, and economic factors, which can significantly shape their career aspirations and entrepreneurial intent. Naqvi *et al.* (2023) argue, entrepreneurship does not have a single, universally accepted definition, which suggests that its perception can be broad and varied across different contexts. This flexibility in definition allows students to see entrepreneurship not only as business creation but also as an opportunity for innovation in various domains such as technology, social initiatives, and even arts and culture. Entrepreneurial education plays a critical role in shaping these perceptions. The exposure to entrepreneurship courses often broadens students' understanding, highlighting not only the potential rewards but also the inherent risks and challenges. Despite the generally positive perceptions, students often have misconceptions about the nature of entrepreneurial success and the challenges involved. Many underestimate the level of risk and resilience required to overcome failures, as highlighted in the work of Dollinger (2018). These misconceptions can lead to unrealistic expectations, which are detrimental to the practical outcomes of entrepreneurship education.

Entrepreneurship Aspiration

Entrepreneurial aspiration among business education students represents a critical focus for educators, as they strongly predict future entrepreneurial activities. The concept of *entrepreneurial aspiration* refers to the deliberate willingness to start a new business venture (Katz and Green 2021). Understanding the formation and determinants of this aspiration is essential for crafting effective entrepreneurship education. The literature identifies several key influencers on entrepreneurial aspiration (Auken et al. 2016). At the core are attitudes towards entrepreneurship, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control, which collectively form the basis of

the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen 1991). These elements are shaped by personal, educational, and environmental factors that interact to either encourage or inhibit entrepreneurial ambitions. Educational influence, particularly through specialised entrepreneurship programs, plays a pivotal role in shaping these intentions. Such programs not only impart necessary business skills but also enhance students' perceptions of entrepreneurship as a viable career path (Liñán and Fayolle 2018).

Entrepreneurship Challenges

The high rate of graduates' unemployment has become a source of concern to all constituted authorities. Urevbu (2018) attributed this phenomenon to a missing link between creativity and a functional education system in Nigeria. Embarking on an entrepreneurial career is full of challenges that can significantly impact the intentions and success of aspiring entrepreneurs. Understanding them is essential for developing effective support mechanisms within entrepreneurship education programs. One of the primary challenges faced by business students is financial constraints. Sourcing funds to start and sustain a new business is a challenging task for many young entrepreneurs. According to a study by Farrell *et al.* (2023), financial challenges are often cited as the most significant barrier to business creation. Students frequently lack the collateral needed for traditional loans and may be unaware of or unable to access alternative funding sources such as venture capital or angel investors. Beyond financial issues, the lack of experience, skills and market knowledge also poses a substantial challenge. Many students have innovative skills, ideas and initiatives but lack the practical business skills necessary to implement these ideas successfully. This gap between skills and aspirations can lead to poorly planned ventures that are more likely to fail (Jayabalan et al. 2020). Entrepreneurship education programs should, therefore, emphasise not only the ideation process but also the development of hard skills such as financial management, marketing, and

operational planning. Another critical challenge is the fear of failure. This psychological barrier can deter even the most motivated individuals from pursuing entrepreneurial ventures.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a descriptive survey research design, chosen to deeply explore and understand the complex event of entrepreneurial aspirations and challenges among business education students. A descriptive survey is particularly suitable for this study as it allows students to express their perspectives and experiences, providing rich, detailed data that are often not accessible through quantitative methods (Cohen et al. 2018).

The name Adamawa State came from the founder of the kingdom, Modibbo Adama, a regional leader of the Fulani, organised by Usman Dan Fodio of Sokoto in 1804. It was formed in 1991 when the former Gongola State was divided into Adamawa and Taraba. Its nickname was *The Land of Beauty*. Adamawa State is a state in the North East geopolitical Zone of Nigeria, bordered by Borno to the west, Gombe to the West and Taraba to the southwest, while its eastern border forms part of the national border with Cameroon. Its land area was 97.0km square and 14254 sqm, its population was about 4,248,436, and its population density, people per sq km 109.78. It had over 100 indigenous ethnic groups, such as: Bwatiye (Bachama), Bali, Bata, Lunguda to the West, Kilba, Marghi and Michika to the North, and Mumuye and others to the South. Fulani are all over the State. Some tertiary institutions in the state are: American University of Nigeria, Yola (AUN), Modibbo Adama University, Yola (MAUY), Adamawa State University, Mubi (ASUY), Federal College of Education, Yola (FCEY), College of Education, Hong (COE), Federal Polytechnic, Mubi (FPM), and Adamawa State Polytechnic, (ASPY)

Multi-stage random sampling technique was used to sample the respondents. In stage one, 6 tertiary institutions that offer business

education program were target namely: Modibbo Adama University, Yola, (MAU) Adamawa State University, Mubi (ASU) Federal College of Education, Yola, (FCEY) College of Education, Hong, (COE), Federal Polytechnic, Mubi, (FPM) and Adamawa State Polytechnic, yola (ASPY). In stage two, in each of these tertiary institutions, 20 students were randomly sampled, which gave a total of 120 students. Throughout the 120 administered questionnaires, 106 were retrieved. The questionnaire was designed using *Yes or No*. The data obtained were analysed using simple percentages in order to achieve the objectives of the study.

RESULTS

Research question one: What is the impact of an Entrepreneurship Education on the ability of Business Education students of Adamawa State and their aspiration to establish a new business?

Table 1.

S/N	Establish a new business (n=106)	Yes	No	Remarks
1.	Are you intending to establish a fast-food business?	30 (28.3%)	76 (71.7%)	No
2.	Are you intending to establish an Automobile Service?	50 (47.2%)	56 (52.8%)	No
3.	Are you intending to establish a POS business?	100 (94.3%)	6 (5.7%)	Yes
4.	Are you intending to establish Electrical/Electronic services?	40 (37.7%)	66 (62.3%)	No
5.	Are you intending to establish a tailoring business?	60 (56.6%)	46 (43.3%)	Yes
6.	Are you intending to establish Fashion/Beauty Services?	70 (66%)	36 (34%)	Yes
7.	Are you intending to establish a Barbing Saloon?	80 (75.5%)	26 (25.5%)	Yes
8.	Are you intending to establish Laundry services?	60 (56.6%)	46 (43.4%)	Yes

9.	Are you intending to establish Hand set repairer?	70 (66%)	36 (34%)	Yes
10.	Are you intending to establish a soft drink business?	80 (75.5%)	26 (24.5%)	Yes
11.	Are you intending to establish a Bakery business?	39 (36.8%)	67 (63.2%)	No
12.	Are you intending to establish other businesses that are not included above?	97 (91.5%)	9 (8.5%)	Yes

Research question two: What are the perceived barriers to the entrepreneurial aspiration of Business Education students of Adamawa State?

Table 2.

S/N	Barriers to entrepreneurial aspiration(n=106)	Yes	No	Remarks
1.	Do you agree that the lack of financial resources is a significant barrier?	100 (94.3%)	6 (5.7%)	Yes
2.	Do you agree that fear of failure can discourage you from achieving your entrepreneurial aspiration?	90 (84.9%)	16 (15.1%)	Yes
3.	Do you agree that limited access to business networks hinders entrepreneurial aspirations?	50 (47.2%)	56 (52.8%)	No
4.	Do you agree that the lack of entrepreneurial skills and knowledge poses a barrier to aspiration?	70 (66%)	36 (34%)	Yes
5.	Do you agree that cultural and societal norms discourage you from pursuing entrepreneurial ventures?	40 (37.7%)	66 (62.3%)	No
6.	Do you agree that limited availability of entrepreneurial support services hampers aspirations?	70 (66%)	36 (34%)	Yes
7.	Do you agree that personal obligations and responsibilities are another factor affecting entrepreneurial aspiration?	100 (94.3%)	6 (5.7%)	Yes

8.	Do you agree that the perceived lack of support from families and friends acts as a barrier to entrepreneurial aspiration?	102 (96.2%)	4 (3.7%)	Yes

Research question three: What is the level of confidence among Business Education students of Adamawa State in pursuing their entrepreneurial aspirations?

Table 3.

S/N	Level of confidence (n=106)	Yes	No	Remarks
1.	Are you confident in your ability to become a successful entrepreneur?	100 (94.3%)	6 (5.7%)	Yes
2.	Do you agree that entrepreneurship is a viable career option?	100 (94.3%)	6 (5.7%)	Yes
3.	Do you agree that entrepreneurship provides more opportunities for growth and advancement?	98 (92.5%)	8 (7.5%)	Yes
4.	Do you agree that entrepreneurship is more important than government work?	101 (95.3)	5 (4.7%)	Yes

DISCUSSIONS

This paper offers a data-rich exploration of business students' perspectives on entrepreneurship, their aspirations, and the perceived challenges within Adamawa state. The diverse perceptions of entrepreneurship identified in this study illustrate that business students view entrepreneurship not merely as a means to economic success but as a platform for innovation and societal impact. This aligns with Gedeon (2016). He argues, entrepreneurship does not have a single, universally accepted definition, which suggests that its perception can be broad and varied across different contexts. This flexibility in definition allows

students to see entrepreneurship not only as business creation but also as an opportunity for innovation in various domains such as technology, social initiatives, and even arts and culture. Entrepreneurial education plays a critical role in shaping these perceptions. However, these findings also suggest that such perceptions are deeply influenced by personal and educational experiences, extending the discourse beyond traditional definitions to encompass a more holistic view of entrepreneurship as a multifaceted career choice. Sendra-Pons *et al.* (2022) argue, we must adapt to integrate both economic and social objectives effectively. Our study enriches this narrative by highlighting how the integration of social impact initiatives into entrepreneurship curricula could better align with students' aspirations, thereby fostering a more engaged and committed approach to entrepreneurial education. Furthermore, it underscores a noteworthy distinction: while students acknowledge the significance of creativity and innovation in defining entrepreneurship, they do not necessarily deem these traits as prerequisites for the term's definition. Instead, they view successful business ownership as constituting entrepreneurship.

