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EDITOR: ANDRÁS TARNÓC

EDITOR EMERITUS: LEHEL VADON



INSTITUTE OF ENGLISH AND AMERICAN STUDIES  
ESZTERHÁZY KÁROLY UNIVERSITY  
EGER

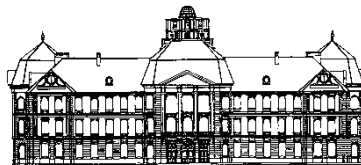
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## Readers

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## A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

We are pleased to present the 16<sup>th</sup> issue of the *Eger Journal of American Studies*, which at the same time marks the thirtieth anniversary of the introduction of American Studies at the Eszterházy Károly College, the predecessor of the Eszterházy Károly University. Following the path hewed out by the founders, this scholarly periodical continues to be a forum for the publication of essays and book reviews on North American civilization in English.

The articles of this volume cover a variety of disciplines including cultural and literary studies, history, and popular culture.

Ágnes Bodnár explores the manifestations of the captivity motif in American culture and literature while Enikő Bollobás takes a scholarly look at intersubjectivity in the short stories of Henry James. Péter Csató discusses the phenomenon of cognitive dissonance in one of Woody Allen's films, Makhdokth Hajjghasemi reveals the social and cultural foundations of Frank Baum's fairy tales and Rita Nándori examines the impact of Christianity on Inuit culture and religion. Zoltán Peterecz provides a historical analysis of the diaries of American intelligence officers and diplomats involved in the peace process concluding World War One, Bianka Szendrei investigates the art of Janelle Monáe and András Tarnóc presents a genre-specific investigation of the prisoner of war narrative and Zsolt Virágos' review study analyzes works of Hungarian-Jewish fiction. The present issue also contains book reviews by Fatma Chenini, Zoltán Peterecz, András Tarnóc, and Renáta Zsámba.

We are especially pleased to disseminate the works of authors representing virtually the full spectrum of the American Studies community in Hungary. The contributors range from PhD students via mid-career scholars to senior researchers. We are proud to enter the fourth decade of the history of American Studies in Eger and we welcome manuscripts of scholarly essays and reviews from the Hungarian and international American Studies community.





# The impact of the confinement motif on selected works of American Literature

Ágnes Bodnár

## I

In my essay I am focusing on three different aspects of confinement in the case of women victimized by physical or metaphysical captivity. The reason for choosing these stories was the actual description of physical captivity or the restrictions and restraints on one's movement. My inquiry is primarily guided by Enikő Bollobás' theory of the performative, along with Maurice Merleau-Ponty's and Emanuel Levinas' views on intersubjectivity. In addition to applying these theoretical models to the selected texts I will identify potential parallels with the given plots and the main motifs of Indian captivity narratives.

Bollobás asserts that the subject can be performed in two ways, either *theatrically*, replaying the existing scripts, thus projecting a *performance* according to the expectations of power while reproducing the ruling ideologies. The other approach is to create new identities, or promoting agency in the form of what she calls the *radical performative*. The concept of intersubjectivity, implying the recognition of the Other, is a fundamental motif or trope of any multicultural encounter including the confinement of the white woman in the hands of Native Americans. The recognition of the Other in the subject implies affective intersubjectivity, while antagonistic intersubjectivity is based on objectification.

Harriet Jacobs' *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861) provides a glimpse at how slavery is coupled with sexual exploitation, Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper" (1892) shows how a woman turns to destructive behavior to rebel against her submissive status within the institution of marriage reflecting patriarchal domination, and Gertrude Bonnin (Zitkala-Sa) reports on the forms of culture shock she suffered in a Quaker boarding school in *Schooldays of an Indian Girl* (1900).

## II

Born to mulatto parents, Jacobs was protected from the brutal reality of slavery until age six when her mother died. Subsequently, she was forced to realize by overhearing the conversation of others that she was in fact a slave. Eventually, she

was assigned into household slavery at the plantation of Dr. Flint, a local doctor, whose main goal was to seduce her. Although she repeatedly refused his advances, he would not relent in his pursuit. In order to escape the fate of becoming his concubine, she started a relationship with a neighboring plantation owner, Mr. Sands, and the liaison resulted in two children. Nevertheless Dr. Flint continued to harass her and did his best to separate her from her children cared for by her grandmother. In desperation she decided to escape. She found refuge in the attic at her grandmother's house near the estate of the doctor. During her seven year hiding, she spent her time by reading the Bible and sewing clothes for children. She escaped to the North in 1842 and became one of the leading spokespersons against slavery.

An early proponent of women's rights and an author known to resort to the captivity motif,<sup>1</sup> Lydia Maria Child, functioned as the amanuensis of the Jacobs narrative. Child's emphasis on the rectitude of Jacobs' character reinforces that she acted according to contemporary social scripts. "During the last seventeen years, she has lived the greater part of the time with a distinguished family in New York, and has so deported herself as to be highly esteemed by them" (7). Child also offers a careful disclaimer concerning the truth value of the Jacobs narrative: "I believe those who know her will not be disposed to doubt her veracity, though some incidents in her story are more romantic than fiction" (7).

Harriet Jacobs is exposed to the contemporary power represented both on the macro and micro level. The macro or social level is the slave holding society of the South, and in the individual dimension it is Dr. Flint who wishes to exercise unlimited control over her. The captivity motif is applicable both on the physical and metaphysical plane. The physical level of course is indicated by the limited space in the garret, while the metaphysical aspect is the peculiar institution of the South.

The protagonists of Indian captivity narratives such as Elizabeth Hanson, Hannah Dustan, and that of the slave narrative as demonstrated by Jacobs, display personal growth ranging from suffering objectification to achieving subject status. The central point of objectification is equivalent to symbolic death, manifested in the full denial of the protagonist's humanity. In the case of Jacobs, her symbolic death, that is, her perception as chattel or property is marked by Dr. Flint declaring that "[she] was made for his use, made to obey his command in everything; that [she] was nothing but a slave, whose will must and should surrender to his" (29). The individual dimension represented by her master is complemented by the same perception held by Southern society, which is reflected in the protagonist's appalled comment: "I never dreamed I was a piece of merchandise" (11).

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1 Hobomok: The Tale of Early Times (1824)

Jacobs' commitment to contemporary social codes is reflected by her insistence on her own virtue and the invocation of the theatrical performative. One such instance is when she informs Dr. Flint of her desire to marry a black man: "It is right and honorable for us to love each other. The man you call a puppy never insulted me, sir; and he would not love me if he did not believe me to be a virtuous woman" (61). The way she attempts to come to terms with Dr. Flint's seductive advances: "He tried his utmost to corrupt the pure principles my grandmother had instilled" (44) reiterates her dedication to a virtuous life. Moreover, she believes that with the affair with Mr. Sands she has degraded herself. She grapples with the dilemma whether she should let her grandmother know about the liaison: "I wanted to confess to her that I was no longer worthy of her love; but I could not utter the dreaded words" (86). Her choice of words: "virtuous woman, pure principles," reflect her attempt to meet the moral code of her age.

The escape from the plantation amounts to defying contemporary social scripts. She rebels against the patriarchal order and uses cunning and trickery to defeat a much more powerful enemy: "Who can blame slaves for being cunning? They are constantly compelled to resort to it. It is the only weapon of the weak and oppressed against the strength of their tyrants" (154). Her confinement within captivity compels her to take on the role of the trickster, a frequent device members of social groups deprived of economic or political power resort to. In order to mislead her pursuers into believing that she escaped to the North, she arranges that letters are sent to the Flint home from New York.

The time she spends at her grandmother's garret implies physical enclosure, while she is metaphysically captured in the institution of slavery. Unlike the Indian captivity, her physical confinement is self-chosen, yet its physical and psychological impact is similar. Her physical suffering is caused by the limited space and lack of mobility and motility. Likewise, being so close, yet so far away from her children, causes emotional anguish: "The garret was only nine feet long, and seven wide. The highest part was three feet high, and sloped down abruptly to the loose board floor. There was no admission for either light or air. [...] The air was stifling; the darkness total [...] I suffered for air even more than for light. But I was not comfortless. I heard the voices of my children" (173).

Antagonistic intersubjectivity can be recognized in her response upon Dr. Flint's assault and his refusal to let her marry a free black man: "He sprang upon me like a tiger, and gave me a stunning blow. It was the first time he had ever struck me; and fear did not enable me to control my anger. When I had recovered a little from the effects, I exclaimed, 'You have struck me for answering you honestly. How I despise you!'" (61). Her reaction to the incident brings Carolyn Heilbrun's preconditioning of subject status on the capability to express anger to mind. The last

sentence in fact can indicate subjectivation, that is, the achievement of the status of Foucault's active subject and the presence of the grammatical subject. The term "you have struck me" expresses distancing from Mr. Flint as the expression "me" clearly indicates the establishment of physical boundaries, and the verb "despise" confirms the relegation of her tormentor to abject status. Despising something or somebody connotes exclusion from one's personal horizon while implying the reinforcement of the self at the same time.

Having witnessed the brutal punishment meted out to a fellow slave and sharing his pain, she also expresses affective intersubjectivity: "I shall never forget that night. Never before, in my life, had I heard hundreds of blows fall, in succession, on a human being. His piteous groans, and his 'O, pray don't, massa,' rang in my ear for months afterwards" (23).

Jacobs uses the captivity motif partly to raise sympathy to her plight while resorting to the Gothic to promote the goals of the abolition movement. Hiding, although voluntarily, in the garret establishes a parallel with Gilman's heroine locked in a room at the top of the "ancestral hall" or with the ominous enclosure of Bonnin at the beginning of her ordeal. Making emotional outbursts reminiscent of Mary Kinnan's captivity narrative, she juxtaposes her suffering to the general immorality of slavery: "Could you have seen that mother clinging to her child, when they fastened the irons upon his wrists; could you have heard her heart-rending groans, and seen her bloodshot eyes wander wildly from face to face, vainly pleading for mercy; could you have witnessed that scene as I saw it, you would exclaim, *Slavery is damnable!*" (38).

Similarly to the captives of Indians, she is exposed to the extremities of the weather while hiding in her grandmother's attic: "I suffered much more during the second winter than I did during the first. My limbs were benumbed by inaction, and the cold filled them with cramp" (185). Another parallel with the captivity narrative is the protagonist acting as an amateur ethnographer as seen in the case of Rachel Plummer and Mary Rowlandson. Jacobs provides detailed information on the logistics of slavery including the diets, the food allowances, and structural aspects of that institution.

It is also noteworthy that just like in the case of the Indian captivity narrative religion plays a central role. True to the general view of religion as presented in the slave narrative, Jacobs has mixed views on the topic. She asserts that it provides comfort for her when she prays at her parents' grave: "I knelt by the graves of my parents, and thanked God, as I had often done before, that they had not lived to witness my trials, or to mourn over my sins. [...] My trust in God had been strengthened by that prayer among the graves" (138-9). But she also condemns Christianity: "When I was told that Dr. Flint had joined the Episcopal church,

I was much surprised. I supposed that religion had a purifying effect on the character of men; but the worst persecutions I endured from him were after he was a communicant” (115).

Jacobs throughout her ordeal evolves from a victim of constant sexual harassment to someone following her own will capable of making her own decisions. The unique aspect of her experience is that she becomes a captive within the pre-existing confinement of slavery. In her case imprisonment in the attic, notwithstanding the torturous circumstances, means liberty. Her position, however, is liminal both in the physical and metaphysical sense. She is removed from the ground and is in between slavery and freedom. The attic serves as a transitional space or as a waystation between bondage and liberty. It is also ironic that she gains agency by intentionally limiting her physical mobility. In light of De Lauretis’s space off theory, the grandmother’s attic functions as the “elsewhere,” or a space at the margin of the represented discursive space, which in the present case is the plantation of Dr. Flint, and by extension the southern slaveholding society.

Captivity, although in a different form, is the central motif in Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s “The Yellow Wallpaper.” The well-known story describes how a woman suffering from at that time undiagnosed post-partum depression loses touch with reality and descends into the abyss of madness. The story emphasizes both the physical and metaphysical aspects of captivity within the confines of a marriage dominated by patriarchy. The unnamed protagonist is under the full control of her husband both from a social and medical vantage point. As her “hysteria” is treated by her spouse, in addition to the paternalistic control generated by the patriarchal society, reminiscent of Foucault’s concept of bio-power she is controlled medically as well. Accordingly, the protagonist is subordinated to “the life administering power subjecting one to precise controls and comprehensive regulations” (325).

At the orders of her husband she is placed in the children’s nursery at the top of the “ancestral hall” with bars on the window. She is deprived of any creative activity, yet, she secretly writes down her experiences. The absolute submission to her husband is also expressed by his control of her time: “I have a schedule prescription for each hour in the day” (Gilman). On the physical level the protagonist is confined against her will and on the social level she is medically controlled by her physician husband and treated as a child. The patriarchal and medical power she faces is described by the following quote:

John is a physician, and *perhaps*—(I would not say it to a living soul, of course, but this is dead paper and a great relief to my mind—) *perhaps* that is one reason I do not get well faster. You see, he does not believe I am sick!

[...] My brother is also a physician, and also of high standing, and he says the same thing (Gilman).

Her subordinated status has three dimensions, she is subjugated as a wife, as a woman, and as a patient. The medication given to her reinforces her husband's bio-power: "So I take phosphates or phosphites—whichever it is, and tonics, and journeys, and air, and exercise, and am absolutely forbidden to 'work' until I am well again" (Gilman). In fact, while being deprived of the tools of writing and denied of the power of expression, she manages to create her own story by describing the wallpaper and recognizing the woman imprisoned in it.

Her objectification on the part of her husband and patriarchal society is indicated by John's attitude toward her condition and how he fully disregards her views. Her repeated questions "But what is one to do?" (Gilman) illustrate her subordinated position and objectification. The question expresses helplessness, vulnerability, and lack of agency. Yet, it also suggests a potential call for action.

By accepting the romantic paternalism influenced diagnosis she acts according to contemporary social scripts, yet, she refuses to acknowledge that to herself. "I take pains to control myself—before him, at least, and that makes me very tired" (Gilman). The theatrical performative is literally applicable to the story as she puts on an act to pretend that she accepts her husband's medical and personal diagnosis of her condition. The paradox of her situation is that while deep inside she rejects the diagnosis made by her husband and contemporary society, her action eventually reinforces the original assessment of her condition. It is also ironic and shows the influence of the contemporary social expectations that she discards the idea of suicide because "a step like that is improper and might be misconstrued" (Gilman).

The statement: "I get unreasonably angry with John sometimes" (Gilman) refers to how she begins her development toward achieving subject status. Her anger will develop into a full-fledged wrath leading to the destruction of the wallpaper. This episode reinforces the original assessment of her condition, but also offers proof to Myra Jehlen's assertion that the expression of anger is a manifestation of one's power in a given situation, by extension the acquisition of agency. In light of the above mentioned events, the story describes how she advances from being a literal patient to a figurative agent.

Much like in the case of Jacobs, her exposure to power at first leads to the reinforcement of contemporary social scripts which will eventually give way to the radical performative. Her husband "hates to have her write a word" (Gilman), therefore she hides her writing, reminiscent of Mary Rowlandson keeping her Bible away from the Indians. It is also noteworthy that she locks herself into the room when she decides to "free" the "woman" captured in the wallpaper. At this point a

multilevel captivity motif is applicable. On the metaphysical level she is victimized by the social, political and bio-power of patriarchal society. Yet, by deciding to lock herself in the room she creates a separate space for her, just like in the case of Harriet Jacobs. In a way of fighting fire with fire she responds to externally imposed captivity with internally induced confinement.

Simultaneously, the “woman” behind the wallpaper is the manifestation of the protagonist’s own situation. By locking herself in she occupies Edward Soja’s Third Space, not fully negating her original position, but building on it. The sympathy she feels for the “imprisoned woman” can be interpreted as a unique aspect of intersubjectivity. Affective intersubjectivity can be recognized in her concern over John and his sister Jenny being “affected” by the horrendous wallpaper. The ambiguity of intersubjectivity is illustrated by her description of Jenny: “There comes John’s sister. Such a dear girl as she is, and so careful of me! I must not let her find me writing” (Gilman). As she refers to her sister-in-law as her husband’s sibling, she distances herself from her and the family. While the first two sentences suggest Levinas’ face to face or ethical relationship and perceiving the world from the perspective of the Other, her fear of being found out suggests an antagonistic attitude.

Her acts also imply self-empowerment. By locking herself in, she creates a space that she controls, thus, she gains agency. The circumstances, living in the attic or a confined space and experiencing emotional anguish and physical ordeal suggest a parallel with Jacobs’ plight. Gilman’s protagonist also appears to act like Heilbrun’s ambiguous woman rejecting to live a life determined by men as she claims the right to vent her anger: “But I am here, and no person touches this paper but me,—not *alive!*” (Gilman).

However, as her attempts to break out of the private sphere are foiled she decides to destroy the physical manifestation of her confinement, the wallpaper, or by extension, the wall. The removal of the wallpaper, that is, the surface covering the actual wall, indicates that despite removing the exterior layer, the internal structure remains untouched and her confinement continues. After her effort to convince her husband to let her go to visit her relatives is failed, she turns inward. She rejects John treating her as a father would by soothing a crying child; taking her upstairs and reading to her until she fell asleep. When John responds with a “stern, reproachful look” (Gilman) to her request to leave the place, she starts to become obsessed with the wallpaper. In fact, she jealously guards it from others and the recognition of the woman aiming to break out becomes her own plot within the gilded cage of a patriarchal marriage.



There are things in that paper that nobody knows but me, or ever will. Behind that outside pattern the dim shapes get clearer every day. It is always the same shape, only very numerous. And it is like a woman stooping down and creeping about behind that pattern. I don't like it a bit. I wonder—I begin to think—I wish John would take me away from here! (Gilman).

Gilman consciously resorts to the captivity motif in a gothic setting to illustrate the suffering of women in the patriarchal institution of marriage. The Gothic aspect is conveyed by such terms as “ancestral hall, haunted house, optic horror, untenanted” (Gilman). The destruction of the wallpaper deemed to be “repellant, unclean, sickly” (Gilman) reinforces the ominous aspect of the setting. The “gouged floor, the pattern lolling like a broken neck” (Gilman) refer to the slow buildup of wrath in the protagonist leading to the eventual violence.

Gertrude Bonnin or Zitkala Sa, whose *Schooldays of an Indian Girl* presents a captivity narrative, reverses the original dynamic of the captivity experience. In this case it is the Native American who is captured and victimized by the representatives of the mainstream. The captivity of the protagonist is not the result of an attack or forceful removal from one's own surroundings. The young child is taken away from the reservation to a boarding school run by Quaker missionaries, who convince her mother to let her go in order to receive an education.

On the eastward train ride the Indian children are exposed to stares and are disapprovingly pointed at by other passengers. “Being scrutinized by fair women” and “large men riveting their glassy blue eyes” upon them brings Bonnin “on the verge of tears” (Bonnin). The paralyzing effect of the hostile gaze robs the protagonist from mobility and motility as she sat “perfectly still, with eyes downcast, daring only now and then to shoot long glances around her” (Bonnin).

Her arrival into the boarding school is only a beginning of a long series of traumatic events. She encounters the contemporary power, that is, the residential education institution representing the intention of the American government to eliminate traditional Indian culture. Her mental and emotional state is comparable to that of the female captives of Indians at the beginning of their ordeal: “It was night when we reached the school grounds. The lights from the windows of the large buildings fell upon some of the iciced trees that stood beneath them. We were led toward an open door, where the brightness of the lights within flooded out over the heads of the excited palefaces who blocked the way. My body trembled more from fear than from the snow I trod upon” (Bonnin).

She was forcefully separated from her home culture as she was compelled to change into Anglo clothes and her long hair was cut against her will. This forced haircut episode represents her subjection and ultimate objectification leading

to symbolic death. After that, likewise to the white female captive, she loses her will and experiences psychological defeat. While at first “her spirit tore itself in struggling for its lost freedom” (Bonnin), the forceful integration into the context of the boarding school breaks her will.

When she finds out that her hair is about to be cut she makes a desperate attempt to escape a fate most disgraceful to any Indian. Despite her friend’s warning that she had to submit, she resists, but her struggle is useless. Although she hides away, when she is found “she is carried downstairs, and tied fast in a chair” (Bonnin) and her hair is cut short. The result of this episode is symbolic death as she not only loses her cultural markers, but her spirit is broken as well:

Then I lost my spirit. Since the day I was taken from my mother I had suffered extreme indignities. People had stared at me. I had been tossed about in the air like a wooden puppet. And now my long hair was shingled like a coward’s! In my anguish I moaned for my mother, but no one came to comfort me. Not a soul reasoned quietly with me, as my own mother used to do; for now I was only one of many little animals driven by a herder. (Bonnin)

Yet, in an attempt to reach subjectivity she repeatedly “tests the chains which tightly bound [her] individuality like a mummy for burial” (Bonnin). She shows antagonistic intersubjectivity when she blames the neglect and lack of education of the staff of the school after her schoolmate dies due to sickness: “I grew bitter, and censured the woman for cruel neglect of our physical ills” (Bonnin). Her fear of the white man’s devil leads to the destruction of its image in a book containing stories about religion, thus offering another example of antagonistic intersubjectivity.

Just like in the case of Jacobs and the protagonist of *Gilman*, the objectified victim at first appears to act according to socially accepted scripts, which later gives way to behavioral patterns resembling the radical performative. What is unique, however, in the present case is that there are no scripts applying to Native Americans as they were seen mostly as the reification of the Noble Savage stereotype at best, or were not even considered part of Anglo society. Nevertheless, Bonnin and her fellow captives are forced to accept the school rules and act accordingly.

The beginning of her subjectivation process is marked by the episode during which she is sent to kitchen duty for the violation of school rules. She is selected to mash turnips for dinner and in a form of the theatrical performative she does what she is told. But she hits the turnips with such force that eventually breaks the jar and the hated vegetable mass falls on the floor. This way a theatrical performative

act turns eventually into the radical performative, a subversive deed, and offers an example of subjectivation.

It must be reiterated that her ordeal is mostly psychological as she is rarely abused physically. The cutting off her hair is motivated mostly by hygienic reasons, with a hidden agenda of breaking her will and robbing her individuality. The power she faces is of course the WASP society, the palefaces, and the boarding school itself. It is noteworthy that she refers to white people as palefaces, offering another example of antagonistic intersubjectivity. The end result of her experience is being suspended between two cultures as she cannot fully reintegrate to Indian society and she is not accepted by the mainstream either.

There are several differences between her confinement and those of Jacobs and Gilman's protagonists. Each heroine is exposed to psychological abuse, but mainly Jacobs suffers actual physical mistreatment. Both Jacobs and the anonymous main character of Gilman are subject to victimization by men, while Bonnin is abused by women. In all three cases a seemingly total control or subjection can be discerned. Spatial and temporal control is present in the case of Bonnin as her time is dominated by the bell in the school along with being forced to line up. The Indian children are deprived of the means of expression as the punishment received after falling into the snow indicates. Gothic elements also dominate the given descriptions as all three protagonists suffer ordeals in physically enclosed spaces. Enclosure, or captivity, however has different outcomes. Hiding in her grandmother's attic can be considered a jumping board to freedom for Jacobs, and enclosure in the boarding schools will present an educational opportunity that will help Bonnin to become an accomplished writer and social activist.

### III

Finally, I would like to explore the limits on the contemporary regime of power, that is, the viability of absolute control over the captive. In all three cases the captors had to acknowledge the limits of confinement. Jacobs was able to fight back against the unwelcome sexual advances of her master by threatening to scream and wake up the household, and especially the wife of Dr. Flint. The husband in Gilman's story is limited in his efforts by the fact that he is the spouse of the patient, and can only threaten his wife with turning her case over to other doctors. Although both Jacobs and, to a certain extent, Bonnin were exposed to physical abuse, the effort to declare full control over the female slave and the attempt to eliminate the culture of the Native American girl eventually backfired and steeled the will of these heroines to take control of their lives.

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## Behavioral Paradigms in the Short Fiction of Henry James: An Intersubjective Approach<sup>1</sup>

Enikő Bollobás

The short fiction of Henry James offers an ideal ground for character studies, in particular the investigation of interactional paradigms, from an intersubjective perspective. Some of James' characters are clearly defined in terms of how they perceive themselves and the others, whether they recognize other perspectives than their own, or not; whether they open onto Others, or not; whether they are touched by Others, or not. Other characters bear gendered marks of language behavior, normative or transgressive styles of speaking. In my study I explore these two major interactional paradigms in James' short fiction, grounding my discussion in intersubjective theory, providing, along the way, an overview of the relevant claims of intersubjective theory that I apply in my interpretation.

### I. Intersubjective theory and interactional relations in James's short fiction

The concept of intersubjectivity was introduced in Husserl's Sorbonne lectures (1929), later published as *Cartesian Meditations*. Here Husserl claims that the recognition of other subjectivities—of the existence and individual aims of Others—provides the grounds for all ethical relations. “Within the bounds of positivity we say and find it obvious that, in my own experience, I experience not only myself but Others—in the particular form: experiencing someone else” (*Cartesian Meditations* 48). This ethical relation—that includes both recognition and self-recognition, presence and co-presence—acts as the condition for perceiving the world from the perspective of the Other; in other words, as the condition of objectivity. For objectivity—when I realize that my perspective is one of many, therefore, I hold no privilege on truth—is fundamentally intersubjective. We can only experience the world as an intersubjective medium if we also realize that Others experience it differently, or if we are capable of transgressing the particularity of our perspective. Otherwise we do not perceive the Other as subject but only as object, the object of our perception.

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In his 1923 essay *Ich und Du* (English translation, *I and Thou*, to appear in 1937), Martin Buber describes a “twofold attitude” of man to the world: the *I-It* and the *I-Thou* relation; here the *I-It* relation does not involve “the whole being,” but the *I-Thou* relation does (*I and Thou* 3). While the former sees the Other as object, the latter experiences the Other as consciousness and subject. “If I face a human being as my Thou,” Buber writes, “he is not a thing among things, and does not consist of things [...] he is *Thou* and fills the heavens” (8). Buber insists on the reciprocity of this relationship, which corresponds to what intersubjective theory defines as recognition, claiming that the simultaneity of *I-affecting-Thou* and *Thou-affecting-I* account for this “primal experience” (21-22) or “relational event” (33). Moreover—and here Buber forecasts a fundamental principle of intersubjective theory—it is by this recognition of the Other that the subject comes about: “Through the *Thou* a man becomes *I*” (28).

Theories of recognition emphasize the intimate connection between recognition and self-recognition, or recognition and self-consciousness. The self cannot recognize itself without recognizing the Other. This is the foundation of all human communication; as Jenny Slatman claims, “I recognize myself, distinguished from that which does not belong to me: and I recognize the Other as a being who, like myself, has a sense of herself and may be concerned for herself (“A Strange Hand” 321-322). Perception, Slatman goes on, is always linked to a particular horizon entailing a particular perspective. But relations and consequently recognition can only come about if the horizons meet: if the participants share a world (329); “one recognizes the Other as someone with whom one shares a meaningful world” (340). Nick Crossley also identifies the recognition of other consciousnesses as the precondition of self-awareness, self-consciousness. Consciousness, he claims, must decenter itself, “identifying and acknowledging its own particularity as a perspective upon the world amongst other perspectives” (17).

James offers diverse explorations of characters who are unable to open to the Other and occupy a shared world with the Other, and who, therefore, are unable to experience the world in its fullness. Indeed, the typical James hero is a *voyeur* and a scopophilic, whose gaze is one-directional and static. For example, the narcissistic John Marcher in “The Beast in the Jungle” has only attention to himself, unable to reverse his gaze and see the Other. The painter living in Florence, Theobald from “The Madonna of the Future” sees the beautiful Serafina as the embodiment of the perfect Madonna, whom he could use for his own purpose. Rose Agathe, the eponymous heroine of the short story, is but a hairdresser’s tool, an inanimate waxen head serving as the resting place for wigs, who the anonymous narrator falls in love with. In “Glasses,” Flora Saunt degrades herself to a mere commodity satisfying the fetishism of the men as she accepts veritable blindness when refusing to wear glasses.

In the story “Adina,” the young woman offers herself to the handsome peasant boy who has been wrongly deprived by Scrope, Adina’s former fiancé, of the carved topaz he found in the fields, thus claiming a ridiculously low value of herself in exchange for the stone piece of jewelry dating back to the time of the Emperor Tiberius.

Considering my first example only here, “The Beast in the Jungle,” it is fair to claim that, because John Marcher is unable to experience the world by opening up to the Other, he is unable to overcome his inertia. Since, as Brian Massumi puts it, “every perception is a creative activity” (*Semblance and Event* 27), he is also unable to commit to any creative act. He suffers because he cannot live his life in full; since he has no attention to anyone but himself, he is unable to read himself. May Bartram, on the other hand, is a perceptive woman open to the world, who faithfully stores in her memory all the events relating to the man, capable to call them forth as well. She is a good observer, who can ask pertinent searching questions too. May is a complete human being with the potential to creatively understand the Other; having allowed herself to be touched by the dilemma of Marcher, she opened up to perceiving and experiencing. As one touched by the Other, she manages to gear Marcher to his belated enlightenment. As a person capable of involving the Other into the creative process of perception and cognition, Bartram is both touched and touching, understanding and helping to understand.

Marcher is one of those James heroes who suffer for not knowing who they are. Because they are unable to follow with attention the events around them, they cannot see their own selves either, no matter with what intensity these modern day Narcissuses watch their images in the river. Only very slowly does he learn to see himself from another’s perspective; when this happens, it is too late, after May died. His learning curve follows what Merleau-Ponty calls chiasm, the intertwining of perspectives that offers knowledge of oneself.

As soon as I see, it is necessary that the vision (as is so well indicated by the double meaning of the word) be doubled with a complementary vision or with another vision: myself seen from without, such as another would see me, installed in the midst of the visible” (“The Intertwining—The Chiasm” 134)

Desiring knowledge of ourselves, we must learn to be open, the Merleau-Pontyan thesis goes, “to visions other than our own,” which then give “the limits of our factual vision” (143). Indeed, this is exactly what happens to Marcher and Bartram: the chiasmatic state of a “reciprocal insertion and intertwining of one in the other” (138) comes about between the man focused on himself and the woman helping the man in his search for his secret, with the “possibility for reversion” (142) taking place as well, as John becomes capable to turn May’s perspective into his own.



Merleau-Ponty insists that such chiasmatic meetings are always grounded in perception. Only perception triggered by the meeting of two sets of eyes, two gazes, can set off a communication process to culminate in knowing: when I think the Other and understand him too. This experience of perception means, he claims, that it brings back the moment when things, truths, and good come to be constituted for us, and that this experience provides us with a *logos* to be born; for “Perception is a nascent *logos*” (*The Primacy of Perception* xv).

By these words, “the primacy of perception,” we mean that the experience of perception is our presence at the moment when things, truths, values are constituted for us; that perception is a nascent *logos*; that it teaches us, outside all dogmatism, the true conditions of objectivity itself; that it summons us to the tasks of knowledge and action. (25)

Judith Butler provides another theoretical link to this problematic. In her recent *Senses of the Subject*, she devotes three chapters to Merleau-Ponty, pointing out that the French philosopher relies on his Cartesian predecessor of the 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century, Nicolas Malebranche, when setting up the three points of the intersubjective process. It is “the primary touch that inaugurates experience” (41), followed by a sense of being touched (“I can feel only what touches me,” Malebranche writes [42]), resulting in the sense of the I—the self who feels, knows, and acts. That is, the person reaches the point of subjecthood: becomes a subject capable of feeling, knowing, and acting.

Feeling, knowing, and acting as intersubjective processes are clearly connected through language. The self is forged out of dialogical events channeled by language. The precondition for the subject’s opening onto the Other is social dialogue. Marcher’s inability to feel is deeply connected with his inability to conduct reciprocal dialogues with Bartram. He needs twenty years to develop in himself a Bakhtinian “responsive attitude,” as well as an “actively responsive understanding” (68) of the Other. For twenty years he has no capacity for “co-creation” (172), and only touched by the woman’s death does he become capable of “creative understanding” (xiii). During such creative understanding, Bakhtin claims,

it is immensely important for the person who understands to be located outside the object of his or her creative understanding — in time, in space, in culture. For one cannot even really see one’s own exterior and comprehend it as a whole, and no mirrors or photographs can help; our real exterior can be seen and understood only by other people, because they are located outside us in space and because they are others. (5)

Only through the dialogic co-creativity slowly acquired during the twenty years of their conversations will Marcher recognize his cemetery epiphany, when he is touched by an unknown face which he understands to be suffering for the loss of his beloved. The stranger touched by loss becomes the touching, passing on to Marcher the capacity to perceive, to experience, and to live. In other words, Marcher achieves a desired sentience via two intersubjective relations, one with Bartram and another with the stranger, which together, intertwined and chiasmatic, reach the path of what Massumi, relying on Deleuze, calls becoming. Tying relationality to this process, Massumi calls such a process “relational becoming” (*Politics of Affect* 51), emphasizing the continuous reciprocal events forging the relationship of two people through which knowledge of one is triggered by the perspective of the Other, while also opening a perspective on the world.

James often approaches this problematic from the negative: what happens when the characters are not touched by Others, nor do they experience any forms of relational becoming. The story “In the Cage” presents a telegraphist whose main preoccupation is to put together the details of the lives of the people whose telegraphs she is sending off. No matter how many details she is familiar with, she does not understand her customers’ true stories because she is only a *voyeur*, outside of their intersubjective dialogue. In the absence of reciprocal events, her deciphering proves to be false: the relationship she assumes to be a secret heterosexual romance is presented to the reader as a cover-up rather, and the pain on Captain Everard’s face is not from love but from anxiety over being found out and blackmailed. The woman’s fictioning of the telegraphs is then prompted by misperception and assumptions pre-existing the texts; her reading is based on her presuppositions concerning the compulsory heterosexuality of love and the assumption that any secret has to somehow relate to illicit heterosexual romance. That is, the absence of reciprocal events—of touching and being touched—necessarily results in the absence of knowledge. And although the reader is not in full possession of knowledge either (James’s secrets most often are not revealed), we can suspect at least that the threat of blackmail is somehow connected to the Captain’s homosexuality. As such, “In the Cage” is yet another text with which James contributes to the conceptualization of homosexuality going on in the 1890s by claiming that understanding requires being touched, while being touched requires a certain intersubjective involvement, the participation in the chiasmic intertwining of perspectives.

## II. Forms of Gendered Relationality in Language

Linguistic dialogue plays a crucial role in intersubjective theory, for Merleau-Ponty in particular. For it is language that forms the “common ground” between the self and the Other in the “experience of dialogue”; it is language that makes up the “common world,” where “our perspectives merge into each other” (*The Phenomenology of Perception* 354). And although we may never be able to fully understand the Other’s perspective—“The grief and anger of another have never quite the same significance for him as they have for me. For him these situations are lived through, for me they are displayed” (356)—we can construct a common ground in which to communicate. This linguistic common ground emerges out of a pact, Merleau-Ponty insists, as the “interworld” that is the project of both participating parties (357).

Linguistic common ground serves as the repository of cultural scripts. In his *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1956), Erving Goffman writes about “abstract standards” (26) or “abstract stereotyped expectations” (27) that the individual learns so that he or she would know what “officially accredited values of the society” to appropriate during the social performances or presentations of the self (35). While Goffman defines the self as the “*product* of a scene that comes off [...], as a performed character” (252) or a “dramatic effect” (253), he also allows for a discursive common ground collecting the social scripts that regulate the dramatic staging of the self.

Nancy Chodorow and Jessica Benjamin offer a different perspective on relational events. Writing about “the relational construction of the self” (Chodorow 149), Chodorow ties the “search for meaningful subjectivity” (145) to the topic of intersubjectivity. Refuting the Freudian ideal of individuality defined by separation—an ideal tailored exclusively to male autonomy and individuality—Chodorow emphasizes the conceptualization of “the self as inexorably social and intrinsically connected” (158). While Freud’s model excludes the role of others in the construction of the self, object-relations theory “directs attention to the interrelations of individuality and collectivity or community” (152), and, as a consequence, to the role mutual engagements play in the production of the self. Benjamin also emphasizes that the traditional psychoanalytic model, valorizing separation and differentiation, is helpful in interpreting relationships of domination only, where the separating party realizes his domination over the person he separated from. “The problem of domination begins with the denial of dependency” (“Master and Slave” 283), she writes. This concept of the subject shows a fundamental difference from that of critical feminist psychoanalytical theory, which posits a concept of individualism that balances separation and connectedness, agency, and

relatedness (“A Desire of Ones’s Own” 82). Benjamin insists that the recognition of female desire—“that one *is* a subject of desire, an agent who can will things and make them happen” (87)—serves as the precondition of female subjectivity. For the intersubjective mode, Benjamin asserts, “assumes the paradox that in being with the Other, I may experience the most profound sense of self” (92). Breaking with “the logic of only one subject” (*Shadow of the Other* 82), Benjamin’s paradigm allows for symmetrical relations between two subjects. According to Benjamin’s “intersubjective view,” “the individual grows in and through the relationship to other subjects”; for “the Other whom the self meets is also a self, a subject in his or her own right” (*Bonds of Love* 19-20).