Regarding entrepreneurial intentions, the results highlight the significant role of experiential learning, as noted by Nabi *et al.* (2017). This study reveals that direct engagement in practical entrepreneurial activities, such as business plan competitions and entrepreneurship clubs, profoundly influences students' intentions to pursue entrepreneurial careers. This suggests that hands-on experience provides not only skills but also confidence, underpinning the importance of practical exposure in entrepreneurship education. The findings challenge educators to rethink how entrepreneurship is taught, advocating for a more action-based learning approach that mirrors real-world business challenges and opportunities. The study also confirms that personal background, especially familial entrepreneurial exposure, plays a crucial role in shaping entrepreneurial intentions.

The analysis of the challenges facing business students who aspire to entrepreneurial careers reveals several critical barriers that

impact their ability to pursue such paths. The greatest challenge identified by the study is financial constraints. Several students expressed concerns about accessing the necessary capital to start and sustain a business. This challenge is consistent with findings from previous studies, such as those by Hisrich and Ramadani (2017), which have long highlighted financial barriers as a primary concern for new entrepreneurs. The fear of not securing enough funding or facing financial instability can discourage them from pursuing entrepreneurial prospects. This study also suggests that entrepreneurship education should not only focus on traditional business skills but also include financial literacy and fundraising strategies to better prepare students for these realities. Another significant challenge uncovered is the fear of failure.

CONCLUSIONS

From these findings, the researchers concluded that Entrepreneurial Aspiration and Challenges have a true impact on Business Education Students in Adamawa State. The questions have been answered, and the analysed data showed that:

1. Entrepreneurship Education does have an impact on Business Education students from Adamawa State to establish a new business.
2. There are barriers to entrepreneurial aspiration ability among these Business Education students.
3. Business Education students of Adamawa State have confidence in their Entrepreneurial aspirations.

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MAPPING THE PAST: EXPLORING MEMORY AND LIMINAL SUBJECTIVITY OF THE POST-PARTITION BENGALI MIGRANTS IN SIDDHARTHA DEB'S "THE POINT OF RETURN"

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Abstract. Colonial rule in South Asia has undeniably reshaped the region's spatial and cultural landscape. However, the tremors of colonisation's aftermath, which include partition, genocide, refugee movements, etc., have acquired characteristics which reek distinctly of their regional epicentre. South Asian countries, as is true of most postcolonial nation-states, often posit their territorial space, defined through cartographic borders, as the most essential and fundamental factor in determining the abstract concept of nationality. Though the nationalistic discourses celebrate the sanctity and inalterability of the territorial space, this is not as fixed as discourses would lead one to believe. This article intends to examine the transience of territorial space that is continually reconfigured along linguistic and ethnic lines, which consequently determines the belongingness or alienation of an individual in the given geopolitical scenario. The 'post-memory' of displacement, alienation and loss that haunts the post-Partition generation of migrants and their sense of homelessness that is distinct from, yet as poignant as that of their ancestors, will be examined through the textual framework of Siddhartha Deb's debut novel *The Point of Return* (2002). The article will present a nuanced study of the tension emanating from the fractured interface between nationalism and sub-nationalism, which is adroitly portrayed by Siddhartha Deb in this novel.

Keywords: subjectivity, post-memory, migration, partition, Northeast India, ethnic conflict

INTRODUCTION

The Point of Return (2002), which is the debut novel of Siddhartha Deb, serves as a poignant exploration of the northeastern region

of India[1], a locale characterised by its status as one of the most strife-ridden areas in the country. This geographical expanse is home to an array of distinct cultural groups, each situated at varying stages of development and possessing relatively autonomous historical narratives, all intricately entangled within a complex web of political entities. The complex mosaic is marked by significant tensions among various ethnic and linguistic communities as they navigate the challenges of political recognition and identity. Deb's novel, with its deep sensitivity and nuanced approach, focuses on a particular case of ethnic conflict—namely, the tensions between Bengalis, both Hindus and Muslims, and the Khasis[2] in Meghalaya, a state in the northeastern region. The novel carefully outlines the historical context of these tensions and the fraught relations between the Khasis and non-Khasis.

Unfortunately, the ethnic conflicts in Northeast India and other postcolonial struggles have not received the same level of attention in media or literature, when juxtaposed against conflicts in other global regions such as Kashmir, Sri Lanka, Bosnia, or Syria. The region has been beleaguered by prolonged insurgencies and bouts of violence, rendering states like Manipur and Nagaland highly militarised zones, where citizens grapple with the precariousness of existence in the pervasive shadow of firearms and explosives. Moreover, the substantial influx of illegal migrants from neighbouring Bangladesh has exacerbated the socio-political unrest prevailing in the area. These multifaceted issues have left an indelible mark on the collective psyche of the population, engendering a profound sense of mistrust *vis-à-vis* the central governing authority. Consequently, the region remains, to a significant extent, marginalised from the mainland of India, which engenders a sentiment deeply rooted in the perception that they have perpetually occupied the status of the Other. The enduring effects of Partition[3] and the repeated redrawing of borders, largely driven by ethnic demands for autonomy, have significantly shaped the region's volatile and often turbulent socio-political environment.

Moreover, there exists a paucity of literature that addresses pressing contemporary concerns affecting the northeastern region. The nation-centric epic narratives crafted by literary luminaries such as Salman Rushdie and Shashi Tharoor have frequently overlooked the intricacies of micro-level narratives, thus failing to encompass the unfolding contemporary historical landscape. Within the spectrum of postcolonial Indian English literature, there has been a pervasive inclination towards encapsulating the entirety of India, replete with its extensive historical tapestry, on an epic scale. This inclination towards a national narrative constitutes the hallmark of Indian English literature. During the 1980s, there was a notable rise in narratives focused on national identities, often referred to as 'nationsroman', a term proposed by Priya Joshi (Joshi 2002, 262). Authors such as Rohinton Mistry, Salman Rushdie, I. Allan Sealy, Nayantara Sahgal, Shashi Tharoor, and Mukul Kesavan offered critical perspectives on postcolonial nationalism and the idea of a unified nation, while still showing varying levels of engagement with the concept of a national narrative. The novels from this Rushdie era, primarily revisionist, viewed the representation of India and its historical development as a significant and challenging endeavour.

In recent times, English literary works emanating from Northeast India have gained prominence, drawing significant attention to the region. Unlike the broader Indian English literary landscape, they distinctly reflect a strong sense of place and local identity, addressing pressing and authentic issues specific to the region. Siddhartha Deb's writings are particularly noteworthy in this context, as they offer timely and impactful portrayals of Northeast India. His novels, *The Point of Return* and *Surface* (2005), provide nuanced and insightful perspectives on this complex area. *The Point of Return* serves as a window into the lives of individuals caught in the midst of ethnic conflicts, exploring themes of migration, displacement, cultural clash, and the exilic experiences of Bengali immigrants. The novel carefully examines the painful process of redrawing state boundaries along ethnic lines, revealing the resulting violence, dislocation, and enduring memories of loss.

This paper aims to analyse the social and ontological experiences of 'outsiders' within the context of ethnic movements seeking political and cultural recognition. It will focus on Deb's debut novel, *The Point of Return*, to explore interconnected issues of migration, territorial boundaries, and the concepts of home and belonging, with a particular emphasis on how memory shapes these experiences.

The setting of this semi-autobiographical novel is an unnamed hill town, which is widely assumed to be Shillong, a prominent hill station and the administrative capital of Meghalaya, the northeastern state where Siddhartha Deb was born. The narrative parallels Deb's own family history, mirroring the experiences of the Dam family in the novel. Like the characters in the book, Deb's ancestors relocated to this hill town after being displaced from what later became East Pakistan following the Partition of India in 1947, which eventually transformed into Bangladesh in 1971. Consequently, the themes of migration and the choice of geographical settings within Deb's literary work beckon readers to interpret it as an autobiographical narrative. In a revealing interview, Deb conveyed the impact of his unique upbringing: "As a child of East Bengali migrants in the hill areas of the Northeast, I was distanced from the upper classes, from Calcutta, from my original homeland, and from the place we were living in" (Bhatt 2006, 205). His formative years were spent in this region before being compelled to depart due to ethnically fuelled complexities. Following his initial career in journalism with various newspaper agencies in Kolkata and New Delhi, Deb undertook a research fellowship at Columbia University in the United States, where he completed his PhD. He has lived in the US for the past sixteen years and has also served as a writer-in-residence at The New School in New York City.

Deb's literary works are notably influenced by the themes of forced migration and repeated displacements that have affected both him and his family. Emphasising the personal dimension inherent in his literary endeavours, Deb acknowledged:

> Things were very precarious for me and my family in my youth, and writing was a way of understanding the things that were happening to me and to others around me [...]. Ideas of home and belonging are complicated, and much of my fiction explores these complications. (Bhatt 2006, 201)

Despite its fictional framework, the novel clearly reflects Deb's personal experiences. This paper argues that the novel not only depicts the challenges faced by the Bengali migrant minority in Northeast India but also explores the real distances and transitions between their original homes, the long-lost and often imagined homelands, and their new settlements. Concurrently, it endeavours to scrutinise how Deb employs the realm of memory as a narrative device to recount his tale of migration and the trauma stemming from loss and dislocation. In essence, our paper aims to demonstrate how Deb's novel captures the suffering and marginalisation experienced by individuals who are persistently regarded as 'outsiders' both within the larger national context and within smaller ethnic or regional communities that exist within the broader national framework.

The Tripartite Nexus: Ethnicity, Migrancy and Borders

The ethnic landscape of Northeast India is remarkably complex and diverse. Over an extended period, various ethnic groups in this region have waged prolonged struggles against the Indian nation-state in their quest for political autonomy. Groups such as the Bodo, Naga, Kuki, Mizo and Khasi[4] have contested the nation-state's notion of a unified national identity, striving instead to create new narratives of nationhood that reflect their unique ethnic identities and cultural traditions. The pervasive sense of alienation felt by the region's inhabitants, driven by both geographical isolation and historical grievances, coupled with demographic changes from significant migrations from Bangladesh, has fuelled a rise in militant nationalism and calls for political self-determination among the

indigenous communities. These identity-based movements and manoeuvres have led to significant territorial reconfigurations and an increase in conflicts among various tribes and groups within the region.

Migration issues are deeply intertwined with the sociopolitical instability prevalent in Northeast India, as local tribes often view successive waves of migrants as serious threats to their cultural heritage and economic resources. The strongest antagonism is directed at Bengali migrants, including both Hindus and Muslims, who have arrived from what was formerly East Pakistan. This section of the paper explores the complex relationship between ethnicity and migration, examining the various boundaries—whether ethnic or political—that shape the precarious and uncertain lives of migrants in the Northeast. Additionally, it aims to analyse the challenges migrants face, particularly when local hostility towards outsiders manifests in violent expressions of ethnic identity.

The narrative of the novel revolves around the Dam family and their arduous journey through life in their adopted homeland. This tale finds its voice through the perspective of Babu, the son of Dr. Dam, who, during the tumultuous period of partition, was but a school student. Within the narrative, two parallel storylines converge: one delves into the experiences of the elder generation, marked by the travails of migration and a lifetime marked by the enduring stigma of being perceived as outsiders in a landscape fraught with ethnic, cartographic, and religious demarcations. Dr. Dam serves as the emblematic figure of this generation. In his newly adopted homeland, he led a life characterised by quietude and dedication, diligently serving as a government official committed to the betterment of the local populace. As the narrative unfolds, the reader, much like Dr. Dam's son Babu, comes to admire the resilience and fortitude that defined his life as he grappled with and surmounted numerous challenges.

Concurrently, the narrative also encapsulates the experiences of the post-partition generation, heirs to the memories of their forebears. They confronted the intricate task of forging their own

sense of belonging and identity within the context of the postcolonial nation-space. The ordeal of migration, accompanied by its attendant pain, melancholy, trepidations, and anxieties, manifested differently between the first and second generations of migrants. Deb's novel artfully exposes how the evolving dynamics of regional ethnic relations and the sociopolitical milieu of the nation influenced the unique pathways that each generation of migrants traversed, as they grappled with their precarious existence and endured the melancholy and stigma associated with migrancy.

The narrator's ancestors, encompassing both his parents and grandparents, sought refuge from the harrowing violence that engulfed India during the tumultuous partition of 1947, eventually finding solace in Assam, situated on the eastern fringes of the Indian subcontinent. Subsequently, Dr. Dam embarked upon a career in the Indian Administrative Service, assuming a role within the veterinary department in the hill town, where he established his residence. Deeply influenced by the nationalist fervour that permeated the Indian freedom struggle and the enduring legacy of British colonial rule, he conducted himself with unwavering dedication and integrity in his service. His unwavering idealism, rooted in his faith in Indian nationalism and the national system, stands in stark contrast to the belief systems embraced by his son.

Babu's deviance from his parents' fervent nationalism can be attributed to the era in which he came of age—a period marked by a profound crisis in the democratic principles underpinning the nation. Babu emerges as a product of the post-Independence and post-Nehruvian milieu, a time when the lofty aspirations and pledges of anti-colonial nationalism were gradually eroding in the face of pervasive corruption, the escalating forces of communalism, power-driven political machinations, and the proliferation of ethnic and linguistic divisions within the populace. Furthermore, this era witnessed the emergence of assertive sub-nationalist movements among various marginalised tribes and communities in the Northeast, often manifesting in violent expressions, and giving rise to fervent calls for autonomy, and in

some instances, outright secession, from different quarters within the region.

In the novel, the Dam family embarks on a ceaseless journey from one locale to another, in an ardent pursuit to establish roots and construct a place they can call home. Yet, despite their tangible connections to these diverse settings, they remain eternally adrift, burdened by the perpetual spectre of their migratory existence. Siddhartha Deb's novel bears a striking resemblance to Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* (1988). The narrative voice of Babu, characterised by its inherent instability, parallels the unnamed narrator in Ghosh's novel, both heavily reliant on the reservoir of memory's resources and vocabulary to reconstruct or fathom the complexities of the past. Akin to Ghosh's work, *The Point of Return* delves into the plight of the Bengali populace, fractured by the partition of the Indian subcontinent. Also, Deb's novel, like Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*, underscores the arbitrary nature of borders and boundaries in the construction of a nation. This novel, in a resemblance to *The Shadow Lines*, revolves intricately around the interconnected themes of migration, cartography, and memory. However, in Deb's narrative, the condition of exile experienced by migrants is not solely a consequence of the partition and the haphazard delineation of boundaries but also arises from the sub-nationalist and militant ethnic assertions enacted by tribal communities within a state embedded within the larger republic, specifically, the undivided state of Assam. Deb's novel unveils "the manner in which a nation, constructed on an impromptu operating table, can persistently redefine itself through the imposition of fresh internal and external boundaries" (Pisharoty 2002).

Since 1947, the Dam family had established their residence amidst the indigenous Khasi community in Shillong. Nevertheless, their existence in this hill station and their interactions with the local populace remained perpetually uncertain. Tensions escalated during a period when the state's unity was unravelling, and novel demarcations were being instituted to delineate the emerging state of Meghalaya, extracted from the territories of Assam. While these

geographical and geopolitical transformations held distinct implications for the grandparents, who had previously endured the traumatic experience of partition, their significance assumed a magnitude of relevance even greater for Dr. Dam and his son, Babu, in subsequent years. As Babu notes:

> "The burden of the partition, of finding a new way of life in the country that had been fashioned so bloodily in 1947, he had left to his eldest son, my father. My grandfather's references to the home left behind as East Pakistan, decades after East Pakistan had seceded from Pakistan to become the independent nation-state of Bangladesh, revealed something more than a limited grasp of geopolitical shifts. It showed that the landscape of his past would forever be permanent and unchanging, not something that was historical and therefore open to perpetual revision but a place beyond the vagaries of time." (Deb 2002, 26)

However, Dr Dam remained acutely cognisant of these transformative developments. On a particular night in 1971, ensconced alone within the confines of a bungalow, he avidly perused the news reports detailing the outbreak of the conflict between India and Pakistan within what had once constituted his homeland, East Pakistan. This war ultimately precipitated the birth of the fledgling nation of Bangladesh:

> He had become emotional at the thought of a war machine moving towards a land that for all the liberation to come would never again be home [...] those place names that had been left behind the border of '47 [...]. Irrevocably gone, like the matriculation certificate he never claimed because he did not have the required fee? (Deb 2002, 110)

Deb adeptly portrays the enduring ethnic fault-lines that have persisted between the hill tribes and non-tribal inhabitants within the confines of the state of Meghalaya. In Dr. Dam's case, the prohibitive 'protective discrimination act' enforced within Meghalaya precluded him from acquiring or constructing a residence in Shillong, a testament to the legislation's restrictions on property ownership by 'outsiders'. The hill region bore witness to escalating ethnic tensions during the 1970s, characterised by a growing assertiveness among local hill-dwellers, as they fervently

demanded new legislation safeguarding their rights to land and resources against encroachments by external settlers. This heightened awareness was rooted in a longstanding perception of being marginalised and overlooked by the Indian central government, ultimately fanning the embers of political mobilisation, which had lain dormant but now rekindled the conviction of having been colonised and marginalised by the Indian nation-state. The self-assertion movement rapidly assumed a more contentious dimension as demands for the establishment of a new state and the expulsion of all 'outsiders', including Bengalis, Assamese, and Nepali individuals, grew in intensity. The resultant upheaval, commonly referred to as the 'anti-dkhar' or 'foreign dogs' riots, persisted well into the 1980s, compelling these marginalised groups to vacate Shillong and disperse to other regions within the country.