Linguistic dialogue serves as an important pillar in Butler’s intersubjective theory. In her Adorno lectures, given in 2003 and published in 2006 as *Giving an Account of Oneself*, she takes Nietzsche’s starting point claiming, “I begin my story of myself only in the face of a ‘you’ who asks me to give an account” (11). Butler connects linguistic context, narrativity, and dialogical relation with the recognition of the Other. Here the illocutionary act of performing the self and the perlocutionary act of persuading the Other meet as they produce an intersubjective relation together. Reinforcing the intersubjective claim concerning the linguistic common ground, Butler also emphasizes that the recognition of the Other and being recognized by the Other can only take place in language (28). For it is language that makes possible narrative recognition and self-narration conducted in order to achieve this recognition; this happens within a linguistic-dialogical situation, where not only is the Other, the addressee of self-narration, present, but also the possibility of persuading the Other. Our narrative self is produced as we talk *to* someone; the self is born out of a web of relations, when one body talks to another. “My efforts to give an account of myself founder in part because I *address* my account, and in addressing my account I am exposed to you” (38). Subjectivity, then, is always relational: “the only way to know oneself is through a mediation that takes place outside of oneself” (28). Recognition and self-recognition are, in short, linguistic (or narrative) acts. As such, Butler’s concept of intersubjectivity accommodates discursivity and narrativity, the self/Other communicative situation, and the idea of mutual recognition.

James was acutely interested in gendered forms of relationality and the ways language frames gender positions in intersubjective relations. Throughout his career he was preoccupied with the characteristic features of female speech, the significance of silence surrounding women, as well as the subversive act of a woman coming to speak. His critics seem to be in agreement on the peculiar features of the way James’s characters speak. Among these, Ralf Norrman discusses referential uncertainty or ambiguity, especially the “confusion in pronominal reference”

leaving open the question of “who is who” (1); intersentence links suggesting hesitation and the understanding that nothing is ever final; as well as “changes in position” (3), also suggesting insecurity and instability. Although Norrman does not interpret these features as gendered, subsequent research in female language—that of Robin Lakoff, Carol Gilligan, Deborah Cameron, and Pierre Bourdieu, among others—clearly assigns these marks to women. Studying gendered linguistic norms, Lakoff concludes that language, including its most concrete syntactic and lexical structures, displays marks of power or powerlessness; “language use can tell us about the nature and extent of any inequity” (39). Gilligan claims that patriarchy demands a very specific language use of women; as the manifestation of such social scripts as empathy and intersubjectivity, this voice will be softer and more insecure than that of men, reflecting “the limits of autonomy and control” (172). Cameron describes the “weak, trivial, and deferential style” of women as deriving from their “training in how to be subordinate” (23), while Bourdieu insists on a symbolic relation between language on the one hand and wealth and power on the Other. As he claims, “utterances are not only [...] signs to be understood and deciphered, they are also *signs of wealth*, intended to be evaluated and appreciated, and *signs of authority*, intended to be believed and obeyed” (67). And since patriarchy forbids autonomy and self-confidence for women, including female voice, it is no wonder that hesitancy, uncertainty, insecurity, indecision, and vacillation are understood as marks of women’s language.

James’s short piece entitled “The Story in It” offers an intriguing staging of the linguistic codes of gender. The speech of the two women protagonists, Mrs. Dyott and Maud Blessingbourne is characterized by exactly those features described by Norrman, namely, referential uncertainty or ambiguity, intersentence links, and a general sense of hesitancy manifest in a linguistic yielding to the male speaker, Colonel Voyt. As Donatella Izzo observes, “Maud uses interrogative, tentative, and reticent tones, and Mrs. Dyott only speaks to echo someone else’s words” (217). As so many other James pieces, this story is characterized by “the Jamesian poetics of the narratability of a nonstory,” as Izzo puts it, (216), suggesting, in other words, that, apart from the power game of appropriating or not appropriating language, nothing actually happens. Their three-way dialogue hides an intricate triangular desire that encompasses two desiring women and one man, the common object of their longing. How very different this triangle is from the dominant intersubjective model captured by Claude Lévi-Strauss, René Girard, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, and Mary Jacobus, in which woman acts as the mediator and vehicle between the homosocial desires of men. Not only are the gender positions reversed in the James story, but the direction of desire too: it is not the man who mediates between the desires of the women, nor do the women desire each other. Moreover, the women

seem to be unable to give voice to their desires. In other words, although women start to own desire, their social subjection continues to gain expression in female silence and linguistic insecurity.

Female silence gets foregrounded in several James texts problematizing language and in particular the absence of speech as marks of one-directional and, consequently, failed attempts at intersubjective relations, as well as the symbolic linguistic manifestations of power structure. Intersubjectivity, whether successful or failed, is regularly treated in terms of gender binaries, assigning first-person speech to men and hesitancy and silence to women.

“The Beast in the Jungle” offers one of the most memorable cases of female silence. Throughout this story that I have already discussed earlier from a different perspective, the woman does nothing else but listen to the man. John Marcher, the protagonist portrayed as an extreme narcissist speaks to his listener for twenty years about his grand secret, hoping that the woman will help him uncover its content (which he himself does not know). The secret never revealing itself is the overriding theme of the story, the same as the theme of the decades-long asymmetrical encounter, assigning to woman the patriarchal role of the patient listener and to the man the no less patriarchal role of the self-centered speaker. While the subject of the story as well as their *dialogue manqué* refers to the secret homosexual desire of Marcher, the behavior of the woman participating in this search points at another, no less silenced secret, the meaning of female listening and female silence. In other words, James presents the mysterious silence surrounding the taboo topic of homosexuality in such a way that he discusses at the same time another taboo topic relating to female submission coded in gendered discourse.

In some other stories, however, James seems to revise this binary gender script. For beside presenting characters who fully appropriate the linguistic codes of femininity, the author introduces women who demand a voice of their own in a subversive act that is allowed at times but forbidden at others. This is a radical innovation indeed, explicitly countering the traditional patriarchal interpretation of the relationship between gender and language.

The punishment of the woman who speaks provides the theme of the story “The Visits,” in which the young Louisa Chantry must die after she repeatedly proclaims her love for Jack Brandon, thereby transgressing the normative Victorian gender script concerning the unsayability of female desire. What complicates her crime is the fact that her admission comes at her own initiative (she speaks “first”), and not as a response to the man’s confession. As such, female autonomy does not only violate Victorian etiquette but the whole Western patriarchal set of norms concerning the demand that woman keep quiet and wait to be addressed by the man.



Side by side with woman respecting patriarchy's gender scripts James presents several woman characters who proclaim themselves autonomous subjects and even agents, having appropriated agency by some form of Foucauldian *assujettissement*: they look, speak, and act. This is indeed a most revolutionary feature of James's writing, assigning individual personhood through relationality to women; as Joyce Warren points out, "What is revolutionary about Henry James's *The Portrait of a Lady* (1880) is his depiction of the American individualist as a woman" (231), that is, his recognition of "the personhood of women" (239).

Agency appropriated by woman through language is problematized in "Julia Bride." The beautiful young woman gains a bad reputation in society because her mother had been married and divorced several times; moreover, her own engagements were broken several times. In order to save her reputation, Julia devises an elaborate performance involving friends, the mother's former husbands and her own former fiancés who are to attest to the fact that neither of the women are to blame for the liaisons gone wrong. In this extraordinary story we hear the thoughts of the woman as the speaker of third-person internal monologues reflecting the thinking mind of a person learning to claim agency to herself. The free indirect discourse reveals a woman who refuses victimhood; she does this by adopting a speech style that goes counter to all norms, approaching the speaking voice usually associated with men.

The female protagonist of "Georgina's Reasons" also belongs among James's women who speak (and speak a lot). Georgina is a sexual creature driven by her desires; she is an autonomous and assertive young woman who actually commits the crime of bigamy by first marrying the navy officer Raymond Benyon and later a wealthy businessman. She cleverly evades getting into trouble because the first husband is tied by the prenuptial promise to keep silent about the marriage. Such silencing of the man reverses the traditional gender division assigned to man as speaking agency: while Georgina speaks incessantly, repeatedly explaining, in a most self-conscious manner, the reasons behind her acts, the man is sentenced to silence. Georgina's transgression is twofold: not only does she appropriate language from the man, she does this in order to satisfy her sexual desire, by violating the laws of patriarchy with both acts.

Similarly active and assertive is the heroine of the story "Mora Montravers," who decides to marry, albeit as a formality, Walter Puddick, the genius artist with whom she had studied painting. With her marriage scheme she aims to secure the annuity from her aunt and thereby to realize her artistic aspirations. Mora is a thinking woman with her own voice: a heroine, as Izzo points out, "who knows and who wills, and she is a winner" (258). That is, countering the patriarchal script and appropriating language from men, she forges her own agency. From an

intersubjective perspective one can posit that the antipatriarchal Mora conducts a dialogue with the scripts of patriarchy when reversing the roles assigned to men and women; not only does the woman come to speech here but assigns the female position of silence to the man.

James is known to have no final word on human relations in his fiction, but to constantly reevaluate the interactions of his characters. As he wrote to Mrs. F. H. Hill, on March 21, 1879, “Nothing is my last word on anything—I am interminably super-subtle and analytic—and with the blessing of heaven, I shall live to make all sorts of representations of all sorts of things” (*Selected Letters* 161). Yet “Mora Montravers,” the last story James wrote, does give his “last word” of sorts on a young woman with a mind of her own. As the culminating point in the long line of stories depicting women trying to break free, “Mora Montravers” is, as Izzo puts it, “the final seal to his representation of the feminine,” casting “a retrospective light over the long road traveled that far” (258), while also offering, through a deep analysis of intersubjective relations, the ultimate dream of subjectivation and agency.

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## **Inconvenient Truths and Comforting Fictions: Cognitive Dissonance in Philosophical Interpretations of Woody Allen's *Crimes and Misdemeanors***

Péter Csató

The study which follows is a counterpart to an earlier paper of mine on Woody Allen's *Crimes and Misdemeanors* (1989)<sup>2</sup>, in which I perform a critical reading of the film in the context of pragmatist philosophy, especially with regard to William James's and Richard Rorty's concepts of truth and morality. While the present analysis also revolves around the same filmic narrative, and addresses issues related to ethics and morality, overlaps with the previous text are minimal. This paper is situated in a different conceptual and philosophical framework, and its intention is twofold: on the one hand, it is intended to be a metacritical study, insofar as its primary purpose is to analyze critical commentaries on the film, which aim to sublimate Allen's skeptical and highly critical take on conventional approaches to ethics and morality; on the other hand, it wishes to formulate a philosophical argument in its own right. My contention is that Allen's skepticism (in *Crimes and Misdemeanors* as well as in some other major films in the same period) is not merely an upshot of his artistic extravagance, but an integral part of a conceptual outlook, whereby his films in question take a consistent philosophical stance, rather than just convey an artistic vision. I will maintain that the critical analyses which aim to offer a corrective to what they deem a bleak artistic vision can be interpreted as reducing the cognitive dissonance which is generated by the discrepancy between the critics' own moral and/or philosophical convictions and the uncompromising demystifications that Allen performs in his films.

### **Demystification, anxiety, and cognitive dissonance**

In the middle-period of his filmmaking career, Woody Allen's proprietary brand of black humor tends to manifest itself in the form of caricatural representations of bleak and pessimistic dispositions, where much of the comedy stems from the cosmic irony of characters from mundane backgrounds and amidst quotidian predicaments confronting some of the most unsettling questions of human

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2 "Pragmatism Goes to the Movies: Pragmatic Conceptions of Truth in Woody Allen's *Crimes and Misdemeanors*". *Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies (HJEAS)* 20.1 2014 11-28.

existence and the universe at large. Sandy Bates, the main character in *Stardust Memories* (1980), is a case in point: after he gets assassinated by a disillusioned fan in an imaginary sequence, his psychoanalyst (Leonardo Cimino) shares the following reminiscence about his former patient: “He was a complicated patient. He saw reality too clearly—faulty denial mechanism failed to block out the terrible truths of existence. In the end, his inability to push away the awful facts of ‘being-in-the-world’ rendered his life meaningless, or as one great Hollywood producer said: ‘Too much reality is not what the people want.’” In *Annie Hall* (1977) the childhood persona of the Allen-character, Alvy Singer (Jonathan Munk), decides to stop doing homework, because he has read that “the universe is expanding, and if it’s expanding, then someday it will break apart and that will be the end of everything.” This thought is taken up by Sandy in *Stardust Memories*, who expresses his despair over the fact that “[t]he universe is gradually breaking down. There’s not going to be anything left.” In *Hannah and Her Sisters* (1986), another Allen-character, Mickey Sachs, has a terrible moment in the film when the inevitability and irrevocability of death dawns upon him, and realizes that there is little, if any, room for the hope of individual redemption in the face of the brute factuality of physical annihilation. In *September* (1987), a physicist named Lloyd (Jack Warden) explains that even more horrifying than the destruction of the Earth by an atomic bomb is “the knowledge that it doesn’t matter one way or the other,” that the universe is “all random, radiating aimlessly out of nothing, and eventually vanishing forever.”

The thought of “vanishing forever” is just as disconcerting to Allen himself as it is to his fictional characters, which he explains in a recent biographical documentary as follows:

[S]omewhere around five or so, I turned grumpier, or sour. I can only think when I became aware of my mortality, I didn’t like that idea. ‘What do you mean, this ends? This...you know...this doesn’t go on like this?’ ‘No, it ends. You know...you vanish. Forever.’ Once I realized that, I thought, ‘Hey, you know...deal me out. I don’t want to play in this game.’ And I never was the same after that . . . I’m not saying my grim appraisal is right . . . but this was only my particular take on everything: that we all know the same truth, and our lives consist of how we choose to distort it.

What one can observe beyond the bleakness of Allen’s blasé contentions is a certain demystifying intent. His brooding characters, besides the comic element, seem to have an air of prophetic heroism around them, as though they were blessed or cursed with the ability to cut through the comforting fictional constructs offered

by their culture, and see “reality” in its most naked and cruel form. Notably, Allen refers to these comforting fictions in his biographical interview as “distortions,” that is, falsifications of the “truth,” whereby he leaves no doubt as to which side of this epistemological divide he finds more favorable. For him, confronting the inevitability of our demise (both individually and cosmically) yields an epistemically privileged truth, which rises above the socially constructed fictions (the distortions) which help to dissimulate that very truth.

While Allen’s claim to fame is not that he has ever aspired to the status of a professional philosopher, his character-portrayals as well as his biographical recollections arguably show an affinity with specific philosophical themes, especially in existentialist thought. Viewed from the perspective of existentialist philosophy, his status as a “demystifier” can be legitimated less by his vindication of a privileged and authoritative meta-position, than a certain sense of anxiety (*Angst*) in a specifically Heideggerian sense. What one has *Angst* about, according to Heidegger, is “being-in-the-world as such” (precisely the predicament Sandy Bates’s psychiatrist—using Heideggerian terminology in the film—attributes to his patient). This differentiates it from fear proper, in that fear is occasioned by some “innerwordly being” (174), which is irrelevant to *Angst*. Thus, the sense of threat generated by *Angst* “does not have the character of a definite detrimentality which concerns what is threatened with a definite regard to a particular factual potentiality for being. What *Angst* is about is completely indefinite” (174). The threat is *nowhere* and ultimately *nothing*, from which Heidegger concludes the following: “So if what *Angst* is about exposes nothing, that is, the world as such, this means that *that about which Angst is anxious is being-in-the-world itself*” (175; emphasis in original). At the same time, *Angst* does not merely denote the state of being anxious: it is also a mode of “attunement” (grasped by Heidegger in the dichotomy of “*Angst* about” vs. “*Angst* for”), which has the capacity to distance us from our ordinary roles and functions, which normally determine and delimit our perception of the world: “*Angst* as a mode of attunement first discloses the *world as world* . . . In *Angst*, the things at hand in the surrounding world sink away . . . Thus, *Angst* takes away from Da-sein the possibility of understanding itself, falling prey, in terms of the ‘world’ and the public way of being interpreted” (175), which entails a sense of freedom, coupled with a sense of uncanniness (“*not-being-at-home*” [176]). This gives rise to what Heidegger calls “existential solipsism,” which constitutes an outsider position from which the world and existence reveals itself in its perverse absurdity.

Viewed from this Heideggerian perspective, neither the experience of one’s own death, nor (and even less so) the cruel indifference of the universe qualifies as an “innerwordly” threat, while being-in-the-world inevitably entails all of those

unfathomable threats about which Allen and his characters seem to be so anxious, even though most people may choose to ignore them. Allen's *Angst* manifests itself precisely in the manner in which he distances himself from ordinary ways of perceiving and dealing with individual and cosmic annihilation, assuming an outsider's position, whereby he does seem to wish to escape from "the public way of being interpreted." Moreover, the demystifying narratives with which he presents his viewers have a genuine sense of the uncanny about them: they compel us to confront truths that are painfully familiar, but at the same time they generate an uneasiness that has an alienating effect—it is certainly not easy to feel "at home" in Allen's demystifying discourse.

Besides the existentialist angle, which marks out Allen's position as an "outsider" rather than a self-appointed Platonist "philosopher king," in what follows I will concentrate on a perhaps less obvious philosophical relevance to his work, which is related to the cognitive aspect of his demystifying intentions. It is worth recalling Allen's statement in the interview that the eventual demise of the individual and the universe is a truth which "we all know," implying that being aware of the falsifications makes our voluntarily blindness all the more condemnable. On the other hand, a legitimate case can be made by arguing that what Allen calls "distortions" originate from the partly epistemological, partly moral (but in any case culturally determined) necessity to help explain and cope with the cruel truths of our existence. From this perspective, the demystification looks rather like a carefully crafted rhetorical trick than an act of revelation, which derives its efficacy precisely from the entrenched status of the comforting fictions. This view, in turn, also enables us to rise above the dichotomies of "fiction vs. truth," "faith vs. knowledge," "blindness vs. insight," etc., and interrogate the processes of knowledge production in a way which combines philosophical inquiry with a culture-based approach.

If we revisit the analyst's description of Sandy Bates's predicament, we will find Allen's argument for demystification presented in an ironically reversed form: "faulty denial mechanism failed to block out the terrible truths of existence," so he was unable to "push away the awful facts of being-in-the-world." Allen's irony depends for its efficacy on reversed psychology, for at first sight it runs counter to our rational faculties to regard denial as the norm and render clear-sight as a "faulty mechanism," which is the conclusion he seems to want us, viewers, to draw. Nevertheless, the reversal generates irony on its own terms, despite Allen's original intention, as there is a philosophically legitimate *literal* reading of the psychiatrist's description, if we take it to mean that social and cultural practices (including the comforting fictions of religion or the arts) serve not only to mediate our confrontation with the naturally given, but they are also capable of

constituting our *first-order* reality. Even Richard Rorty, who has never ceased to debunk metaphysical thought, concedes that he “cannot imagine a culture which socialized its youth in such a way as to make them continually dubious about their own process of socialization” (87). In the same vein, one would be hard pressed to find a society in which the education of the young ones begins with teaching them about the ruthless indifference of the natural world, prior to introducing them to the tales, songs, myths, poems, historical narratives, or religious beliefs of their respective cultures (this is what makes the character of young Alvy Singer so irresistibly hilarious). Once one’s initiation into such a cultural matrix has taken place, the “undistorted truth” can only emerge from within that matrix, but if that truth is found to be in conflict with the network of beliefs which constitute the matrix, it is likely to be dismissed as falsehood, fabrication, sophism, or at best “your truth against mine.” A more complex case occurs if the dismissal does not happen out of hand, but rather through offering a counter-narrative (in some cases more, in some cases less elaborate) which aims to explain why, for instance, faith in eternal life is a more plausible, even *rational* (and not simply more comforting) position to hold than the awareness of irrevocable annihilation after death. The latter case is far more interesting than the former, as it implies that the one whose beliefs are being challenged with a demystifying intent finds the opponent’s argument compelling enough to take the trouble to formulate a counter-argument so that they can continue to hold those beliefs. The phenomenon which results is widely known by the term “cognitive dissonance,” which is by no means restricted to the relatively common debates between faith and reason, but it can occur at multiple levels of intellectual proficiency, even among the scientifically or philosophically well-trained (Smith 5).

The theory of cognitive dissonance was put forward in 1957 by American social psychologist Leon Festinger, based on the observation from previous experiments that “persons are not always successful in explaining away or rationalizing inconsistencies to themselves . . . Under such circumstances—that is, in the presence of an inconsistency—there is psychological discomfort” (Festinger 2). Replacing the term “inconsistency” with “dissonance” (because, as he put it, it has “less of a logical connotation”), he proposed the first basic hypothesis of his theory as follows: “The existence of dissonance, being psychologically uncomfortable, will motivate the person to try to reduce the dissonance and achieve consonance”<sup>3</sup> (3). The scope of the theory’s applicability, expounded by Festinger in his *A Theory*

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3 The second one of his two basic hypotheses, which is less relevant to our discussion, states: “When dissonance is present, in addition to trying to reduce it, the person will actively avoid situations and information which would likely increase the dissonance” (Festinger 3).



of *Cognitive Dissonance*, is less relevant to a philosophically ingrained discussion than the research which lay the groundwork for its formulation, and especially the way in which Festinger and his group interpreted the findings. Festinger and his collaborators,<sup>4</sup> infiltrated a doomsday cult, which predicted a global cataclysm to take place on December 21 1954. Festinger and his research group were interested to find out how the behavior of the cult members would change in the wake of the inevitable realization that the apocalypse did not happen on the appointed day. The scientists paid special attention to how the cultists managed to explain away the failure of the prophecy in such a way that they could continue to hold on to their beliefs (Smith 2-4). It is easy to understand how the theory of cognitive dissonance followed logically from this particular research, but it is all the more surprising how the scientists' interpretation revealed their own proclivity for explaining away the dissonance that they encountered. As Barbara Herrnstein Smith explicates, the research group operated with the hypothesis that the cultists' faith would not be disconfirmed by the failure of the prophecy, and that the explanations they formulate for the failure would continue to foster group cohesion among them. The result, however, turned out to be more varied than it was expected: several members left the cult and only a few of them would continue to spread the word to recruit new members (Smith 4). The surprising element is the following: "Like their subjects . . . the scientists exhibited considerable resourcefulness in explaining the relevant disparities of expectation and experience—in the scientists' case, largely by discounting recalcitrant portions of the data as 'unclear' and, in the formal conclusion of the report, describing and interpreting events in ways that minimized their difference from what had been predicted" (Smith 4). This leads Smith to conclude that the tendency to retain one's prior beliefs in the face of disconfirmation is not "altogether eradicated by scientific training or good-faith efforts at objectivity . . . [;] once we have framed an explanation of some puzzling phenomenon, we are strongly inclined to be most alert to what confirms it" (5).

While in the case of scientists, the cognitive dissonance and the attempts at explaining it away can be discerned through examining the hypothesis, the data, and their interpretation, it is more difficult to find such points of reference in the case of critical commentaries on works of art, including (and perhaps especially) literary and filmic texts. Critical interpreters also operate with hypotheses of some sort, but what qualifies as interpretable "data" in a text or a film remains dubious, nor is there any formal consensus about methods of literary or filmic interpretation. Moreover, we, literary critics and theorists, pride ourselves on the

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<sup>4</sup> Henry Riecken and Stanley Schachter, with whom he published their findings in a book titled *When Prophecy Fails* in 1956.

diversity and inclusiveness of our discipline: following in the footsteps of the narrator of Henry James's famous story, we are looking to discover figures in the carpet, but the figures we claim to see remain functions of the hypothesis which informs the reading. Literary and filmic texts rarely present falsifiable claims or refutable arguments, and for this reason, distinguishable occurrences of cognitive dissonance are so minimal that one might tend to believe they are nonexistent in literary or filmic criticism.

Even though such occurrences might be rare, they are all the more intriguing to explore when they are found to arise. In the following, I will concentrate on two philosophically conceived critical interpretations of Allen's *Crimes and Misdemeanors*, which perform highly erudite readings of the film, but its pessimistic moral outlook generates an urge in the commentators to find a sophisticated philosophical apologia to explain away the inconvenience of the filmic narrative. The result is a remarkable case of the emergence of cognitive dissonance in an otherwise perspicuous and rational philosophical discourse.

### ***Crimes and Misdemeanors*: the worst nightmare of moral philosophers**

*Crimes and Misdemeanors* (henceforth *Crimes*) runs two parallel storylines: one follows Dr. Judah Rosenthal (Martin Landau), a successful ophthalmologist, the other, Cliff Stern (Woody Allen), a less than successful independent filmmaker. Judah is a well-respected and wealthy medical doctor, a family man, which does not stop him from starting a relationship with a younger woman, Dolores Paley (Anjelica Houston). One day, Dolores confronts the doctor with the request that he should leave his wife and marry her. She would not shy away from divulging everything to the wife or even blackmailing Judah, threatening him to go public with the information that the doctor embezzled from the foundation of which he was put in charge. Desperate to keep his reputation intact, he resorts to calling the black sheep of the family, his brother, Jack (Jerry Orbach), who apparently is no stranger to the world of organized crime. Jack offers to have Dolores' killed, which Judah initially refuses, but when fear for his reputation and his cocooned family life gains the upper hand over conscience and conventional morality, he eventually decides to make the deadly phone call. Dolores gets killed by a hitman, whereupon Judah initially finds himself torn up by guilt, feeling that his whole world is falling apart as he constantly frets legal and even divine retribution. Finally, however, the police catch a "drifter," a multiple murderer, on whom the murder of Dolores can be conveniently blamed, so Judah can finally retreat to his former life of "wealth and privilege," with bad conscience no longer troubling him.

Meanwhile, Cliff's life is in shambles: he receives no recognition for his socially and environmentally conscious documentaries on poverty, famine, or acid rain, and even his marriage is deteriorating. His wife's brother, Lester (Alan Alda), a wealthy and successful television producer, as a gesture to his sister, offers Cliff the opportunity to shoot a documentary on him for the *Great Minds* series. Cliff reluctantly accepts, hoping to channel the money he would earn on it into his more worthy projects, such as the documentary he is preparing on philosophy professor Louis Levy (Martin Bergmann). He can only find comfort in attending matinee screenings of old Hollywood classics with his niece and a budding love affair with Halley, an assistant producer on the series (Mia Farrow). Eventually, things turn out badly for Cliff: Professor Levy commits suicide, he loses Halley to Lester, and his marriage breaks off for good. To add insult to injury, Lester fires him due to the fact that Cliff's tampered editing of the raw film footage for the documentary shows Lester as a self-centered, manipulative, and pretentious brat. The final words of the film are given to the late Professor Levy in a voice-over narration, in which he acknowledges that "human happiness does not seem to have been included in the design of creation," but our "capacity to love" may give meaning to the "indifferent universe," and he expresses hope that "future generations might understand more." However, his consoling words come far too late to redeem the pessimism of the film: by this point, Dolores is dead, Judah, Jerry, and the hitman have gone unpunished, and the professor himself has committed suicide.<sup>5</sup>

It is hardly surprising that commentators have found themselves confounded by the bleak vision of the film, which leaves no hope of redemption for the grumpy and hapless, but honest and good natured Cliff, while showing an adulterer, embezzler, and virtual murderer, Judah, go unpunished, and the pompous and phony Lester gratified in love and continuing to prosper in his professional life. Two critics, who have offered philosophically ingrained readings of *Crimes*, John G. Pappas and James Lawler, are both acutely aware of the radical skepticism of the film, yet they seem to be unable to repress the urge to counterbalance the apparent despondency of the narrative by appealing to universalist notions of morality, which might still shine through the schemings of the Judahs and the self-important posturings of the Lesters.

Pappas uses the story of the ring of Gyges from Plato's *Republic* to perform a thought experiment along Socratic lines, asking the question: how would the three

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5 Sander H. Lee interprets Professor Levy's unexplained suicide as a corollary to his philosophical convictions. He contends as follows: "Louis Levy finally realized . . . the ultimate extension of Hannah Arendt's famous description of "the banality of evil," and, being a fundamentally honest person, concluded both that nothing he could say or do would stop this degradation, and, further, that he no longer wished to live in such a world" (259).

male characters (Lester, Cliff, and Judah) behave, if the power of Gyges' ring of invisibility were conferred upon them? While it is arguably hard to settle on the Socratic conclusion that "virtue is its own reward," as probably none of us would swap places with the ill-fated Cliff, Pappas argues that from among the three men, it is Cliff who is the least likely to use the ring for his own selfish or evil purposes:

[W]e ought to believe that Clifford, bequeathed the wealth and power that Lester possesses, would use his "ring" in a decent, fair, and honest manner. Again, evidence of Clifford's good-nature is that, handed the vast power to further craft Lester's phony image to demi-god status and simultaneously garner wealth and prestige for himself, Clifford actually exposes the truth about Lester, [even at the expense of getting fired]. (212)

Furthermore, he goes on to conclude that

[a]s we reflect on the film's pessimism, our thoughts and feelings are curiously provoked and heightened. They are a mixture of the wonders and paradoxes of our own human nature and existence. Plato's Gyges story in his *Republic* and Allen's *Crimes and Misdemeanors* encourage us in our lives to continue a search for justice and moral enlightenment. In this wonderful mysterious, examined life, then, maybe we could hesitatingly claim, "It's not all darkness." (217)

Although Pappas does not justify his position by outright metaphysical arguments, his reflections markedly aim at neutralizing the disenchanting moral outlook of the film, whereby the sharp contrast between his interpretation and the argument of the film gets all the more thrown into relief. Why should it be Cliff who turned the power of the ring for morally worthy causes? Most probably because he is the least obnoxious of the three characters, and he is the ultimate loser of the story, who thus earns our sympathy. But is this a sufficient test of his overall moral stature? After all, why would it be any less plausible to interpret Cliff's (mis)representation of Lester in his documentary as stemming from petty jealousy and spite than to assume that he was operating with the morally commendable purpose of "exposing the truth" about his brother-in-law? While Lester's character might be closer to Cliff's eventual representation of him than what he would have expected to see in a flattering portrayal, we must not forget that the "truth" which emerges in Cliff's film is expressed through a concoction of manipulatively edited film footage, which includes inserts of Mussolini and a hee-hawing donkey to highlight and ridicule certain personality traits of Lester (as perceived by Cliff).

In fact, Cliff is not only the least obnoxious, but also the most powerless of the three men, so his moral standing has never been compromised by the temptations of money and fame. Judah is tried and he fails, but he is never found wanting: his wealth and social status protect him against retribution, and he eventually revels in his newly found freedom without a modicum of remorse. Judah's getting away with murder must be morally scandalizing for any decent viewer, which makes it all the more difficult to allow for the insight that his moral failure does not originate from innately evil inclinations, but is rather an upshot of a contingent factor: social privilege. The "drifter," on the other hand, is described by Judah as a person "who has a number of other murders to his credit, so I mean..., what the hell, one more doesn't even matter." Thus, the scapegoated drifter's fate becomes the perfect counterpoint to that of Judah: although the doctor's professional expertise, his wealth, and his success all enhance his "social visibility," the very same factors make law-enforcement authorities and legal institutions blind to his crime; by contrast, the drifter's underprivileged status makes him socially invisible, yet, coupled with his criminal record, his "invisibility" turns him into a convenient excuse for improving the police statistics of solved crime cases even at the expense of trivializing justice as well as Dolores's murder.

These are rather harrowing facts, which can justifiably undermine one's faith in universally valid moral principles and justice. Pappas seems none the less affected by this blatant pessimism, so in his commentary he seems to attempt to restore some of the metaphysical comforts the film so cruelly denies us, thus reducing the dissonance that the film generates. This is apparent in his contention that the film should serve as an incentive for the viewers to affirm their faith in "justice" and "moral enlightenment," but he does not provide any clues as to what could serve as a rational foundation for such an affirmation after a thoroughgoing deconstruction of "justice" and "morality" as stand-alone categories. Allen's demystifying narrative is far more convincing than to explain it away by the same mystifications which it seeks to dismantle. The most positively inclined approach could be to regard the film as a defamiliarization of our entrenched and unexamined convictions, arguing that justice and morality are not found as natural kinds, but neither are they exactly constructed in an arbitrary fashion. Rather, they ideally result from an optimal functioning of social practices, where the criteria for ideality will have been agreed upon before we, as individuals, enter the realms of social and cultural discourse. We are well aware of those criteria, which is the reason why we gasp at the abominable injustice of the wrongdoer getting off the hook contrasted with Cliff's professional, financial, and marital failure, and his righteous rabbi brother-in-law, Ben, going totally blind at the end of the film. Feeling outraged over such an unfair unfolding of events may seem like a passive reaction, but it might well

be our best bet against injustice and immorality, as it indicates an awareness of the social and institutional norms which render such injustice condemnable. Nonetheless, hoping to ground our outrage in something more fundamental than social practice requires a narrative that is more convincing than Allen's bleak, but undoubtedly rational and economical account of the socially constructed nature of morality.

James Lawler hopes to find this narrative in the moral philosophy of Immanuel Kant, which results in a philosophically more reflexive argument than that of Pappas, but he also goes further along the lines of metaphysical thinking. Lawler offers a professedly Kantian analysis of the film, which seems rather controversial in the context of a work which could not be further from Kantian philosophy in outlook. As a consequence, the thoroughgoing and sensitive argument performs itself into a self-defeating extolment of subjectivity, which does not do justice either to Kant's philosophy, or to Allen's film. Laying down the premises of his analysis, Lawler claims to paraphrase Kant's argument from *Critique of Pure Reason*, according to which "the so-called real world, the universe as portrayed by science as a morally indifferent place, is not so real after all" (Lawler 41), and goes on as follows:

It [the real world] is only an "appearance," built up in part out of the underlying structures of the mind that we employ when we seek to organize knowledge. When we pursue scientific knowledge, we inevitably employ categories of strict causality. But these categories reflect the structure of the human understanding and its "transcendental logic," not the nature of reality as it is in itself. [Thus] ... the "logical" categories of a deterministic science are in fact subjective, not objective. They express the way in which human beings, in their scientific enterprise, subjectively organize experience, not the nature of reality itself. Beyond the "logic" of a mechanistic science is a more fundamental truth, expressed in religious traditions, in the aspirations of the human heart, and in the implicit assumptions of moral consciousness. This is the truth that the universe in fact has meaning and purpose—that of fostering the Highest Good. (41-42)

The passage is more reflexive of Lawler's own views than Kant's original reasoning. The point being made is analogous to my contention above, according to which the cultural practices into which we are born, and the cultural narratives which they generate will always already serve as a buffer between "pure reality" and human perception (hence, "pure reality" is a useless term). Thus far Lawler's reasoning is correct, but when he proceeds to interpret the actions and motivations of the film's



characters in terms of how they measure up to the Kantian ideal of deontology, he seems to start operating with articles of faith rather than rational insights. He invokes Kant's notion of authentic freedom, according to which there is no higher power than that of the Moral Law, which determines the will and actions of the individual, over which those who possess mere political or institutional power will not hold sway. Once the individual recognizes where the path of moral action lies even in the face of life-threatening forces pressuring him/her to the contrary, s/he will perform what is right even at the cost of self-denial. Thus, Lawler contends, when "Judah has to choose between his own life and killing an innocent person . . . he *should* have the experience of authentic freedom. And yet Judah is intent on denying just such a possibility. He rationalizes and denies" (44; emphasis added). Furthermore, commenting on the imaginary conversation between Judah and Ben right before the former decides to have Dolores killed, Lawler claims that "[a]s in Kant's moral imperative, God sees the intrinsic dignity of Dolores. Judah *should* see that too—see with God's eyes of love" (44; emphasis added). Instead, he goes on to say, "Judah locks himself into one view of the world, that of 'reality,' the worse than dog-eat-dog, indifferent, loveless world of egoism and survival. But this 'real world' that Judah chooses is in fact an appearance, as Kant says, and as the characters of the film themselves acknowledge" (44-45).

From this, the following question arises inevitably: is there any logical method whereby it could be qualitatively demonstrated that the ideally hypothesized world in which the Moral Law prevails is any less of an appearance than the "indifferent, loveless world of egoism and survival"? In the longer passage quoted above, Lawler associates this latter world with the "logical categories of deterministic science," and claims that scientific attempts at objectivity (apparently the token of emotionless indifference for Lawler) can only produce subjective appearances. He provides no rational argument, however, for his claim that religion, emotion, and moral consciousness constitute a "more fundamental truth" than logic and science. Does "more fundamental" mean "more objective"? If so, what makes our capacity to organize experience better suited to produce objective knowledge than it does in scientific discourses? On the other hand, if, from Lawler's perspective, neither discourse can be regarded as more objective than the other, the preference for one over the other becomes a matter of faith, and as such it dispenses with all criteria of falsifiability. One could rationally argue that because an individual's socialization in emotive and moral terms (potentially including religious teachings) most likely precedes their initiation into science and logic, their understanding of scientific discourse can be positively or negatively affected by their emotional and moral knowledge. Nevertheless, the sheer fact of antecedence does not invalidate scientific knowledge in the face of moral convictions.