In the year 1979, a wave of violent rioting and bloodshed engulfed the region, with a particular focus on targeting migrant Bengali communities. During this tumultuous period, the state underwent partition into distinct tribal territories, each delineated with specific quotas allocated for the indigenous hill-dwelling populations. As Meghalaya assumed its identity as a nascent tribal state, several measures were implemented that directly impacted non-tribal entrepreneurs. These included the imposition of higher taxation rates, the rejection of a proposed railway connection to the state, on the grounds that it would facilitate further migration, and the implementation of a mandate stipulating that Bengalis must carry identity cards at all times to substantiate their status as Indian citizens (Deb 2002, 176). For Babu, these ethnic tensions manifested in deeply personal ways. The town, which he had hitherto considered his home, a place of convergence for his childhood aspirations and unwavering faith in the future (187), underwent a distressing transformation, evolving into an environment fraught with fear and impending danger.

Amidst the backdrop of escalating ethnic tensions and the burgeoning tribal students' movements, Dr. Dam and Babu found themselves subjected to ethnic animosity and unprovoked physical

assaults, all within the confines of the very town that had long served as their residence. During this turbulent phase characterised by widespread violence, strikes, and a prevailing atmosphere of apprehension, non-tribal residents, with Bengalis bearing the brunt, were compelled to reinterpret their daily existence through a novel framework of indignation and fear, which pervaded the town. This paradigm shift effectively divided the populace into distinct categories of 'insiders' and 'outsiders', thereby imposing a new set of societal norms (Deb 2002, 175). For Babu, whose singular sense of home had always been embodied by this town, comprehending the sudden emergence of divisions between 'us' and 'them' within this familiar landscape proved to be an enigma. He grappled with the bewildering transformation, wherein the town he had forever regarded as his own became a place where he and others like him were disparagingly referred to as 'Dkhar'. As the novel elucidates:

> What this meant was that by some undefined process, the 'we' became composed exclusively of non-tribals, and the tribals who had been part of my life since the age of six faded away, joining groups of their own (Deb 2002, 177).

The local Khasi community vehemently expressed their desire for the Dam family to depart, by labelling them as Bangladeshis. However, the question loomed: Where could they possibly relocate to? This predicament is poignantly captured by the phrase "What had been left behind could not even be given a name?" (Deb 2002, 178), symbolising the profound sense of dislocation that ensued as new borders and nation-states materialised in spaces that were once simply referred to as 'home'. The violence inflicted upon migrants and non-tribal inhabitants by the indigenous population finds its roots in the contentious issue of territoriality and the intricate cartographical reconfiguration of the region. Dr. Dam's life is forever altered when he becomes a victim of a mob assault during a period of turmoil. These national borders are deliberately drawn to demarcate a stark distinction between 'outsiders' and 'insiders'. The historical partition of the subcontinent stands as a sombre reminder

of the brutality and violence that can accompany the delineation of borders between nations. Deb's novel indelibly captures the atmosphere of paranoia, violence, and upheaval experienced by individuals when the cartographic landscape undergoes a process of reconfiguration.

A substantial corpus of literary works, spanning both vernacular languages and English, has emerged to grapple with the partition of the Indian subcontinent and the unimaginable horrors and enduring trauma it engendered. It is imperative to acknowledge that the historical documentation and literary portrayals of the partition are predominantly skewed towards the Punjab region. Historians and authors have diligently chronicled the human tragedy, the bestiality, and the brutal riots and bloodshed involving the Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh communities. Consequently, the partition of the subcontinent is frequently perceived as an event that primarily afflicted these particular communities. Regrettably, the trauma of partition on the eastern side of India, a region that continues to bear its weight, is often overshadowed. Novels such as Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* and Deb's *The Point of Return* stand as notable exceptions, delving into the partition's impact on the eastern region of the subcontinent. Deb's literary work illuminates that, on the eastern side, the partition resonated with communities beyond Hindus and Muslims, albeit in distinctive ways.

Anindita Dasgupta astutely reminds us that when our focus shifts to the northeastern quadrant of India, the partition of the subcontinent becomes manifestly more intricate than a mere Hindu-Muslim dichotomy. Her scholarly inquiries into the narratives of partition migrants from Sylhet underscore that many of the post-partition conflagrations in the Northeast were fundamentally rooted in "the rivalry between Assamese and Bengali middle-classes in colonial Assam rather than that between Hindus and Muslims of the colonial province" (Dasgupta 2001, 345). In these regions of India, the partition evolved into an event entailing not only Hindus and Muslims but also interwoven local ethnic intricacies.

Amit Baishya (2010) further elucidates that *The Point of Return* unveils the complexities of evolving from a 'Hindu' to an 'Indian' identity within the eastern frontier region, where such transitions often clashed with local rivalries and issues, thereby fracturing the presumed seamlessness of assimilation into the 'national order of things'. Even individuals who were ostensibly demographically assimilated into the national framework as Bengali Hindus could abruptly find themselves relegated to the status of 'outsiders' as new demarcations between 'insiders' and 'outsiders' were (re)defined within specific locales in post-colonial India. Baishya underscores that *The Point of Return* vividly exemplifies the trajectory "of post-partition Hindu Bengali refugees from Refugee-Indian, Indian-not-Refugee, not-Indian-not-Refugee to Indian-but-always-Refugee through the characterisation of Dr. Dam" (Baishya 2018, 261).

Dr. Dam's initial recognition of the pervasive paranoia embedded within the India he diligently served materialised when he encountered a disconcerting incident involving two Danish professors who had arrived in the hill-town to assess the Indo-Danish Dairy Project. These academicians were unjustly subjected to suspicions of espionage, illuminating the prevalence of apprehension and mistrust. Subsequently, amidst the tumultuous period in the hill regions, Dr. Dam found himself confronting this unsettling reality once more, which served as a poignant reminder that:

> The nation he imagined being shored up through the efforts of people like him was ultimately a fortress, where everywhere around him new battle lines were being drawn and fresh groups of people were being defined as outsiders, borders bristling with barbed-wire teeth. (Deb 2002, 221)

Deb's novel is inherently concerned with delving into the liminal subjectivity experienced by Bengali Hindu migrants. This state of liminality stands in stark contrast to the recognition conferred by official state citizenship. For Bengali Hindus, India naturally emerged as their chosen adopted homeland. However, as vividly portrayed within the novel, a significant portion of these migrants

found themselves perpetually marginalised, unable to attain the status of full-fledged citizens within their newfound country. Their narratives, embedded in the context of the partition, have, by and large, remained overlooked within the broader national historical narratives, primarily because they were presumed to have been seamlessly incorporated into the institutional framework of the nation-state. The liminal existence experienced by Bengali migrants like Dr. Dam may not exhibit the same degree of absolute hopelessness as that witnessed in the case of contemporary refugees hailing from regions such as Syria and Iraq. Nevertheless, the figure of Dr. Dam effectively "internalises certain aspects of the modes of being-in-the-world that encapsulate the essence of the refugee" (Baishya 2018, 239). Deb posits that one does not inherently become an exile within their own country; rather, this designation is thrust upon them by the capricious nature of geographical delineations. The constructs of nationalism and ethnic boundaries invariably dictate that certain individuals remain uncharted within the demographic landscape of postcolonial India.

Conclusion

In the culmination of his journey, Babu arrives at the stark realisation of the implausibility of a triumphant return to his erstwhile home. In a deliberate rejection of conventional notions surrounding the motifs of 'return' and 'homecoming', Deb's narrative exhibits a certain resonance with Jamaica Kincaid's novel, *Lucy* (1991). Much like the protagonist Lucy, Babu consciously opts to retain the status of an exile, assuming the role of a writer residing within the metropolis of Delhi. Deb's novel, resonating Kincaid's narrative, can be discerned as a concerted effort to challenge the pervasive assumptions that underlie numerous counter-narratives pertaining to exile and displacement. These typically adhere to the notion that the disorienting experience of 'exile' inexorably

culminates in the joyous celebrations of a triumphant 'return' (Sugg 2002, 156).

In the face of exile, Babu, similar to Lucy's response, can only lay claim to two intangible possessions: memory and his personal 'history'. Despite the persistent undercurrent of nostalgia fuelling a yearning for some form of return, Babu's mnemonic endeavour accentuates not the pursuit of an exclusive 'homeland' but rather underscores the broader and more universally relevant themes encompassing the elusive nature of the concepts of home and belonging. The epigraphs selected by Deb for the novel, drawn from the works of Ursula Le Guin and Herman Melville, significantly reinforce this perspective. Baishya echoes these sentiments in his analysis, noting that the novel is:

> A phenomenological exploration of the meanings of 'home', the 'space of childhood' and the condition of homelessness [...] an intense exploration of the phenomenological realities engendered by the displacement of populations, and the subsequent negotiations that such displaced people and their future generations have to undergo in the sphere of everyday life with the governmental regimes of the postcolonial state apparatus. (Baishya 2018, 262)

In an interview with Sangeeta Barooah Pisharoty, Deb articulated that this situation extends to encompass the entirety of the Northeastern region, where "all its people, whether indigenous inhabitants or migrants, appear to occupy an uncertain and fragile position within a nation where the lines of identity are seemingly etched in stone" (Pisharoty 2002). The volatile nature and proliferation of secessionist movements within the region can be attributed to a confluence of factors, including imbalanced power dynamics, ethnic political ambitions and conflicts, and the region's prolonged history of neglect by the Indian state, particularly concerning communities residing on the fringes.

However, it is noteworthy that Deb's novel primarily conveys the perspective of migrants, neglecting to amplify the long-standing narrative of exploitation and dispossession endured by the indigenous inhabitants. Furthermore, the novel does not explore the

indifference displayed by the central government, whose 'one nation, one state' ideology often disregards the lived reality of what Dr Amalendu Guha aptly characterises as the "little nationalities" (2) within the region. In reference to the narrator's discernible bitterness concerning the precarious state of non-tribal rights in the hill states of the Northeast, Priyamvada Gopal observes that, "While the questions posed by the novel hold significant importance due to their perceived intractability, the narrative ultimately, and paradoxically, weakens itself by refraining from engaging with history in a more nuanced manner" (182).

Over an extended period, the indigenous tribal communities endured derogatory treatment and outright ridicule from individuals hailing from the larger Indian populace. Concurrently, the parochial and chauvinistic postures adopted by dominant nationalities, coupled with the appropriation of the lands and resources of indigenous inhabitants by individuals originating from Bangladesh, exacerbated their insecurities regarding their very survival. This gradually fostered a deep-seated apprehension of outsiders. The escalating sentiment of uncertainty and precarity ultimately propelled these "little nationalities" onto the path of ethnic assertion and self-preservation.

Despite these narrative gaps, *The Point of Return* emerges as a literary work intrinsically linked to contemporary sociopolitical processes within this contentious region of the Indian republic. Through its contemplative exploration of ethnic struggles and the plight of marginalised communities, the novel underscores the urgency of reconfiguring the national narrative from the periphery. Furthermore, it calls for a comprehensive re-evaluation of the very concept of nationhood and national identity or belonging within the context of postcolonial India.

NOTES

1. The Northeast region of India is a diverse and strategically important area, comprising eight states: Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya,

Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura, and Sikkim. This region is known for its ethnic diversity, with numerous indigenous communities, languages, and cultures. Geographically, it is characterised by hilly terrain, lush forests, and river valleys, and it shares international borders with countries like China, Myanmar, Bhutan and Bangladesh.

2. The Khasis are an indigenous ethnic group native to the northeastern part of India, primarily inhabiting the state of Meghalaya. The Khasi people speak the Khasi language, which belongs to the Mon-Khmer branch of the Austroasiatic language family.
3. Partition refers to the 1947 division of British India into two independent nations, India and Pakistan. It was a traumatic event that led to widespread violence, mass migrations, and deep-seated communal tensions. India became a predominantly Hindu-majority country, while Pakistan was established as a Muslim-majority state, with its territory split into West Pakistan (present-day Pakistan) and East Pakistan (now Bangladesh).
4. The Bodo, Naga, Kuki, Mizo, and Khasi are indigenous ethnic groups from Northeast India, each with distinct languages and cultural traditions, and they have been actively seeking varying degrees of political autonomy and recognition within the Indian state.

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RETHINKING GLOBAL CULTURE: A THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF ARJUN APPADURAI'S GLOBALISM

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Abstract. This paper examines the theoretical contributions of Arjun Appadurai to the study of cultural globalism through four of his major works: *The Social Life of Things* (1986), *Modernity at Large* (1996), *Fear of Small Numbers* (2006), and *The Future as Cultural Fact* (2013). Appadurai's innovative concepts, such as "scapes", "imagination as a social practice" and "ethics of possibility", have reframed how we understand cultural flows, identity, and globalisation in the 21st century. By reviewing existing scholarship and applying thematic analysis, this study synthesises key insights from his works and explores their relevance in contemporary debates on global culture, nationalism, and future-oriented thinking. This paper contributes to cultural sociology by emphasising the continued importance of Appadurai's ideas for understanding the disjunctures and potentials of global modernity.

Keywords: cultural globalism, Arjun Appadurai, globalisation theory

1. INTRODUCTION

Globalisation is often discussed in economic or political terms, but culture remains a vital domain through which it is lived, negotiated, and contested. Arjun Appadurai has emerged as one of the most influential voices in rethinking global culture beyond homogenization narratives. His work focuses on the unpredictable, disjunctive nature of global cultural flows and the role of imagination in shaping social futures. This paper explores Appadurai's ideas across four major books to understand how he conceptualises culture in an era of global transformation. The central question this paper addresses is: How does Appadurai

theorise cultural globalism, and why is his framework significant for understanding contemporary global dynamics?

To answer this question, the paper undertakes a thematic analysis of Appadurai's four key works—*The Social Life of Things* (1986), *Modernity at Large* (1996), *Fear of Small Numbers* (2006), and *The Future as Cultural Fact* (2013). By examining the development of his core concepts—global flows, imagination, fear, and futurity—this study offers a comprehensive synthesis that reveals the evolution and coherence of his thought. It also integrates and critically engages with existing scholarship that supports or challenges his framework, highlighting both its theoretical innovations and its limitations. In doing so, the paper contributes a more integrated and diachronic interpretation of Appadurai's approach to cultural globalism and demonstrates its enduring relevance in addressing the complexities of contemporary global transformations.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Arjun Appadurai: A Brief Biography

Arjun Appadurai is an Indian-American anthropologist born in 1949. He earned his PhD from the University of Chicago and has held academic positions at Yale University, the New School, and New York University. Appadurai's research is distinguished by its interdisciplinary nature, bridging anthropology, sociology, media studies, and political theory. His work consistently centres on how globalisation reshapes cultural practices, identities, and the experience of locality.

Appadurai has been instrumental in shifting the study of globalisation toward more culturally nuanced and multidimensional analyses. His theories have been widely adopted in fields such as media studies, migration studies, urban studies, and international development. His concept of *disjunctive globalisation* has become foundational in cultural studies and critical communication theory (Rai 2018). His influence also extends to public discourse, where his

ideas have shaped conversations around cosmopolitanism, diasporic politics, and the ethics of future-making (NYU, n.d.; Rai 2018).

While Appadurai has authored a wide range of essays and edited volumes, these four books mentioned above represent pivotal moments in the development of his intellectual framework, particularly in relation to globalisation, culture, and imagination. Two key themes that emerge from these works are the dynamic and disjunctive nature of global cultural flows and the transformative impact of globalisation on imagination and identity, including its contradictions and potential for conflict.

2.2. The Dynamic and Disjunctive Nature of Global Cultural Flows

Appadurai's work emphasises the fluid and interconnected nature of the global landscape, moving away from static, localised understandings of culture. This idea is initially hinted at in *The Social Life of Things* (1986), which, reintroduced in the introduction to *The Future as Cultural Fact* (2013), explored how things "move across regimes of value, enable new commodity paths through diversions, and bridge worlds far apart in space and time through their own capacity to morph, without losing their cultural significance" (Appadurai 2013, 128). This early work laid the groundwork for understanding the dynamic trajectories of objects and their embedded cultural meanings in a broader context.

The concept is more developed in *Modernity at Large* (1996) through the framework of "global cultural flows", which Appadurai categorizes into five dimensions or "scapes": ethnoscapes (the flow of people), technoscapes (technological interactions), financescapes (capital flow), mediascapes (flow of media), and ideoscapes (the flow of ideologies). These "scapes" are not necessarily aligned; Appadurai stresses their "disjunctive" and "unpredictable" nature. He argues that the "new global cultural economy has to be seen as a complex, overlapping, disjunctive order" (Appadurai 1996, 32-33). This disjuncture, or the gaps and contradictions between different global flows, becomes a crucial point of analysis. For example, Japan's

openness to foreign products contrasts with its reluctance to accept immigrants, illustrating such a disjuncture. (Appadurai 1996, 34).

The Future as Cultural Fact (2013) builds upon this by acknowledging the increased speed and spread of these flows due to the internet, travel, cross-cultural media, and global advertising. Appadurai notes that "global cultural flows have lost the selective and cumbersome qualities that they have had for much of human history" (Appadurai 2013, 132). This intensification further underscores the dynamic and potentially chaotic nature of cultural globalism. Critics like Heyman and Campbell (2009) acknowledge Appadurai's contribution to popularising the idea of "global flows" but suggest that his emphasis on disjuncture might underestimate the power of capital and the interactions between different kinds of flows.

2.3. The Transformative Impact on Imagination and Identity

Appadurai also extensively explores how globalisation, driven by these cultural flows, profoundly impacts the *social imagination* and the *formation of identities*. In *Modernity at Large* (1996), he argues that migration and electronic media are key forces in shaping how people collectively imagine their lives and worlds. These flows expose individuals to possibilities beyond their immediate locales, leading to "a wider set of possible lives than they ever did before" (Appadurai 1996, 53). This deterritorialization of people and ideas means that identity is no longer solely tied to a specific place of origin but is instead constructed through interactions and comparisons across diverse communities. This leads to the emergence of "postnational" identities and "diasporic publics", where shared identities and imaginations transcend national borders.

The Future as Cultural Fact (2013) reiterates the significance of imagination, stating that lives today are as much "acts of projection and imagination as they are enactments of known scripts or predictable outcomes" (Appadurai 2013, 111). The book suggests that the future itself becomes a "cultural fact," something to be

actively envisioned and worked towards. This connects directly to the transformative power of the social imagination.