Once we give up the naïve belief that the function of science is to help us catch glimpse of the ultimate reality of the world as it is, we can acquire a more nuanced view according to which the aim of science is to provide us with an ever expanding body of knowledge, which helps us cope with the world. This knowledge, however, is not arbitrary or subjective, as it is under constant social surveillance in the sense that it is discussed, debated, tested, interpreted, verified, and altered, if needs be, in/by scientific communities. Empirical methods of inquiry are fundamental to any scientific endeavor, but even scientists cannot dispense with discursive practices in assessing and applying their findings. Furthermore, coherence among knowledge claims can be achieved by first reaching consensus over optimal ways of coping and goals to be achieved. By the same token, there is no reason to suppose that moral knowledge is any less dependent on social and discursive practices than scientific knowledge, and that it gets constructed, sustained, and altered any differently. To claim that moral knowledge is informed by “a more fundamental truth,” that of the “universe” having “meaning and purpose” is a rather specious metaphysical, hence unprovable, claim, and it does not quite do justice to Kant, either.

The guiding principle of Kant’s deontological moral philosophy is that ethics must be divorced from all forms of empirical (hence, by implication, social, cultural, political, institutional, etc.) considerations, from conditions, consequences, and utility. Therefore, passions and desires, the anticipation of pleasure or pain, or any kind of momentary self-interest must not play a role in determining the agent’s will towards moral action, and any moral rule arising from these can at best be a “maxim,” not a law. Kant’s formulation of the fundamental law of “the pure practical reason” is the following: “Act so that the maxim of thy will can always at the same time hold good as a principle of universal legislation” (Kant 119). Moral laws (categorical imperatives) are *a priori*, intrinsically valid, and unconditional, originating from pure practical reason, which Kant painstakingly endeavors to isolate from any extrinsic factor which could contaminate its purity. As he contends: “[b]ut that reason may give laws it is necessary that it should only need to presuppose itself, because rules are objectively and universally valid only when they hold without any contingent subjective conditions, which distinguish one rational being from another” (Kant 107). As a corollary to this:

Laws must be sufficient to determine the will as will, even before I ask whether I have power sufficient for a desired effect, or the means necessary to produce it; hence they are categorical: otherwise they are not laws at all, because the necessity is wanting, which, if it is to be practical, must be independent of conditions which are pathological and are therefore only contingently connected with the will. (Kant 106)



For this independence to be achieved, such a level of abstraction is required at which the moral law is in effect reduced to its mere *form*:

Now, when we abstract from a law all matter, i.e., every object of the will (as a determining principle), nothing is left but the mere *form* of a universal legislation. Therefore, either a rational being cannot conceive his subjective practical principles, that is, his maxims, as being at the same time universal laws, or he must suppose that their mere form, by which they are fitted for universal legislation, is alone what makes them practical laws. (Kant 114-15)

Lawler seems to overlook Kant's key concepts of universality, unconditionality, and purity in his (allegedly Kantian) analysis of *Crimes*, whereby he turns Kantian moral philosophy into the exact opposite of what it purports to be: a repository of truistic *maxims*. In fact, nothing reveals this tendency better than his repeated use of the modal "should": the prescriptive claim for Judah to experience authentic freedom upon contemplating murder, and see Dolores' dignity through "God's eyes of love" (a notion never mentioned by Kant) is highly ironic, considering how Judah dismisses all moral principles of universal appeal and acts solely with regard to his own self-preservation.

It is Ben to whom Judah turns for advice in his predicament, but when the rabbi testifies to his own moral faith, saying, "I couldn't go on living if I didn't feel with all my heart a moral structure with real meaning and forgiveness, and some kind of higher power, otherwise there is no basis to know how to live," Judah remains conspicuously impervious to this proposition. Ben makes an attempt to persuade the doctor to confess his infidelity to his wife, Miriam, but he can do no more than appeal to a general principle, suggestive of the rhetoric of religious sermons: "Sometimes when there is real love, and a true acknowledgement of a mistake, there can be a forgiveness, too." Not surprisingly, Ben's advice is lost on Judah, who is quick to expose the vacuity of this benevolent, but bland wisdom by transposing it to the specific context of their marriage, saying: "I know Miriam, her values, her feelings, our place among our friends and colleagues . . . Miriam won't see two years of scheming and dishonesty as a small infidelity."

Judah's moral outlook could not be further removed from the Kantian ideal: giving in to the passions of momentary pleasure, he commits adultery, and hides the fact from his wife so as to avoid the pain of public humiliation for his family and himself, which eventually makes him decide to hire a hitman to take care of his "problem." Thus, the anatomy of Judah's misdemeanor (adultery) and crime (murder) is composed of small, contingent factors, forming a causal pattern, which

eventually lead to the murder of a woman. At each instance of decision-making, Judah acts in accordance with what he thinks is “right,” but “rightness” in this regard is defined by how much pleasure or pain he is to expect from one course of action as opposed to another. None of the maxims Judah might deploy to defend his actions would he (or anyone else in his place) even think of elevating to the level of “universal legislation.” Indeed, any thought of universality, unconditionality, or purity is precluded right from the start.

The purpose of my analysis above has not been to prove that Pappas and Lawler have insufficient knowledge of the philosophy they apply to *Crimes*, nor even to demonstrate that their interpretations are wrong. On the contrary, both critics appear to be well-versed scholars in full command of their philosophical forces. It is precisely their philosophical erudition that makes their endeavor to churn a hopeful philosophical message out of the film so conspicuous. The dissonance which occurs seems to be generated by their philosophical convictions about the universalist foundations of morality, and their refusal to accept the film’s argument at face value, retaining the belief that a fictional narrative (a “work of art”) is a symbolic discourse, whose basic mode of operation is aestheticization and sublimation. The comforting fictions do indeed prove to be powerful constructions, even in the realm of philosophical discourse.

### **Concluding notes, or, can we save the author from his own pessimism?**

Ironically, in the final scene of *Crimes*, it is Allen’s own character, Cliff, who is given the lines to mitigate the grim conclusions we can draw from Judah’s sordid story. Upon their accidental encounter, disguising it as an idea for a movie script, Judah relates his “great murder story” to Cliff, which, he says, “has a very strange twist,” referring to the murderer finally getting away with his crime: “Now he’s scot-free [after the drifter is arrested],” Judah concludes his story, “his life is completely back to normal. Back to his protected world of wealth and privilege.” Cliff, however, responds in a skeptical manner: “Yes, but can he ever really go back? . . . [Because if it is possible], then our worst fears are realized . . . Here’s what I would do: I would have him turn himself in, ‘cause then you see... then your story assumes tragic proportions, because in the absence of a god or something, he is forced to assume that responsibility himself. Then, you have tragedy.” To this, Judah responds, followed by a derisive chuckle: “But that’s fiction, that’s movies. I mean... you see too many movies. I’m talking about reality. I mean if you want a happy ending, you should go see a Hollywood movie.”

Judah’s meta-reflexive remark could justifiably be ascribed to Allen himself, as though sending a warning to future critics of the film: although the medium

might be deceptive, this is not your run-of-the-mill movie, in which the story comes with a conventional morale, so do not even try to read one into it. In fact, though they seem to represent different perspectives at first, eventually both Judah and Cliff confirm the intuition that the ethos of moral justice is a property of fictional constructs. Judah's father, Sol, also affirms this insight in a flashback of a Seder night where a heated debate breaks out over moral convictions between the religious and atheistic members of the family: "Whether it's the Old Testament or Shakespeare, murder will out"—Sol proclaims. Indeed, fictions of various kinds play a significant role in our moral education, which is the reason why we feel confounded and inconvenienced by fictional stories which outright tell us that what we knew about morality and ethics is itself fiction.

I conclude my paper with a final example of a commentator's attempt to reduce the cognitive dissonance generated by *Crimes*, even (and literally) in the face of the *auteur*. Sander H. Lee in his reading of the film, having analyzed the narrative almost scene by scene, and having given due account of Allen's moral pessimism, turns his interpretation around in the final section (aptly titled, "And Yet..."), and claims that Judah's return to his protected life is just a charade: "it is more likely that his high spirits at the film's end are temporary, and that, in the long run, he will secretly torment himself for the rest of his life" (270). More interestingly, Lee presents his redemptive interpretation to Allen himself in an interview, which the director unambiguously rejects: "You are wrong about Judah;" he tells Lee, "he feels no guilt and the extremely rare time the events occur to him, his mild uneasiness (which sometimes doesn't come at all) is negligible" (Lee 271). Lee, however, remains unconvinced: "I would [still] argue that the film's text gives stronger support to my interpretation . . . [For] I would contend that in many instances artists do not possess privileged access to all of the nuances of their creations" (271). In a general sense, Lee could be right: the profession of literary criticism has long since operated with a license to discover figures in the carpet, setting aside the author's intentions (in the rare cases in which they have been made available at all). Nevertheless, the motif of Judah's self-exoneration is not just a figure in the carpet, but rather the very material out of which the carpet has been woven. Moreover, it constitutes a strong premise to the stern but unequivocally stated argument that one's sense of guilt and troubled conscience can merely be fear of being found out and punished; once retribution has been avoided, the guilt evaporates. In fact, the strength of the argument is indicated precisely by the fervent attempts of the commentators to reduce it. Furthermore, considering the frequency with which Allen addresses the inconvenient truths of our existence in several films of his middle period, a strong case can be made for the claim that his artistic vision is conjoined by a consistent conceptual outlook. This could well be

a case in which the author does not need saving from the putatively unwanted implications of his work. Therefore, Allen's *Crimes and Misdemeanors* offers an exceptional perspective to explore cognitive dissonance in the discourse of literary/filmic criticism, in which such anomalies are normally dissolved, and hence remain concealed.

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## American Society in Popular Imagination: Frank Baum's Fairy Tales

Makhdokht Hajighasemi

*"... What unites people? Armies? Gold? Flags? Stories. There is nothing in this world more powerful than a good story. Nothing can stop it. No enemy can defeat it."* Tyrion Lannister, GOT, Final Episode.

Stories have been present in humans' life since childhood. They facilitate the process of learning for children and help them learn about worlds other than what they live in. In such worlds, they can find relief from their fears, afflictions, and anxieties that make life more bearable for them. Bruno Bettelheim explains that while for adults grandmother's replacement by a scary wolf in "Little Red Riding Hood" is frightening, in a child's perspective it is just as scary as any other time that his or her kind and caring grandmother suddenly changed into a "figure who threatens his very sense of self" for some mistake he or she made (66). Therefore, after reading the story the child knows that although the angry grandmother can be as scary as a wolf, her mood is not permanent, and the kind and lovely granny is somewhere inside the wolf.

Unable to see any congruence between the different manifestations, the child truly experiences Grandma as two separate entities—the loving and the threatening. She is indeed Grandma and the wolf. By dividing her up, so to speak, the child can preserve his image of the good grandmother. If she changes into a wolf—well, that's certainly scary, but he need not compromise his vision of Grandma's benevolence. And in any case, as the story tells him, the wolf is a passing manifestation—Grandma will return triumphant (Bettelheim 67).

Literature in the United States of America was not considered American until the 1760s. The British colonies were mostly influenced by English literature, and colonial writers did not recognize themselves as American. As larger groups of immigrants arrived in these colonies, and the new republic was searching for a united identity, American Literature began to emerge based on religious ideas. The new American society was developing rapidly. Millions of new immigrants were arriving in the US every year from different countries with different backgrounds and different hopes. Such diversity and plurality, along with significant incidents like The Civil War and the Westward movement, made the American identity vulnerable. Thus, different forms of literary genres emerged to help the American people embrace all the difficulties, find the ability to face these sudden changes, and adapt themselves to their variable living conditions while preserving their American identity.

In this paper, I am going to study fiction as an essential form of literature that helped American society in many ways. The question is whether all fictions work alike, or do they have a different impression? As Hayden White puts it, “all stories are fiction,” and whatever story one would read or hear is made but not found, so fiction has a specific role in humans’ life (9). This specific role is what Robert Scholes explains in *Structural Fabulation* as such “[fiction] takes our worst fears and organizes them in a form charged with meaning and value” (5). He explains that cognition, the ability of fiction to help its readers to know themselves and their existential situation, and sublimation, turning our concerns into satisfying shape, are essential aspects of good fiction. These aspects—cognition and sublimation—distinguish works of fiction from one another, as some of them can successfully cover both cognition and sublimation and turn into well-known, successful pieces of literature. In contrast, some other pieces of fiction may only represent one of these aspects.

Furthermore, according to Paul L. Harris, the critical aspect of fiction is “fictional absorption,” which means “to temporarily adopt a point-of-view situated inside the make-believe world rather than the real world” (342). By entering fictional absorption, the audience—both children and adults—can experience an event from a new perspective. Fictional absorption is a unique ability as in our lives; there is only one perspective available at a time for us, so seeing life through a different perspective along with ours means living more than one life. Therefore, fiction may provide us different stages of fictional absorption.

Bo Pettersson explains Samuel Levin’s frame for literary communication in his book *How Literary Worlds Are Shaped: A Comparative Poetics of Literary Imagination*. He mentions that stories are like an “invitation to imagine,” and in Pettersson’s idea, this is important for children’s socialization into a “culturally and emotionally joint sphere” (112).

Among different genres of children’s literature, a fairy tale can be recognized as one of the most attractive and practical genres which deeply affect children’s socialization. Bettelheim in *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* mentions that a “fairy tale offers meaning on so many different levels, and enriches the child’s existence in so many ways, that no one book can do justice to the multitude and diversity of the contributions such tales make to the child’s life” (12). He enumerates fairy tales as an essential source of cultural adaptation for children. They are curious about many things, but they may only have limited experiences due to physical and material boundaries. Therefore, the imaginary world which fairy tales show to children is attractive because it has no boundaries. They can imagine themselves in dense forests or high mountains, speaking to wolves or fairies while lying in their bed.

Imagination is a significant attribute for the human mind. Thomas Suddendorf explains that it is “one of the most fundamental aspects of our human mind: we can imagine things other than what is available to the senses. We can picture past, future, and entirely fictional worlds and think about them” (141). Suddendorf discusses that human’s ability of imagination is not only a distinguishing cognitive attribute between humans and other animals, but it is a critical element for some other cognitive abilities as well. Pettersson mentions “literary world-making” as an example of such other cognitive abilities.

Literary world-making, as Pettersson explains, is a complicated cognitive process in which imagination plays a vital role. When humans can think about the world they live in, they are also able to think about worlds different from that, and this means world-making. Pettersson claims that imagination is a significant key to literary world-making. He categorizes imagination into two categories: individual and popular, and he puts the literary imagination under the latter category. He emphasizes that popular imagination acts as a “shared frame of mind” for humankind, and it is essential for shaping nations and their cultures (21). As Pettersson quotes Michael Tomasello, imagination helps humans to learn about others and develop empathy, not just from them, but through them (25). In other words, through imagination, anyone can learn about other human beings not just by observing their lives, but by imagining oneself in their position, or as Tomasello puts it, “they can imagine themselves ‘in mental shoes’ of some other person” (6).

Pettersson argues that for literary world-making, we need to have some modes of literature (oral, visual, and written), or some literary themes (challenge, perception, relation). Then, by imaginative use of mimesis, we can make changes in or to these modes and themes to make a new literary world. This process of literary world-making, as Nelson Goodman claims, is remaking because the author always builds the new world based on the world he or she already knows (6). Pettersson also mentions that literary world-making is always based on the real world we live in; therefore, social and historical events occurring in the real-world can influence literary world-making.

Scholes in *Structural Fabulation* explains that different literary genres represent a connection to their development period. For example, in the early nineteenth-century novel was a recording of changes in history, and it was considered as a “source of political understanding” (Whitebrook 32). Later, technological developments contributed to the concept of future as a radically different condition than the present time, and as its result, fantasy and structural fabulation came into existence. Oliver Conolly and Bashshar Haydar explain this in “Literature, Politics, And Character” as such: “certain political environments give rise to certain types



of literature, and that those political backgrounds thereby explain certain aspects of literary phenomena” (87).

In Scholes’s opinion, some of the most effective and valuable examples of structural fabulations “are direct projections of the present, which provide concrete realizations of current trends in our political and social situation” (70). Taking these in mind; I want to study L. Frank Baum’s *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* as a well-known American fairy tale to investigate the role of popular imagination in the literary world-making of this author. Grounding my analysis in the ideas of Bo Pettersson and Robert Scholes, I investigate the relationship between the imaginary worlds which Baum’s fairy tale offers to the readers and the world Americans experienced at the time. By exploring the literary world of this tale, I want to explain why it could become a twentieth-century landmark in children’s literature in the United States. For a better understanding, I would compare *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* with another fairy tale book of Frank Baum, *American Fairy Tales*. I would like to investigate to what extent they are different and how Pettersson and Scholes’s ideas can explain why one of them is a huge success while the other is not even well-known.

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Lyman Frank Baum was an American writer who is known for his books about the land of Oz. Published in 1900, it was an enormous success for him, and he continued writing a series of books under this title. In Baum’s idea, as he mentions in his introduction for *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, new generations need new fairytales with new themes that can serve current society’s interests, that he names “modern fairy tales.” It is a unique example of an American fairy tale that is different from traditional European tales in many aspects, mainly reflecting American values in its plot.

America was an ideal destination for many immigrants during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries because of “the chance for individual freedom, equality of opportunity, and material wealth” (Datesman, Maryanne Kearny., et al. 32). These benefits were available to those who were ready to pay the price of self-reliance, competition, and hard work. These values have been pillars of the unique culture of the United States from the beginning until today. Although Baum describes his book as a means of pleasure for children and not a source for moral lessons, his fairy tale contains different social and historical moral-like messages.

The story is about a girl named Dorothy, who lives on a farm with her aunt and her uncle. She is caught by a cyclone which dislocates her, her house, and her dog, Toto, into Munchkin county of the imaginary land of Oz. The house falls over the Wicked Witch of the East and kills her and makes all the residents of Munchkin very

happy. Dorothy wants to go back home, and The Good Witch of the North explains to her that her only chance is to ask the great and powerful Wizard of Oz to help her. She gives Dorothy the silver shoes of the Wicked Witch of the East and kisses her on her forehead as magical protection on her journey to Emerald City, where she could meet Oz. On her way to Emerald City, she finds some friends, a Scarecrow who was looking for a way to earn a brain for himself, a Tin Woodman who was wishing to have a heart for himself, and Cowardly Lion who wanted courage. They decide to go with Dorothy to the Emerald City and ask Oz to help them grant their wishes. After different adventures, they arrive at the capital. Oz represents himself in a different form for each of them and tells them how to reach what they want; they need to kill the Wicked Witch of the West, who is ruling over the Winkie county.

The Wicked Witch of the West tries her best to stop the travelers on their way. She finally manages to break the group apart and enslaves Dorothy. One day, when the Wicked Witch of the West wanted to steal Dorothy's silver shoes, Dorothy dashed a pot of water over the Wicked Witch of the West and melted her away. Then she managed to rescue her friends, and they returned to Emerald City to earn their prizes from Oz. There, they learn that Oz is just an ordinary man and not a wizard. Oz sews a new head full of bran on the body of the Scarecrow instead of a brain, puts a silk heart stuffed with sawdust in the Tin Woodsman's chest, and gives a magical courage potion to the Cowardly Lion. After meeting Dorothy, Oz misses his home and plans his return. He flies away with his Balloon to Omaha and leaves Dorothy behind. So, she goes to see Glinda, the Good Witch of the South, asking for her help. There she learns that her silver shoes, which she had them from the very beginning, can take her anywhere she wishes to go. With the help of her magic shoes, Dorothy and Toto go back home to Kansas.

As I mentioned above, this story is an excellent example of presenting social concepts and values like self-reliance, hard work, freedom, self-discipline, and competition in the form of children's tales. At the beginning of the story, Dorothy is not self-reliant. She is frightened because she cannot find her way back home. Still, Dorothy does not consider finding her way back home on her own. She immediately asks around for the solution, which shows her lack of self-reliance and self-confidence. During her journey, whenever there is a danger around or problems to solve, her male companions step out to fix the situation. She is defiantly different from usual passive fairy tale heroines, but still, her actions emphasize that problem-solving is not an essential characteristic for women. Even though she is the actual human being within her group, with an actual brain and actual heart, she always fails to demonstrate her abilities.

On the one hand, Baum tries to explain that magic is not the answer to every problem. In order to achieve a mindful brain, a kind, and caring heart, and

desirable courage, one should take responsibility and work hard, and then what is needed would be found inside, just like the concept of the self-made man. On the other hand, Baum's solution for Dorothy's problem, which could not be solved by her efforts, is magic at the end. This part can be seen as believing in miracles and hoping to achieve the desired result by relying on forces beyond the human effort, which is also a popular part of the American culture.

Dorothy's journey to find a way back home contains familiar elements of American culture and history. The book is written almost a decade after the official closure of the frontier. Therefore, tracing elements of the myth of the frontier in this text is not surprising. The Witch of the West is wicked, and to achieve what was promised to Dorothy—like the concept of Promised Land or Manifest Destiny—she needed to conquer the west, and by doing that, she could go back home and bring a better life to the residents of that land. The protecting kiss from the Good Witch of the North can relate to the concept of “God is on our side,” which is a crucial element in American Identity. This kiss saved Dorothy in many situations while her other companions did not have such an advantage. In contemporary history, Americans justified many of their actions, like regime change wars or military interventions in the Middle East, according to the ideology of “God is on our side.” For example, George W. Bush justified his invasion of Iraq or his foreign policies toward the Palestinian-Israeli conflict by mentioning that “God told me to end the tyranny in Iraq” or “I am driven with a mission from God” (MacAskill).

Denouncing slavery is also a prominent theme in the plot as the wicked witches had enslaved their citizens while good witches did not. The story was written almost four decades after ratifying the Thirteenth Amendment, but American society was still struggling with different issues related to slavery. All these examples are supporting Scholes's idea that valuable examples of fiction can provide readers with projections of their cultural and political trends.

In his literary world-making, by using popular imagination, Baum built his imaginary world as a close projection of American society at his time. He elaborated essential American values through his plot, which made his fiction a valuable piece because it covers both the sublimation and cognition aspects of good fiction. Sublimation as helping its readers understand rapid social and cultural changes in the western territories, and cognition as it gives them a core understanding about American identity and values and explains to them how they can achieve them.

Challenge is a major theme of the story. Dorothy had to find a way back home, and she and her friends were asked to kill the Wicked Witch of the West. The perception theme is present too. The Scarecrow, the Tin Woodman, and the Cowardly Lion had to figure out their abilities through hard work and self-reliance, and Dorothy had to know her belongings better to solve her problem and go back

home. Moreover, the relation theme is also present in this tale as friendship among Dorothy, Toto, Scarecrow, Tin Woodman, and Cowardly Lion leads the narrative. So, this story represents Pettersson's literary world-making in every aspect.

Besides this triumphant fairy tale, Baum wrote a collection of short fairy tales under the name of *American Fairy Tales*. Unlike *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, *American Fairy Tales* is unknown, and it could never get the same attention as the previous book did.

Magic has a less critical role in *American Fairy Tales*, and protagonists can solve their problems by themselves through thinking and self-reliance. An essential difference between the tales of this collection and *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* is that they are more like moral lessons. For example, in one of the stories named "The Box of Robbers," a girl named Martha happens to stay home alone, and while wandering around the pantry, she finds a chest that belonged to her uncle. She was told before that, as uncle Walter requested, this chest should remain unopen until he comes back, but because of her curiosity, she tries to open it. Finally, when she succeeds in opening the chest, three Italian Bandits come out of it. They try to rob Martha's house, but she figures out a solution to put them back in the chest and lock them up again.

In another story named "The Girl Who Owned A Bear," Jane, the girl, receives a book from one of her father's former employees who wanted to take revenge on Jane's father. Any animal, which was shown in the illustrations of that book could come to life and while Jane was reading the book, an angry bear jumped off the pages to eat Jane, but she quickly thought and found out a solution and saved herself.

Imagination is present in these tales, and they contain moral lessons, but they only engage the individual level of imagination. The literary worlds they build are not separated from the real world, and their messages are rather personal than community-oriented. They do not represent any connection to social or historical events at their time, so from a moral aspect, they have nothing to share with their readers. They may cover the sublimation aspect of good fiction, but they can never cover the cognition part.

To sum up, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* as a successful American fairy tale represents both aspects of good fiction. Baum made his literary world by using popular imagination of American society and represented different trends of his era in this book, which can be considered as an essential factor for his success. Using challenges, perception, and relation themes at the same time made the literary world of this story even more enjoyable. As a famous fairy tale, both in publication and later adaptations, it is a perfect example of a close relationship between the imaginary world and the real world that it reflects. Such a relationship can help readers connect themselves to the make-believe world easier and help them find a

better relief as they can project themselves into an imaginary world surrounded by the same problems as they face in their real lives.

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## ***Akutaq*<sup>1</sup>: The Impact of Colonialism on Inuit Religiosity and Literature**

Rita Nándori

### **The Spiritual Shift: Magic Songs Versus Hymns and Journals**

“Above each hut waved a little white flag—signs that the inmates had relinquished their old heathen faith and become Christian” (Rasmussen 118). The shaman Aua had explained to Knud Rasmussen that traditions based on experience and generational knowledge are what the Inuit adhere to. The harsh Arctic life is reflected in Aua’s description of Inuit beliefs. The shaman explains that fear is the primary guiding force of life:

“We fear the elements with which we have to fight in their fury to wrest out food from land and sea.

We fear cold and famine in our snow huts.

We fear the sickness that is daily to be seen amongst us.

We fear the souls of the dead of human and animals alike.” (Rasmussen 130)

This summary of Inuit faith is not foreign to Christianity where god-fearing is an often-used term. All of the things feared by Aua—such as illness and a variety of hardships—are feared by Christians as well. While Christians believe that everything is governed by the will of God, the Inuit are less certain why things happen the way they do (Rasmussen 129-130). The existence of the spirit world—something divine that is beyond the material world— that intertwines all is not unknown to Inuit faith. To be a good person is what the Christian commandments teach people, similarly Inuit teachings rest upon proper behaviour and avoidance of evil doings (Piercey-Lewis 252-253).

Riding the wave of this mutual comparability, a variety of Christian faiths attempted to spiritually colonize the Canadian Arctic: Moravian, Pentecostal, Holy Alliance, Anglican, Roman Catholic all sent their brothers to learn about and evangelize the Inuit (Whidden 1). Sometimes many different Christian religions were present in one community. According to Oosten and Remie, in the

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1 Akutaq is a Yup’ik word in the Aleut-Eskimo languages meaning mixture, here as of languages and cultures.

case of the Pelly Bay (present-day Kugaartuk) settlement, which was reached by Catholic missions, the Oblates<sup>2</sup> of the church were more invested in warding off Anglican influences than making sure if Inuit converts of the faith really believed and practiced their new religion (109). Naturally, the Natives of the vast tundra implemented Catholicism to their arctic realities as it best fit them, creating a sort of religious mixture or *akutaq* in their spiritual tradition adapting elements from Christianity and in a way that best fit the already existing Inuit system of belief. However, evidence points to the fact that missionaries in Kugaartuk believed themselves to be superior to the Inuit by way of spiritual intelligence transmitted through Christianity (Oosten, Remie 3) and were largely oblivious to the actual religiosity of the Inuit they thought to have converted. It is possible that the protection of the Inuit from their own paganism or the influences of non-Catholic missionaries barred the Oblates from inquiries into the spiritual lives of those to be converted to see if there was compatibility between the two religious traditions. This is of no surprise and is a common method of a culture thinking of themselves as better in some way than the inhabitants of the land it arrives to colonize. However benign the motivations of these missionaries were, it can easily be seen, how a certain sensitivity was missing from their approach.

Unlike in other historical examples of colonial efforts, in the case of the Arctic, not only did Christian missionaries learn Inuktitut to deliver the message of the Bible to the Inuit, but they gave them writing through introducing Cree syllabics. The purely oral culture of the Inuit thus transitioned into a written period, altering the shape of how Inuit traditional knowledge, *qaujimajatuqangit* is delivered. The first things written down—even before Inuit traditions—were religious hymns translated from German into Inuktitut by the Moravian Brethren. Music, dance and poetry are intertwined in Inuit tradition; thus, for the purposes of this study, I will treat hymns and song lyrics as poetry—similarly to Rasmussen and Boas, who identified Inuit songs as poems (Martin 165).

Although most of the first hymns sung by Inuit believers were translations, less frequently some were written by Inuit authors as well. Hymn 478 was composed by Anne Paedlo and is the only Inuit composition in the Anglican hymnal:

My father in heaven  
Is my only source of confidence  
I am extremely happy  
I have someone who feels for me

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2 In Christian monasticism, especially in Catholicism, an oblate is a person who is specifically dedicated to God's service.



My father told me  
How he was making a place for me  
I am extremely happy  
To be saved (McGrath 62)

Both Inuit thinking and writing are regarded as clear and simple but not without depth, which is reflected in Paedlo's hymn. Hymns—whether Moravian, Anglican or Catholic—substituted for the old songs of the people and the magic songs of *angakoqs*, shamans. Paedlo's hymn satisfies the criteria for *akutaq* since the Christian hymn was written by an Inuit poet. Having grown up in Inuit tradition, Paedlo incorporated in her poetry elements of the outside influence present in the area at the time. I shall compare Paedlo's hymn to a magic song collected by Arctic explorer and anthropologist, Rasmussen, during his anthropological expedition of the Canadian extreme North from 1921 to 24:

This is blood from the little sparrow's mother.  
Wipe it away!  
This is blood  
That flowed from a piece of wood.  
Wipe it away! (Petronne 7)

Both poems are concrete, instead of alluding, they say what they mean, whether that be happiness over finding God or a wish to stop bleeding. Anne Paedlo's hymn is but four short lines with a partial repetition, and Aua, the Igloodik shaman's "Words to Stop Bleeding" is also four curtly put sentences creating a magic song. Of course, there is no one specific God this incantation is pleading to, rather, as is in animism, the very source of the problem is addressed: in this case, bleeding. Another song performed by Aua as a birth ritual is also worth mentioning as it is comparable to the overall message of words a priest might say during a Christian baptism ceremony:

I arise from rest with movements swift  
As the beat of a raven's wings  
I arise  
To meet the day  
Wa—wa.  
My face is turned from the dark of night  
To gaze at the dawn of day  
Now whitening in the sky. (Rasmussen 47)



When asked if he believed in God, Aua said that the Inuit did not believe, they feared. This wording seems to be reminiscent of the term “god-fearing” as it is used in the Bible. One must not forget that at the time of his interview, he might have been under the influence of Christian missionaries and he, along with many others, is known to have later converted to Christianity (Kleivan, Sonne 32). Inuit poems in the oral period were rather spontaneous, so it is possible that as the influence of the missionaries was growing, shaman poems became closer in style to Christian hymns.

At first glance, the Inuit identity as it emerges in religious rituals, does not seem to have been influenced to a great degree by the insertion of a foreign religion into the local culture, as it appears in the similarity between the shaman’s song and that of the Christian Inuit hymn. However, Inuit songs were accompanied by drum dance, and it cannot be forgotten that any kind of “heathen” music and singing was forbidden by the Moravians for nearly two hundred years (Artiss 33). Hence ages-long Inuit oral traditions were seriously interfered with by the well-intended modernization of the arctic dwellers of Canada, with it permanently sending the original Inuit song tradition into oblivion. Young Inuit are largely ignorant of their ancestral song-making<sup>3</sup> traditions, although the very same can be said about youth in any Southern Canadian or Western European setting. If this hypothesis is valid, it is worth pondering whether this means a loss of traditions or the enrichment of them with outside influences. As is well-observed, there is no one culture that is entirely uninfluenced by others, unless enforced by law, as seen in rare cases.

The Inuit are a highly musical people, and we know from reading only the lyrics to any song—Inuit or otherwise—without the accompanying music that the words have rather different affect. The repetitiveness and simplicity of the poems are apparent without the music playing, but this makes them not different, but similar to poems from the time before Christianity reached the North. If we consider both magic songs and hymns as musical poems, lyrics to music, then old magic songs are the ancestors of Christian hymns: they both are simple songs about things we do not understand claiming magical power and sung by or led by an *angakoq* (as Western priests too were referred to by the Inuit).

The value of the simple inspirational hymns is exactly in their open and direct expression. According to McGrath, Moravian translations of hymns into Inuktitut are not really inspiring, such as the one entitled “Bringing in the Sheaves:”

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3 Based on discussions with students in English classes in the hamlet of Igloodik, Nunavut in 2016.

We will come bringing things  
And we'll be happy  
With our Lord Jesus  
We will come  
We will come  
We'll be happy  
With our Lord Jesus (McGrath 61)

However, I must disagree, especially if one considers the simplicity of magic songs from before and during the time of Christian missionaries; those songs are as straightforward as the English translation of the Inuktitut version of “Sheaves.” In Southern and Western culture “Sheaves” might do with a bit more allusion, but the translation back from Inuktitut to English seems to transmit the same clear wording as most Inuit song-poems or magic songs sung by *angakoqs*. If they did not impress the Inuit, they would not have worked as efficiently as they did, as is evidenced by the conversion of Aua, the guide and shaman with whom Rasmussen carried on a friendship during the *Fifth Thule Expedition*, a project led by the Inuktitut-speaking ethnographer, Knud Rasmussen in order to complete the first comprehensive recording of traditional Inuit societies in Canada.

The many magic songs used by particularly the shamans are good examples for obvious wording, such as the one aimed at healing one’s knees after falling, collected among the Copper Inuit by anthropologist, Diamond Jeness:

Falling tears  
Falling tears  
The old knee down there  
The old knee down there  
It splashes on it; it splashes on it. (Leechman 68)

While, according to McGrath, religious fervour did not inspire a substantial amount of poetry in the far North—although I would argue that religiosity has a certain place within Inuit poetry—Christian sentiments were a great source of motivation for Inuit writers of prose, especially those in the genre of letters and journals (62). Kingminguse, who was the very first Moravian convert, wrote about Jesus with great faith in his journals, confessing that all his confidence was in Him, (only to forget about Christianity as soon as the missionaries moved on). Aua, another Inuit who had witnessed the conversion, followed up as such: “I believe very much, but at present I want a knife” (Petronne 61). As it is seen in such cases, it was not easy for the missionaries to spiritually colonialize the Inuit, which might be beneficial if outside cultural influences are regarded as a negative impact.

Still, the Inuit did incorporate Christianity in their belief system, their poetry and prose, writing poems for the first time, which I regard as the enrichment of their expression in language and writing, rather than a loss.

Christian imagery first appeared in the journals of the Inuit converts from Nain, Labrador in the early twentieth century. Abraham, one such convert who was even taken to Europe, frequently used Christian imagery in his writing: “The believers here in Germany are our brethren. They even called us brothers and sisters. They even cried in front of us so that we would not get lost through Satan” (Petrone 109). Since the old faith of the Inuit recognized no God or Satan, this is a clear indication of the influence of the missionaries. The very first book published by an Inuit woman was the diary of Lydia Campbell. The work of the Moravian Brethren lies hidden in her writing: “I have seen many ups and downs, but the good Lord has safely brought me through” (Petrone 113), as she wrote upon losing nearly her whole family. It is obvious that belief in the Christian God was a great deal of comfort for her in the hardships suffered in the High Arctic. Both journals and autobiographies were new forms of transmitting intellectual culture for the Inuit using English, a new language, hence the amalgamation of the two resulted in yet another form of *akutaq*. What was gained here is the ability to remember; writing became an important source of Inuit tradition for posterity. Journals and autobiographies seem as the first steps toward a wider range of prose styles.

Moravians believed that shamanistic music should not be played as they were not compatible with their evangelization. This certainly meant the loss of many magic songs that *angakoqs* sang for a variety of purposes. Since the Inuit are highly musical, hymnals became the substitute. Some hymns, just like magic songs, were performed only on certain days or at special occasions overseen by church elders (Artiss 19). When Nunatsiavut (the Inuit-governed part of the province of Newfoundland and Labrador) was asked to represent the semi-autonomous region for the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver by sending throat singers<sup>4</sup> or drum dancers, some elders thought that the Moravian Church Choir should have been sent instead (Artiss 1). This is a clear shift in Inuit poetry and music as well as traditions from shamanistic to Christian. While the adoption of Christian gospels can be regarded as the enrichment of Inuit culture, the neglect of old songs represents a definite loss of traditions.

Recently deceased Inuit folk singer, Charlie Panigoniak was from a community of less than five hundred people (Chesterfield Inlet or Igluligarrjuk) with missions

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4 Inuit throat singing is a form of musical performance consisting of two women who sing duets in a close face-to-face formation with no instrumental accompaniment using a variety of guttural sounds in a certain rhythm.

present from the Roman Catholic, Anglican and Holy Alliance Churches. These data show how intensively a variety of churches pursued the religious capacity of the Inuit to claim for their own, and with how much success. Panigoniak is mentioned in this context because he had famously put a song based on John 3:16, starting with “God so Loved the World” in his repertoire and referenced God in many of his songs, whose lyrics are treated for our purpose as poetry the same way as shamanistic songs are. Panigoniak’s musical poetry is a unique fusion of religious and traditional topics. In an interview given about Inuit music, William Tagoona, a musical friend emphasized the importance of Panigoniak’s lyrics as they helped the Inuit remember their culture as well as provided solace in times of hardship with treatments of Christian hymns (Whidden 1). Tagoona’s comment suggests that Christianity does not necessarily generate a negative literary impact on Inuit writing and music.