However, Appadurai also addresses the darker side of this transformation. While *Modernity at Large* (1996) was sometimes seen as presenting an optimistic view of globalisation, *Fear of Small Numbers* (2006) directly confronts the relationship between this phenomenon and ethnic violence. Appadurai argues that the anxieties and insecurities produced by the intensified flows and the erosion of traditional identities can fuel exclusionary and violent forms of "culturalism", particularly in the context of minority populations feeling threatened (Appadurai 2006, 50). He suggests that these very processes that foster new imaginations and connections can also generate fear and hostility towards difference.

Many scholars, including Amy Young Evrard (2017), Josiah Heyman and Howard Campbell (2009), and S. Rai (2018), have critically engaged with Arjun Appadurai's contributions to the study of cultural globalisation. However, much of the existing scholarship tends to focus narrowly on specific phases of Appadurai's intellectual output, particularly *Modernity at Large* (1996), without situating it in the broader arc of his theoretical development. This fragmented approach has insufficiently explored the evolution and coherence of his ideas across these four key texts: *The Social Life of Things* (1986), *Modernity at Large* (1996), *Fear of Small Numbers* (2006), and *The Future as Cultural Fact* (2013). Our study therefore asks: How does Appadurai's theorisation of cultural globalism develop across these major works, and to what extent does this trajectory address the critical tension between cultural fluidity and structural constraint identified in contemporary scholarship?

3. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative, interpretive methodology grounded in thematic textual analysis. The research centres on a close reading of four of Arjun Appadurai's foundational works: *The*

Social Life of Things (1986*), Modernity at Large* (1996), *Fear of Small Numbers* (2006), and *The Future as Cultural Fact* (2013). These texts were selected for their significance in mapping the evolution of Appadurai's view of cultural globalism—from early insights on commodification and value, to complex global cultural flows, to the tensions of identity politics, and finally to the imagination and futurity as ethical domains.

To contextualise and critically engage with Appadurai's contributions, this study also analyses secondary literature that either builds on or critiques his theories. Key sources include Evrard's (2017) interpretive synthesis of Appadurai's argument, Rai's (2018) overview of Appadurai's influence in critical cultural studies, Heyman and Campbell's (2009) Marxist-geographical critique of global flows, and Rantanen's (2006) interview-based reflection on Appadurai's scholarly trajectory and self-positioning within media and globalization discourse.

The analysis was conducted through iterative reading and coding of these primary and secondary texts to identify four core thematic strands: disjunctive global cultural flows, imagination as a social force, the relationship between globalisation and fear, and the future as a cultural project. These themes were used to evaluate the consistency, development, and applicability of Appadurai's framework across his major works and to assess their significance in contemporary scholarly debates on globalisation. This approach enables a comprehensive and diachronic interpretation of Appadurai's cultural globalism, addressing existing scholarly gaps by synthesising his intellectual trajectory in light of both supportive and critical engagements.

4. Findings

This section presents the findings derived from a thematic analysis of Appadurai's four major works concerning the research question: How does Appadurai theorise cultural globalism, and why is his

framework significant for understanding contemporary global dynamics? The findings directly address the conceptual gaps in the existing literature identified in the preceding review and offer an integrative synthesis of Appadurai's evolving theoretical framework.

4.1 Global Cultural Flows as Disjunctive and Interconnected

Appadurai speaks about globalisation not as a uniform or homogenising process, but as a disjunctive and layered configuration of flows that intersect in unpredictable ways. Across his works, he consistently develops the idea that global cultural processes cannot be adequately understood through traditional centre-periphery or nation-state models. In *The Social Life of Things* (1986), he first introduces the concept of movement and value transformation in relation to material culture. Commodities, he argues, have "social lives," moving across different contexts and accruing meaning in ways that reflect broader cultural logics (Appadurai 1986, 31).

This foundational idea anticipates his later formulation of cultural flows in *Modernity at Large* (1996). In this seminal work, he expands this framework through his five "scapes": ethnoscapes, technoscapes, financescapes, mediascapes, and ideoscapes. Each of these scapes reflects different dimensions of global flow, and importantly, they operate disjunctively—at different speeds, with distinct logics, and often in conflict with one another (Appadurai, 1996, 24-28). This theory moves beyond static models of cultural diffusion, offering a complex, multi-scalar understanding of global interconnectedness.

Scholars have engaged critically with this framework. Evrard (2017) affirms that Appadurai's disjunctive model marked a decisive break from earlier approaches that treated culture as static and tied to specific localities. By foregrounding the interplay between global media and transnational migration, Appadurai reframed culture as dynamic, mobile, and shaped by global networks. However, Heyman and Campbell (2009) express concern that Appadurai's

insistence on the disjunctive and chaotic nature of these flows—treating them as analytically equal and causally unranked—risks obscuring the real hierarchies that structure global dynamics. They argue that "finance capital and centralised political authority often exert disproportionate influence on shaping and constraining cultural flows" (Heyman & Campbell 2009, 133).

The intensification and acceleration of these flows in the digital era is addressed in *The Future as Cultural Fact* (2013), where the author argues that the once-slow and cumbersome global exchanges of people, goods, and ideas have become more rapid and pervasive (Appadurai 2013, 59-60). This insight updates his earlier scapes model and shows how new forms of media and communication technologies have transformed the temporality and spatiality of cultural interaction.

By tracing this theoretical development, the analysis reveals that Appadurai's theory of cultural globalism is best understood not through a single text, but as a trajectory that evolves with the transformations of global systems. This synthesis addresses a critical gap in the literature, as most scholars focus exclusively on *Modernity at Large*, missing the broader arc of his thought.

4.2 Imagination as a Cultural and Political Force

A central contribution of Appadurai's theory of globalisation is the treatment of imagination as a collective, socially organised practice. In *Modernity at Large* (1996), he introduces the idea that imagination is no longer the preserve of artists or elites, but is increasingly a mass phenomenon fueled by media and migration. He writes, "the imagination has become an organised field of social practices, a form of work, and a form of negotiation between sites of agency (individuals) and globally defined fields of possibility" (Appadurai 1996, 31).

Rai (2018) highlights the significance of Appadurai's concept of imagination as rooted in media, migration, and ideology, functioning as a key site of globalisation processes. She particularly emphasises

the role of mediascapes in shaping shared imaginaries, often resulting in what she calls a "globally variable synesthesia", where similar imagined worlds appear in multiple contexts with localised variations (Rai, 2018: 4-5).

Heyman and Campbell (2009) critique Appadurai's concept of imagination, arguing that while it is a useful theoretical tool, it does not adequately address the uneven distribution of imaginative capacity. They contend that access to the tools of imagination—such as media production, digital platforms, and educational institutions—is itself deeply stratified along lines of class, geography, and political power (Heyman & Campbell 2009, 133-135).

This idea is extended in *The Future as Cultural Fact* (2013), where imagination becomes not just a way of interpreting the world, but a method of shaping it. Appadurai frames imagination as an ethical and political project, arguing for an "ethics of possibility" in contrast to the "ethics of probability" that dominates risk-based thinking (Appadurai 2013, 295-297). Here, imagination emerges as a site of resistance and innovation in the face of uncertainty and precarity.

The empirical relevance of Appadurai's theory of imagination is demonstrated in several recent studies. Suzuki (2020) explores how young Japanese women enact imagination through temporary migration, aspiring to personal transformation and fulfilment beyond the rigid norms of their home society. Their life projects are shaped by transnational media and narratives of possibility, supporting Appadurai's view of imagination as a field of social practice. Likewise, the case studies in *Aspirations of Young Adults in Urban Asia* (Remmert *et al.* 2020) reveal how youth in diverse urban contexts employ the imagination to forge alternative identities and futures amid structural constraints. Westendorp (2020) explicitly links these aspirations to Appadurai's notion of the "ethics of possibility," offering a grounded perspective on how young people navigate and imagine alternative futures. These examples reinforce Appadurai's idea that imagination is not merely fantasy, but a mode of cultural agency—contingent, situated, and deeply political.

Boccagni's (2017) comparative study of immigrant workers also shows how aspirations function as temporal orientations grounded in structural and emotional experiences of migration, resonating with Appadurai's later emphasis on futurity.

4.3 Globalisation, Fear, and Cultural Violence

Appadurai's engagement with the darker dimensions of globalisation is most fully developed in *Fear of Small Numbers* (2006), which departs from the more optimistic tone of his earlier work. He addresses the rise of violence against minorities as a consequence of their disjunctures. Drawing on Freud's "anxiety of incompleteness", he argues that the volatility introduced by global flows destabilises majority identities, leading to xenophobia, scapegoating, and ethnic violence (Appadurai 2006, 155).

This represents an important corrective to critiques like those of Evrard (2017), who suggests that Appadurai's early work overemphasised the emancipatory potential of globalisation. By acknowledging the intersection of global cultural flows with fear, uncertainty, and violence, Appadurai develops a more nuanced theory that accounts for both the constructive and destructive outcomes of cultural globalism.

Rai (2018) notes how Appadurai addresses critiques of his earlier work in these later publications. In *Fear of Small Numbers*, he explores the "dark side", where global flows intensify anxieties about identity, triggering violence against minorities. Appealing to Freud, he theorises the fear experienced by the majority population as they confront the perceived volatility of identity in a globalised world (Rai, 2018:11-12).

Moreover, *Fear of Small Numbers* ties together imagination and disjuncture in a novel way: just as the imagination can be a site of hope and future-building, it can also be a site of anxiety, myth-making, and exclusion. This dual potential reinforces the need to consider globalisation not as inherently liberatory or oppressive, but as a set of contradictory forces with unpredictable consequences.

4.4 From Diagnosis to Ethics: Toward a Future-Oriented Framework

Across the four texts, Appadurai moves from diagnosis to prescription. While his early work is primarily descriptive—mapping how objects and ideas circulate globally—his later ones advocate for ethical engagement. *The Future as Cultural Fact* (2013) introduces the idea that future itself has become a cultural object: something that is imagined, contested, and acted upon. He calls on scholars to think beyond fatalistic or probabilistic models and explore how cultural actors envision and create alternative futures.

This trajectory fills an important gap in globalisation studies, which often remain trapped in structural or deterministic paradigms. Appadurai instead centres culture, imagination, and ethics as key tools for navigating global complexity. Rai (2018) highlights this shift in Appadurai's work, noting his emphasis on "grassroots globalisation" and inclusive, question-driven approaches that challenge the dominance of Western-centric models in global research. She observes that Appadurai offers a hopeful corrective through his advocacy for "grassroots globalisation"—a bottom-up movement driven by NGOs and transnational advocacy networks that seek justice and inclusion outside of elite-driven globalisation processes (Rai 2018, 11-12).

This analysis demonstrates that Appadurai's theory of cultural globalism is a rich, evolving framework that captures the complexity of contemporary global dynamics. Through the themes of disjunctive flows, imagination, fear, and futurity, Appadurai offers a comprehensive and flexible lens for analysing how culture shapes, and is shaped by, this process. His work remains vital for understanding not only how global cultural systems function, but also how individuals and communities respond to, resist, and reimagine these systems in diverse and context-specific ways.

5. Discussion

The synthesis of Appadurai's four major works reveals a robust and

evolving framework for understanding cultural globalism that moves beyond economic determinism and cultural homogenization. His theorisation captures the complexity, fluidity, and contradictions of global cultural processes. Appadurai's contribution lies in his ability to conceptualise this process as a series of intersecting and disjunctive flows that shape, and are shaped by, both material and imaginative practices.

A key insight of this analysis is the dynamic interplay between global cultural flows and imagination. As established in *Modernity at Large* (1996) and further developed in *The Future as Cultural Fact* (2013), imagination functions not only as a site of identity formation but as a terrain for ethical engagement with possible futures. This redefinition of imagination—as a form of agency and futurity—distinguishes Appadurai's theory from earlier globalisation models that treated culture as passive or reactive. Instead, he positions cultural actors as actively negotiating and producing meanings within shifting global conditions.

This study also clarifies how Appadurai incorporates a growing awareness of the structural inequalities and violence generated by global cultural disjunctures. *Fear of Small Numbers* presents a corrective to the more optimistic interpretations of cultural globalisation found in his earlier work, highlighting the affective and political volatility that emerges when majority identities feel threatened by perceived minority encroachments. Here, Appadurai integrates psychoanalytic theory with globalisation studies, offering a novel explanation for the rise of cultural violence and exclusion in an increasingly interconnected world.

Despite criticisms—such as those by Heyman and Campbell (2009), who argue that he underplays the influence of global capital—this analysis demonstrates that Appadurai's later works begin to address precisely these concerns. The shift toward ethics and grassroots globalisation, as identified by Rai (2018), illustrates his attempt to move from descriptive theory toward normative and political engagement. Thus, his corpus reflects not a static

worldview, but a responsive and adaptive body of work that seeks to meet the evolving challenges of the global age.

In bridging the gaps identified by Evrard (2017), Heyman and Campbell (2009), and Rai (2018), this study demonstrates the value of reading Appadurai's works in chronological and thematic relation to one another. It reveals a continuity of thought in his interrogation of globalisation as a fundamentally cultural and imaginative process, one that demands not only critical analysis but also ethical responsibility.

Conclusion

Arjun Appadurai's theorisation of cultural globalism offers a compelling and multidimensional lens through which to understand contemporary global dynamics. Through the concepts of disjunctive flows, imagination as social practice, the anxiety of identity, and the ethics of futurity, Appadurai articulates a vision that is both critically incisive and ethically engaged.

This study demonstrates that the four selected texts—*The Social Life of Things, Modernity at Large, Fear of Small Numbers,* and *The Future as Cultural Fact*—are not isolated contributions but constitute an integrated theoretical trajectory. They collectively trace the evolution of his thinking from the circulation of material objects to the imaginative constitution of global futures. His work not only challenges conventional models of globalisation but also expands the methodological and ethical scope of cultural research in a global context.

By synthesising Appadurai's major works and situating them in conversation with both supportive and critical scholarship, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of cultural globalism. It affirms the enduring relevance of Appadurai's framework for analysing global flows, cultural imaginaries, and the ongoing struggle over identity and inclusion in the 21st century. Ultimately, Appadurai's call for an ethics of possibility invites scholars and

practitioners alike to reimagine globalisation not as a singular force, but as a field of contestation, imagination, and potential transformation.

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REVIEWING THE INTERSECTION OF EPISTEMICIDE, AFRICAN DIGITAL PLATFORMS, AND DIGITAL STORYTELLING. A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

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Abstract. Digital storytelling emerges as a key 'epistemic site' for knowledge reclamation and narrative sovereignty, potentially challenging dominant knowledge hierarchies. This paper reviews the potential of digital storytelling to counter the so-called 'epistemicide'. The review extends beyond traditional epistemological critiques to theorise about the role of digital platforms in countering epistemicide. The purpose of this paper is to propose a theoretical framework where digital storytelling acts as a vehicle for epistemic resistance and justice. This theoretical framework responds to previous calls for decolonial methodologies that prioritise lived experiences and counter the dominance of centric epistemologies. To support this framework, the review highlights the role of African digital platforms in fostering alternative knowledge systems and examines how participatory digital storytelling can contribute to social justice. This review paper, hence, claims that digital storytelling can be a site for narrative reclamation, sovereignty, and decentralisation. The paper advocates for an epistemic decentralisation model that reimagines digital media as a domain for inclusivity. Such inquiries about the systematic integration of digital storytelling in both global and local knowledge systems or settings and whether it constitutes a potential *site of epistemic dialogue* are recommended. An understanding of the role and effectiveness of digital storytelling in countering epistemicide and the intersection between digital storytelling and epistemic justice, mainly among Indigenous communities, necessitates such virtual ethnographies.

Keywords: epistemicide, African digital platforms, digital storytelling, theoretical framework

INTRODUCTION

Epistemic Injustice / Epistemicide

Epistemic Injustice implies the harm inflicted upon individuals in their knowledge capabilities, often manifested through prejudice and systemic biases that undermine their credibility or impede their capability to interpret their experiences. The term "Epistemicide" elaborates further on such Epistemic injustice through a combination of two root words, "Episteme"—knowledge, and "Cide", which indicates killing or annihilation as it appears in words like "homicide" and "genocide". Thereof, Epistemicide denotes the killing or annihilation of a certain system of knowledge, that is, the deliberate annihilation of a group's knowledge system, often as a tool of oppression, hence, epistemic injustice.

Though Epistemic Injustice seems like a form of an unequal distribution of epistemic goods, be it knowledge, education, or information, it is not merely about access to knowledge but about how individuals "are wronged specifically as knowers", as contributors to or interpreters of knowledge (Fricker 2007, 7). According to Fricker, there are two key forms of epistemic injustice: Testimonial Injustice and Hermeneutical Injustice. The former occurs when a speaker's credibility is unfairly deflated due to prejudice. As illustrated by Fricker (2007, 23), if a black person reports a crime but is not believed by the police due to racial bias, their knowledge is dismissed because of prejudice in the economy of credibility, that is, the social system that determines whose words are taken seriously. The latter, on the other hand, happens when gaps in collective knowledge prevent someone from fully understanding or expressing their own experience. A clear example, as given by Fricker (2007, 149), is a woman in a society that lacks the concept of sexual harassment, who may struggle to articulate her experience because the collective interpretive resources, such as language and social awareness, are insufficient. Fricker here accentuates that both forms of epistemic injustice reveal ethical issues in everyday epistemic practices.

According to Fricker (2007, 43), epistemology is not just a theoretical field but is further intertwined with social justice. Epistemicide or Epistemic Injustice creates disadvantages. While Testimonial Injustice affects how we share knowledge with each other by shaping credibility judgments, Hermeneutical Injustice influences how we make sense of our own social experiences. Such disadvantages harm individuals both intellectually and socially by limiting their ability to understand and express their experiences as well as reducing their voice in public discourse, thereby reinforcing socioeconomic inequalities and structural injustices (Fricker 2007, 43-46). Therefore, a failure to achieve global "cognitive justice" implies a failure of global social justice (de Sousa Santos 2015, 233).

The Intersection Between Epistemicide and Domination

De Sousa Santos (2015, 91) theorises epistemic injustice or epistemicide from a more global lens, that is, as intersected with globalisation and Western cultural domination. Epistemicide here is the aftermath of the unequal cultural exchanges that have historically led to the erasure of knowledge from subordinate cultures. In the context of European expansion, Eurocentric modernity's destruction of these knowledge systems is a key factor in epistemicide (de Sousa Santos 2015, 92). Given that Western evaluation systems, such as tenure metrics, often reinforce hegemonic norms and existing power structures, alternative or non-Western ways of sharing and producing knowledge may be seen as less credible (Patin *et al.* 2021, 10). To challenge and end the epistemicide in Africa, a focus on concrete and practical ways of epistemic liberation is called for (Masaka 2018, 297).