The frequently sung Hymn 219, “What a Friend We Have in Jesus” is an example of well-liked translated hymns. Translated back from Inuktitut to English, the hymn reads as follows: “What a Friend we have in Jesus/All our sins and griefs to bear/What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer!” (Piercey-Lewis 280). Jesus appears as the invisible friend helping in times of need of which there is many in the Arctic. However, original Inuit Christian compositions provide an even closer understanding of what the Inuit worshipper feels and needs. “Never Failing” by Ellen Pameolik (Piercey-Lewis 112) is one such hymn that also meets the definition of *akutaq*:

Deep inside her heart she felt alone  
And the soul in her life faded like a light  
And the days seemed so long  
Even though she hasn’t realized  
That the dark side has told her not to go  
But all it takes to bring a heart of life to love  
Is a dream of hope to meet Jesus Christ  
And here I am never failing

One of the hymns which has lyrics that shows a striking difference between the English original and the Inuktitut versions is “The Old Rugged Cross,” a Methodist hymn written by George Bennard in 1915:

On a hill far away stood an old rugged cross,  
The emblem of suffering and shame;  
And I love that old cross where the dearest and best  
For a world of lost sinners was slain.

Ch. So I'll cherish the old rugged cross,  
Till my trophies at last I lay down;  
I will cling to the old rugged cross,  
And exchange it someday for a crown.

However, the Inuit translation by Arviat native, Sandy Okatsiak slightly differs, and when translated back to English its elusiveness is apparent and it reads as an entirely new poem:

A cross that is from the tree  
A wood from the tree that I saw  
Jesus was hanging there  
Because he loves people in the world  
I stopped near the cross  
I give all my sins  
He loves me so much  
I want to follow Jesus (Piercey-Lewis 134)

This discrepancy is partially due to the Inuit avoidance of explicitly naming things that might bring bad luck, such as *nanuk*, the polar bear is often referred to as the “big, white one.” Unlike straight-forward *ayaya* songs (Inuit mood songs), spiritual songs tend to be allusive. The highly symbolic nature of expression that is ever-present in poetry written in the English language is very different if translated to Inuktitut that belongs to an entirely different language family and is spoken by people with vastly different realities than those of most Southern Canada. According to the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, or linguistic relativity, as linguists based on this hypothesis argue (Campbell), language is the shape in which our thoughts appear; its structure as well as our cultural background and belief system influence the way we speak and write, which I suspect is the reason for the difference between the original English hymn and its translation back from Inuktitut to English. All things considered, the result is an *akutaq* of the original Moravian hymn and the Inuit understanding of it. “Looking back, our ancestors, although they had never heard of God, they were taught to always do what was good” said the elder, Suluk, in a 1983 December issue of *Inuktitut* magazine (27). This observation is important if we consider that one of the possible reasons for the relative success of the evangelization of the North was the similarity between the concept of good and God in Inuit shamanistic traditions and Christianity. Both traditions feared an omniscient being (or spirit in the Inuit tradition) to whom if one pleads to admitting wrongdoing, will be healed, and with the help of priests (*angakoqs*) and through hymns (magic songs) believers might connect to something larger than

themselves (Piercey-Lewis 188). Music and lyrics, both in the old tradition and the new, provide the medium for communicating with the holy spirit of the land and help to come to terms with wrongdoings and relieve the singer of guilt, which can be considered as a form of confession. Another resemblance between the old Inuit religion and certain forms of Christianity is the ability of priests or *angakoqs* to cast out evil (Inuktitut 43).

The great unseen power of the Arctic with whom the *angakoqs* communicate through songs is very similar to the role of priest in relation to God. As Jesus left his body and flew to heaven, shamans were thought to have left their body during magic songs entering a trance which allowed them to communicate with the power they all feared. I believe that this similarity might be the cause of the popularity<sup>5</sup> of hymns like the Anglican “Create in Me a Clean Heart, O God”, in which such spiritual states are addressed:

Create in me a clean heart, O God,  
And renew a right spirit within me.  
Create in me a clean heart, O God,  
And renew a right spirit within me.  
Cast me not away from Thy presence;  
Take not Thy holy Spirit from me.  
Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation;  
And renew a right spirit within me. (hymnal.net)

Martha Nutarasungni of Arviat explains as such: “Singing comes from the heart; it comes from our soul; we use our voices to speak to God; when we all make beautiful music together, the Holy Spirit comes around us and we can feel it” (Piercey-Lewis 208). This notion is in synthesis with the communal spirit of Inuit living in pre-contact, early contact and transitional times and to a certain extent, even today. Musical performance of songs, just like in the case of those sung by *angaqok* ancestors, reinforces tradition and continuity and brings the local Inuit together strengthening the bond of family, community and *Inummariit*, the “real Inuit” in an age of the onslaught of outside influences.

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5 Pentecostal, more spiritual renderings of hymns are preferred by many Inuit as they are claimed to be better tools of communion with God than conventional Anglican service or Roman Catholic mass (Piercey Lewis 246).

## **“Akutaq” in Modern Inuit Music, Poetry and Prose**

Both religious and pop culture influences—especially if the folklore, the traditional song-poetry and traditions of the Inuit people as a whole are retained in the style, form or lyrics—result in a certain mixture of cultures, an *akutaq*. In an interchange between cultures both parties have something to gain, but an eventual loss of some aspects of one’s cultural heritage might also be a part of the process. In the case of the Inuit and the Western culture that imposed itself on them, it is fair to say that the Inuit have suffered the partial loss of their native culture through contact with the whalers, fur traders and missionaries. For example, elder, Davidee Aningmiuq, as part of a cultural revitalization group in the Nunavut capital, Iqaluit, expressed her sadness when overhearing priests describing the Inuit as not even being able to make *kamik* (traditional footwear) or not knowing about the traditional wisdom of their people. Aningmiuq feels negatively impacted by her Christian upbringing and grieves her loss of tradition which she feels is due to having been uprooted from her community in order to receive Christian education (Hickey CBC).

Survival in the harsh Arctic climate has always been one of the main driving forces of Inuit life and literary tradition, and today cultural survival is a prime motivation for poets. In Alootok Ipellie’s short story, “When God Sings the Blues”, the narrator performs a chant after which he undertakes a spirit journey in which he meets the Christian God introduced to the Inuit by the Western missionaries. The tone of the story is sarcastic; which is not foreign to Inuit oral tradition. *Iviutiit* or songs of derision were traditional Inuit song-poems that were made to make fun of people using, among others, sarcasm. The blues in the title is played by Satan to entertain the Inuit, which might be understood as a metaphor for the influence of different cultures on each other and shows how these customs can be borrowed and made part of one’s tradition.

Inuit customs have long been threatened by early colonization of North America; especially the Christian prohibition on some of the fundamental oral traditions, such as drum dance and shaman songs. But even before Christianity’s involvement in the oral literature of the Inuit, whalers and trappers had intervened in the Inuit way of life, especially hunting, by introducing the concept of commerce in the area. The nomadic lifestyle of the Inuit was banned, and families were forcibly relocated to unfamiliar parts of the Arctic around military outposts to establish Canada’s northern sovereignty. But certain traditions have never changed; the way poems are born seems to remain identical to the times before Christianity’s arrival to the North. Panigoniak, a musician and poet describes the way he composes poetry as such: “You listen to mother nature, it’s like these spirits that go through your body and speak to you ... that’s where those songs come from, in terms of the



spirit world...it's like a dream" (Williams 252). The fusion of music and poetry is a way to express, like Karina Møller, a Greenlandic Inuit rock musician, the anti-colonial sentiments many Inuit have today. She, however, does not relate to some of the separationist sentiments:

Anything that has more aggressive energy and has the idea of saying them-and-us, separation from other people, I'm always very careful. Because I think it's good if you have pride as a human being. You can be proud of your culture, but it's always dangerous to create separation. And if you are saying it's because you are so upset at the white people for what they have done, [creating separation] does the same thing ... so that's why I really like Ulali and Native Roots ... their music communicates that it's not about separation. (Perea 203)

While the Oblates and Brethren are long gone, Western culture has not stopped influencing the Inuit, some of whom are not fully aware that they are in Canada<sup>6</sup>, treating the semi-sovereign Nunavut as a separate Inuit Homeland. However, the arrival of the satellite TV connection, Internet, and especially the cheaper broadband services in all the hamlets in 2019 have changed the Inuit one more time. The influence of folk and contemporary chart music is as apparent on Inuit poetry as once the Christian hymns were when they burst through the igloos in the age of shamans. Panigoniak's songs are heavily influenced by seventies North American folk music, albeit his lyrics feature distinctly Inuit topics as well as renderings of Christian hymns. His stature in the *Inuit Nunaat*, the Inuit homeland, and his style is reminiscent of Bob Dylan's. Alexis Utatnaq's lyrics, which I will treat as a poem, entitled "Blood-thirsty Enemies," published in the 1974 issue of the now derelict *Keewatin Echo* displays a rap-like rhyme:

Our enemy  
Our enemy  
They're so many  
Our blood they spill  
They make us ill  
Help us, oh god  
From their piercing rods  
Our sworn foes  
The mosquitoes

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6 During my conversations with the *Iglulingmiut* while living in Igloolik in 2016, the Inuit that I have talked to referred to taking the trip from Nunavut to Ontario as "going to Canada."



The poem's rhythm is not unlike lyrics for a rap song. Although Utatnaq's poem predates the now mainstream rap culture, rapping has roots in slave songs and first appeared in blues songs in the fifties, such as in Joe Hill Louis's "Gotta Let You Go" (Reese 11). The blending of the Inuit theme of the mosquito problem of long summer days and the use of rap-like rhythm creates a modern *akutaq* with a catchy rhythm that is easy to remember.

The syncretism of ancient and modern emerges in the music and lyrics of contemporary Inuit artists such as Pangnirtung-based Riit or Silla&Rise from Kimmirut and Igloolik, the late Kelly Fraser from Sanikiluaq and The Jerry Cans from Iqaluit. All of these artists build upon Inuit song traditions either in their singing technique or themes and the language they use to perform their songs. It is worth noting that all of these acts mix Inuit roots with pop culture or Canadian folk music and find an international audience with this approach. It appears that blending contemporary musical styles with Inuit song traditions does not seem to take away from the cultural merit of these acts, rather building on traditional Inuit elements highlights and brings focus to the Inuit.

Riit sings in Inuktitut to ensure that her Pangnirtung dialect remains alive<sup>7</sup> by incorporating in her songs a guttural, traditional singing technique called *katajjaq*. Her songs are a way of preserving the Inuit language (Wheeler 1). Since dialects within the Inuit homeland differ so greatly that residents from different communities do not always understand each other without using some English as a linguistic mediator, we can say with certainty that keeping the entire range of Inuit dialects and cultures alive is an immense endeavour. In this sense, it might be called beneficial that the English-Inuktitut mixed or *akutaq* language can be used to communicate between distant places within the Inuit homeland. Also, it is a difficulty to keep traditions and language alive when there is no uniform nationhood and language across the Arctic, rather there is a connection between related peoples that weaves the Inuit together by their shared experiences.

Although Silla&Rise, whose art also features the ancient Inuit singing style of *katajjaq* and some traditional themes sung or rapped to a futuristic dubstep music, sing in English, they are equally keen on maintaining their Inuit identity by adding throat singing to their repertoire. Silla&Rise pay homage to their Inuit roots in their choice of name as well as "Silla" means weather in their dialect. Weather is of special importance in the far North as it connects all Inuit to the land and its wildlife along with the quintessential theme of survival. Silla,

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7 Having talked to Igloolik residents in 2020, they have explained to me that they do not understand Riit's dialect at all.

the singing duo part of the band, made it their goal to write new throat songs, on top of performing old ones, thus continuing the age-old Inuit tradition into the future.

Probably the most famous artist using the *akutaq* approach to language, culture and art is award-winning singer, Kelly Fraser, who wrote some of her songs in Inuktitut with an agenda to use pop music but sung in her native language as a means of deepening her cultural heritage. She also wanted to make her music as accessible to as many people as possible, Inuit and non-Inuit alike. In an effort to reach wide audiences, she mixed English and Inuktitut in some of her lyrics and blended traditional Inuit singing techniques and themes with contemporary music (“The Guardian”).

In the case of The Jerry Cans, Inuit and non-Inuit musicians play together in a musical group using Inuktitut language in their lyrics and adding *katajjaq* to their songs. Additionally, The Jerry Cans wrote a children’s book entitled *Mamaqtuq!* based on their song of the same name. *Mamaqtuq!* is bilingual, written in Inuktitut and English, providing a perfect amalgamation of North and South. Language preservation is one of the important goals of the band’s project. Singer Andrew Morrison explains that:

Nancy and I have two daughters together and her late father insisted that I learn Inuktitut and learn how to hunt...he would wake me up at 5 a.m. to go seal hunting, or always make fun of me when I spoke English...he was making sure that his future granddaughters would have every opportunity to learn Inuktitut and be brought up in their culture. I guess the band is one expression of this. (“20 Questions”).

Hence the fusion of the two cultures through the use of two distinct languages seems to mesh together in a mutually respectful manner emphasizing the crucial message: here the majority adheres to the minority in order to help the cultural survival of the latter.

Canadian fans, Inuit or non-Inuit alike are delighted to embrace these Inuit folklore-influenced bands. Maintaining cultural continuity and retaining integrity as an Inuk while embracing the idea of Canada as one nation is probably one of the most life-affirming approaches. To some extent, Canadians regardless of their background live by this creed, creating a very special mosaic or *akutaq* everyone can call home. Based on the many examples of contemporary artists successfully blending cultures, I argue that colonial narratives can be challenged by asking if only recognizably traditional—such as throat singing or *katajjaq*—Inuit poetry and song-making are means of cultural reaffirmation.

I agree with Renee Hulan (90) that cultures intersect and influence each other in a natural process. Western Christian literature, whether in the form of hymns, popular song lyrics or journal writing has influenced Inuit literature, starting with the initiation of the written tradition by the use of syllabics. However, as seen in Rasmussen's rich collection of literary and anthropological material during the Fifth Thule Expedition, there is plenty to learn from the Inuit. I disagree with Edmund Carpenter's assertion in *Eskimo Realities* (13) that there is no Inuit literature, only Inuit oral traditions that involve songs that ethnographers collected regarding them as poetry. While I agree that oral tradition carries a fluidity foreign to poetry composed for the page only, it is in no way a less valuable representation of a culture's literary efforts.

I concur with John Robert Colombo's high opinion on the merit of Inuit writing as a valuable part of the Canadian literary mosaic. If our hypothesis is manifold in the sense that we either assume that Christian contact had an enriching effect on Inuit writing or that it had no effect whatsoever, we can see—based on poetry that was printed in the past hundred years—that while there is frequent reference to God, these are individual poems by some poets rather than a trend. Singer-poet Panigoniak and his wife wrote both traditional songs and Christian-influenced ones and both styles were well-liked. In a considerable amount of Inuit Christian songs, Christianity is infused with the old spirituality of the Inuit creating a special fusion of religiosity manifesting in song lyrics, hymns and poetry.

I share Hulan's opinion, that post-contact Inuit poetry has not been influenced by Western contact to an extensive degree. Techniques of the oral tradition and traditionally Inuit themes appear in transitional and contemporary writing in a manner not dissimilar to pre-contact song-poems (94): *katajjaq*, the significance of hunting and the cultural importance of survival (both as people on the land with a harsh climate and as those with a distinct identity), are just two of these themes. While I agree with Hulan that the Inuit play a dual role in Canadian culture, "that of the ultimate of identification and the ultimate of difference" (95), I believe that this is not specific to Inuit, but generally to aboriginal cultures of any multicultural society. The Inuit homeland is located within the borders of Canada and internationally Canadians distinguish themselves—among many things—with being hosts to a very special culture. Most Inuit poets and writers, however, seem to be less concerned with their role within Canada than their Inuit identity as in relation to the land, not necessarily regarding themselves anything other than Inuit in the Inuit Homeland, the Arctic North<sup>8</sup>.

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8 Based on personal conversations with local residents in Igloodik, Nunavut, in 2016

Thus, it might be concluded that acculturation has never fully<sup>9</sup> happened in a far North where very few Southerners travel, if ever, and where until recently no cellular and internet service have existed to transmit outside influences. Up until today, laws allow only for the Inuit to hunt whale, seal and walrus. Although hunting is done with updated harpoons and new Western tools, people still prefer country food and speaking Inuktitut, two highly beneficial trends for preserving Inuit culture. Similarly, in poetry and prose, the resilience of the Inuit is ever-present in the unchanged forms of poetry. Albeit Inuit artists write words on paper now, the themes and forms are the same, even if some Christian elements are present in the rich Inuit poetic tradition. Inuit are not a homogenous nation, not every Inuit community is the same and neither are the effects of colonial contact, as Tom Artiss asserts in the title of his study of the musical traditions of the Nunatsiavut community, *Nain*: “more white does not always mean less Inuit” (Artiss). As in the case of the Yup’ik dish, *akutaq*, adding an extra spice for some is a loss of the original flavour, yet for others it is a gain.

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## Vienna and Budapest in American Secret Diaries in Early 1919

Zoltán Peterecz

Few historic periods have been more thoroughly studied and scrutinized than the Paris Peace Conference in 1919. The reason for this interest is hardly surprising since after the devastating First World War a truly new epoch started that was launched largely by the Peace Conference. Europe was made anew, old empires were gone and new states were born, while the new ideology of bolshevism arose to challenge the western democracies. Also, amid the general devastation brought on by the four long years of war, many states were financially and economically ruined and their resuscitation was only imaginable under previously unseen international cooperation. This last point was strengthened by the League of Nations called into being by the Peace Conference as well. Therefore, the minute study of the year 1919 in general, and the Conference in particular, is understandable.

This study is focusing on a special and small aspect of the turbulent first half of 1919. It examines and compares private diaries made during the half year stretching from December 1918 until May 1919. All three diaries in question were written by American officers, mainly during their stay in Vienna, Austria, and to a smaller degree in Budapest, Hungary, and Bucharest, Romania. All three authors came from similar background, were of similar age, and were members of the same American field mission, so their vantage point was also similar. In light of this, the article wants to compare the three diaries and highlight what similarities and perhaps differences can be found in them. Doing so, it will be seen what was the general line of thinking not only for these three men, but possibly for a much larger group of Americans: what they thought about post-war Europe, the role of the United States in this new Europe and the world at large, and, perhaps the most interesting factor, how they saw the possible implementation of the Wilsonian policy in the future.

It is imperative to introduce the three authors in a few words as to get a picture about who they were.

Walter Goodwin Davis (1885–1966) was born in Portland, Maine. He attended Exeter and later Yale in 1908. After completing his law studies at Harvard in 1911, he joined the firm of Shearman and Sterling in New York. Subsequently he pursued a business and banking career in his hometown, Portland. Following the American declaration of war against Germany in April 1917, Davis attended the Officers



Training Camp at Plattsburg, New York, and received a commission as Captain of Infantry in early 1918. He was assigned to the Military Intelligence Service, and served as Assistant Military Attaché at Berne, Switzerland. After the November armistice he was attached to the American Commission to Negotiate Peace in Paris, subsequently being transferred to Vienna as a member of the Coolidge Mission, where he remained until March 1919.<sup>1</sup>

Charles M. Storey (1889–1980) came from a rather prominent New England family. His father, Moorfield Storey was a well-known lawyer in Boston, Massachusetts, with a long practice, various titles in associations, and was a liberal person in his political and legal outlook.<sup>2</sup> His son, Charles Moorfield Storey, was a Harvard graduate, who, after getting his lawyer degree, worked in the Justice Department until the end of World War I. After the war he became a member of a law firm where he stayed for the remainder of his life. He held various posts as members, presidents, and trustees in different organizations, of which being Harvard overseer for five years made him the proudest.<sup>3</sup> He was a member of the Coolidge Mission.

Nicholas Roosevelt (1893–1982) was born in New York City among favorable circumstances. The Roosevelt dynasty was one of the most prominent and wealthiest families in the United States. Roosevelt belonged to the Long Island branch of the family, and lived close to Oyster Bay. His father, James Roosevelt, was the cousin of later President Theodore Roosevelt, who, after the premature death of James Roosevelt, mainly brought up Nicholas. During World War I he first worked as attaché at the American Embassy at Paris for sixteen months, then he was at Plattsburgh, New York, in a non-commissioned training camp. Later he was in Spain as a secretary to the American International Corporation, which errands provided him with invaluable insight into diplomacy and European affairs. At the time of the armistice he served in the rank of captain, and joined the Coolidge Mission as such in the last days of 1918.

The American Peace Delegation, exactly in order to learn about the often anomalous-looking Central European region, sent the Coolidge Mission to Vienna in the first day of 1919. This mission was responsible for gathering as much information as possible at its headquarters in Vienna and in the countries in the region: Hungary, Romania, the Kingdom of Serbs, Slovenes, and Croats,

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1 The information was gleaned from Guide to the The Walter G. Davis Papers MS 469, compiled by N. X. Rizopolous with the assistance of Anne Willard, March 1973, New Haven, Connecticut.

2 Eugene Wambaugh, "Moorfield Storey (1845-1929)," *Proceedings of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, Vol. 71, No. 10 (Mar., 1937), 552–556.

3 Theodore Chase, "Charles Moorfield Storey," *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, Third Series, Vol. 92 (1980), 151–156.

and Poland. The motley group of Coolidge's mission consisted of military officers, university and college professors, and lawyers. It was the mission's task to obtain valuable information concerning the present position and outlook of the countries mentioned and relay useful data to Paris to help the American Peace Delegation in making decisions. Archibald Coolidge sent the various members to the aforementioned countries and tried to keep the flow of information to Paris at a sustainable and satisfactory pace.<sup>4</sup> The three individuals, Davis, Storey, and Roosevelt, were all members of this mission. All started their diary entries in Paris, which activity must have been spurred by the momentous circumstances of peace making after the devastating war.

What are really diaries and what is their significance from the point of view of studying history? Diaries are a personal mirror on history. Although reflected and retained through this personal lens, and therefore distortions are natural, history presented from the first person singular perspective enriches our knowledge about a certain event or period. The diary as a form of and mirror on history has been around for centuries, but the first detailed diary entries came into being during the Renaissance, which era produced an earlier unknown measure of self-consciousness and, in the wake of it, a larger need for self-reflection.<sup>5</sup> The almost universal practice of putting down observations in a diary, however, really became in vogue in the mid-nineteenth century. Most typically, persons belonging to the upper classes in general grabbed their pens, but diplomats and politicians in particular were active in this field. Today, this form of preserving the present seems to be on the wane, largely due to the digital and globalized world, where the visual image is taking its place. The diary entry is a living imprint of history, since those persons scribbling down events into their diaries reflect fresh experience and observation, and they do it right after the event takes place, so the usually distorting feature of many years and distant memory do not play a role in being historically correct. On the other hand, the diary entry can also be seen as a form of literature, even if the notes sometimes in short form are not representatives of fine literature. That is why it has an "unsure status," because the diary is "an uncertain genre uneasily balanced between literary and historical writing, between spontaneity of reportage and the reflectiveness of the crafted text, between selfhood and events, between

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4 For the history of the Coolidge Mission see Harold Jefferson Coolidge and Robert Howard Lord, *Archibald Cary Coolidge: Life and Letters*, (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1932), 192–216.

5 David L. Ransel, "The Diary of a Merchant: Insights into Eighteenth-Century Plebeian Life," *The Russian Review*, Vol. 63, No. 4 (Oct., 2004), 596.

subjectivity and objectivity, between the private and the public.”<sup>6</sup> Obviously, one always has to be on guard when faced with a diary entry, because, if nothing else, the unavoidable subjectivity will play a part.

Still, these entries usually reflect history well. This does not mean that we should look at diaries as refutable historical artifacts, since these texts are personal “images” only.<sup>7</sup> Coloring, magnifying, and distorting facts, as well as errors are all characteristic of it, but that also holds true for professional history writing. Although there are naturally plenty counterexamples, in most cases the author of a diary entry does not purposefully distort the story he or she writes down. The author’s primary goal is clearly to preserve the present and not to lie about history.<sup>8</sup> The author wishes on reading the entries to be able to reproduce events and feelings ten, twenty, thirty, or more years later, irrespective of its nature—family, politics, or war. So, while a historian mainly analyzes the past, a diary entry mainly preserves it. This preservation may show signs of idiosyncrasies, also those of an analytical mind of the observer, but it presents history as it was for that individual.

Depending on time and place, the level of “freedom” of the diary entries may also differ. If someone lives in a society and jots down events when they do not need to worry about the material getting into the wrong hands, the opinion will be a more open one, the author will be committed to a more “honest” style. On the contrary, in the atmosphere of an oppressive regime, a diary person will choose circumventing wording and style, even perhaps a code, driven by the fear what might happen to them if the authorities find the entries, read them, and, as a consequence, punish the author and /or their family. Seen from this point of view, the authors of the three diaries examined here, it can be stated that they could write as freely as they wished, even if some of the entries were put down in “enemy countries”—they did not need to worry about being punished for their contents. Naturally, only looking back a hundred years later can we appreciate the historical significance of some of the entries in these diaries.<sup>9</sup>

All three of these Americans were then headquartered in Vienna, where they gathered information first and foremost by meeting and interviewing various shades of Austrians. They made shorter or longer trips to Hungary as well, and in

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6 Rachael Langford and Russell West, eds., *Marginal Voices, Marginal Forms: Diaries in European Literature and History* (Amsterdam, 1999), 8.

7 Gábor Gyáni, „A napló mint társadalomtörténeti forrás”, [The Diary as Sociological Source] *Szabolcs-szatmár-beregi levéltári évkönyv*, 1997, vol. 12, 25.

8 Pál Pritz, „Napló és történelem”, [Diary and History] *Múltunk*, 2017, vol. 62, 1., 4–6.

9 This section on diaries as history is almost identical with Zoltán Peterecz, “Immediate Post-World War I Hungary through the Eyes of an American”, *Hungarian Studies*, vol. 32, no. 2, (2018), 306-7. <https://doi.org/10.1556/044.2018.32.2.12>

the case of Storey and Roosevelt, also to Romania. If one studies the three diaries in some detail, there will be various points that stand out as the most conspicuous questions that interested all three persons. The most typical common features can be listed as the following: the possible danger of bolshevism, the role of the United States and of the Wilsonian principle in drawing up the new borders, Wilson as the self-proclaimed messiah of the new world order, dire circumstances in Vienna, political intrigue of the successor states, the impossible worldview of Hungarian nobles, daily chores of the mission (interviews with various people in Vienna and Budapest), daily life in Vienna and Budapest, Viennese opera, etc. It is worth looking at some of these points and see how closely the three intelligence officers thought about these points or whether there are major differences in their analysis of these issues. In the rest of the article, these issues will be introduced through the diary entries of the three Americans, and their notes will be compared as to prove whether they all saw the same things or whether there are discrepancies in how they experienced the surrounding events and personalities.

Clearly, one of the most defining issues in the immediate postwar worldview in the West in general, and in the United States in particular, was the fear of Soviet-Russian bolshevism and the panic that it might spread there from the East. The antagonism between the two nations went back a long time. In 1837, for example, a German-born American journalist described the eastern power in the following terms: "Russia is the evil genius of history; while America is its guardian angel. The power of Russia is opposed to the interests of humanity; that of the United States is based on wisdom and justice... The power of Russia rests on bayonets; that of America on the superiority of mind over brute force. They are to each other as darkness to light... The day of battle must come; the war of principles must ensue."<sup>10</sup> Toward the end of the nineteenth century another example is the following thesis: "At heart the Russian is still more Asiatic than European. We call him Christian; but his religion is a mingling of superstition and fanaticism less attractive, and certainly less conducive to morality, than the religion of the Bedouins."<sup>11</sup> So, when the Bolshevik revolution took place and started to show more and more antagonistic signs toward western and, especially, American thinking, not much was needed for a crusade-like atmosphere to gather that was an amalgam of righteousness and fear. As Hoover put it, after the war was over, "there began to loom up a greater fear from a more potent enemy of freedom than anarchy,

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10 Francis J. Grund, *The Americans, in Their Moral, Social, and Political Relations* (Boston, 1837), 392-393. Quoted in C. Vann Woodward, *The Old World's New World*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1991, 88.

11 William R. Thayer, "The Armed Truce of the Powers." *Forum*, vol. 12 (November 1891), 322.

which after all is an unorganized force. Communism, which had captured Russia, was a new form of organized destruction of Liberty. And it was vengeance itself. The Communists had captured the Czarist gold reserves. Their agents spread over Europe, subsidizing a new revolution. Soon we began to realize that its infectious poison was spreading alarmingly among all starving peoples. Here loomed up a defeat of all we had fought for—to establish liberty.”<sup>12</sup> To Robert Lansing, the American Secretary of State, bolshevism was “the most hideous and monstrous thing the human mind has ever conceived.”<sup>13</sup> Many agreed with the conclusion of a US Senate subcommittee’s paper that said: “The activities of the Bolsheviki constitute a complete repudiation of modern civilization.”<sup>14</sup>

As far as the members of the Coolidge mission are concerned, they could see some of the communistic leanings close up and personal. Therefore, it is interesting what they thought about it courtesy to their first-hand experience. Davis, when he spent two days in Budapest, a city where communist takeover had been expected by some, commented wryly on the situation as he saw it: “Today proved a disappointment. There was no Bolshevik revolution, no massacre of Christians.”<sup>15</sup> While Storey only hinted at the social problems that were connected with the possibility of a communist coup, Roosevelt, for his part, who was present when the Hungarian Soviet Republic was declared, was more vehement than his colleagues when it came to Bolshevism. In his mind, Bolshevism was a phenomenon spread by the Jews: “it is merely the work of a few unscrupulous Hungarian and Russian Jews, working with a few scoundrelly [sic] Austrian Jews, and playing on the feelings of a hungry mob to ride into power themselves.”<sup>16</sup> At the same time, he detected that there was a unifying force of the Bolshevik movement in Hungary on account of the drastic mutilation of the country’s former territory.

When the subject of the diary entries was the role of the United States in the postwar world, the three men were in unison in their view. They all agreed that the various countries of war-torn Europe looked to the United States as the possible redeemer, whether the issue was economic, financial, or political in nature. Storey wrote that almost all of the European continent was “looking to America as a

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12 Herbert Clark Hoover, *The Memoirs of Herbert Hoover*. Vol. 1–3. New York, The Macmillan Company, 1951–1952, vol. 1, 283.

13 Quoted in Michael H. Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy*. New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1987, 115.

14 Ibid.

15 Dairy entry, February 2, 1919, Walter G. Davis Diary, Box 1, Folder 16, Walter Goodwin Davis Papers (MS 469), Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library, USA.

16 Diary entry of April 21, 1919, *A History of a Few Weeks*, Box 18, Nicholas Roosevelt Papers, Syracuse University Libraries, United States, 423.

composite savior, guardian angel, boundary commission, and food supply.”<sup>17</sup> In the defeated capitals of Central Europe, naturally, Americans were even more welcome. As Davis registered upon their arrival in Austria, “everyone to whom we have talked says emphatically that American officers are a welcome sight. They would be better pleased if we were accompanied by occupying troops.”<sup>18</sup> Roosevelt strengthened this view. “Everyone,” he wrote, “no matter of what former persuasion or nationality, looks to America—Huns as well as Czechs; Slovaks as well as Slovenes; Austrians as well as Serbo-Croates; Roumanians as well as Ukrainians. America is apparently the referee in this big game, from their point of view.”<sup>19</sup> It is little surprise that both in Vienna and Budapest, the mission and its members were seen as the ultimate channel to the American Peace Delegation in Paris, as all three men’s diaries attest.

Wilson’s role was discussed in the diaries as well. The author of the Fourteen Points loomed large over everybody’s mind in those months, and victors and defeated parties alike hoped the salvation from their own interpretation of Wilson’s peace agenda. This was a major problem: different countries understood in different light what Wilson chose to say, obviously their interpretation favoring their own cause. The Fourteen Points were so universal and so idealistic that it was bound to create controversy and clearly could not satisfy all sides. The hub of it was national self-determination the lofty ideals of which it was impossible to live up to, and, consequently, it was unmanageable to do justice among the existing ethnic conditions in Central Europe. Secretary of State Robert Lansing was convinced “of the danger of putting such ideas into the minds of certain races. It is bound to be the basis of impossible demands on the Peace Congress and create trouble in many lands.”<sup>20</sup> He found the phrase was “loaded with dynamite” that would only raise hopes in vain, and finally would be “discredited, to be called the dream of an idealist who failed to realize the danger until too late to check those who attempt to put the principle in force.”<sup>21</sup> While Storey only referred to the unfeasibility of the principle in Transylvania, where one purely Romanian village was followed by a similarly pure Hungarian settlement, he criticized Wilson for his veneer of idealism that tried to conceal hard truths. The president, he said, “comes to the Conference, unprepared, and undismayed—Sir Galahad from the West with a wooden sword

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17 Diary entry, November 26, 1918, Charles Moorfield Storey Journal, 1918-1919, Massachusetts Historical Society, United States.

18 Diary entry, January 5, 1919, Davis Diary.

19 Diary entry, April 21, 1919, *A History of a Few Weeks*, 152.

20 Diary entry, December 30, 1918, In. Robert Lansing, *The Peace Negotiations: A Personal Narrative* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1921, 97.

21 *Ibid.*, 97–98.

to carve the casques of some of the hardest-headed individuals in Europe today.”<sup>22</sup> But Roosevelt was once more sharper when it came to condemning Wilson. He accused the president with undue and exorbitant optimism, and characterized the president as someone who opted for “a well-worded, moralistic rhetorical sentence” instead of practical foreign policy. For Roosevelt such rhetoric would, and he mainly had Wilson’s Fourteen Points in mind, give the false impression that “this verbal patent medicine will purge Europe of her ills overnight, and introduce the reign of brotherly love.”<sup>23</sup>

Perhaps it is of interest to compare the opinions on Hungarians in general, or on some specific persons. Although one cannot find exactly corresponding subjects of deep analysis in the diaries of the three Americans, more than one outstanding person was written about in detail. For obvious reasons, Mihály Károlyi, President of Hungary at that time, was one such person. Storey was struck by the Hungarian leader “as being sincere, honest, a man prone to think better of the world that it deserved, an idealist... an extremely human person, capable of exciting a blind affection, based as much on his weakness as on his strength.”<sup>24</sup> He added that, in his view, Károlyi was “an idealist, something of a dreamer, scrupulously honest, considered by some a poor judge of men and subject to the influence of stronger characters. Personally he is extremely attractive, a good talker and has made on all of us a deep impression. There is no doubt as to the depth and sincerity of his conviction and to his force. To my mind he is an extremely forceful personality, and has displayed considerable political instinct.”<sup>25</sup> As for Roosevelt, he also met and held conversations with Károlyi. His basic impression was also praise and a mild enchantment. He characterized Károlyi as “a sincere patriot,” who “through his patriotism [...] took the helm, only to be faced by impossible problems, attacked from within and without, with nowhere to turn.”<sup>26</sup> This last point soon materialized when the so-called Vix Note was handed over to Károlyi, and where N. Roosevelt was also present.<sup>27</sup> The Vix Note was to inform the

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22 Dairy entry, December 14, 1918, Storey Journal.

23 Dairy entry without date, but it is from late March, 1919, Nicholas Roosevelt, *A History of a Few Weeks*, 383.

24 Dairy entry, January 15, 1919, C. M. Storey Journal.

25 Storey to Dulles, February 3, 1919, Storey, Charles M. 1919, Box 53 Folder 19, Allen W. Dulles Papers; Public Policy Papers, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library.

26 Dairy entry of March 20, 1919, *A History of a Few Weeks*, 279.

27 Fernand Vix (1876–1941), French military officer, the leader of the Inter-Allied Military Mission in Budapest in 1919. He handed over the allied note to president Mihály Károlyi on March 20, 1919, which the latter and his government could not accept and resigned instead, opening the way for a communist takeover.



Hungarian government to withdraw deep into its former territory, and it basically foreshadowed the dismemberment of Hungary at the Peace Conference.