> "The quest for the realistic concrete epistemic liberation can be enhanced if the agents of both the dominant and the dominated epistemologies are prepared to challenge the unjust *status quo* and move toward a position of parity of epistemologies and their agents." (Masaka 2018, 297-298).

Given the problematicality of epistemicide or epistemic injustice, further research is required to explore the connection between

epistemic injustice/ epistemicide, and concepts like "epistemic violence (Spivak 1988), epistemological privilege (Fricker 1999), silencing (Dotson 2011), epistemic oppression (Dotson 2014), decolonization work (Duarte & Belarde-Lewis 2015), epistemic exploitation (Berenstain 2016), citational justice (Kumar & Karusala 2020), and knowledge justice (Leung & Lopez-McKnight 2021)" (Patin *et al.* 2021, 11).

African Digital Platforms Agency

The future resides in digital media platforms. Technology's significance in Africa and the effects of the so-called digital revolution have been widely celebrated and extensively chronicled in fields including journalism, politics, agriculture, trade, and communication not to forget African digital arts, which provide innovative methods to represent diverse and evolving African identities (Bisschoff 2017, 264-266). Digital platforms, according to Nesbitt-Ahmed (2017, 377), provide Africans with significance and worth in relation to the creation and consumption of African literature. Global connectivity is rapidly changing in Sub-Saharan Africa, which is moving from a state of digital disconnection to a digital economy with hundreds of millions of connected inhabitants. The area can now compete internationally in the creation of digital goods and services thanks to this transformation, which has sparked enthusiasm about the prospects of an emerging knowledge economy (Graham et al. 2017, 345).

Digital platforms have historically been defined according to the field in which they have been researched (Koskinen *et al.* 2019, 321). Three fundamental traits are shared by the majority of digital platforms: they are technologically mediated, facilitate communication between user groups, and grant those user groups certain capabilities (Evans 2016; Constantinides *et al.* 2018; Davis 2018; Jacobides *et al.* 2018 as cited in Koskinen *et al.* 2019, 324). Digital Platforms can counter Epistemic Injustice as well, especially Public Scholarship. Digital platforms such as open-access online journals may elevate and centre voices from historically marginalised

populations through research-intensive public institutions to address epistemic injustice in education research (Quantz & Buell, 2019, 130). That explains why Africa's connectedness has risen over the last two decades and resulted in an increase in African entrepreneurs employing handmade digital technology, which might provide a breakthrough scenario (Tafese 2022, 1). However, it is not appropriate to be left to the intellectual hegemony or monopoly of one area to spread ideas about advancements in digital technology, particularly their adoption in many social contexts, thus, true globalization necessitates being receptive to North-South dialogue which is important in building relationships and overcoming intellectual barriers (Schoon *et al.* 2020, 12).

In order to establish African digital experiences as "epistemic sites" of knowledge creation in and of themselves, Schoon et al. (2019, 2) advocate for a decolonial approach in digital media studies that gives qualitative approaches precedence. Even while digital platforms are widely used in the global South, little is known about their effects on development (Koskinen *et al.* 2019, 8-9). Despite the fact that many nations in the global south have been freed from the prevailing colonial structures, many continue to face injustices such as the marginalization of indigenous languages, epistemic indigenous oppression, and destruction of cultural injustices against indigenous peoples brought forth by colonization and empire regimes (Makananise & Madima 2025, 2).

The Power of Digital Storytelling

The practice of using digital tools and multimedia elements, such as images, video, audio, and text, to create and share a narrative is considered digital storytelling**.** The latter is, precisely, defined by Lambert (2009, 84-86) and De Jager *et al.* (2017, 2549) as a brief multimedia presentation, typically lasting between two to five minutes, that blends images, spoken narration, and various sound elements. Particularly, it is used for community engagement, creative

expression, and therapeutic settings, yet it has more recently been adopted as a research method within the arts. While digital storytelling projects may encounter some challenges, participants' feedback indicates that the advantages of digital storytelling surpass these difficulties, especially when implemented through a respectful and inclusive research approach (De Jager *et al.* 2017, 2575).

Digital storytelling also has the potential to promote justice and inclusivity by impacting participatory approaches in fields such as science and technology studies, design research, and human-computer interaction. This includes methods like participatory design, co-design, ethnographic studies, and participatory action research (Parvin 2018, 515). In academia, Digital storytelling can serve as a form of counter-storytelling in that it offers a compelling way to reframe knowledge from marginalised perspectives, and thus, presents a decolonial alternative to dominant neoliberal ideologies that uphold institutions and universities as the primary sites of knowledge creation (Dutta *et al.* 2022, 59). In South Africa, both individual and collaborative digital storytelling have enabled participants to document daily experiences and form a database for analysing social justice issues, aside from generating knowledge from lived realities (Walker 2024, 1). Walker states that their insights are organised into a social injustice map approach, which is further proposed as a valuable tool for empowering young people worldwide to foster their role in knowledge creation and contributing to a more just society.

A Theoretical Framework

Based on the literature examined above, it can be said that digital storytelling is powerful and may constitute an epistemic site for Knowledge Reclamation and Narrative Sovereignty. There is also the supposition of an intersection between Community-Driven Platforms and Inclusivity or Inclusively Multimodal Storytelling Approaches. Another dynamically indicated dimension that Open-

Access avenues or storytelling platforms may be a key for such Epistemic Decentralisation.

Knowledge Reclamation, Narrative Sovereignty, Inclusivity and Epistemic Decentralisation

Digital Storytelling can be considered as an Epistemic Site of knowledge reclamation. Undoubtedly, the digital age presents both challenges and opportunities for knowledge production, particularly for marginalised communities whose epistemologies have historically been silenced. Through the integration of oral histories, visual narratives, and multimedia storytelling, digital platforms can become powerful tools for cognitive justice and, therefore, a counter to epistemicide—the systematic erasure of Indigenous and non-Western knowledge systems. Digital storytelling, I propose, is not merely a means of expression; rather, it can serve as an act of epistemic resistance.

One of the most crucial aspects of digital storytelling is narrative sovereignty—the ability of marginalised communities to control how their stories are told and disseminated. Community-led storytelling initiatives can empower groups to document oral traditions, indigenous philosophies, and lived experiences, and so preserve them against the forces of epistemicide. Furthermore, these narratives may serve as counter-histories that challenge hegemonic knowledge production while resisting the dominant discourse that often distorts or erases Indigenous perspectives. Digital platforms, henceforth, can be regarded here as spaces where knowledge reclamation occurs, thereby providing a possibility for the validation and amplification of previously silenced epistemologies.

To maximise accessibility and engagement, digital storytelling must employ multimodal approaches that cater to diverse audiences. This includes the use of text, audio, video, and interactive media,

where the latter ensures that knowledge is not restricted to traditional literacy-based formats. Additionally, this multilingual storytelling is essential in preserving socio-cultural and linguistic diversity, that is, allowing indigenous knowledge to flourish in digital spaces. Techniques such as digital archives, interactive maps, and participatory documentaries may further enhance accessibility while ensuring that knowledge is both preserved and dynamically engaged with by different communities.

Open-access digital storytelling platforms may bring about decentralisation. The latter means that the digital storytelling process is in the hands of the communities it represents. Therefore, developing open-access storytelling platforms prevents corporate and institutional control over narratives. This may allow marginalised voices to retain agency over their knowledge production. Besides, fostering an inclusive approach to storytelling, such as co-creation models, where community members collaborate with scholars, digital designers, and activists, is necessary for the decentralisation process. What is far more significant is participatory storytelling work-shops where individuals can be equipped with the necessary digital literacy and technical skills to document and share their narratives, thereby enhancing a self-sustaining knowledge ecosystem.

Conclusion

Digital storytelling can offer a powerful means of amplifying marginalised voices, resisting knowledge erasure, and fostering epistemic justice. Regardless of the digital divide issue, which may

constitute a hindrance to such epistemic justice, digital narrativity or storytelling can provide accessible, participatory, and multimodal approaches to preserving and sharing diverse epistemologies, thus ensuring that African knowledge systems are both recognised and actively shaping global discourses.

In this review paper, I propose that digital storytelling or narrativity can be a powerful means of establishing such epistemic sites of narrative reclamation, sovereignty, inclusivity, and decentralisation. Such a decentralised approach to digital media should prioritise qualitative and contextually rich narratives that may challenge dominant epistemologies. While digital platforms are widely used across the global South, their potential as tools for knowledge production remains underexplored. Therein, the persistence of epistemic injustice, seen in the marginalisation of Indigenous languages, cultures, and ways of knowing, raises the urgent need for alternative frameworks. Hence, leveraging digital storytelling can enable these communities to reclaim narrative sovereignty, resist epistemicide, and transform digital spaces into decolonial knowledge ecosystems where their epistemologies are preserved as well as actively shape the global discourse.

Future directions should explore how digital storytelling can be systematically integrated into both global and local knowledge systems as *sites of dialogue*. Also, virtual ethnographic research may be an effective way to understand the role of digital storytelling in countering epistemicide and the relationship between digital storytelling and epistemic justice, typically in Indigenous communities.

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