Albert Apponyi was the grand old man of Hungarian politics, the most well-known figure outside Hungary. While Storey remembered more vividly Apponyi's looks and his command of the English language, Roosevelt formulated a deeper opinion about the Hungarian. The two had actually met fifteen years earlier, when Apponyi visited Theodore Roosevelt at Oyster Bay. The Apponyi of present day basically gave a presentation of how Hungary would seek revenge if it were mutilated with millions of Hungarians left outside the mother country. Even worse, he implied that in the case of dismemberment, the Hungarians living in the United States, together with the Germans there, would make a united effort against Wilson and the Democratic Party. Roosevelt was, of course, a Republican but such a brazen threat against American democracy left him angry. No wonder that his assessment of Apponyi was mixed at best: "He is an interesting old scoundrel—very intelligent, perfectly unrepentant, and a thorough Chauvinist."<sup>28</sup>

When it came to Pál Teleki, Storey again was struck by the extent to which an educated Hungarian noble could use English. Roosevelt, who met Teleki on more occasions, gave again a more thorough description of the man. Teleki had a very good impression on the American, partly because the latter learned a lot of information from the renowned geographer and cartographer, and future prime minister of Hungary. Teleki came through as "the most intelligent and in his line the ablest" among all the Hungarians Roosevelt had met.<sup>29</sup> As Roosevelt noted, Teleki "gave me a mass of information that filled up many gaps in my scant knowledge of Hungarian affairs... I got almost everything I wanted to know."<sup>30</sup> Naturally, Teleki was feeding the American with careful propaganda regarding the expected large ethnic Hungarian blocs in the successor countries, which is a further indication how everybody in these countries grasped any American as a possible channel to the highest decision makers at Paris.

Davis, for his part, wrote his impression concerning Hungarian nobles based upon his contact with them at Vienna. His opinion was not flattering. "These Hungarian aristocrats are absolutely impossible to converse with," he wrote in his diary, "their ideas are hopelessly sixteenth century, and with every breath they prove against themselves those accusations of feudal mentality made by Mr. Seton-Watson. Countess Hadik told me as a proof of the uselessness of all Slovaques [sic], that the peasants on her husband's estates would never have learned even to speak

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28 Diary entry of February 28, 1919, *A History of a Few Weeks*, 202.

29 Diary entry of April 16, 1919, *A History of a Few Weeks*, 279.

30 Diary entry of February 28, 1919, *A History of a Few Weeks*, 203.



Magyar if he had not built schools and compelled them to go to them! A frank admission of the forcible magyarization of this nationality which is willing to suffer martyrdom rather than give up its own language.”<sup>31</sup> Storey gave a quick study of the other end of the spectrum—the Transylvanian Hungarians. The Szekler people struck him as crude but honest folks: “I must say that the Szeklers made us feel very much at home. To my mind they resembled our New Englanders, with a certain simplicity, sturdiness, and an independence amounting to obstinacy in many cases.”<sup>32</sup> But from a political aspect the verdict was different, especially after conducting a handful of interviews in Kolozsvár: “In the first place all these people were so irreconcilable, so pigheaded, so narrow. In the second place they were utterly out of joint with the new tunes; and were being buoyed up with hopes for the return of the old royal order. Lastly they were not thinking; which were the saddest of all. The most that could be said was that they were brooding over present wrongs, and idealizing a dull and long moribund past.”<sup>33</sup>

### Conclusion

What is to be learned from these personal diaries written during the same time and place, based upon a very similar experience? These diaries do not contradict our knowledge of the events taking place in the aftermath of World War I in Central Europe. The facts are not challenged by these witness testimonies. What the entries reveal are mainly twofold. On the one hand, they allow the present-day reader a glimpse into what it was like to be a member of an American intelligence-gathering mission in early 1919 in Vienna and Budapest. The three authors’ views basically corroborate each other as far as the daily challenges and tasks are concerned for the Coolidge Mission. On the other hand, and perhaps this is the real value of these pages written a little bit over a hundred years ago, the diaries introduce persons of historic fame and represent them as these American officers saw them. Their own personal slant was magnified beyond the pure facts. Largely unbiased opinions greet us when we read these diaries—inescapably peppered with individual preferences. The three diaries personalize two struggling Central European capitals, and also nations, that try to find the way out of the murky aftermath of a defeated war. Davis’, Storey’s, and Roosevelt’s diaries enrich our collective knowledge of the early months of 1919, and tell us a lot about how the American officers of the day typically saw and related to their Central European host countries and the people living here.

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31 Diary entry, February 13, 1919, Davis Diary.

32 Dairy entry, February 15, 1919, C. M. Storey Journal.

33 Dairy entry, February 19, 1919, C. M. Storey Journal.

**“I’m not America’s nightmare / I’m the American dream”:  
The Spiritual and Emotional Journey from Anger to Love  
in Janelle Monáe’s *Dirty Computer***

Bianka Szendrei

**INTRODUCTION: POLITICS OF ANGER AND LOVE**

Generally, anger is associated with hatred, negativity, pain but most importantly, it is a regularly misinterpreted emotion. Angry individuals are often viewed as violent and vengeful ones who are desperate to release their frustration instead of dealing with their personal confrontations; therefore, they negatively affect their environment with their vibe. Though it is undeniable that anger also encourages people to find a solution, to change a situation or to give voice to their fears. Due to the bad reputation of this emotion, most people feel discouraged from admitting the overwhelming anger they feel in the fear of being stigmatized. Nevertheless, what is anger exactly? Many believe that anger and hatred are interconnected, nonetheless, they carry distinctive meanings. Audre Lorde argues that while hatred’s only aim is to hurt, to destroy, to draw back people from loving each other, in contrast anger is a tool of self-expression and a sign of concern for the self, a community or the future of a society. She notes, “Anger — a passion of displeasure that may be excessive or misplaced but not necessarily harmful. Hatred — an emotional habit or attitude of mind in which aversion is coupled with ill will. Anger, used, does not destroy. Hatred does” (151). Is not anger also a way of coping with a helpless situation, letting others know that our boundaries are being violated and threatened? Is not it a tool of powerful expression of our opinion? Indeed, suppressed anger only results in an excessive one, which slowly destroys the individual inside. To avoid this, it should be normalized to let the anger flow through our veins, embrace the pain because hiding from the problem will eventually only add fuel to the fire. Anger is sometimes necessary to move forward in a situation. Anger is sometimes part of a healing process. Anger is sometimes part of one’s heritage.

Anger and love are sometimes inseparable since anger originates from pure love. The latter emotion is based on mutual respect, compassion and concern for the less fortunate individuals. For decades it has also been a driving force for the grassroots civil movements. The politics of love has various purposes: it is an act of resistance

against social injustices<sup>1</sup>, empathy for the oppressed individuals, a tool for the healing process and a cohesive power for a community. Sometimes individuals are in rage because most of them hate seeing others whom they love getting hurt or mistreated. Sometimes someone replies with anger when their morality of love is being violated. Sometimes anger is a response to the overgrowing hatred and the lack of love.

## **CHAPTER ONE: AFRICAN AMERICAN ANGER**

### **1.1 GENERAL INTRODUCTION**

As James Baldwin says, “To be a Negro in this country and to be relatively conscious is to be in a rage almost all the time” (thepostarchive, 0:54-1:05). He reflects on how being angry became part of Black people’s life due to the pain and frustration inflicted by the history and the current unequal conditions. White<sup>2</sup> mainstream media portrays African American rage as a violent response, nonetheless, in this case, violence is not necessarily harmful. Frantz Fanon offers a disparate perspective in his essay, “Concerning Violence” in which he draws a parallel between the relationship of the colonizer and the colonized, showing how violence can be treated both negatively and positively. He argues that the violence of the colonized – in this case Black people’s, whose colonization started with slavery – and its consequences are driven by lived experience.

When the dominant culture conquers an area, it maintains its power through repression, fear and violence. Dehumanization of the colonized to a savage level is also a tool of asserting power for the colonizer. On the one hand, violence brings sorrow and terror. Fanon writes, “When the native is tortured, when his wife is killed or raped, he complains to no one” (54). The colonized remaining silent about their experience of torture applies to contemporary African American experience. Fanon implies that through centuries, violence against enslaved people was normalized. Thus, many Black people suppressed their pain and could not vocalize issues affecting the Black community. Fanon’s quote also indicates that even though they wanted to be vocal about their struggles, it only fell on deaf ears.

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1 My research will be based on this type of love.

2 In the research, only the lowercase “white” is going to be used instead of the capitalized one – except when starting a sentence. When discussing African Americans, “Black” is to be used – just like in other ethnicities’ cases, including Asian, Arab, Hispanic, etc. The aim of this distinction is to alienate the dominant from the oppressed. The contrast demonstrates that they are not on the same level. By writing “White” and “Black”, the research would denote the real message and suggest that the two sides are viewed equally.

On the other hand, violence is part of the healing process and is essential for the reconstruction of their identity. When the colonized become fully conscious and wishes to be independent from the colonizers, they allow themselves to regain their self-worth and dignity. The resistance of the colonized is observable nowadays too, but in this context, it is rather a “symbolical” violence.

To be clearer about this idea, let us take the non-violent Black Lives Matter movement, which was organized by Opal Tometi, Patrisse Cullors and Alicia Garza in 2013 to respond to the unfair prosecution of George Zimmermann, the murderer of Trayvon Martin. The Black Lives Matter, the colonized, shows their resistance against the systematic oppression of the colonizer, white American society, by “vocalizing” social issues on an intersectional scale, challenging the legal system and calling for the cut of police funding. Therefore, the Black Lives Matter movement goes against institutionalized racism which was constructed by white Americans while also calling for the vitality of accountability of criminals, legal system and police. *Anger* for African Americans is a significant tool to start a movement and fight for racial justice. Without anger, the abolition of slavery would have never happened, the Civil Rights’ Movement would not be a part of American history books and Jordan Edwards’ senseless death would have never led into a protest against police brutality. In “As Much Truth as One Can Bear,” Baldwin sums up the idea of Black people calling for changes as “Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced” (57). Baldwin suggests that people should learn how to overcome their fears, be honest with themselves and face the truth. Yet, African American anger is commonly used by the dominant culture, especially in popular culture, to vilify Black individuals e.g., the angry and aggressive stereotype of Black gangster in white Hollywood cinema.

## **1.2 THE USE OF ANGER: BLACK WOMEN’S RAGE**

Malcolm X’s 1962 speech perfectly sums up the fate of the African American woman in the American society: “The most disrespected person in America is the black woman. The most unprotected person in America is the black woman. The most neglected person in America is the Black woman” (“Who Taught You to Hate Yourself - Malcolm X.”, 2:26-2:30). The “angry Black woman” is among the most common racial stereotypes, which derives from white American mainstream media’s misrepresentation. Black women are often portrayed as illogical, aggressive and ignorant. Alas, not many people are capable of interpreting Black women’s anger in a positive way. Audre Lorde argues, “every black woman in America lives her life somewhere along a wide curve of ancient and unexpressed anger” (145). If

one takes into consideration the anger of Black women: what might be at the root of their pain? Police brutalizing Black women which is going to be discussed in the “Django Jane” chapter. Another reason can be rape culture, which dates back to slavery, and oversexualization of Black women’s body which mainly originates from the stereotypical image of Jezebel, the sexually loose Black woman. When rape occurred, Black women were less likely to report the incident due to the sense of guilt which appeared due to the internalization of the idea that Jezebel desired sex and could be easily exploited (West 294). Black women’s body was not only treated as an object but also as a monstrosity which greatly affected their self-image. According to Mogul et al., in earlier times heteropatriarchy usually compared Black women’s vagina to the idealized image of white women’s vagina. Their conclusion was that Black women’s clitoris is larger than the ideal one which was a sign of Black women’s sexual deviance that was a result of sexual intercourses with Black lesbians (16). It means that Black women’s body in general was not only an object for the white male-gaze fantasy but their sexual integrity was also crushed by white heteropatriarchy. Mogul et. al also suggests that the vilification of Black queer women was closely connected to the shaming of Black women’s vagina and body in general.

Intersectionality is an essential element of feminism, especially when it comes to the issues of women of color whose experience of sexism and racism is simultaneous. The term was first introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw and was used to criticize the antidiscrimination doctrine and describe the location of Black woman in the “imperialist whitesupremacist heteropatriarchal” system<sup>3</sup>. She argues in “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color,” that intersectionality “provides a basis for reconceptualizing race as a coalition between men” (1299). Intersectionalism takes into consideration racial,

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3 I use the term “imperialist whitesupremacist heteropatriarchy” to describe the “interlocking political systems that are the foundation of our nation’s [America’s] politics” (hooks 17). According to Black feminist and activist bell hooks [her name is purposely not capitalized] who coined the term, these mutually constitutive political systems are based on domination: imperialism claims the right of territorial domination; whitesupremacy asserts its power over marginalized communities, while heteropatriarchy strives to dominate genders other than cisgendered heterosexual men. hooks suggests that amongst the three systems “we all learn the most about growing up is the system of patriarchy, even if we never know the word, because patriarchal gender roles are assigned to us as children and we are given continual guidance about the ways we can best fulfill these roles” (hooks 17-18). Since people are born into heteropatriarchy and it becomes a part of their everyday life, many times it is difficult to spot heteropatriarchy.

gender, class, queer<sup>4</sup> injustices. It is the key of seeing others' struggles from disparate perspectives. White women must feel obliged to empower women of color and cannot neglect their struggles. They cannot claim to stand for every woman if they are only concerned with problems that are only beneficial for them. Black women's anger cannot be left ignored either, and white women should not remain silent when it is time to act for women of color. The pain of women of color roots in their involuntarily removal from their home to a land where they were forced into slavery. They watched their children torn away from them and sold into slavery; sexual abuse became part of their everyday life. Even after the abolition of slavery, Black women were humiliated and exploited<sup>5</sup>. In consequence of the never-ending atrocities, their anger and rage are responses to racism and gender inequalities.

Audre Lorde argues in "The Uses of Anger," that learning to express anger is a tool of personal growth and is part of survival (Blacpast.org). Nevertheless, it is also essential for Black women to learn how to replace their anger with something powerful. In my interpretation, Lorde suggests that Black women should never let anger bottle up in them and eventually make their spirit bitter. Since their rage is never left unnoticed, it is better to articulate the frustration even though society makes them believe that it is unnecessary. There is a difference between expression and expression. While, for example, Serena Williams can be extremely vocal about racism she encounters on the court (and alas, it is often labeled as a meltdown by the dominant narrative)<sup>6</sup>; or Lucy McBath transformed her pain into power

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4 I intend to use "queer" throughout my analysis as it encompasses various aspects of social identity and behaves as an umbrella term, Burgett and Glenn Hendler defines queer as "an attempt to challenge identity categories that are presented as stable, transhistorical, or authentic" (190). Queerness is more than a social identity, it is closely related to politics and "is a description inherently fluid, a zone of endless possibilities that challenges oppressive norms and social institutions" (Perry 68).

5 Sojourner Truth discusses the pain of seeing her children sold into slavery in one of her speeches, "Ain't I a Woman?" (1851) while Harriet Jacobs' autobiography *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861) details the sexual abuse she was a victim of.

6 In *Citizen: An American Lyric*, Claudia Rankine quotes Zora Neale Hurston, "I feel most colored when I am thrown against a sharp white background" (70) to illustrate Williams' situation on the overwhelmingly white platform. Williams is not welcomed by the whitesupremacist heteropatriarchy on the tennis court because of her skin color. Hence, she becomes an open target of racism, the "Other", the alienated. Judges (mostly white men) constantly accuse her of cheating and give bad calls, people on social media label Williams as a "gorilla," others call attention to her "manly" appearance while Williams was also a target of distasteful jokes which targeted her breast size as well. By this the dominant culture wishes to assert its power over a Black woman's body. She becomes hypervisible for being "different" and "angry". Rankine perfectly shows how Williams reclaims her pride through using white culture's weapon, violence, against itself. Even though Williams is a wealthy athlete, she cannot escape the atrocities of racism and sexism as a Black woman.

and became an advocate<sup>7</sup>; others, like Janelle Monáe, write lyrics to express their frustration. Nonetheless, there is an essential common point in Williams's, McBath and Monáe's way of addressing social problems: they openly criticize without censorship. They disregard the dominant culture's response, endeavor to challenge everyone and withdraw from filtering their messages. Monáe, as a contemporary Afrofuturist artist, uses one of the most predominant spaces in popular culture, music, to address racial injustices, spread feminist ideas and openly criticize white supremacy because she feels responsible for the marginalized and embodies a representative of the community. Throughout their<sup>8</sup> career, one of their main aims is to liberate their audience from the marginalized's mental prison the "imperialist whitesupremacist heteropatriarchy" forced them into. Grace Gipson perfectly sums up the uniqueness of Monáe and their technique of giving visibility to the oppressed:

Through each album, song, lyric, and musical note, Monáe gives freedom to that 'other' (marginalized victims within the world) or segregated minority that is often discussed in Afrofuturism. Instead of them being minimized, she maximizes their existence and breathes this sort of life. It is as though she elevates this state of consciousness that surpasses the misfortunes that one may visually perceive in today's society. (93)

Monáe being an openly queer influencer ensures proper representation for the queer community. Monáe's queer identity suggests "an identity, understood as a sexuality that does not conform to Western notions of heterosexual expression" (Anderson 3). It means that Monáe's identity and style are rather fluid but at the

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7 Lucy McBath is a member-elect of the US House of Representatives from Georgia's 6th congressional district whose son, Jordan Davis, was a victim of gun violence in 2012. McBath decided to run as a mother and as a representative of the Black youth and her rage led her to victory.

8 On 11 Jan 2020 Monáe shared a tweet where they let their audience know that they identify as non-binary. Holleb defines non-binary as a gender identity which "can be used to describe anyone whose gender isn't exclusively 'man' or 'woman,' and anyone whose gender isn't either 'man' or 'woman.' Anyone who is gender fluid, agender, demi-gender, genderqueer, neutrois, a mix of man and woman, or any gender which isn't unambiguously 'man' or 'woman' could call themselves non-binary. There isn't one single way to be non-binary" (185). Individuals identifying as non-binary mostly use "they/them" pronoun, nevertheless, there are cases when beside "they/them," either "he/him" or "she/her" are also accepted pronouns by the person. Since I would like to respect Monáe's pronouns, I intend to use "they/them" as Monáe's pronoun – although please note that Monáe has never confirmed their preferred pronoun.



same time challenges the heteronormative norms<sup>9</sup>. By their honesty and bravery, they become one of the most important voices of our generation. Through an analysis of some of the lyrics of their newest album, *Dirty Computer* (2018), this study examines Monáe's spiritual journey from anger to love. The essay also demonstrates how they have stepped over many boundaries to confer their views on racial, gender and queer injustices.

## CHAPTER TWO: INTRODUCTION TO *DIRTY COMPUTER* (2018)

Monáe's *Dirty Computer* is probably the most honest work they have ever released. It is more than just a simple album: as Monáe puts it, it is "rooted around love" (Mastrogiannis), serving as a therapy session for Monáe and a metaphorical refuge for marginalized individuals. It depicts an ideal world for the audience where sexuality, gender, and race are no longer viewed as negative aspects. Originally, Monáe planned to record an angry album, albeit instead of taking violent actions and using overly explicit terms, they decided to write social criticism. The album is divided into three main parts; each of them demonstrating Monáe's process of defeating their anger and finding peace. They open the section by defining their and many marginalized people's role in America, as Monáe explains, "the sting of being called a n\*\*\*er for the first time by your oppressor. The sting of being called b\*tch for the first time by a man. You're like, 'OK, this is how I'm viewed in this society'" (Mastrogiannis). Later on, Monáe celebrates their "dirtiness", which is equivalent to extraordinariness. "Dirtiness" shows their absolute freedom and the transformation elevated into reclamation (Mastrogiannis). Reclamation carries distinct meanings here: it can refer to the identity and pride of queer African American women, and the denial of the socially constructed "ideal" liberation of the body and sexuality.

*Dirty Computer* has a significant meaning for Monáe since they have always had an extraordinary, yet, futuristic view on humans. Futurism is also an essential theme because their progressive interpretation of racial, gender and sexual liberation goes against the traditional, heteronormative norms. To Monáe, each individual is a

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9 The definition of heteronormative must be fixed since it is going to be one of the driving forces in the research. Berlant and Warner define the term as "the institutions, structures of understanding, and practical orientations that make heterosexuality seem not only coherent – that is, organized as a sexuality – but also privileged" (548). While heteronormativity and heterosexuality are not inseparable terms, it is crucial to emphasize that their meaning are not the same. Heterosexuality is indeed the foundation of heteronormativity although heteronormativity is rather a power structure that influences the queer community and straight people based on socially constructed norms.



fragmented one, most of them are being judged for their “filth” and “dirtiness” – it includes sexual orientation, gender, race, class, mental health, etc. In an interview with *iHeartRadio*, Monáe draws a parallel between humans and computers: “We’re downloading, uploading things in our brains, in our hearts, and some of the things that make us unique can be seen as these bugs, and these viruses. And for me, I see all my bugs and viruses as features, as attributes. [...] This album is about reckoning what it means to have your rights trampled on and to face opposition, perseverance” (Mastrogiannis). Monáe refers to being the Other in a mainstream society as “the bugs are in me” (Monáe 2018). Monáe’s fascination with computers elevates human existence to a new, scientific level where humanhood is understood in technological terminology. Sylvia Wynter argues in one of her studies that human existence should be understood as a praxis (23). Therefore, both Monáe’s and Wynter’s understanding of the human existence reduces humanness to a theoretical level and rather opens towards an inclusive definition of being – which also includes computers.

In the latter interview, Monáe elaborates on that people possess viruses and bugs and to Monáe, these features are more like positive attributes. In general interpretation, the bug is not equivalent to an insect, but to the fault in the system. Bugs or even viruses are threats to a carefully constructed operational system, they have the capacity of destroying or disrupting a system. This explains why Monáe views some people as computers as oppressed individuals are capable of disrupting the whitesupremacist heteropatriarchy by simply resisting social norms. Nevertheless, dominant culture uses “bug” as a slur to make the marginalized feel like outsiders. “Imperialist whitesupremacist heteropatriarchy” states that having a “bug” is a fatal flaw, a disease; and it results in expatriation from society. Monáe, instead of letting be defined by the slur, the creation of the dominant culture’s fantasy, decides to identify with the “dirty computer”, the supposedly flawed android to express their support towards fellow dirty computers. Thus, Monáe weaponizes the oppressor’s tool, the slur in order to liberate from the mental prison – similarly when the Black community reclaims the n-word. Throughout the *Dirty Computer* “journey”, Monáe asks their listeners to be proud of their “bugs” by which the oppressed can reclaim their pride.

The album is a response to Donald Trump’s 2016 election victory, which left many minority groups in fear and uncertainty. Trump’s figure imposes a threat and those were familiar with his background (sexual assault allegations, controversial campaign speeches, racist agenda) did not expect a positive outcome from his administration. Thus, one might ask: is it possible to maintain a “safe space” for gender, racial and sexual minorities, moreover, can the Trump administration ensure the proper representation of their rights? At the time of such ambivalence,

Monáe, being an African American non-binary pansexual woman coming from a working-class family had concerns about their and community's future. In an interview with *Allure*, they recall the pain and the frustration after the results: "I felt it was a direct attack on us, on black women, on women, on women's rights, on the LGBTQIA<sup>10</sup> community, on poor folks. I felt like it was a direct attack saying, 'You're not important. You're not valuable and we're going to make laws and regulations that make it official and make it legal for us to devalue you and treat you like second-class citizens or worse'" (Ford). After Trump's victory, many voters felt let down, that their struggles in an oppressive system will never be recognized. Sorrow and helplessness create frustration, which eventually turns into anger. Monáe had two choices: let anger slowly destroy them or find a way to let the pain and fear flow away. As an artist, they felt responsible for giving voice to the problems of minorities and restoring their faith in the future. Monáe decided to directly respond to the Trump administration and channel their emotions because they got tired of being the inferior one in the society. Monáe refuses to be devalued and treated as a burden by the "imperialist whitesupremacist heteropatriarchy". They reclaim their dignity and define their societal significance in one of her songs, "Crazy, Classic, Life," which I incorporated in the title of my study, that "I'm not America's nightmare / I'm the American dream" (Monáe 2018). They had been angry for too long and wanted to take action. They wanted to record an angry album, which paradoxically resulted in a loving one.

### CHAPTER THREE: DEPICTION OF ANGER AND LOVE

Through "Americans" and "Stevie' Dream," Monáe offers a great contrast between anger and love. On the one hand, in "Americans," they take into account the injustices that marginalized individuals have been struggling with for decades and lists various reasons for Black people to be angry about. On the other hand, "Stevie's Dream" strikes a distinct tone and offers love in the darkest times.

Monáe's journey of finding inner peace and learning the trick of communicating their feelings started with one of her good friends', Stevie Wonder's, advice. Monáe brings the verbatim of Wonder's lesson in the form of a song, titled "Stevie's Dream". The lyrics goes,

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10 The acronym, "LGBTQIA" is an umbrella term to describe a community (sexual minorities) as a whole. It is the abbreviation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex an Asexual." However, the form of the acronym may vary in different studies. In earlier academic works, some scholars only mention "LGBT" which was later extended to "LGBTQ". Nowadays, "LGBTQIA," "LGBTQ+" and "LGBTQIA+" are the most commonly used forms where the "+" signifies the other sexual identities such as polysexual or demisexual.

Even when you're upset, use words of love  
'Cause God is love  
Allah is love  
Jehovah is love  
So don't let your expressions, even of anger  
Be confused or misconstrued  
Turn them into words of expression  
That can be understood by using words of love. (Monáe 2018)

Wonder suggests that addressing issues and dealing with anger will ultimately result in love. Forgiveness and kindness weaken evil and do not let hate tear people apart. As Monáe says, "It's easy for me to just stay angry, but it's harder for me to choose love" (Norwood) because hate takes no effort, but expressing gentleness requires maturity and bravery. Moreover, Monáe presents religion from a different perspective here. The Bible and religion are used by Western Christianity to justify that the existence of queer people is wrong and sinful. Rejection by Christian community can lead to many queers abandoning God since they feel alienated from his mercy. As a non-binary pansexual Black woman, Monáe volunteers to use their faith, to embrace and represent the queer community members. They stand before God and pray in the name of the queer community in order to let them know: they are worthy of God's love and their feelings are valid.

"Americans", wanders to darker places and creates a great contrast between hatred, represented through bigotry and violence; and love, embodied by acceptance. Monáe arrives at her final destination: peace. They can finally let her anger go away, having expressed their opinion and transformed their emotions into art. It is now the listeners', the "dirty computers'," task to face their fears, go through a spiritual journey and find home. However, in the current American society, it is challenging to do so. Monáe knows well that her marginalized audience will always face rejection and anger; however, they refuse to let these individuals down. They do not want to declare one solution for dealing with anger because they are aware of the individual differences in coping mechanisms and experiences; they only show their way to find the way from rage to love. They immediately state, "Hold on, don't fight your war alone / Hate all around you, don't have to face it on your own / We will win this fight, let all souls be brave / We'll find a way to heaven, we'll find a way (Monáe 2018). They comfort their listeners and offer their support to the listeners. Monáe, furthermore, gives a sense of belonging to the listeners as they use the "we" pronoun, expressing solidarity and togetherness. While it is difficult to remain kind and keep loving under such harsh circumstances, the singer encourages their audience to keep rejecting anger and fighting for the good

purpose. Monáe brings many examples of injustice in their lyrics, thus giving a powerful social criticism about the current conditions in American society from various aspects in order to encourage the listeners to critically interrogate social norms that people internalize and the dominant culture in general.

In “Americans,” gun control is mentioned as in “Die in church” (Monáe 2018). Monáe pays tribute to the victims of the 2015 Charleston mass shooting perpetrated by Dylan Roof who targeted ten Black congregants and killed nine of them in the hope of declaring a race war. Roof consciously targeted the holy place as the Charleston church has a long history of being the symbol of the peaceful protest against white oppression of African Americans (Jorgensen 340). Whitesupremacy has the tendency to “victimize” shooters, claiming that the perpetrator suffered from mental illness. Thus, white America fails to acknowledge the actual problem (the unregulated gun distribution and systemic racism); they simply sweep it under the rug. It is not a surprise then that after the tragedy, Black people could not rely on protection from the supposed “justice” system. Additionally, the Charleston shooting made it very clear that even after the atrocities of slavery, Jim Crow laws, segregation and the Ku Klux Klan, history will always repeat itself and racism returns in disparate forms to Black people’s life. In that sense, Black people’s main quests become survival and resistance. Instead of withdrawing, the victims and Monáe remind Black people to maintain the communal power and love because through union comes solidarity and strength. Through a united protest against guns comes the chance of change.

Monáe also brings up the mistreatment of African Americans, concerning criminal law, as they sing, “Live in jail” (Monáe 2018). It is a general truth that Black people get executed unfairly<sup>11</sup>, especially since the declaration of War on Drugs (1971), and the dominant culture views their imprisonment as a benefit to private businesses. Black individuals have higher a chance to get imprisoned than white people<sup>12</sup> because, as Grier & Cobbs argue, “hatred of blacks has been so deeply bound up with being an American that it has been one of the first things

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11 Many statistics and studies prove that the legal system treats colors differently. Carlos Berdejó notes that according to a statistic of the Wisconsin Circuit Courts, white defendants are 25% more likely to be found “not guilty” and leave the court without serious charges while the court often imposes the highest charges on Black individuals. The study also points out that Black people are 75% more likely to be punished for minor crimes such as possession of cannabis, vandalism, or petty theft (3). Gross et al.’s study suggests that innocent Black people are seven times more likely to wrongfully get charged with murder than a white person, moreover about 3,5 times more likely to be found falsely guilty in sexual assault (4, 11).

12 This can also be traced back to private businesses profiting from free prison labor which can only be maintained if prisons are filled with inmates. Therefore, mass incarceration became a common practice which Ava DuVernay perfectly explains in her film, *13<sup>th</sup>* (2016).

new Americans learn and one of the last things old Americans forget” (204). Grier & Cobbs suggest that the institutional racism and the hatred of people of color had become part of the white American identity. The dominant culture has managed to find loopholes and violate the 13<sup>th</sup> amendment without the threat of any legal consequences. This violation of law has been going on since the early 1900s and even nowadays its morality and legality are vital questions in the American society. Ava DuVernay’s documentary, *13<sup>th</sup>* (2016), sheds light on how privatized prisons systematically target poor African Americans who cannot afford a good lawyer or the bail-out money (Alexander 104) to exploit them for businesses’ profit interests. She points out that mass incarceration and the criminal justice system have become a societal problem and require major reforms. Many poor Black individuals do not have a stable financial background to afford a good lawyer and bail out after an arrest and thus it is easier for the oppressive system to keep them in jail.

Criminalization also has a psychological impact on African Americans’ individual and communal identity. As African American lawyer Bryan Stevenson argues in *13<sup>th</sup>*, “We make them their crime. That’s how we introduced them. ‘That’s a rapist. That’s a murderer. That’s a robber. That’s a sex offender. That’s a burglar. That’s a gang leader.’ And through that lens, it becomes so much easier to accept that they’re guilty and that they should go to prison” (00:29:55-00:30:10). If the oppressive society enforces a false image for an individual and depicts them as a savage and violent criminal, the victim eventually starts identifying with the image<sup>13</sup>. The victims of such a system can share their anger and traumas with publicity, and through talking about the difficulties comes healing.

Monáe then continues, “say her name, twice in hell” (Monáe 2018). This line is a remark on the #SayHerName movement, which raises awareness for Black women (including transgender individuals) victims subjected to racial profiling, police brutality and sexual misconduct committed by an officer. Due to the interlocking racism and sexism, proper media representation for marginalized communities is lacking, hence, they become silenced victims of the system. #SayHerName resists silence and the loss of identity of the victims. In an interview with *Black Perspectives*, Andrea Ritchie notes, “Black women’s mere presence, speech, and protest of mistreatment in public spaces is [...] a threat that officers meet with physical or even deadly force” (Jackson). Ritchie sheds light on how institutions, in this case police departments, abuse their power against not only racial but gender

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13 This process of transformation can be observed in Richard Wright’s *Native Son* as well. Through the main character, Bigger Thomas, Wright criticizes racial oppression which affects the Black conscious in the American society while also arguing that society greatly contributes to one’s identity development. Due to his skin color, Bigger Thomas cannot have a meaningful role in white society, and he is reduced to be only an outcast, a threat.

and sexual minorities. The loss of loved daughters wreck mothers, but brings them together at the same time. Through sisterhood and shared pain, these women learn how to create love out of their sorrow and rage. By these contrasts, again, Monáe forces their white audience to think and invites them to call attention to these vital questions and become allies. However, without giving up certain privileges, one cannot expect change in the society. White people should use their inherited privilege to empower minorities, question the justice system, challenge the supposedly “ideal” images that determine everyone’s status in the society.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEY**

### **4.1 “DJANGO JANE”: BLACK GIRL MAGIC, BLACK VISIBILITY, LISTENING AS UNDERSTANDING**

When Monáe dropped “Django Jane,” it quickly became the anthem of Black women. The title itself is already very telling. *Django* (1966) was originally a Western movie with a white male protagonist. Howbeit Quentin Tarantino’s *Django Unchained* (2012) meant a great shift in Wild West stories by making the main character a Black man, who escapes slavery, and exacts revenge on his oppressors. While in Tarantino’s movie Django gains physical and spiritual freedom, Monáe escapes their mental enslavement that the whitesupremacist heteropatriarchy forced them into. In Monáe’s song, Django’s character appears as “Jane Bond, never Jane Doe / I Django, never Sambo” (00:20:12-00:20:16). Monáe plays a language game in which they oppose a name with a similarly sounding term. They are Jane (the nickname of Janelle) Bond, the intellectual heroine, who saves the day, but they refuse to be invisible in the society, and named Jane Doe, a term used to refer to “a woman whose real name is not known or cannot be revealed” (“Jane Doe”). The latter term also criticizes the ignorant social attitude towards violence against women of color and the lack of representation of victims in law or media. By denying “Jane Doe,” Monáe breaks out of the role of the victim and becomes an individual with an identity. They identify with the escaped hero, Django, instead of remaining Sambo, a racial stereotype used to degrade Black people. “Sambo” and other stereotypical Black characters (see “Jezebel or Sapphire”) function as colonizing tools for the dominant to enslave the marginalized. Consequently, Monáe defies the dominant culture’s creature, “Sambo” and moves towards resistance along with liberation.

To Monáe, “Django Jane” is more than just a simple song. It is an individual and a communal story at the same time, as they describe, “a response to me feeling the sting of the threats being made to my rights as a woman, as a black woman,



as a sexually liberated woman, even just as a daughter with parents who have been oppressed for many decades” (Bengal). The song is centered around Black women’s magic and liberation, but Monáe does not stop there, they go even further and talks about Black queer women’s magic<sup>14</sup>. The concept of Black woman’s magic creates a contrast between society’s and Monáe’s view on women. White supremacist heteropatriarchy tends to measure (Black) women’s strength by how much pain they can endure, and not by their achievements, actions or self-expression. Monáe offers a distinct perspective and does not let women be defined by their pain, but by their most precious power: womanhood. Monáe pays tribute to CaShawn Thompson<sup>15</sup> in “Black girl magic, y’all can’t stand it” (Monáe 2018). They turn their anger into magic, transforms their rage into a power by which they can openly call out the oppressive patriarchal system, and reclaim their and their sisters’ pride. Black girl magic is also a reference to Michelle Obama’s speech at the 2015 Black Girls Rock Awards, which challenges the social expectations towards women. Obama’s speech shed light on how women are constantly blaming and judging themselves for wanting to deny heteropatriarchy, escape toxic masculinity, and be different from the socially constructed image. Through her personal experience as a woman, she teaches other women to defy labels, overcome hardships and elevate themselves to a free and independent being. Furthermore, she invites her audience to question the heteronormative patriarchy and deny toxic masculinity<sup>16</sup> which aims to view women as objects in order to fulfill the male-gaze desire. Monáe asserts women’s formidable role in the song, emphasizing their incredible power when saying, “We gave you life, we gave you birth / We gave you God, we gave you Earth” (Monáe 2018). These words reinforce Monáe’s idea about women, discussed

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14 Although she never openly identified with the term but based on Monáe’s love and respect for women she can be called, what Alice Walker defines in her novel *In Search of Our Mothers’ Garden: Womanist Prose*, a womanist. Walker argues, a womanist is a “woman who loves other women, sexually and/or nonsexually. Appreciates and prefers women’s culture, women’s emotional flexibility (values tears as natural counterbalance of laughter), and women’s strength. Sometimes loves individual men, sexually and/or nonsexually. Committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female” (xi). Hence, love for women should not necessarily be based on sexual desires but shared experience of sisterhood.

15 #BlackGirlMagic movement promotes self-love amongst African American women. According to Thompson, she never wanted to claim this culture for herself, her main goal has always been to deliver a significant message to women: they are magical, strong, beautiful and successful (Ebony F.).

16 Toxic masculinity is a concept or a code of behavior that describes all those unhealthy characteristics that men are supposed to possess in order to fulfill their manhood. For instance, violence as a part of masculinity (“boys will be boys”) is often normalized by the mainstream society or men cannot struggle with mental health issues such as depression or anxiety because these are considered as weaknesses.

in her 2017 Women's March speech: "I want to remind you that it was woman that gave you Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., it was woman that gave you Malcolm X, and according to the Bible, it was a woman that gave you Jesus." (Democracy Now!, 0:41-1:05). They state the ultimate truth: women are the source of life and possess a power that no one can ever imagine. Therefore, Monáe refuses to let this power left unacknowledged and only allow patriarchy to view women through an objectifying lens that only serves the male gaze.

In the song, Monáe also states the thesis of *Dirty Computer* when rapping, "hit the mute button, let the vagina have a monologue," (Monáe 2018) Monáe does not simply warn the audience to listen, but addresses their message to the imperialist whitesupremacist heteropatriarchal system. Cisgendered, white heterosexual men have always ruled the platform and now it is women's time to take over. Listening means that people allow each other to tell stories. Telling a story is not only crucial for a communal reflection on the self, history and culture but also for the individual one. Vocalizing personal fears and sharing traumas are vital parts of one's identity development especially when the individual feels trapped in their own mind. There are different forms of listening: on the one hand, one pays attention in order to form a response, to avoid awkward silences, it is like a "must". Albeit this way does not guarantee that the listener successfully decodes the message and understands the meaning of the words. On the other hand, people also listen to start conversations and exchange ideas. It forces them to think and evaluate the words and to seek to understand the messages. Monáe strives to achieve the latter form of listening, because as they explain in a discussion, "through understanding comes empathy, through empathy comes love" (Double J). Thus, they ask their audience to put aside judgments and anger. Through listening, open their hearts and ears to understand each other. Hear the words, taste and analyze them.

Besides women's role, Monáe also points out how the dominant culture fails to recognize Black people's power when singing, "Kept us in the back of the store / We ain't hidden no more (Monáe 2018). This part can be interpreted as a reference to Ralph Ellison's "What America Would Be Like Without Blacks". Ellison discusses the role of African Americans in the American society as "whatever else the true American is, he is also somehow black. Materially, psychologically and culturally, part of the nation's heritage is Negro American, and whatever it becomes will be shaped in part by the Negro's presence" (587). His essay argues that without the presence of Black people the United States would have never reached economically, culturally and socially its current level. It is undeniable that the US was also built on the pain, suffering and blood of African Americans during slavery and post-Emancipation through their exploitation as cheap labor. Black people also blessed the nation with their music, arts, and literature that defined the American literary



canon as well. Monáe creates a bridge between past and present, when they pay tribute to their parents' hard work and to historical African American figures, whose impact shaped the views and identity of the Black community. These people influenced Monáe's career, moreover, in "Django Jane," each person represents their own ways of dealing with anger.

For instance, the "fled to Paris / In the darkest hours, spoke truth to power?" (Monáe 2018) part may refer to author James Baldwin, who was not only vilified for his skin color, but also for his sexual orientation. Instead of letting anger poison his soul, Baldwin decided to distance himself from the judgment of the American society and fled to Paris, where he put his thoughts about racism and homophobia into words. Contrary to Baldwin, she wants to stay in the US and keep fighting for her rights. Monáe understands those individuals, who choose fleeing as a tool of escaping racism. Additionally, Monáe is aware of the fact that each individual copes with traumas and difficulties differently and thus they do not want to determine one good solution against anger and hatred. They let their audience to experience their boundaries and individual path to healing. Years later, Baldwin returned to the US to preach against the senseless hatred and unite the American society through encouraging his white and Black audience to welcome each other as "brothers" and "sisters" with love because they belong together through the shared history. He notes:

No one in the world—in the entire world—knows more—knows Americans better or, odd as this may sound, loves them more than the American Negro. This is because he has had to watch you, outwit you, deal with you, and bear you, and sometimes even bleed and die with you, ever since we got here, that is, since both of us, black and white, got here—and this is a wedding. Whether I like it or not, or whether you like it or not, we are bound together forever. We are part of each other. ("In Search of a Majority: An Address")

Baldwin argues that the white and Black American have an unconditional love between each other as they have always coexisted since the creation of the American nation. Although I believe that the absence of this type of sense of togetherness is only a part of the issue, the American institution was founded on systematic racism.

Next, Monáe turns to another figure: "Who twist the plot? / Who shot the sheriff" (Monáe 2018). It is a reference to reggae king's, Bob Marley's "I Shot the Sheriff," being one of the most powerful criticisms of the American criminal justice system, law enforcement and corruption, explaining how the dominant culture

has the power to create a false narrative. By asking “Who twist the plot?,” Monáe holds a mirror against the dominant culture that frames the main narrative. In consequence of this, Monáe encourages white listeners to a form of self-criticism. In Marley’s song, the narrator tells his story about how he killed a corrupt sheriff in self-defense and was later framed as the murderer by the white society<sup>17</sup>. Instead of accepting the dominant narrative and living out his life as a monster, Marley’s character chooses to share his story and call attention to racial injustice<sup>18</sup>. The Marley-reference can also be applied to the problem of police brutality against non-white ethnicities, which is gaining more and more attention in the mainstream media and through the Black Lives Matter movement. Police brutality reappears in “Crazy, Classic, Life,” condemning gun violence and police brutality by drawing a parallel between police and Rambo, both famous for their overly militaristic nature and violence.

#### **4.2 “DON’T JUDGE ME”: SEXUAL AND SPIRITUAL LIBERATION THROUGH SELF-LOVE, QUEERNESS AND VULNERABILITY**

Self-love is just as significant on the album as communal love<sup>19</sup> for the healing process of individuals. Monáe demonstrates this concept in “Don’t Judge Me” which strikes a more intimate tone and Monáe opens up about their personal life, identity crisis and sexuality. They used to be a prisoner of their own body and mind, trying hard to fit into the society but after a while they realized that they do not want to spend their life being a disguise. In “Don’t Judge Me,” they establish a connection between spiritual and sexual liberation. Firstly, they abandon all toxic social expectations about sexuality; then they get intimate with their identity, discover the hidden parts of their spirit, befriend with themselves, appreciate their being as it is and lastly, the healing process begins. In the song, Monáe asks the

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17 Richard Wright’s *Native Son* carries a similar idea: the dominant culture’s power lies within the capability of creating and then enforcing a new narrative. In Wright’s case, the “murderer” lets the narrative define him, while Marley’s character resists this idea.

18 While doing a research on Marley’s song, I came across a Medium article based on a 2011 documentary about the singer, titled *Bob Marley: The Making of a Legend*, where one of his ex-girlfriends, Esther Anderson, explains that the song was inspired by the ongoing argument between her and Marley about birth control. Marley allegedly viewed birth control as a sin. This interpretation of the song would go against Monáe’s feminism; therefore, I believe that she was not aware of Marley’s values.

19 *The New Psychology of Love* defines communal love as a term that “encompasses a number of different relationships without necessarily defining their nature. It may be present in friendships as well as in love between relatives or married couples” (Strenberg & Weis 320). Here, the shared experience connects the individuals and keeps love alive.

listener to let them start from a blank page and disparate view, as they says, “Let’s reintroduce ourselves, from a free point of view” (Monáe 2018), to show their real, uncensored side because they have nothing to hide anymore.

Firstly, even though Monáe does not openly state in the song, they have finally found their freedom through her self-love. Monáe becomes an independent, free self and learns self-appreciation. Here, anger and hatred are in connection with the self and not the system. Seeing distorted images and being rejected by the society for being the Other can result in self-hatred. Before Monáe’s guide to self-acceptance, sexual, racial and gender minorities lived in their own mental prison, where they were controlled by dogmas. They hid their identity behind a mask and tried to comply with socially constructed norms in order to feel visible. The unhealthy expectation of heteropatriarchy had defined the identity of many, although now, individuals focus on their feelings and they choose to prioritize their happiness to become visible. They learn how to appreciate their uniqueness and reinterpret their societal role. When one lets go of expectations and chooses free self-expression, they become spiritually and physically free. They learn how to resist, how to allow the self to discover itself and accept the endless possibilities of one’s identity. Monáe’s main message is to let the vulnerable and honest side come to the surface, endeavor to be a human. Dare to resist social norms because expectations are only mental obstacles and force everyone to suppress their real self. It requires an exceptional power to face one’s fears and it is essential in order to find one’s real identity.

Even though the singer has always had a unique relationship with their audience<sup>20</sup>, up until *Dirty Computer* they were rather silent about their personal life. The fans knew about Monáe’s family background and their struggle to gain recognition in a critical white society, but very little about their sexual orientation, which led to many speculations in the past. For instance, Monáe’s androgynous style and their “trademark”, the black and white, clean cut tuxedo with a bowtie is supposed to be a form of tribute that they pay to their parents’ hard work and resistance towards heteronormativity’s idea about gendered clothes. Thinking with a heteronormative individual’s head, a woman wearing “manly” clothes denotes one’s gayness; and thus, people were debating wherever Monáe was attracted to women too<sup>21</sup>. With

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20 To me, this deep connection is especially visible in her “Cold War” video where she is naked (Monáe expresses her openness towards the listener by becoming vulnerable), looks deep into the camera and opens up about her fears.

21 At first, even Monáe thought that she was bisexual but after doing a research, she identified herself as a pansexual woman. Pansexuality is a “genderless” and biological “sexless” attraction so the person can be attracted to everyone, including transgenders, genderqueers, intersexuals, etc. Pansexuality and bisexuality may appear very similar and there is an overlap between the two terms. Bisexuality is defined as attraction to two or more genders, while pansexuality refers to ALL genders.

this comes the great pressure of trying to define herself and fit into a category<sup>22</sup> to find their place in the society.

Monáe refers to the anger of being in a forced disguise when they sing, “Taste my fear and light your candle to my raging fire / Of broken desire” (Monáe 2018). They express their anger which can be traced back to the toxic expectations of heteronormativity. Since Monáe felt that they cannot fit into the “ideal” image of sexual orientation, they suppressed their desires and started questioning their feelings for a long time. Coming to terms with one’s sexuality is essential in the individual’s identity development and a difficult, but deep emotional, psychological and spiritual journey for most people. Outcomes may vary, though acceptance or denial are amongst the two most common. One cannot judge those, who refuse to admit the truth to themselves. Some individuals are aware of the consequences of a “coming out” process and thus, they are desperately trying to conform to the socially constructed images and fit into the heteronormative society in order to avoid rejection. This creates a type of mental boundary in many people who are trying to come to terms with their sexual identity. Additionally, queerphobia or the internalization of queerphobia complicates individuals’ self-accepting process which may eventually result in self-destructive behavior (McDermott et al. 817). Just like many people before or even nowadays, Monáe also had their own journey with their sexuality, but they decided to celebrate themselves and the queer community. Nonetheless, they mention that being open is not always a fairy tale.

The lyrics goes, “Even though you tell me you love me / I’m afraid that you just love my disguise” (Monáe 2018). Monáe becomes vulnerable and opens up about the fear of being rejected. Their fear of abandonment by their partners, who will not accept their true self, only the constructed image that the other one knows, the disguise that hides Monáe’s real identity. The doubts and fears are closely connected to Monáe’s mental health. They suffer from anxiety disorder so in many cases their mental illness holds them back from experiencing the joy of life. Instead, they are constantly focused on their fear of being vulnerable, falling in love, loving themselves and forgiving those, who hurt them. Having anxiety disorder can mean limited existence, feeling less connected to the world, distancing the mind from the body. While everything seems dynamic, the individual is just incapable of moving forward due to the weight of their fears and doubts. It is like an eternal detention, bereft of finally exhaling. Monáe had dealt with similar issues and they were desperate to gain control over their life. Eventually, Monáe came to

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22 Monáe denies the idea of categorization; therefore, it can also be viewed as a form of resistance towards society’s expectations. In “Q.U.E.E.N.”, for instance, she sings, “Categorize me I defy every label” (Monáe 2013).

the conclusion that vulnerability is more likely a power than a weakness. “Don’t Judge Me” tells the story of how heteronormativity forced Monáe to repress their sexual desires for too long and how they have finally escaped their cage through overcoming their fears.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it is wrong to assume that there always has to be a parallel between anger and violence. Excessive anger indeed can result in verbal or physical abuse, although another perspective about anger suggests that it may serve as a tool to give voice to the frustrations of mistreatment and injustice, bringing the “wind of change”; and motivating individuals to come up with solutions. Many find it easier to hide behind labeling anger violent because it threatens their ideologies and confronts them with reality. The essay pointed out that in case of racial and gender minorities, anger is often misinterpreted and confused with aggression, while it is only a way to say “enough”. In this case, anger does not wish to bring more hatred and hurt others; it is just simply “spitting the truth”. Through Fanon, it was demonstrated that violence can also be a liberating power for minorities because it helps them regain their dignity and self-respect. Black women respond with rage to their simultaneous misogynoir of racism and sexism. Therefore, people should put aside their socially determined meaning of rage and anger and approach the definitions from a disparate point of view.

*Dirty Computer* is an extremely complex work and a very intimate experience at the same time through the eyes of a racial, sexual and gender minority. Monáe shows how through art it is possible to channel one’s emotions, fears and anger, while finding love and peace. They never say, however, that it is going to be an easy task for the listeners. Their album is for both sides: for the marginalized community, it is a guide of survival and healing. It is a mirror for the privileged to see themselves and the damage caused by their “exceptionality”. Monáe asks everyone to listen to each other, as it is the only way to understand the situation of the unprivileged. Through paying attention and trying to understand comes empathy with love. Monáe refuses to be devalued or have their pride taken away from them. Even though they are hurt and humiliated, their extraordinariness lies within their magic, strong spirit, identity, and these are possessions that no one can acquire without experiencing pure love. Monáe turns hatred into love, using love to reclaim their pride and weaponizes the tools of the dominant culture which once constructed Monáe’s identity. Thus, at the end of the album the listener is left with a liberated and loving being in Monáe’s character while also having a deeper insight into the marginalized experience.

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## **”The war goes on behind bars:” The prisoner of war narrative as a building block of the American myth of origination**

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### I

The accounts written by prisoners of war (POW) belong to the genre of life writing, that is any written text whose subject is one’s life. The POW narratives describe one of the crucial components of the American myth of origination, the captivity motif. The American myth of origination promoted among others by John Cotton, John Winthrop, and Cotton Mather focuses on a group of people chosen by God to carry out a divinely inspired mission of settling a new continent and gaining salvation. The realization of the respective goal incurs the cost of the so-called *savage war*<sup>1</sup> waged against the natives and the resulting captivity experience.

The purpose of my essay is to explore how the POW narrative contributes to and reflects the American myth of origination. Additional objectives include the examination of the role of memory in the construction of such texts, the identification of the main components of the plot structure and the principal features of the presentation of the self.

The theoretical apparatus of the research includes the works of Robert Doyle, a foremost expert in the field of POW and war studies, and Pierre Nora’s model of memory construction. The primary sources to be explored are the narratives of Prescott Tracy from the Civil War, Patrick O’Brien’s story of his escape from a German prison camp in 1917, Robert Swartz’s narrative of life in a POW camp run by the Wehrmacht in 1944, and the account of James Bond Stockdale, commanding officer of the Navy Air Force shot down during the Vietnam War. The essay at first introduces the historical and legal background of the POW experience and then provides an illustration for the application of the abovementioned theoretical devices.

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1 The concept of the savage war advocates the total eradication of the enemy, ”root and branch”. This type of warfare did not recognize the general rules of fighting and was characteristic of the conflict of settlers and Indians in the colonial period. The notion was advanced by Samuel Nowell’s 1678 sermon, titled “Abraham in Arms,” and was advocated among others by Theodore Roosevelt and Lyndon B. Johnson in referring to the conquest of the West and the Vietnam War respectively.

## II

### *The historical and legal context of the POW experience*

The first POW experience was related to the American Revolution and War of Independence. Ethan Allen's. "A Narrative of the Capture of Ticonderoga and of his Capture and Treatment by the British Written by Himself" (1849) is considered among the first POW narratives. Allen spares no detail in indicting the British for inhumane treatment: "The private soldiers, who were brought to New York, were crowded into churches... The floors were covered with excrements (sic)... The provision dealt out to the prisoners was by no means sufficient for the support of life. It was deficient in quantity, and much more so in quality." (34).

Since the British did not officially recognize the United States the captured soldiers were treated as rebels, and received a harsher treatment within the jurisdiction of Britain. Pursuant to the North Act American soldiers captured on land were charged with treason, while those apprehended at sea were accused of piracy. Another tactic or strategy the Americans objected to was the British practice of paroling officers and separating the line soldiers from the ranked corps while forcefully enlisting men into the British Army.

The Civil War saw the first attempts to establish the rules of war, as one of the guidelines prepared by the Union Army was General Order 100 also known as the *Instructions for the Government of Armies of the United States in the Field* issued by Francis Lieber, a leading member of the Department of War. It stated that "Men who take up arms against one another in public war do not cease on this account to be moral beings, responsible to one another, and to God" (McCracken 14). This was the first time that the captured soldier's conduct was also determined as he was required only to provide his rank, name, service number, and date of birth to the captor (McCracken 20).

World War One was the first international conflict in which the status of a POW was regulated by a system of rules. The 1874 Brussels conference on military law determined the given criteria and the respective findings were confirmed by the 1899 conference at The Hague. The related conference documents and regulations were signed and approved by the representatives of the United States. The doctrine of the capturer's fortunes, that is the military and economic conditions of the detaining enemy emerged as an unwritten rule guiding the treatment of POWs at this time. Accordingly, if the opposing army or nation did not suffer from hardship the captured soldiers were held in relatively good conditions. Conversely, if the detaining army experienced starvation or lack of resources their prisoners could not count on any better treatment either. According to McCracken American

POWs received average treatment at this time. One of the best known World War One POWs is Eduard Isaacs, the Navy officer, who was captured by the Germans. Nevertheless, he escaped and was able to provide crucial information to American navy intelligence about the position of the German submarine fleet (Edward U. Isaacs, *Prisoner of the U-90*, 1919).

The Geneva Convention of 1929 was signed by the main belligerents of the Great War, but Japan opted out by referring to the incompatibility of the Convention with the Bushido code. The Convention stipulated the often cited NRSD rule, that is, the captured soldier was not required to disclose any information besides his name, rank, serial number, and date of birth.

During World War Two the conditions of the POW experience depended on the respective front. Soldiers captured on the European front experienced much better treatment than their counterparts at the Pacific. Most World War Two POW accounts were written by officers of the Air Force as captured officers were considered a potentially valuable source of information for the Germans. At the same time the plight of Americans taken as captives at the Pacific theater was much worse. The Japanese military code of Bushido, or “war as a lifestyle” did not tolerate submission to the enemy and POWs regarded as cowards were treated accordingly. Another important feature of the POW experience at the European front was the call for escape. Officers were obliged to attempt escaping as such acts had a military significance since the enemy would allocate substantial forces to capture the escapee thereby limiting the German forces potentially deployable at the battle field.

Doyle points out that during the Civil War 211 400 soldiers were taken prisoners in the south and 30 200 of them died in captivity, while 26 000 Confederate soldiers did not survive in the POW camps out of the total 220 000 (17). In World War One 4 120 soldiers were captured and 147 of them died. In World War Two approximately 130 200 servicemen were captured and 14 072 died, and 78 773 were listed as MIA. In the Korean War 7 140 Americans were taken captive out of those 2 701 died. In the Vietnam War 758 soldiers were taken as POW (17-29).

The Korean War (1950-1953) was the conflict that motivated the American military to develop the Code of Conduct (Henceforth: Code). The issuing of the Code also became necessary because according to the American military establishment by the end of World War Two, but especially during the Korean War American soldiers, primarily because of the given enemy violated international conventions, became “prisoners at war” instead of being prisoners of war (McCracken 2). Nevertheless, despite the widespread media images of large numbers of soldiers collapsing emotionally and physically due to the “brain washing” techniques of mostly Chinese captors, only 11 POWs of the “forgotten war” were court martialed for behavior unbecoming a member of the United States military.

The Code contains six articles and its primary objective is to confirm the identity and commitment of the American soldier to the military during captivity. It also provides action patterns, reaffirms the status of the POW as a continuing member of the armed forces, makes resistance obligatory and highlights the importance of the contemporary military organizational system and culture. The Code provides crucial psychological support as well.

Article One reinforces the identity of the American soldier: "I am an American fighting man. I serve in the forces which guard my country and our way of life. I am prepared to give my life in their defense." Article Two reiterates that the American soldier never surrenders until he has devices available to resist: "I will never surrender of my own free will. If in command, I will never surrender my men while they still have the means to resist." Article Three emphasizes escape as one of the means of potential resistance: "If I am captured, I will continue to resist by all means available. I will make every effort to escape and aid others to escape. I will accept neither parole nor special favors from the enemy." Article Four prescribes a potential action pattern a POW should follow: "If I become a prisoner of war, I will keep faith with my fellow prisoners. I will give no information or take part in any action which might be harmful to my comrades. If I am senior, I will take command. If not, I will obey the lawful orders of those appointed over me and will back them up in every way." Article Five establishes the limits of information that can be provided to the enemy: "When questioned, should I become a prisoner of war, I am bound to give only name, rank, service number, and date of birth. I will evade answering further questions to the utmost of my ability. I will make no oral or written statements disloyal to my country and its allies or harmful to their cause." Article Six basically reinforces the message of Article One: "I will never forget that I am an American fighting man, responsible for my actions, and dedicated to the principles which made my country free. I will trust in my God and in the United States of America (McCracken 20)."

### *The theoretical background*

Doyle mapped the plot structure of the POW narrative. Accordingly, the POW experience can be described in seven stages: *Pre-capture*, *Capture*, *Remove*, *Landscape*, *Resistance*, *Release and Lament* (297). The Pre-capture segment usually describes the major landmarks or respective references to main events in the author's life. The conditions of Capture generally are not revealed due to the confidentiality required by the military. The means of Removal are detailed similarly to the Indian captivity narrative as it can take place either on foot, or by motorized vehicles of the enemy. After weathering the difficulties of the Capture stage the prisoner

provides details of the given holding facility. Resistance refers to the “victim’s” attitude to captivity, and its main concern, survival. Survival can be achieved either by passive resistance or active defiance. The first one alludes to refusal to cooperate, while the second can include escape. Doyle makes a distinction between high resistance and least resistance. High resistance alludes to escape and least resistance suggests collaboration or turning renegade. Release can take place via international agreement, parole, liberation, or treaty. The Lament stage includes musing about the wasted opportunities of one’s life due to captivity.

The expression of the self is also an important aspect of the POW narrative (Doyle 10). The *beleaguered self* primarily resulting from the trauma of undergoing a military defeat and suffering a culture shock usually appears at the beginning of the experience, at or soon after the time of capture. The *fortunate self* alludes to an overall positive appreciation of the captivity experience similarly to that of Mary Rowlandson declaring “It is good for me that I have been afflicted” (90). The *distanced self* implies a figurative removal from the captivity experience, as the protagonist attempts to stay aloft of the suffering. The *soldierly self* displays behavior meeting the requirements of the Code of Conduct, a model established by the military to follow even in captivity.

The formation and processing of memory are also crucial aspects of the POW narrative. As Nora asserts the act of remembering creates *lieux de memoire*, or places of memory. Such memory sites “tear moments of history away from the movement of history” (12). All captives are faced with the duty to remember, or blocking “the work of forgetting” (19). Having been captured, the individual is integrated into a shared history, processes his or her own memories in a formal, material, symbolic, and functional sense. In a formal way the narrative belongs to the category of autobiography, materiality is represented by the text itself, symbolically it is part of the myth of origination, while functionally it fulfils the three roles assigned to myth by Zsolt Virágos, namely explanation, justification, and projection. Nora makes three further distinctions concerning archive, duty, and distance memory. Archive memory refers to the actual physical repository of the memory, duty memory is expressed by the POW heeding the call: “An order is given to remember, but the responsibility is mine and it is I who must remember” (15) and distance memory emphasizing discontinuity removes the actual recalled episode from the continuous flow of history. (16).

**Prescott Tracy** was held as a POW in Andersonville, Georgia, at one of the most infamous prison compounds of the Confederacy during the Civil War. His time as a POW was relatively brief lasting from June 22, 1864 until August 16, 1864 when he was released as part of an exchange with Southern captives. His report serves a larger purpose, to provide data for the official inquiry carried out by the United States Sanitary Commission. Tracy's Narrative titled *Account of Sufferings of Union Prisoners of War of Camp Sumter, Andersonville, Georgia, Private Prescott Tracy on August 16, 1864*, is considered a deposition for the compilation of a larger narrative titled *Narrative of Privations and Sufferings of United States Officers and Soldiers while Prisoners of War in the Hands of Rebel Authorities by the United States Sanitary Commission* (1864).

The narrative can be explored according to Doyle's cyclical model. While his Capture is only briefly described, he provides a rather detailed rendering of the Remove stage including train rides and forced marches to the actual final destination

We were kept at Petersburg two days, at Richmond, Belle Isle, three days, then conveyed by rail to Lynchburg. Marched seventy-five miles to Danville, thence by rail to Andersonville, Georgia. At Petersburg we were treated fairly, being under the guard of old soldiers of an Alabama regiment; at Richmond we came under the authority of the notorious and inhuman Major Turner, and the equally notorious Home Guard [...] Another batch of prisoners joining us, we left Richmond sixteen hundred strong (259).

The capture is clearly marked and he provides appropriate self-identification in fact he gives his name and rank anticipating the NRSD rule of the Code of the American Fighting Man. He also offers a detailed description of his journey to Andersonville. While he does not provide Pre-capture information, the details of his Capture and Remove are rather thorough: "I am a private in the 82nd New York Regiment of Volunteers, Company G. Was captured with about eight hundred Federal troops, in front of Petersburg, on the 22nd of June, 1864" (259). Tracy provides exhaustive information concerning his removal as the waystations to the prison camp are fully listed. The physical and logistical conditions are clearly described as well. Furthermore, the account contains the exact depiction of food rations, a staple of antebellum slave narratives: "Our ration was a pint of beans, four ounces of bread, and three ounces of meat a day" (259).

Tracy also offers a painstakingly detailed depiction of the POW camp holding 28,000 to 35,000 captured soldiers. He describes the dreaded fence or "dead-line,"



through which if the captive extended even a finger, he would be shot. He also discloses the logistical arrangements of the camp:

This prison is an open space, sloping on both sides, originally seventeen acres, now twenty-five acres, in the shape of a parallelogram, without trees or shelter of any kind. The soil is sand over a bottom of clay. The fence is made of upright trunks of trees, about twenty feet high, near the top of which are small platforms, where the guards are stationed (260).

Tracy's entry to the prison camp is also described in an emotionless almost indifferent way, as no references are made to the end of one's freedom or to the ominous sound of a gate slamming shut. Instead of providing a depiction of his mental state Tracy immediately starts to describe the physical surroundings. This of course is one of the best known techniques of coping with the trauma of captivity as turning one's attention outward was often deployed by the captives of Indians. Suffice to mention Mary Rowlandson or Rachel Plummer providing a detailed description of the surrounding landscape in their narrative. Plummer writes that "Notwithstanding my sufferings, I could not but admire the country" (339) and informs the reader about the plant and animal world of the prairie. In the same vein Mary Rowlandson functions as an ethnographer providing information on the dietary habits of her captors (83).

The Landscape section also includes descriptions of the given ordeal. As Tracy reports until the appearance of the Alabama Home Guard and the "notorious and inhuman Major Turner" (259) the POWs were not mistreated. The greatest suffering was caused by starvation or poor nutrition. Tracy provides a detailed account of the substandard hygienic and dietary conditions. He depicts the mental state of his fellow prisoners as: "melancholy, beginning in despondency and tending to a kind of stolid and idiotic indifference" (265). Yet he points out that theft, robbery, even homicide took place among the captives.

The narrative also contains examples of Resistance. One such manifestation could be the actual break through the deadline, "About two a day were thus shot, some being cases of suicide, brought on by mental depression or physical misery, the poor fellows throwing themselves, or madly rushing outside the 'line'" (265). Another form of resistance is the preservation of physical and mental fitness, and Tracy describes several ways of how this objective was achieved. The main goal was to break the monotony of captivity and to find a productive pastime which included carving, drawing, or any creative activity, which required "long and patient execution" (266). "Many were wise and resolute enough to keep themselves occupied—some in cutting bone and wood ornaments, making their knives out of iron hoops—others in manufacturing ink from the rust from these same hoops, and



with rude pens sketching or imitating bank notes or any sample.” Tracy provides only a succinct rendering of his Release and information concerning any regret or lament cannot be found. Tracy was freed as a result of a prisoner exchange, but he does not present details of that transaction either. The term used by him, “I was exchanged” expresses self-objectification.

As far as the personal aspects or self-presentation of the POWs is concerned, it is noteworthy that the *beleaguered self* is not discernible in the narrative as Tracy reports in a rather matter of fact way about the capture, even mentions being “treated fairly” during the transfer to Andersonville. The *soldierly self* is suggested by Tracy’s self-definition and his remark concerning the patriotism of his fellow captives. He highlights that despite the suffering many soldiers refused to swear an oath to the Confederacy. “I carry this message from one of my companions to his mother: ‘My treatment here is killing me, mother, but I die cheerfully for my country’” (269). Another manifestation of the soldierly self is the escape attempts as Tracy describes some efforts made by his comrades to flee primarily by digging tunnels. Conversely the *detached self*, implying an effort of the POW to distance himself from his suffering, appears in his description of the criminal acts committed by his peers. He bitterly points out that “it is a melancholy and mortifying fact, that some of our trials came from our own men. At Belle Isle and Andersonville there were among us a gang of desperate men, ready to prey on their fellows. Not only thefts and robberies, but even murders were committed” (266). The use of the passive voice along with such terms as “melancholy, mortifying fact” suggest Tracy’s intention to maintain a distance from his ordeal regardless of the first person plural narration.

The account also shows how the prisoners’ living conditions depended on the captors’ fortune as the doctor on duty in the camp, Dr. White often expressed his regret that he had had very limited supplies and this prevented him from providing better care for the captives. Tracy describes Captain Wirtz, the commanding officer of the Andersonville POW facility, as “harsh, though not without kindly feelings” (266). In Tracy’s case Nora’s concept of the duty to remember must be taken literally as he is called upon by the military establishment to share his recollections for the purposes of a court martial inquiry. On the one hand he wants to commemorate his comrades’ and his ordeal, but he also responds to an official call, namely the Army Commission investigating the crimes of Captain Wirtz.

**Patrick O'Brien** was one of the first Americans to fight in World War One. His captivity similarly to Prescott Tracy's lasted a short time. He was a member of the Royal Canadian Flying Corps as he volunteered to be a fighter pilot before the United States entered the war. After several successful aerial dog-fights his feats became known among the Germans as well, but he was shot down over Belgium. He was injured and taken to a POW camp in Courtrai. After spending three weeks at the camp he was placed on a prisoner train bound for Germany, but he escaped from there. He was hiding in Belgium for 72 days before making it to neutral territory in Holland. He published his recollections with the title *Outwitting the Hun: My Escape from a German Prison Camp* (1917).

The narrative is not a classic POW account as his experiences as a POW literally ended quite early. Naturally not all aspects of Doyle's cyclical model can be applicable in this case. Regarding his pre-Capture life, we learn that he wanted to prove himself and hoped to "earn his wings." His main motivation to go to war was the desire for adventure: "I was anxious to get into active service and there didn't seem much chance of America ever getting into the war, I resigned and, crossing over to Canada, joined the Royal Flying Corps at Victoria, B. C." (8). He provides a detailed description of his capture and we learn about the injuries he sustained on that day on August 17, 1917. "A burst of bullets went into the instrument board and blew it to smithereens, another bullet went through my upper lip, came out of the roof of my mouth and lodged in my throat, and the next thing I knew was when I came to in a German hospital the following morning at five o'clock, German time" (33).

Although he points out that ideological considerations did not play a role in his decision to join the war effort, the title of his account reflects the impact of the successful British propaganda depicting Germany as the Huns overrunning innocent Belgium. Naturally, he compares Kaiser Wilhelm to Attila the Hun as well. After capture he is provided medical care and receives a relatively good treatment which is due to two factors, him being known as a famous fighter and as an officer at the same time. The fact that he cannot actually continue his participation in the war as a fighter pilot exacerbates his ordeal: "One of the hardest things I had to endure throughout the two weeks I spent there was the sight of the Hun machines flying over Courtrai, knowing that perhaps I never would have another chance to fly" (58).

Despite the acceptable conditions as his guards even took him to a swimming pool several times, he is dedicated to escaping, a plan he realizes after jumping off the prisoner train heading to Germany. The narrative primarily describes his adventures and emphasizes his survival skills as well. Although the text is not motivated by religious considerations, the author does not omit mentioning divine interference: "Without the help of Providence I would not be here to-day" (xii).

Following Doyle's taxonomy, the Landscape is also described in considerable detail:

The prison, which had evidently been a civil prison of some kind before the war, was located right in the heart of Courtrai. The first building we approached was large, and in front of the archway, which formed the main entrance, was a sentry box. Here we were challenged by the sentry, who knocked on the door; the guard turned the key in the lock and I was admitted. We passed through the archway and directly into a courtyard, on which faced all of the prison buildings, the windows, of course, being heavily barred (54).

While he offers a depiction of his surroundings as a captured soldier, despite his escape he does not consider himself a free man until he reaches Holland. Just like in the case of escaped slaves he is led by the North Star on his way: "I located my friend, the North Star" (108). Similarly to the plot structure of the slave narrative, O'Brien being "weak, nearly starving to death, a refugee in a hostile country" (99) reaches the emotional and physical low point during his ordeal. His physical condition is like that of the "real" POWs: "actual hunger, and the accompanying worry naturally reduced my weight" (108).

He receives reluctant help mostly from poor Belgian people and eventually reaches the Dutch border and makes his way to freedom by crawling under the electric fence to neutral territory. Upon reaching Allied headquarters, he provides crucial information on military, logistical, and economic issues pertaining to the enemy.

His narrative includes primarily the description of the *soldierly self*. By his escape he fulfils a duty expected of officers. Despite "hunger pangs gnawing at his insides" (140), he is able to observe the positions of German fighting forces and estimate the extent of the enemy food supply. He views his surroundings from the point of view of a military man and a strategy expert: "When I saw these military roads in Belgium for the first time, with their heavy cobblestones that looked as if they would last for centuries, I realized at once why it was that the Germans had been able to make such a rapid advance into Belgium at the start of the war" (135).

The *beleaguered self* appears to be irrelevant, primarily due to the favorable treatment he received at the POW camp. As his greatest regret was his inability to fly, his captivity can be interpreted as the manifestations of the *fortunate self*. The *detached self* appears during his almost hallucinatory state of mind brought on by starvation and fear. In fact, he carries on a conversation between his brave soldierly and "yellow" self.

There you are, you old North Star!" I cried, aloud. "You want me to get to Holland, don't you? But this Pat O'Brien—this Pat O'Brien who calls himself a soldier—he's got a yellow streak—North Star—and he says it can't be done! He wants me to quit—to lie down here for the Huns to find me and take me back to Courtrai—after all you've done, North Star, to lead me to liberty. Won't you make this coward leave me, North Star? I don't want to follow him—I just want to follow you—because you—you are taking me away from the Huns and this Pat O'Brien—this fellow who keeps after me all the time and leans on my neck and wants me to lie down—this yellow Pat O'Brien wants me to go back to the Huns! (117)

The narration is a result of duty memory arising from an obligation to himself, to his fellow captives, and to the military establishment. The narrative is dominated by the aspect of the Resistance and its most radical aspect, the escape. In fact, he anticipates the archetypal hero of post-World War Two fiction, the RAF officer "shot down over Europe, captured, imprisoned, then escaping" (Worpole 55). Although he was treated as a hero after his return, and was even received by King George, later he committed suicide due to marital and financial problems. The title of his work, especially the term, "outwitting" is a reminder of the figure of the trickster, a character often used by minority authors. In lieu of economic and military power the trickster has to rely on his wits and O'Brien was often compelled to resort to tricks in order to achieve his freedom.

**Robert Swartz** was serving as a navigator on a B-17 bomber of the 306<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group during World War Two. He was taken captive after his aircraft was shot down. His narrative does not provide information related to his capture as it is considered a military secret or confidential information. At the same time, he refers to the episode as a horror story whose details he would like to remove from his memory. Thus in this case the duty memory works in a selective way, as he would put "the machine of forgetting" in motion regarding certain episodes. The refusal to reveal details of his Capture is reminiscent of the authorial strategy of the antebellum slave narrative as the producers of those texts declined to divulge information about their escape in fear of endangering their helpers or their companions left behind.

Similarly to other POW narratives a substantial part is dedicated to the description of the Landscape. As an officer of the Air Force he is transferred to a POW camp located at the Baltic region and run by the Luftwaffe. He reports about the relatively acceptable and proper treatment of the captives. The readers are provided detailed information on the location, the number and size of the

barracks, the identity of the captives, even the number of the nails in the barbed wire are reported. The observation of the prisoner of war status on the part of the Germans is indicated by the ability of both the British and American Red Cross to forward packages into the camp. Swartz does not mention starving as part of his ordeal, but alluding to the capturers' fortune doctrine he reports on a limited availability of food mostly due to the German rationing efforts in the winter. The author also alludes to certain forms of Resistance. The narrative describes the system or rules the captives had to observe. The Germans continuously monitored the number of the prisoners in order to prevent any escape attempts. At the same time the Americans developed a set of rules too. Although the Code of the American Fighting Man had not yet been issued, in order to avoid any collaboration with the enemy the prisoners followed the "give them nothing but abuse and lofty indifference." principle. Naturally the "lofty indifference" generated behavior is reminiscent of the distanced self. Another example of resistance was the "goon-guard," a fellow captive chosen to look out for approaching German guards to search the barracks.

The relatively good treatment of the captives was guaranteed by international laws as the POWs were "furnished with the bare necessities." They were given the opportunity to participate at religious services, to get access to books, even to improve their knowledge by learning. Swartz makes mention of several classes organized among the "kriegies." The captors' fortune doctrine, however, is at play again as by early 1945 the food rations have become smaller and malnutrition or even hunger becomes a daily challenge: "Most of February and March had been grim times. Food had not been plentiful. We were never starving, but we had been mighty hungry at times and all of us lost weight. We had not had a single Red Cross parcel since the 27<sup>th</sup> of February." The text also describes the need to make up for lost time, or in his case lost meals, as he sends a detailed menu broken down to the various food groups to his parents to prepare for him after his return home:

All during our confinement we were denied many of the things we once thought were the essentials of life. Food was the most important of these and especially during the lean period, we talked of little else. When I first get home I want to make up for lost time. For once in my life I will pay the bills and I want to eat. So you can prepare, here is an idea of what I am looking forward to.

Similarly to the Caribbean slave narratives, the account contains poems and various literary works of his fellow captives. The main theme is loneliness, and longing for the family or loved ones left behind. Despite the fact that religious

considerations did not primarily motivate the writing of POW narratives, Swartz' account contains details of the mass held in the camp at Easter. The sermon of the chaplain draws a parallel between the Passion of Christ and the ordeal of the captives. In both cases death and resurrection played a dominant role. As Reverend Mitchell pointed out the death of Christ spoke to all and his resurrection was the rebirth of everyone. Swartz along with his fellow captives' experiences "the wonder of resurrection [...] in the pulsating life of spring."

The captivity of Swartz ends on May 1<sup>st</sup> 1945 when American troops take over the camp. The Release despite the momentary euphoria of the prisoners, "everyone rushed outside in a great display of emotion" proves to be anticlimactic as the commander of the Russian troops succeeding the Americans expresses its disapproval upon the lack of sufficient enthusiasm displayed by the former captives "over their liberation."

The Swartz narrative begins with the description of the *beleaguered self* alluding to the horror of the Capture, but the statement "we refer to these events as 'horror stories' and there is much we would like to forget" conveys a sense of detachment from the respective episodes. Thus the text reveals the dual working of memory. On the one hand, it puts the machine of forgetting into operation by excluding the details of the Capture, on the other it compels the captives to provide the logistical details of their POW experience to their superiors. At the same time the narrative is written in a letter format expressing a more intense, almost live connection with the intended addressee, the parents. The *soldierly self* is present in the establishment of the internal chain of command and the forms of resistance displayed:

We were forced to abide by the rules of the Germans, but cooperation was unheard of. Whenever a new German order came out it was S.O.P. to ignore it until forced to comply. The motto was 'give them nothing but abuse and lofty indifference.' Within the camp we had our own American organization. Naturally we observed and obeyed all orders from our officers.

Although the Code of the American Fighting Man had not yet been issued, the captives' main concern was to avoid even the faintest likelihood of collaboration with the enemy. The resistance was mostly passive, and the motto implies both distancing from the captors and an effort of the captives to detach themselves from their ordeal.

The narrative of **James Bond Stockdale** titled *Courage under Fire* is not only a traditional confinement narrative, but a philosophical essay about life and one's conduct in the face of peril. Stockdale served as the commanding officer of the Navy and he became the highest ranked POW in Vietnam after he was shot down

on September 9, 1965. He made good use of his studies of philosophy in college as he relied on the teachings of Epictetus, the Stoic during his ordeal. He viewed his captivity at the Hoa Lo prison known as “Hanoi Hilton” as a “laboratory of human behavior” (*Courage* 1) and was able to hold himself together in the hardest and most difficult circumstances by the help of Epictetus and the Code. Accordingly, he developed a distanced attitude towards his fate. He removed himself from his suffering which included solitary imprisonment for four years, torture, and wearing shackles for extended times. As he warned, one must be indifferent to his status in life as it can change any time.

Stockdale’s narrative reflects Doyle’s cyclical model. The Pre-Capture stage describes how he finished his education, established a family, and started his military career. Naturally Epictetus’ teachings had the greatest impact on him. He also shared the praise of military life professed by the Romans and he fully subscribed to the view expressed by the motto, “vivere militare.”<sup>2</sup> The Capture stage reveals the conditions of being shot down on September 9, 1965. As he states after being ejected he was transferred from the world of technology to the world of Epictetus. His strengthened resolution or resolved will is shown by the following sentence: “between pulling the ejection handle and coming to rest on the street, I had become a man with a mission” (11). The Removal state also indicates that for Stockdale despite being captured the war continues behind bars.

Stockdale does not assign priority to the description of the Landscape. He dispels the stereotypical view of a POW camp as he points out that the Hanoi Hilton was rather a jail, or “part psychiatric clinic and part reform school” (15). The depiction of the ordeal dominates over that of the given surroundings as the former includes the details of an emotional crisis eventually leading to a suicide attempt. During his tribulations he gains strength from Epictetus, who cautions about excessive insistence on one’s status in life while suggesting a more indifferent attitude. Stockdale comes to realize that the greatest loss one can suffer is “destroying the trustworthy, self-respecting, well-behaved man in one” (13)

Being Epictetus’ best disciple helps him to develop and implement a form of Resistance, in fact overriding the Code with ‘its guilt-inducing echoes of hollow edicts’ (15) and developing an action pattern or defense mechanism for all US prisoners to cope with the respective personal, political, and military crisis. The method called BACK US prescribed the following conduct: “Don’t Bow in public; stay off the Air; admit no Crimes, never Kiss them goodbye” (15). The second half of the acronym could stand for the United States, but also suggested “Unity over Self,” thus reiterating the importance of the community over the individual.

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2 Life is that of a soldier’s.



In other words, he underlines the importance of the military community and the inclusion of all his fellow comrades within the chain of command while insisting on the continuing applicability of the martial organization. He not only earned the respect of his fellow captives, but that of the captors as well. After he attempted suicide the Vietnamese were desperately trying to save him since he gained international fame partly due to his wife's televised appeal for humane treatment of POWs.

It is Epictetus' teachings that help him to preserve his *soldierly self*. Driven by Article Four of the Code, he forges a new chain of command helping his fellow captives to preserve their personal dignity while maintaining aloofness from their captors. The BACK US policy also enables Stockdale and the rank and file to transcend the actual captivity experience and stay away from publicly confessing any alleged crimes committed against the Vietnamese people. The motto, "Unity over Self" expresses that the war goes on behind bars (12) and the chain of command was not broken only transferred from the army barracks and the battle field to the enemy prison camp. While in most POW narratives the *beleaguered self* appears at the beginning of the given captivity experience, in this case it is manifested in Stockdale's suicide attempt. The narrative also contains traces of the *fortunate self* as Stockdale considers the POW experience as a path to more effective recognition of the self. He shares Alexander Solzhenitsyn's epiphany upon realizing the value of redemptive suffering: "Bless you, prison, for having been a part of my life" (8).

The term, "laboratory of human behavior" suggests an external look at one's situation. Accordingly, Stockdale functions both as a scientist and the object of inquiry. Although his strong belief system and defense mechanism help him to avoid the beleaguered mental mindset mostly characteristic of the given captivity experience, the suicide attempt indicates the respective psychological and personal nadir.

His experiences are commemorated partly to provide examples to learn from for future generations and also as a manifestation of duty memory, an obligation he owes to the army. The philosophical aspect of his narrative focuses on the applicability of Epictetus' thoughts. In a way his account becomes an example of applied philosophy. The eight year long captivity provides an opportunity to test these ideas. He is able to cope with the trials by insisting on a code of morality. In addition to the Code, he heeds Epictetus's call for preserving one's rectitude outlined by a moral compass. He becomes a Stoic, and this helps him to view his ordeal in an objective way, as he even acknowledges the military prowess and skills of his interrogating officer. "He was a good soldier, never overstepped his line of duty" ("Thoughts")



The Vietnam War differed from all previous military conflicts the United States became involved in. Not only in its outcome, as it was the only war the country lost, but regarding the psychological pressure the POWs were compelled to endure. Stockdale's narrative thus serves a greater purpose than commemorating one's ordeal for posterity or providing crucial strategic information for the military establishment. His daring stand in adverse circumstances, the very "courage under fire" provides a psychological boost and offers crucial strategic advice for dealing with the inevitable crises of one's life.

### III

The POW narrative testifies not only to the physical and psychological stamina of the captive, but shows how the given ordeal is taken on the personal plane. The POW narrative is the record of the cost the US paid for realizing its national mission underscored by the idea of exceptionalism. The POW experience is also part of the American myth of origination as the protagonist assumes the role of the mythical hero.

The fate of the POW reverberates throughout American history and the narratives project the image of the American hero to the reader. As it was demonstrated these accounts serve multiple audiences, the military establishment and the families left behind or American society in general.

Prescott Tracy displays admirable persistence and an unshakable moral compass along with his commitment to American democracy. Patrick O'Brien provides a notable example of resourcefulness and ingenuity as a successful escapee while Robert Swartz demonstrates how the American soldier can retain self-discipline in adverse conditions. Furthermore, James Bond Stockdale presents an unforgettable illustration of the unbreakable human will.

The POW as the reification of the captivity motif, in itself one of the building blocks of the American myth of origination fulfils the three functions of myth identified by Virágos: explanation, justification, and projection (37). Myths are known to have been able to simplify complex historical and political issues, thereby making them "more palatable" to the average American. Accordingly, the POW narrative and the confinement motif in general can provide a substantiation or easy explanation for the manicheistic interpretation of American history assigning the moral high ground to the United States and relegating the contemporary archenemy into the position of the evil.

Due to the ideological content and the promotion of propagandistic goals the POW narrative carries out a justification function primarily through the emphasis on the cruelty of the enemy. Suffice to point to the horrendous neglect of captive

militia by the British during the War of Independence, or the tragic disregard of Union soldiers' needs by the Confederate captors, not to mention the physical and psychological brutality of the Vietnamese.

As far as projection is concerned the obligatory moral and physical stand of the captive American soldier is a prerequisite to carrying out the national mission and demonstrating the practical aspects of exceptionalism embraced by John Winthrop in 1630 in his often quoted sermon titled "A Modell of Christian Charity." In fact, the Code of the American Fighting Man contains traces of Winthrop's ideal. The American soldier fighting for a worthy cause, defending the founding principles of the country, refusing to surrender, resisting at all cost and trusting in God sets an example worthy of any resident of this "city upon a hill."

The four texts discussed in this essay testify to the diversity of the POW experience. With the exception of the Civil War narrative the enemy is external, and as it was mentioned earlier, the narratives related to the Vietnam War are associated with military defeat. Although the four accounts originate from different time periods their protagonists project a shared image of the American hero committed to the propagation of the timeless values of democracy, liberty, equality, and individualism. Prescott Tracy's account provides crucial information to the trial of the commander of the infamous Southern military prison. The respective legal proceedings take place at the close of the Crucible of American Democracy, the Civil War. Patrick O'Brien's narrative shows a commitment to individualism, as he achieves his hard earned freedom alone. Robert Swartz became a cog in the machinery of the American military fighting for democracy on the global stage and James Bond Stockdale along with other former captives of the Vietnam War show how individual rectitude can help in turning a military defeat into a moral catharsis.

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## HUNGARIAN—JEWISH WRITING OUT OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA: A LOOK AT TWO RECENT PROSE VOLUMES:

**The Choice: Embrace the Possible** by Edith Eva Eger, New York: Scribner, 2017, and **Memento Park** by Mark Sarvas. New York: Farrar, 2018.

Zsolt K. Virágos

### [A] Preliminary Observations and Citations:

{1} Edith Eva **Eger**<sup>1</sup> was born into the polyglot Hungarian, Slovak, German, Jewish, etc.—altogether 16 different ethnic nationalities—community of Kassa (today Kosice, Slovak Republic). She was 16 when she and her family were sent to the Nazi concentration camp at Auschwitz, Poland. Her parents lost their lives there. She emigrated to the U.S. and in the 1940s she completed her university studies of psychology. Today she is an internationally known psychologist. She is also one of the few remaining Holocaust survivors in the world today. She is a resident of LaJolla, California, where she maintains a busy clinical practice and holds a faculty appointment at the University of California, San Diego. She also serves as a consultant for the U.S. Army and Navy in resiliency training and the treatment of PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder). Dr. Eger has appeared on numerous television programs, including a CNN special commemorating the seventieth anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. She was also the subject of a one-hour program on Hungarian (MTVA) television in 2018.<sup>2</sup> She was named Psychology Teacher of the Year in 1972, Woman of the Year in El Paso in 1987, and earned a California State Senate Humanitarian Award in 1992. Her most recent book—*The Gift: 12 Lessons*

1 From an onomastic point of view it is rather unlikely that this surname should be—should have been— **Eger**. The recommended, version is **Éger**, which is pronounced [eiger] and has fixed meanings: **alder** in English, **éger, égerfa** in Hungarian. I am belatedly seeking the permission of the author to use the **Éger** form a couple of times.

2 The MTVA program has been aired under the title *On the Spot – Az ellenség gyermekei* [‘The Children of the Enemy’] It also offered footage to presenting aspects and the physical environment against which she works. They showed her elegant and posh California home, her large palatial house complete with all the luxurious modern fixtures. Not surprisingly, while she was taking a relaxing evening bath in her large open-air jacuzzi pool, the question was asked: “Edith, did you ever dream of a life like this?” “Never,” she confided, “never. An enormous amount of work went into it. It is a kind of happy feeling which satisfies my soul. It makes me feel good also because I am in the position to help other people.”

to *Save Your Life* [Az ajándék: 12 lélekmentő lecke]—was published a few weeks ago in Hungarian by Libri. In this second book the author continues a practice initiated in her first volume: she employs the case histories of her patients as the bases for exploring various mental states such as stress, fear, grief, anger, shame, etc. that tend to confine and imprison our psyche. *The Choice* will be discussed below.

{2} Mark **Sarvas**, a second-generation Hungarian Jewish-American, who hails from Santa Monica, California, is an author, critic, and blogger. He is also a teacher and educator; he teaches novel writing at the UCLA Extension Writers' Program. His book reviews and criticism have appeared in *The New York Times Book Review*, *The Threepenny Review*, *Bookforum*, and a number of other publications. The German Expressionist painter Ernst Ludwig Kirchner's painting "Berlin Street Scene" served as the inspiration (*Budapest Street Scene*) for the fictional model of *Memento Park* (2018), Sarvas's most highly acclaimed novel so far.

{3} As regards the *generic terminology* used in the present discussion, by the time the reader comes to the end of the argumentative framework, it should be clear why in my title I am using the words, "prose volume" instead of "novel," or "memoir" or "life writing," or even "reminiscence."

{4} With reference to the *selection of texts* to be looked at here, this is what I can offer by way of comment: if the thematic-ethnic focus of the present text had been constructed for the purposes of applying them to Hungarian and Californian writing exclusively, our exemplary primary source would have been Imre Oravecz's massive, epic trilogy of almost fifteen hundred (1470) pages—**A rög gyermekei** [Children of the Soil]; I: Ondrok gödre [Ondrok's bottom], II: Kaliforniai fürj [California quail]; III: Ókontri [The old country]—depicting the lives of three generations of Hungarians in the U.S. and in the "Ole Country" between post-civil war America and the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. The authors of the two respective volumes chosen for review here are residents of the U.S., each one of them living within the cultural context of a mythicized Californian dream, making us think, among other things, of Walt Whitman's California poem entitled "Facing West from California's Shores:" " But where is what I started for so long ago? // And why is it yet unfound? A couple of lines that speak volumes.

{5} ROS: We have done nothing wrong! We didn't harm anyone. Did we?"  
GUIL: . . . there must have been a moment, at the beginning, where we could have said—no (Tom Stoppard, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* (1967).

Supposing Guildenstern were given a chance to continue his line of reasoning, this is what he would probably say: 'We could have prevented the blind and tragic unfolding of events, of raw everydayness, of history.' Stoppard's two protagonists seem to be confiding in self-defence. Indeed, the formulated views of the two courtiers' help to objectify a special set of dilemmas—most often both existential and epistemological—and nearly always profoundly and intrinsically moral. Statistically speaking, this might be the retrospective "who is to blame?" game people most often play, most typically in the wake of devastating wars and battles lost as a repercussion of man-made and natural disasters: unforeseen loss of any kind. And, it is almost needless to point out, that the politics of everyday discourse, indeed, the various departments and compartments of the social consciousness tend to be pervaded by this kind of self-justifying truth-seeking. There exist quite a few time-tested and well-rehearsed paradigmatic clichés often quoted in the day- to-day cultural discourse of most historical as well as contemporaneous nations (including the ideological statements and projections to be witnessed in this country).

One of the problems of Stoppard's courtiers is whether to withhold comment to avoid the clash of mutually exclusive truth preferences. The pragmatism of everyday life seems capable of teaching us that if we can manage to refrain from comment, i.e., to keep silent, we will not have to run into unpleasant repercussions. To put it as simply as possible, we have been talking here about a play-it-safe formula of conduct and decision-making. "Do not volunteer information," a child is often likely to hear as a piece of parental advice. "No utterance, no headache." All in all, in the final analysis, we have been talking here about noninvolvement as a survival strategy. Thus, the recipient—the reader, the cultural consumer—is likely to be confronted in these contexts with a special sort of dilemma: the manifestation of the moral responsibility of the "silent" intellectual, where "silence" can be, or is bound to be conducive to—, therefore synonymous with—"betrayal." The lurking awareness of betrayal is likely to deplete the moral reservoir of the writer or of any other literate intellectual as communicator; the self-recognition of ideological shortcoming may gnaw at what we can simply identify as conscience. If we look at our examples in this study, we can sense how this utterance-versus-silence dichotomy can calibrate morally charged responses.

{6} Consider the case of one of our "invited witnesses." This time the person chosen to testify will be Jorge *Semprun* of Spain, who waited more than 16 years to share the heart-rending events involving the cold-blooded murder of the 15 Jewish boys arriving at the railway station of Auschwitz on a winter day. "Perhaps" Semprun testifies, "the time has come for me to tell the story of the Jewish children, to tell of their death . . . that story which has never been told,

which has lain buried in my memory like some mortal treasure, preying on it with a sterile suffering. That is, now, after these long years of willful oblivion, not only am I able to tell this story, I feel compelled to tell it” (162-163). Thus, one of the major objectives of authorial communication is to get the story told for the purposes of *getting it off the author’s mind*; a therapeutic—as well as an epistemological—transaction.

{7} There also seems to be a second objective. This one is the logical consequence of a general agreement over the fact that the representation of excessively violent atrocities and unredeemingly revolting life material—consider much of what we generally label as Holocaust literature—should somehow be controlled (most often filtered through the consciousness of the author). This “rescue operation” is normally created for the benefit of the “jaded” reader in the sense that a detailed chronicle of the killings, gassings, appalling clinical medical experiments, slow deprivations, excremental outrages, screaming madresses, beatings, tortures, and other entries into the historical account which have already been made by men of letters and political activists such as George Steiner, Tadeusz Borowski, Elie Wiesel,<sup>3</sup> Bruno Bettelheim, etc. are preferably minimized or avoided. For instance, the argument that the Japanese in Manchuria outdid the Nazis in committing horrendous crimes against humanity will not minimize the overall impact of German involvement. Semprun’s masterpiece—already quoted from above—will be used as an illustration. And now, as I promised earlier, an abridged text from the pen of Semprun will be made available below:

That was the day I saw—confides Semprun more than a dozen years after the fact— that was the day I saw the Jewish children die . . . [They came] from Poland in the cold of the coldest winter of the war, . . . [come] to die on the broad avenue leading up to the camp entrance, under the cheerless gaze of Hitler’s eagles. . . . The Jews from Poland were stacked into the freight cars almost two hundred to a car, and they had traveled for days and days with nothing to eat or drink . . . . When, at the train station of the camp, they opened the sliding doors, nothing stirred, most of the Jews died standing up. . . . One day, in one of the cars where there were some Jews alive . . . they discovered a group of Jewish children . . . about fifteen in all . . . who ranged in age from eight or so to twelve. . . . [T]he SS loosed their dogs and began to hit the children with their clubs, to make them run . . . [T]he pack of dogs and SS running behind the Jewish children soon engulfed the weakest

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3 The Hungarian-born American Jewish writer and political activist Elie Wiesel was one of the best-known Holocaust critics and survivors. He received a Nobel Peace Award in 1986.



among them, the ones who were only eight years old, perhaps, the ones who no longer had the strength to move, who were knocked down, trampled on, clubbed on the ground, who lay there on the avenue, their skinny disjointed bodies marking the progress of that hunt swarming over them. And soon there were only two left, one big and one small . . . , and the little one began to fall behind, the SS were howling behind them and then the dogs began to howl too, the smell of blood was driving them mad, and then the bigger of the two children slowed his pace to take the hand of the smaller, who was already stumbling, and together they covered a few more yards, the older one's right hand clasping the smaller one's left hand, running straight ahead till the blows of the clubs felled them and, together they dropped, their faces to the ground, their hands clasped for all eternity (165-166).

Jorge Semprun, *The Long Voyage*. TUSK Ivories 1963.

{8} "You must come to a decision!" [. . .]

"I have already made my choice . . . I will not get involved. I mean this! "You have to assume responsibility, Zosia. You've come to the place where you can no longer fool around like this, you have to make a choice!"

William Styron, *Sophie's Choice* (1979)

{9} **Choice or Decision?** A brief look at the *either/or* pattern of argumentation in the introductory sentence will show an apparent inconsistency in word selection. On the one hand, we shall see that **choice** (as a noun) is the celebrated number-one buzzword in Eger's conceptualisation and the reader-interpreter is not encouraged to confuse it (them) with **decision**. The latter word possesses a sort of *finality* that **choice** does not. Yet the two nouns are very close in meaning and further synonyms could be brought into the picture (e.g. option, alternative, dilemma). The interpretation of the text recommended for consideration will show that it might be intriguing to know, for instance, that in the Hungarian translation and edition of Edith Eger's volume, the title—**The Choice**— is translated as **A döntés**, which translates back into English as **The Decision**. Interestingly, one of the early scenes of the film version of *Sophie's Choice* is the selection-line episode in which Doctor Mengele at the railway station of Auschwitz forces Sophie Zawistowska to surrender one of her children to the forces of darkness for eternity. This scene is so utterly powerful—and sinister—that we are tempted to believe that owing to the presence of the diabolic physician the choice (the "either-or" shape of the structural paradigm) belongs to the doctor. Thus, who actually sealed Ewa's fate; who uttered the sentence "Take the girl"? In view of what has been said so far—and in a very narrow sense—it was

the mother, Zosia, who triggered the fatal chain reaction that ultimately brought about her daughter's death in Birkenau the very same day.<sup>4</sup>

The Mengele affair can also be seen as an illustration of how some exceedingly energized images may be capable of reaching beyond the confines of their immediate borders. Thus, it is intriguing to realize, for instance, that in the energizing patterns of representation certain configurations can be granted existence even if they do not actually operate. For instance, speaking of Styron's above-mentioned novel, a large number of readers would be surprised, if reminded, that the widely known Nazi doctor does not appear in the novel at all. As our readers will remember, the German officer Sophie is "interested" in SS Obersturmbannführer Rudolf Franz Höss. However, as the saying goes, "that is a different story."

{10} This above-mentioned absence of Mengele from Styron's book, however, does not necessarily mean that the spirit of Nazism is waning. It is present in the highly predictable mode of traditional thinking systematized and elaborated by the German school system, the blunt and sinister mechanism of ideological persuasion, a la in the logistics of top-notch organizational skills of mass annihilation as industry. Read Fritzch Hauptsturmführer's "welcoming address" delivered to the newly arrived inmates of the extermination camp in Auschwitz: "You have come to a concentration camp, not to a sanatorium, and there is only one way out—up the chimney. Anyone who don't like this can try hanging himself on the wires. If there are Jews in this group, you have no right to live more than two weeks. Any nuns here? Like the priests, you have one month. All the rest three months" (216).

{11} Let us briefly ponder now what I may have meant by the phrase "viewed from a balcony." "In Stephen Crane's "The Open Boat" (1898), on the third page of the short story, contemplating the existential distress of the four men fighting for survival in the tiny dinghy, Crane makes this observation about the contemplated scene: "Viewed from a balcony, the whole thing would doubtlessly have been weirdly picturesque." Crane is actually talking here about one of the fundamental requirements of aesthetic perception and appreciation: the human recipient—in other words, the cultural consumer—is simultaneously capable of contemplating and absorbing the messages of the aesthetic realm only if he can also manage to distance himself from the object of contemplation at the same time. In other words, if he is sufficiently alienated/estranged from the object of

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4 In like fashion Edith Eva Eger was tormented for decades by the memory of saying the "wrong" word at the selection line. When the Nazi officer, who was actually nobody else but the "Angel of Death" himself, asked whether the woman next to her was her mother or sister, she said "mother." She should have said "sister."

perception. Narrowly pragmatic considerations, precarious existential threat, cosmic anxiety represent forces that may tend to work against—even cancel—the aesthetic dimension. That's why Crane's story begins with these words: "None of them knew the color of the sky." They were clearly exposed to existential threat, and in a predicament like that they could not care less what color the sky happened to be. I would briefly add that there was a sizeable proportion of the population who were ready to embrace the values of the conqueror or who were not reluctant to claim that they simply "did not know" what was going on inside the death-camps. I will quote at this point a single sentence from the Hungarian poet Mihály Babits: "*For he who is silent among culprits will be an accomplice.*"

{12} Let it not be too late to consider the importance of **language** in the cultural transactions we looked at. When E. E. Eger arrived in the United States about half a century ago, she took with her from Europe, and particularly from Central and Middle Europe, the rich multicultural tradition of understanding other people, learning other languages, and 'reading' other cultures. In Europe it was taken for granted that the answer to the challenge of a polyglot linguistic culture was appropriating the language(s) of your partner. For how do I respond in a situation of inadequate communication? Earlier, when we discussed linguistic sources in the case of Dr. Eger in Kassa/Kosice, where she grew up as a child, we mentioned the inevitability of cooperation, where the word cooperation is a code-word for bridge building. What do I do if I wish to communicate with someone who is a linguistic stranger to me? It is very simple: I learn his/her core cultural alphabet. What did Edith Eger do after she had found that she would be foredoomed to failure in her chosen, New World environment if she was unprepared to communicate in English; when she realized that she failed to measure up? She buckled down to study English. The English language used in America.

Eger has no intention of alienating actual or potential supporters, so she does not go in for a complicated and far-fetched private terminology. Even so, the reader should be careful to stick to well-rehearsed meanings and usages. The most promising approach seems to be using Eger herself as a source. Here is a useful example:

I want to make one thing very clear. When I talk about victims and survivors, I am not blaming victims—so many of whom never had a chance. I could never blame those who were sent right to the gas chambers who died in their cot, or even those who ran into the electric barbed wire fence. I grieve for all people everywhere who are sentenced to violence and destruction. I live to guide others to a position of empowerment in the

face of all life's hardships . . . I also want to say that there is no hierarchy of suffering. There's nothing that makes my pain worse or better than yours, no graph on which we can plot the negative importance of one sorrow versus another. (*The Choice* 8-9).

And here follows a mercifully economical way of making a relevant distinction: "Survivors don't have time to ask, 'Why me?' For survivors, the only relevant question is, 'What now?'" (*Choice*, 8-9). If everything works out fine, survivors become *thrivers*.

"A substantially different attitude to language" Mark Sarvas theorizes, "can be discerned in Matt's (lack of) understanding of how communication works." "Despite my childhood visit to the Balaton sleepaway camp, I find Hungarian impenetrable. It alludes me, defies my attempts to form even its most rudimentary sounds. It's alien to me as Hebrew, though without the music. What language, I wonder, did my father think in. His English was serviceable if heavily accented, a touch of Bela Lugosi, although I like to imagine that he dreamed in his native tongue, the familiar sounds of his childhood language perhaps giving him some fleeting comfort." (212)

### **[B] Edith Eva Eger and the Triumph of Affirmation**

I am inviting the reader to recall the 'pool scene' (cf. footnote No. 2), especially the question asked there by one of the Hungarian television crew, and her answer to the query. From what we see and hear emanates the spirit of wealth, elegance, a glimpse of the Pacific Ocean across the fence. At night one can probably hear the surges of the ocean beating against the shore. There is no doubt about the fact that this property must have cost "a pretty penny." To me, this manifestation of being morally obligated and rewarded in a karmic sense has an irresistibly symbolic significance; she has been repeatedly reminded by fate that she has got still more homework to do. Thus, in a sense she is not in the position to quit. To measure up to these tasks and challenges she had to learn the art of survival, of resilience and of healing other people.

The general mood of the quoted scene is that of optimism, affirmation, the overall belief in times to come, the soothing concept of having "arrived." It has been a long journey and it was far from being easy. The person who owns the place (remember William Faulkner self-appointing himself "sole owner and proprietor"?) seems to be in total control of understanding and meeting the major human challenges and ambitions. Whoever lives here must be favored by the gods. Whoever lives here must

be a person who has “made it.” The image of Succeeding in the Land of Success is both an acceptable and irresistible ideology. The Hollywood movie industry has been churning out cinematic images of the self-made man for over a century now. What about the self-made woman? Cinderella perhaps?

She was fated to survive two world wars. There was a point in time in Europe when she was left for dead in a mass grave. She was snatched from the abyss in the very last minute—by her guardian angel? There was a time when it seemed, with a baby in her arms, that she would never make it. She did not have the six dollars to board the ocean-going vessels that would take her to the New World. She did not speak the language of her future home. All in all, she may have harbored revenge for some time. But then she went through a radical change. “I refuse to fall into the trap of revenge.” I will tell you a secret: I can pinpoint where you can diagnose Edie's “revenge” at its most spectacular. It is a full-page document on page five (v.): “five generations of my family.” Altogether 15 people. What could be a more effective revenge than creating a grand family made up of the children and grandchildren of the purported victim?

You have to read this book to realize that the word **survivor** is a lexical item expressing a sort of go-ahead spirit, individual energies, faith, positive vibrations, and a whole bunch of affirmative traits routinely associated with Emerson's brand of New England Transcendentalism. Another concept I am ready to use without hesitation and compunction to describe the unique power of Dr. Eger's semifictional handbook of survival is **heroism**. Heroism of the romantic kind that can make you believe that the human agent—as an individual—is capable of changing the world. It was not by accident that I was referring to Walt Whitman a few pages earlier.

This book itself has been written for students of U.S. culture, as well as for indomitable seekers and therapists of the soul. The power of these ideological foundations may explain surprising decisions in Eger's “choices” and “decisions”. For example, she was capable of forgiving . . . Hitler. “I accept the invitation to Berchtesgaden.” “I am walking on the same steps that Hitler once took, but he isn't here now, *I* am. . . . It is springtime, though not for Hitler. For me. . . . *I am alive*. . . .

Purists may consider *The Choice* a “recent prose volume” that violates the accepted norms of literary creation. This reasoning is rooted in the confrontations of familiar concepts such as the fictive, the creative, the literary, as well as fortuity, inspiration, etc. This has generated lengthy debates that I do not wish to perpetuate here. Instead, I will offer two brief observations. One, fictivity versus literary as opposed to expressive versus creative often produce random means of achieving special effects (leaving things to luck and chance, generating fortuitous experience as part of the process of inspiration and invention). Two, what is

more relevant in our case and what also explains the reason for the insertion of a detailed—over a dozen pages long—name and subject index is that the intentions behind the book are in agreement with the fact that part of the life writing on the title page is coded as “memoir”, the rest as psychological material, mainly actual case studies Dr. Eger has used in her therapeutic activity.

### [C] **The Strange Visit of Mark Sarvas in *Memento Park***

Sarvas’s professional career serves as an apt illustration of the recent academisation of the literary culture in the U.S. Like a large number of his present-day and one-time contemporaries (for example, Raymond Federman, Robert Lowell, Donald Barthelme, John Barth, Ronald Sukenick), he is actively interested in the interrelationships between belletristic theory and literary history. Besides generating a substantial amount of fiction, he teaches novel writing at the UCLA Extension Writers’ Program. As the reader may assume, on the basis of his critical remarks pertaining to the fine arts, he is also involved in art criticism. The comments on the statues in Budapest’s Memento Park make this obvious, and this is especially so in relation to *Budapest Street Scene*, a lost and found—as well as forged—painting by a certain Hungarian artist and around which—restitution, fake art, whereabouts, forgery, legal ownership, filial and fraternal responsibility—the plot of the whole novel revolves. “Now I stand here alone in the stillest and darkest moment of the night, with this strange painting and my strange story, tired and aching, and I can only think about all I have squandered, the astonishing lack of care with which I have blundered through life. So much beyond recovery, things that can never be restored, truths devoured by time, by neglect” (164). He feels “the presence of something” in the room. “Is it my father? Is it God? I know You’re here. Show Yourself. . .” At this point he chooses to focus on the facts of his father’s life, “as I know them”:

He was born in Budapest. He left it twice, once for London in his childhood, only to return two years later, and once for New York. . . . He was a commercial painter and a cardplayer and a collector of vintage toy automobiles, and a Hungarian Jew. He was my father. . . It would take a journey to the other side of the world for me to learn the rest. (165)

While in the Hungarian capital, Matt is determined to recharge his cultural and familial batteries; he is planning to visit and contemplate as many Jewish sights and memorabilia as possible. He also wants to spend time in his father’s boyhood home. There are two reasons why he experiences moments of bitterness and inadequacy.

On the one hand, he is not a religious Jew. He does not understand much of what the other members of the family do and say. “I placed the stones on his grave, as I had seen my mother’s mother do years ago, without knowing why. . .As I left the cemetery, I saw a pair of young workmen halfheartedly scrubbing away at a swastika that had been painted on a headstone. I could only make out one of the Hungarian words scrawled beneath it: ZSIDÓ. Jew.” None of the sights can measure up to what he experienced by what he himself calls “Yahweh’s rough justice.” This is about the Holocaust memorial on the Danube. One of the Budapest relatives told him about: “sixty bronze pairs of shoes left on the embankment where many of the murders had taken place. . . .” “We visited the Shoes on the Danube Bank memorial” continues Philip Zimbardo, “that honors the people, including some of Edie’s own family members, who were killed by the Arrow Cross militiamen during World War II, ordered to stand on the riverbank and take off their shoes, and then shot, their bodies falling into the water, carried away by the current” (qtd. in Foreword, *The Choice* xii). Matt is infuriated when he sees two neo-Nazi goons pack bloody pig’s feet into the bronze shoes. He comes to blows with them and is injured. He leaves Hungary in utter dismay and with the rhetoric of violence. Edie and Matt should compare notes. And basic strategies.

He has to go to the other side of the world to find his roots. “The other side of the world” for Matt is, of course, Hungary, regarded as the locus of acts of slow and painful discovery, as well as the “source” of whatever mystery that would help uncover vital information re the elusive painting. He visits Budapest’s Memento Park, which, as an institution, is a graveyard of gigantic cold-war-age exhibits outside the city limits in the south-western Buda section of the Hungarian capital. It also functions as a graveyard of kitsch and theme park including over forty large, allegorical communist-era statues of internationally known personalities of working-class and leftist radicalism such as Lenin, Marx, Dimitrov, Ostapenko, Béla Kun and other personifications such as soldiers of the Red Army who “liberated” Hungary during World War Two and the Revolution of 1956.<sup>5</sup>

Here were Stalin’s gleaming warriors and workers, rushing toward a future that has ceased to exist. Matt’s Jewish lawyer, Rachel, who accompanies him to Hungary, broke the silence: “I can’t decide if this is funny or creepy or sad”. I shrugged. “A little of each?” She nodded. . . . If one looked past the megalomaniacal subtext, it was almost possible to apprehend a strange beauty in these statues, . . . If you

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5 The Park’s programmes also include optional guided tours and the display of retro art material such as the world famous monoxide-belching Trabant (Trabi) car, the “paper jaguar” manufactured in the German Democratic Republic.



divorced them from their context, their meaning, saw them as objects only. Can you do that, I wonder? (202-203).

Much of the novel's appeal derives from Fate resolved that Matt (i.e. Matt Santos), who is the novel's leading character, should take care of his dying father. "I am horrified at the sight of him. . . . He looks deflated, a clot of tubes and wires the only thing keeping him alive. His pallor is gray, his thick stubble in its third or fourth day, his mouth sunken in an almost dainty pucker . . . The doctor leaves me, his brief visit underscoring how little remains to be done. I pull up a chair to my father's bedside and sit beside him. I should take his hand, I know. It's the correct gesture, what the script calls for. I lean forward and take his limp, clammy hand. I'm here. . . It is hours before he awakens. When he does, the son is unprepared for his parent's response. "My father smiles at the sight of me. His smiles are rare, indeed, rarer still since my mother left him. And I am such a perennial disappointment to him, my fame and financial success notwithstanding, that his smiles have come to feel like an exotic currency" . . .(10, 156). Then the inevitable happens, Matt loses his father. The condolence e-mails are beginning to pile up.

Matt logs into his father's e-mail to set his auto-reply with news of his death. . . To his surprise, his inbox already contained more than thirty condolence e-mails. . . "I hurried through them at first, just scanning to see if I recognized the senders. Then I sat back and began to read. *Gabi will be missed. He was a true gentleman. Klara and Dezső.* Matt's mental response is skeptical at best: "He was? By what standard?" "*Such courage!*", announces a male citizen called "Viktor." "*He lived his life on his own terms and was an inspiration to me.*" Matt: "Yes, he was an obstinate, rigid bastard."

"For more than an hour I read on," Matt confides, "taking in these memories of my father from his contemporaries. I couldn't reconcile the picture they painted with the man I'd known. *Classy. Generous. Charming. A straight shooter. A good man.* I could only chuckle and think, *You obviously didn't know him like I did.* Then a darker, more troubling thought announced itself. What if I was the one who didn't know him? What made me think my impressions were the accurate ones? After all, the numbers were against me, thirty-seven to one. I sat back in my chair, deflated. How ungenerous had I been all these years? How rotten had I gotten to the old man? (172-173).

These are the facts of Matt's father's life as presented by the son himself. The life and the deeds. "He was born in Budapest. He left it twice, once for London in his childhood, only to return two years later, and once in New York. . . He was a commercial painter and a cardplayer and a collector of vintage toy automobiles, and a Hungarian Jew. He was my father."

The rest is still missing – Matt seems to be saying, "It would take a journey to the other side of the world for me to learn the rest" (165). The destination of this journey is Hungary. Matt suspects that his roots can be discovered and appropriated. He is in for serious disappointments however.

This part of the plot possesses all the characteristics of the classic father and son pattern. But why is the mother absent? For the mother is virtually nonexistent. Are we confronted with the loss of the mother as a cultural fact? The disappearance of Penelope?

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**Lynn, Thomas Jay. *Chinua Achebe and The Politics of Narration: Envisioning Language*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.**

Fatma Chenini

Thomas Jay Lynn's book examines Chinua Achebe's language and narration in relation to the intersections of African culture – especially the oral traditions of his native Igbo community – and Western novelistic forms in a postcolonial critical framework. Although the title of the book alone does not indicate the importance that Lynn ascribes in his analysis to the specifically African elements in Achebe's language, the cover design is telling: the background photo is of a giant traditional African mask – one of the most typical visual representations of African art. Although the mask's lineaments are not apparent because the title and the subtitle cover them, this may be understood as a visual allusion to the African oral tradition, which greatly informs Achebe's language, and this is precisely what Lynn is striving to illuminate for his readers.

According to the author, Achebe invents a literary technique which enables him to draw on the characteristic syntax of an African language within English. Lynn argues that Achebe's new technique is a form of "revolution" against denigrating perceptions of Africa in Western literature, since "it is through words that colonial culture inscribes its presumed superiority over the African culture" as Simon Gikandi remarks (qtd. in Lynn 2). This technique also helps his readers to have a historical, psychological, and social insight into the mindset of his fictional characters, through which Achebe seeks to depict the colonial and postcolonial experience of African people. Achebe's mastery of both the English and the Igbo enabled his texts to traverse the boundaries of Africa and reach global audiences, which accounts for the fact that his "dignified narrative voice" (1) and his way of interweaving his native African language and traditions with Western literary conventions have become widely admired.

In the first chapter, "An Adequate Revolution: Achebe Writes Africa Anew," Lynn demonstrates how language is one of the serious impediments that prevented Europeans from dealing with and understanding Africans properly, which was responsible for the representations of Africans "through animalistic and savage imagery" (25). Lynn opens his chapter with a question from Achebe's first novel, *Things Fall Apart*: "Does the white man understand our custom about land?" to which the answer comes in the form of another question: "How can he when he does not even speak our tongue?" These questions suggest how the language barrier

created a gap between the two cultures, and how it prevented the Europeans from exploring the inner lives, customs, and the psychic complexities of the African individual, which led eventually to misrepresentations of Africa. Achebe attributes this dehumanization of Africans to the racist Western ideology according to which Africa is to be considered “as a foil to Europe” (qtd. in Lynn 32), whereby the Western colonizers justified their exploitation of the continent’s natural resources. Lynn quotes Achebe as saying: “[Some of] the first Europeans [who] came to Africa . . . persuaded themselves that Africa had no culture, no religion, and no history. It was a convenient conclusion, because it opened the door for all sorts of rationalizations for the exploitation that followed” (25). As the chapter proceeds, Lynn explains how Achebe uses language in his novels to heal the damage caused by the West’s lack of knowledge of African languages and culture by inserting dialogues in Igbo or integrating proverbial elements, as Achebe believes that the traditional Igbo proverbs are a powerful mode of discourse, which contributes to the revelation of the African voice and shape in Anglophone African literature. The Igbo perspective is central to Achebe’s writing because it supports the principles of negotiation and the possibility of multiple points of view in discourse.

Lynn explains that Achebe’s narration draws upon a contrapuntal approach embracing multiple concepts, subjects, and viewpoints rather than privileging one over all others, which is illustrated in the Igbo proverb “Wherever Something Stands, Something Else Will Stand Beside it” (qtd. in Lynn 6). Achebe uses this approach in response to Western texts such as Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, which represents the Africans as savages incompatible with the modern civilization of the West. By contrast, Achebe’s endeavor is to counteract the hierarchical binary oppositions associated with the colonial presumption of superiority. Thus, his aim is to eliminate a binary opposition of superiority vs. inferiority, or the civilized vs. the savage, and replace it by a sense of diversity which draws upon the philosophy of balance in Igbo culture. According to Lynn, the Western binary dualism is ponderously visible in “Western chauvinism toward non-Western peoples,” or in what Edward Said calls Orientalism, which “is never far from what Deney’s Hay has called the idea of Europe, a collective notion identifying us Europeans as against all those non-Europeans . . .” (qtd. in Lynn 7). Through his narration, which is firmly grounded in Igbo culture, Achebe is able to obviate the prejudices of European writers by creating a novelistic form that resists the “one-way traffic” (32).

In the second chapter, “Of Flight, Fraud, and Freedom: Achebe’s Political Tricksters,” Lynn focuses on the African political challenges in the context of which Achebe’s fiction was written. Lynn contends that the trickster has been adapted by modern writers, like Achebe, to represent the resistance of African communities to colonialism in the past, as well as injustice and corruption in the present.

Moreover, the figure of the trickster also serves to strengthen the presence of the elements of traditional African storytelling in the modern novel. Achebe affirms this importance in his novels by his repeated allusions to the trickster figure, which he relates to African political challenges. First, in *Things Fall Apart*, he chooses the folktale about the tortoise and the birds, which depicts the struggle against colonialism in Africa from an African perspective; second, in *A Man of the People*, he represents the political career of Chief Nanga as that of a trickster, whereby he exposes the domination of corruption and the sources of disillusionment in post-independent Africa; and third, in his final novel, *Anthills of the Savannah*, Achebe uses another tale of the trickster tortoise to show the crisis of authoritarian rule in Africa. Thus, the trickster figure, as one of the main characters in Achebe's fiction, helps to overthrow the hegemony of binary narratives, as the trickster functions as a combination of heroes and villains, or as a "beloved rascal," whom we appreciate even despite their apparently evil deeds.

The subsequent chapters focus mainly on different dimensions of Achebe's language in which he tells his story of Africa. Lynn goes on to elaborate on Achebe's effort to link the past with the present by combining elements of oral storytelling with written literature to produce a work that creates a link between the historical and the contemporary, and at the same time alters our understanding of African histories. Lynn appears to be in full agreement with Achebe's views, and so he neglects to mention instances of counter-criticism where *Heart of Darkness* is interpreted from different perspectives than what urged Achebe to start writing in the first place. Such a critical approach can be seen in Edward Said's "Two Visions in *Heart of Darkness*," where he argues that Conrad's narration and his dehumanizing representation of Africa is due to the sovereign historical force of imperialism and its system that represents and speaks for everything within its sovereignty. Said explains that Conrad's narrative is contingent on and limited to a situation in which his narrator, Marlow, recites his adventures to a set of British listeners at a particular time and in a specific place. Said adds that Conrad's narrations show that neither Conrad nor Marlow could imagine an alternative world to imperialism, where the natives may be able to put an end to the European colonization and achieve independence.

As a consequence of his long teaching experience in the field of literature of Africa and that of the diaspora, we find that Thomas Jay Lynn is captivated by Achebe's language and narrative methods, which accounts for the sophisticated innovativeness of his novels. Lynn's appreciation of Achebe's language and African literature in a broad sense led him to write a chapter, at the end of his book, about classroom approaches to Achebe's fiction, explaining that these approaches should be based on "multidimensional response," since Achebe's work encompasses

widely discussed topics such as “colonial otherness,” “postcolonial agency,” and “transnational perspective.” Furthermore, Lynn also sees that the comparative approach is important in dealing with Achebe’s texts, since it highlights “conflicts, motivations, and themes in a story that would be undervalued or hidden without the reciprocal influence of the other text” (146). Thus, *Chinua Achebe and The Politics of Narration: Envisioning Language* is a useful, comprehensive, and accessible book for teachers, scholars, and students who wish to familiarize themselves with African literature in general, and a detailed study on Achebe’s use of language in particular.



**Paul Hanebrink, *A Specter Haunting Europe: The Myth of Judeo-Bolshevism*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2018.**

Zoltán Peterecz

Many myths are part of our lives, past and present, and we hardly notice most of them. Paul A. Hanebrink of Rutgers University set out to examine a relatively new historical myth, which, however, has been a force to reckon with ever since it was created: Judeo-Bolshevism. The gist of this myth that was born in the beginning of the twentieth century is that Communism was basically a Jewish conspiracy in order to achieve hegemony in the world, “a transhistorical global conspiracy by Jews to destroy Western civilization.” (4) It is no coincidence that the idea first reared its head during World War I. Anti-Semitism had had a long history in Europe, when in 1917, in the wake of the Russian Bolshevik Revolution, a new state ideology appeared on the scene, which denied practically everything that had accumulated in European and North American societies and culture: property rights, individual freedom, religion, etc. Therefore, with the cataclysmic changes during and right after the war, it was relatively easy to make large masses of people believe, both in Europe and the United States, that the root of the trouble was the Jewish communists. And it is enough to think of the events in Hungary or Germany in 1919 to appreciate the magnitude of this question. In the twenty-first century, when due to complex issues nationalism has been on the rise once more, many appear to have found an answer in the familiar vein: anti-Semitism and the accusation of Judeo-Bolshevism. What is more, this new trend is not only palpable in Central and Eastern Europe, where for historical reasons this might be less surprising; these voices can be heard in Western Europe and on the far right in the United States as well.

Hanebrink goes through some periods of the twentieth century and examines in the historical mirror the accusations—imagined or real—of a Judeo-Bolshevist agenda. The inevitable starting point is 1919, when shortly after the seismic shift caused by the Russian Bolsheviks, in the chaos brought on by the end of the world war, in Central Europe—in Germany and Hungary—revolutions appeared in short succession. It is true that many Jewish persons were attracted to the radical ideology and movements, but the reason for this lay in the fact that most of them did not get the chance to fully assimilate in their respective countries. There was political fragmentation among the Jewish people as well, but their presence

was acutely felt in far left organizations everywhere—sometimes making up the majority. Therefore, those Jews who openly and loudly were disseminating the tenets of Bolshevik ideology made it possible that the Jewry as one could be made the scapegoat for the social pandemonium. The author identifies three anti-Semitic beliefs that had been around for centuries: striving for social disharmony, international Jewish conspiracy to the detriment of Christians, and Jewish fanaticism. The revolutionary period, naturally, only heightened and strengthened these fears, and gave a wide enough basis for large multitudes of people to believe in Judeo-Bolshevism as the modern-day equivalent of the Jewish danger.

When the revolutions in East and Central Europe, suitably to their nature, led to excesses and a reign of terror, (imagined) “reality” justified fear that Jews and Bolsheviks wanted to overtake the control in various countries and they were not circumspect as to their means. This fear was married to the old European historical reflex that physical danger is manifested in the shape of barbaric hordes coming from the East—bringing alien and primitive culture with them. The Mongols and later the Turks were the par excellence examples, and Europe had to be defended against their incursion and devastation. This strain of thinking was especially strong in Polish and Hungarian historical mythology. Although it must not be forgotten that when the first tribes of Hungarians appeared in the Carpathian Basin and raided the land west to them, they were judged by the same standard as later Batu Khan’s hordes or the Turkish Sultans’ armies. “The Bolshevik,” writes the author, “was at once a rootless migrant Jew, the sign of an invading horde from the East, and an Asiatic beast.” (41) Twentieth-century communist “danger” was similarly perceived by many, and Europe, but especially Central and Eastern Europe, in the wake of the losses in World War I and social uproar, appears to have found the new source of peril in Judeo-Bolshevism. This danger seemed to threaten the whole European order and civilization. Since the fanaticism and messianism of the Jews was well known, fear grew into hysteric proportion at times and places that their country would be ruled by revolution—and the Christian world might be conquered.

Before World War I, in the area of Eastern Europe where Jews were concentrated in larger numbers—Poland, Russia, Ukraine—pogroms regularly took place. As a result, tens of thousands of poor Jewish people began to move westward. They were the Galician Jews who arrived in Budapest and Vienna, among other places, where they were not welcome, and they were often found to be the scapegoats for shortages of all kinds when war arrived. With the Bolshevik revolution in 1917, the hatred toward the Jews collectively only gained strength when, on account of the Jewish political actors, the “revolutionary-subversive” label was extended generally to the Jewry. With the armistice in November 1918, fights did not cease

in Central and Eastern Europe—civil wars and revolutions were a typical feature in the region. Hanebrink introduces the Polish, Romanian, and Hungarian examples in order to give an extensive picture of the anti-Judeo-Bolshevist sentiment and steps taken against that perceived danger. All these countries wanted to create a pure nation state, and they propagated this wish at the Paris Peace Conference. Naturally, Jews were not deemed as part of that national image. It seemed good political capital for all the newly formed states to make the Jewish communists appear as a transnational phenomenon to be feared not only by them but by the Western countries. If this danger was not stopped, so the argument went, the revolutionary wave led by Jews might sweep Western Europe as well. The Peace Conference in the end heeded the call and decided that there was a need to stem the Bolshevist tide. At the same time, minority protection in the peace treaties was an important new feature that was supposed to protect Jewish people as well, although the League of Nations, responsible to carry out such measures, came up way too short in this dimension—as in others. So, Jewish communities accused of incendiary activity remained the scapegoats, non-nationals, and dangerous, all this giving the basis to cut back on their rights. It is enough to think of the *Numerus Clausus* of 1920, the Hungarian law that discriminated against Jews mainly in higher education.

The second chapter of the book focuses on Germany under the Hitler era, and the increasing measures against the Jewish-Bolshevik enemy. As the author puts it, in Germany “Judeo-Bolshevism became a symbol of the need to wage a ruthless war of preemptive defense against racialized threats to national security.” (92) The Spanish Civil War gave a perfect opportunity for Hitler to widen his vision to much of the European continent. Since he was already seen as a successful person against the imagined Judeo-Bolshevik danger, he easily became the credited leader of this fight internationally too. The Catholic Church called attention to the peril caused by both Communism and Nazism, but its own anti-Semitism before and during World War II proved to be a hindrance in case of the latter, and only in the postwar years did it start to speak out clearly against the totalitarian state form.

Naturally, the most tangible and brutal effort against the Judeo-Bolshevik peril was the German assault on the Soviet Union in the summer of 1941. Although the propaganda of ideology masked geopolitical goals, still it was by far the harshest manifestation of anti-Semitism and anti-Bolshevism of the past decades. At the same time, however, the old lurking fear of Asiatic hordes could be detected in most European countries that shared the belief that there was danger in the East, and this danger might be uprooted by the German preemptive strike. The Nazi atrocities on Soviet territory—practically genocide—were in close harmony with and a direct antecedent to the “final solution” to exterminate the Jews. But it was

not only the Germans. On the territories under Soviet control in Poland in 1939-41, there were undoubtedly many cruelties carried out—and the Nazi propaganda did everything to tout them as to give some justification for the offensive in the East—, and almost everywhere among the “liberated” local population collective anti-Semitism burst open. The Germans allowed this type of safety valve to work: trying to turn the pent-up hatred against the Jews and Bolsheviks into a type of crusade. Then, as the Soviet Red Army began its counteroffensive and it became clear that Eastern Europe would belong to the Soviet sphere of influence, the anti-Jewish and anti-communist sentiment reached its zenith, and never disappeared.

With Eastern Europe becoming a Soviet zone after World War II, in certain countries the stereotype concerning Judeo-Bolshevism remained. Right after the conclusion of the most horrific war in human history, in Poland, Romania, and Hungary the well-known defensive reflexes were back at work. As a result, the overwhelming majority of the people in these countries considered the Soviet occupation—which was called “liberation” in the official propaganda—and the Moscow-centered rule of the local communist parties as the latest chapter of the Jewish-Bolshevik conspiracy. According to Hanebrink, this had three pillars: the behavior of the Soviet occupying troops, the reappearance of Jews—both physical and political, and the emergence of the earlier persecuted and banned communist parties via the effective help of the Soviet troops. And since again there were a few conspicuous Jewish leaders in these communist parties, the generalization and earlier acquired instincts gave potent basis for many to give credit for the Jewish-Communist cooperation and their aim to rule the world. In the “us vs. them” dichotomy the Jewish population in these countries more often than not fell in the “them” category, “in ways that mapped neatly onto popular understandings of the new Soviet-backed state as a foreign power: ‘them’.” (175). After the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, and when it became real that the new country enjoys American backing, there was a wave of nationalist communism in the satellite countries, which had again negative results for the Jewish citizens. They were once more targeted as aliens, and people perceived a Zionist conspiracy by the help of which the Jews wanted to grab control—to the disadvantage of their respective countries. Basically, the politics of memory was at stake, in which the Holocaust was committed by the Nazis and their collaborators, while liberation was thanked to the Soviets who worked together with the national antifascist elements. In this type of narrative there was little room for the Jews.

Another chapter concentrates on the processes regarding the central theme of the book—this time in West Germany, which was established in 1949. The larger, western part of Germany was under American, or Allied, control in the first years after the Second World War. In the changed political climate and under

the American-sponsored denazification program there could be no promoting the known elements of the propaganda for a Judeo-Bolshevik conspiracy. The emphasis quickly, and with the setting in of the Cold War totally, shifted only to anti-communism. In this work, many former Nazis participated under American protection, because the experience and “changed” worldview of such people could be used by the United States. This somewhat new conservative Christian approach also appeared in Austria and basically everywhere in the western part of Europe: an ecumenical Christian (Democratic) Europe had to defend itself against the Asiatic communist ideology that denied the existence of God and tried to make the life of the Church close to impossible in its sphere. In addition, there was the fear of the totalitarian state that could feed on the memory of not-so-distant fascism and Nazism. That is how the Judeo-Christian idea came into being in the first half of the Cold War, which served as perhaps one of the most important theoretical theses of liberal democracy against the Soviet bloc.

The book’s final chapter examines the thirty years since the end of the Soviet Union and communism in Eastern Europe. Its central theme is how the memory of the Holocaust became relative. This was done in many post-socialist countries by elevating the victims of the communist era onto the same level as the millions of Jews murdered by the Nazis. This almost automatically meant that often the Jews appeared as scapegoats for crimes in the 1945-1990 period. “Amid debates about how to strike the right balance between acknowledging the genocide of Europe’s Jews and recalling other kinds of suffering—above all, suffering caused by the crimes of Communist regimes—the demands of Holocaust memory”, writes Hanebrink, “were frequently juxtaposed with another form of collective memory: national memory.” (259) Such debate, if not meaningless, is unnecessary. Both systems—Nazism and Communism—had left millions of people dead in their wake. The author implicates that the relative comparison between the two tragic state forms sprang from the latent, or sometimes quite open, anti-Semitism that could not tolerate that “only” Jews should be remembered as victims. Naturally, this type of politics of memory at the same time wants to alleviate the perhaps existing pangs of collective conscience that stems from the role of an accomplice in the systematic extermination of the Jews in these countries.

And the phenomenon has not disappeared without a trace in the present century. In his conclusion Hanebrink states—having in mind the mostly negative reactions to the immigrant and refugee wave coming to Europe from the Middle East and beyond—that “examining the ideological function that the idea of Judeo-Bolshevism has played in European politics since the end of World War I reveals that this myth—a potent fusion of racism and ideological defensiveness—is one of the most fertile sources for anti-Muslim and anti-Islamic sentiment today.” (277)

There are minor mistakes in the book. For instance, the author misses the German attack against France in World War II by a month, or the Hungarian foreign minister, Kálmán Kánya, appears as the prime minister of the country. (122, 131) This, at the same time, only indicates how difficult it is to write a monograph that encompasses a long period and many countries in Europe. Despite such minor shortcomings, the exhaustive research and rich source material, the logical argument and contextualization, the examination of certain basic connections all make Hanebrink's work a worthy piece of modern historiography.

**Zoltán Peterecz trans. ed.: *Forradalmi időkben Budapesten és Bécsben. Egy amerikai katona-hírszerző-diplomata feljegyzései 1919 első feléből.* (Witness of revolutionary days: notes of an American intelligence officer-diplomat from the first half of 1919). Eger. 2019.**

András Tarnóc

According to Pierre Nora the task of remembering makes everyone their own historian. As his famous maxim goes, “an order is given to remember, but the responsibility is mine, it is I who must remember” (15). Nicholas Roosevelt presents an example of such self-initiated recollection. Roosevelt, a member of the American presidential dynasty and a distant relative of Theodore Roosevelt made a significant contribution to the American delegation at the Paris Peace Conference after World War One.

Roosevelt’s writing is a personal journal commemorating historical facts. The genre itself gives rise to questions concerning the role of memory and the motivating factors behind the writing process. Nora emphasizes the aspect of duty memory, a compulsion exerted either by internal or external impact, that is the creator of the text, himself or herself, or an outside authority. Kathleen Brogan distinguishes between two kinds of memory. Narrative memory as a flexible process helping to reshape or give meaning to the past, while traumatic memory is rigid, inflexible (155). Furthermore, Stephen Kagle argues diary or journal writing is motivated by the lack of internal balance in the given person.

Nicholas Roosevelt, whose recollections were translated and edited by Zoltán Peterecz heeded such a dual call. As a member of the Coolidge Commission performing a fact finding function during the Paris peace talks, he became direct witness to the upheaval in Central Europe following World War One. His notes cover his experiences gained in Vienna and Budapest, and the recordings related to the latter assignment serve as a historical document of special importance.

While the events he commemorates are registered in the private or personal narrative memory, the tragic episodes of Hungarian history including the presentation of the Vix Notes, the fall of the Károlyi government, the rise of the Soviet Republic, and the eventual dismembering of Hungary serve as the cornerstones of traumatic memory on the national level.

The text including the description of the events in Vienna and the experiences gained in Budapest is expanded with a scholarly introduction and an annotated



index. The introduction contains scholarly justification for topic selection while the translator/editor provides crucial explanations and further guidance to the potential reader. One of the most notable aspects of the text is the author's uncensored opinions, and statements reflecting a belief in Anglo-Saxon superiority, ethnocentrism and chauvinism. Not only does Peterecz render a faithful translation of such controversial statements, but easily handles the respective sensitive content with elegant explanations. The detailed description of the memoir's historical and political background along with genre-specific analyses is a valuable addition to the work.

Captain Roosevelt spent the first half of the year 1919 in Vienna and in Budapest and during this time he became the proverbial witness to the making of history. As an outsider observer to the troubled region he considers Central European politics as "a great jumble of conflicting interests, in which the dominating note is 'Let's grab all we can.'" While Roosevelt recognizes that America represents the hope for all nations of the region for a fair post-war settlement: "There is no question that everyone in this part of the world wants to be nice to the Americans. They all look to America as the dispenser of high justice," he tempers such expectations by the realization that the Coolidge Commission "had no consular, diplomatic or commercial powers, and could do nothing except study." At the same time, he makes several derisive and anti-Semitic statements about members of the local cultural and political elite: "I saw first of all Benedict [sic] of the *Neue Freie Presse*, a most interesting Jew, large, fat, square-headed, but with the nose and mouth of the race."

Furthermore, in an effort to maintain the position of the neutral observer and attempting to distance himself from the surrounding political turbulence he frequently resorts to ethno-centric comments: "we Northern races don't understand the fierce selfishness of the non-Anglo-Teutonic peoples." In the same vein he asserts: "The violence of racial jealousy among the Eastern European peoples is inconceivable to the more staid Anglo-Saxon mind." Conversely Roosevelt is equally critical of his own compatriots pointing to a lack of American diplomats "who are good at languages and know how to pass the time of day with foreigners." Partly as a result of the relatively preferential treatment received in Vienna Roosevelt notices the positive aspects of the Austrians including their courtesy while he continuously warns of the danger of Bolshevism and the continuing German influence in the country. In the other way around, he considers members of the Austrian elite, a "menagerie" and refers to Princess Lichtenstein as an "old girl." He also juxtaposes the national character of America to Austria: "These old-timers are charming old dears to play around with, and have fine manners, and much tradition, and also some education, and very little understanding;

but they lack the American ginger.” Roosevelt’s choice of words concerning the defeated nations is noteworthy as well. He regards the emperor of Germany and the country’s leading politicians “unrepentant sinners” and calls for the “crushing of the obnoxious, arrogant German spirit.” Needless to say in his description of the Hungarian political establishment he uses similar terminology.

Driven by his original mission, and directed by his Anglo-Saxon point of view, he continues to provide ethnically and culturally biased stereotypical descriptions. Being part of the American elite, his opinion is largely conditioned by his socialization. At any rate he correctly perceives how all Central European nations wish to assign the function of arbiter or “the referee in this big game” to the United States and how the politicians of the region see him and the Coolidge commission as a potential channel of communication to the Paris peace conference.

Naturally, the most intriguing aspect of the notes is how Roosevelt saw the events and decision makers of Hungary. He personally met several representatives of the contemporary Hungarian political establishment. His notes concerning the encounter with Albert Apponyi, Mihály Károlyi, and Pál Teleki speak for themselves. Naturally, Apponyi, although the best-known Hungarian politician in the West, represented the past, Károlyi stood for the ephemeral present, and the figure of Teleki anticipated the not so distant yet tragic future. His description of Apponyi is similar to that of German leaders: “He is an interesting old scoundrel—very intelligent, perfectly unrepentant, and a thorough Chauvinist.”

His depiction of Károlyi is as ambiguous as that of the view held by his contemporaries and posterity as well. He acknowledges his feat for overcoming several setbacks: “One can’t help admiring a man who has three such handicaps and yet can rise to the position of leading politician in his country.” Nevertheless, he is dismayed after the Hungarian President turns his government over to radical Communists in the wake of the Vix Note and makes an appeal to the international proletariat: “Why, the man’s mad, simply mad!”

Teleki is seen as a “canny man, and the most intelligent and in his line the ablest.” Yet again, Roosevelt’s first impressions are rather ambiguous: “At first he didn’t appeal to me so much, but after lunch I got him up in the office before a gigantic map of Hungary, and I told him I was going to ask him forty questions. So I pointed in, and I have rarely spent a more interesting two hours. Here was a man who knew exactly what I wanted to know.”

Not only does Roosevelt berate the political leaders, but he does not shy away from making broad-sweeping comments about the Hungarian people in general: “These people have much spirit, and at the same time have an appearance of energy that is almost American. And it seems to me, as I thought—the intelligent Hungarian is a fine animal. But the others (?)”

Roosevelt also grapples with the quandary of making the Hungarians, but in fact all Central European people to accept the fact that his and the Americans' presence in Budapest amounts to "no more than a study trip." He, however, not only views himself as American only, but as a representative of the West and Western culture. Often he is unable to hide his condescension over the "infernal Oriental indirection" he is faced with.

Such an ethnocentric conviction comes especially to the fore in his scathing remark on the political culture in Central Europe. "Politically, the Eastern Europeans are badly brought up children." This comment expresses the same views that were held by the British, concerning the Americans one hundred years earlier perceiving the latter as unruly children at the lunch counter.

While he is acerbically critical of the leaders of the countries he visited, he is equally disappointed with the naiveté of Wilsonian internationalism and the negligent attitude of the Allies culminating in the unwitting American acceptance of the Vix Note. As he states "the moral lesson is formidable." He is equally sceptic with the conative impulses of Wilson's idealism. and views the American foreign policy in Europe as "inglorious meddling:" "This was merely another example of the criminally evil consequences of high sounding, meaningless rhetoric applied to issues of world-wide importance. [...] The idle phrase of the politician becomes a poisoned shaft when it is used to right the world."

Attempting to understand the geopolitical and topographical aspects of Central Europe, Roosevelt often employs American terms. He compares the dispersed ethnic population of Hungary to a "patchwork quilt" and establishes a parallel between the Hungarian landscape and that of Illinois. Roosevelt's notes also reflect the anti-Catholic hysteria of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century referring to the alleged evil and sinister aspects of the Roman Catholic Church: "I look at them with all the mysterious feeling that their ways are dark, and they are plotting and scheming to advance the Church politically, and bring the world back to its condition of the middle ages."

All in all, Roosevelt's memoir and the thoroughly prepared Hungarian translation provide an unprecedented historical source. The author's words convey the objective external view of events perceived through a subjective lens domestically while presenting another example of the proverbial American in Europe. The volume projecting a unique version of the "politically innocent abroad" reiterates the historic inability of either side of the Atlantic to decode and correctly perceive the intentions of their counterparts.

As far as research into American and Hungarian relations is concerned it is a welcome development that Zoltán Peterecz found Roosevelt's heretofore unpublished notes at the "depth of the archives of Syracuse University." The main

value of the work lies not only in the thorough and attentive translation, as the detailed explanations, the carefully compiled footnotes and the annotated lists introducing the respective historical actors help to make this volume a significant addition to the achievements of American Studies in Hungary.

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**Martina Vranova, Zénó Vernyik and Dávid Levente Palatinus (eds.). *Crime and Detection in Contemporary Culture*. Szeged: Americana eBooks, 2018.**

Renáta Zsámba

*Crime and Detection in Contemporary Culture* is an edited collection of scholarly essays which addresses a relatively long-standing debate around the genre of crime fiction, its significance in shaping the literary map of the past two hundred years, its contribution to not only popular but mainstream literature and culture as well. It is, then, no surprise, that the editors in the Introduction, immediately start outlining the traditional critical approach to the genre, which was rather hostile and discriminative. Similar to dozens of criticisms written about crime and detective fiction, the introductory paragraphs point out that this type of literature was marginalized for being labelled as escapist and lowbrow texts, cheap literature that has no literary value due to its formulaic nature or flat characterization. Furthermore, its proliferation and popularity in the book market associated the genre with mass production, low-quality writing and lower-class readership. Undoubtedly, crime fiction suffered from this narrow-minded and mean critical attitude for decades but the turn of the century brought a rapid increase in academic criticism that targeted the revision and re-interpretation of the genre which was also part of the vivid interest in cultural studies. Along with other leading critics and acclaimed authors of crime fiction, such as Stephen Knight, Charles J. Rzepka, Mary Evans, Andrew Pepper or P. D. James, the present volume also calls for and participates in the process of re-visioning and re-evaluating the status of the genre by claiming that it has always been truly contemporary in its ability to continuously re-invent itself and reflect on the social, cultural and political context of its own time since its appearance in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Another intriguing aspect of this type of literature lies not only in its popularity with people of all social classes or educational level, but also in its capacity to inspire writers with very different literary backgrounds. While literary critics from the 1930s did a lot to prevent the genre from rising to its deserved place, mainstream or 'serious' writers could not resist the temptation of not only becoming a fan, e.g. W.H. Auden, but felt the urge to write crime/detective stories.

The Introduction illustrates this phenomenon with literary examples from the post-war era to hint at the genre's flexibility to cross boundaries between high-, middle- or lowbrow literature. Writers like Cormac McCarthy, Paul Auster and

Martin Amis are mentioned as representative examples, but readers of crime fiction are fully aware of the fact that the appreciation of crime fiction by serious writers dates back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, to William Godwin, an acclaimed philosopher, a novelist and the author of an early mystery novel, *Things As They Are; or The Adventures of Caleb Williams* (1794). Nevertheless, it is only after the Second World War that crime fiction for the first time truly had the opportunity to narrow the gap between serious and popular literature, both categories being redundant and discriminative, and to invent a great diversity of forms that best suited for the representation of the post-war era regarding crime, political threats, violence, social and financial crises, or everyday life. As a result, the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century gave birth to many sub-genres in literature and film, from the hard-boiled type to forensic mysteries, or the most recent form, video games.

Apart from emphasizing how rich and complex this field is, one of the goals of the present collection is to draw attention to the role that crime fiction in its numerous literary, and visual forms has come to occupy and play in contemporary society. The authors of the articles take an interdisciplinary approach to explore the selected texts, so the reader will find that the analyses are located at the intersection of various fields, such as gender, cultural, media, spatial, adaptation and medical studies, but some papers reflect on the historical and the structural methods as well. Although all of the essays submit themselves to the main goals of the collection, the editors divided them into two sections based on the area accentuated in them. Thus, section one is dedicated to crime and detection in literature, and section two examines the representation of crime in other media, such as film, television series, or computer games. Although the first section is more loosely organized in terms of themes and sub-genres than the second one, it certainly offers an insight into contemporary crime fiction as it has adapted to and satisfied various national and cultural demands with an inevitable transformation in its form and content. Thus, as the essays show, crime fiction has provided a ground for both authors and critics to address issues in relation to historical eras, national identities or political upheavals.

Markéta Gregorová, for instance, enquires into the Scottish brand of crime fiction, tartan noir, and delineates how the duality, so intrinsic to the Scottish character, features in Ian Rankin's crime novels. Michaéla Marková's article explores the connection between form and content, more precisely the reasons why the thriller form is the most suitable one to stage the Northern Ireland conflict, 'The Troubles'. Martina Vranová addresses such recurring themes in crime fiction as the nature of evil or the psychology of the characters in Ian Banks's fiction and pays special attention to the author's nihilism and the dystopian view of human nature. Petr Anténe discusses the connection between detective fiction and the



campus novel in A. S. Byatt's *Possession* (1990) and Michael Dorris and Louise Erdrich's *The Crown of Columbus* (1991). The claim that the two genres are related is not a novelty considering Dorothy L. Sayers' campus murder mystery, *Gaudy Night* (1935), but the fact that the features of detective fiction have significantly "enriched the genre in the last decade of the twentieth century" (55), is a sign that Golden Age crime fiction had an immense influence on the development of campus novels in the post-war era. The first section ends with Sándor Klapcsik's essay, which insightfully demonstrates common practices in Sherlock Holmes adaptations with special regard to the *fantastic*. While the topic and approach are both appealing, the essay is probably too short to be crammed with long lists of productions and terminologies that might hamper understanding the main idea.

As mentioned earlier, the second section centers around the visual representation of crime in various forms of media, films, computer games, television series and digital interfaces. Unlike in the first part, the articles are more in dialogue with and complement each other. This may be attributed to the fact that all of them foreground the relation between technology and how crime fiction responds to its latest innovations, which most of the authors demonstrate through the analysis of the television series *CSI*. The opening article by Zoltán Dragon is truly captivating as it illustrates the latest evolution of the genre in the digital age. The author sheds light on the process of the inevitable "shift in detection paradigms" (82) in its exposure to the rapid technological development. He argues that the modern detective need not rely on the "little grey cells" any more as it happens in the classical phase, but his/her knowledge and investigative methods are more and more defined by technology. Dávid Levente Palatinus exploits forensic crime stories, which is a relatively new and unexplored area in the criticism of crime fiction. His article is truly engaging in its details of the generic features of forensic mysteries through the example of one of the most successful television series, *CSI*, but he delves into a theoretical discussion about the aesthetics and visual language of forensic crime series as well by examining "the mediation of post-human anxieties about the fragmentation of the human body" (92). Zénó VERNYIK's essay is undoubtedly one of the most captivating and novel approaches to the genre since it puts a video game, *The Black Mirror*, into focus, and argues that it can be read and interpreted as a detective story. Furthermore, he argues that analyzing this video game as a crime narrative allows him to demonstrate its ability to incorporate two different types of detective fiction: the classical and the metaphysical. Finally, Elke Weissmann joins the previous article in depicting the representation of crime in a Facebook game: *CSI: Crime City*. Her interest, however, lies in discussing how the original *CSI* series has affected the creation of additional texts, such as this particular game, in revising media practices that control the relationship between the productions and the audience.

The present volume is an ambitious attempt to show that crime fiction has not abated during the past few decades but has occupied a central position in literature and other forms of media. The authors claim that the way crime is represented in the various sub-genres can be a key to the understanding of the ontological and epistemological concerns in modern culture. While most of the articles are a joy to read, some would have needed a more careful proofreading in order to bring the content, style and language in harmony. Nevertheless, anyone setting out to read *Crime and Detection in Contemporary Culture*, will eventually recognize its merits, its engagement with the latest theoretical ideas, and enjoy its witty and informative way of sharing it all with the reader.

