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Nostalgia and Creative Urge as Double-Edged Swords in the (Auto)Biographical Writings of Rose Gollup-Cohen

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Abstract. While some Jewish immigrant autobiographies have received broad critical attention, a few important autobiographical endeavours have been underrepresented or almost forgotten. Autobiographies written by Jewish female writers who immigrated to America from Russia, Poland, or Galicia often draw a bifurcated picture of their struggles in callous New York sweatshops, or, on the contrary, they exalt the Jews' notable success while blending in the American melting pot. Scarce studies, however, have been devoted to the dislocation and uprootedness of female immigrants and to the nostalgic feelings they have experienced during their absorption into American reality. This paper intends to resuscitate the forgotten voice of a Jewish immigrant female writer, Rose Gollup-Cohen. Moreover, using primarily psychoanalytical methodology and a feminist theory, the paper focuses on the nostalgic feelings that immigrants reverted to. Finally, it deals with both the therapeutic and the destructive powers of compulsive writing and shows how the writing process assists an immigrant writer when coping with distress experienced in her new homeland, but, on the other hand, it also demonstrates how compulsive writing may lead to obsessive behaviours, resulting in losing awareness of one's surroundings, neglecting one's family, and even to depression and suicide.

Keywords: nostalgia, immigration, autobiography, Jewish female writers.

> "The selves we display in autobiographies are doubly constructed, not only in the act of writing a life story but also in a lifelong process of identity formation of which the writing is usually a comparatively late phase" (Eakin 2019, IX).
>
> "Every act of rebellion expresses nostalgia for innocence and an appeal to the essence of being" (Camus 1984, 14).
>
> "The twentieth century began with utopia and ended with nostalgia" (Boym 2007, 7).

Autobiographies and memoirs have been popular practically as long as history has been chronicled. Nevertheless, autobiography was not classified as an independent genre until the late eighteenth century, and, as such, it missed an important testing ground for critical controversies about an array of ideas, including authorship, selfhood, representation, and the distinction between fact and fiction. Robert Southey coined the term "autobiography" in 1809 to describe the work of a Portuguese poet (Berryman 1999, 71). Since then, intense literary disputes have arisen regarding the genre's definition and its characteristics. One definition that has gained a relative consensus among literary critics is that of Philippe Lejeune, who defines autobiography as "a retrospective prose narrative produced by a real person concerning his own existence, focusing on his individual life: in particular, on the development of his personality" (Lejeune 1982, 193).

The Jewish immigrant autobiography forms a particular sub-category within the immigrant autobiography sub-genre, which has recently received quite an extensive critical attention. Dozens of literary studies were dedicated to Abraham Cahan's novel *The Rise of David Levinsky* (1917), in which *Levinsky*, as some other Jewish immigrant writers, does not entirely succeed to bridge the gap between Europe and America. Quite wide-ranging research was also devoted to autobiographical works of Jewish female immigrants such as Mary Antin's *The Promised Land* (1912), Leah Morton's (pen name: Elizabeth Stern) *I Am a Woman – and a Jew* (1926), and Anzia Yezierska's semi-autobiographical work *Bread Givers* (1925) and her later autobiographical novel *Red Ribbon on a White Horse* (1950). Nonetheless, several less known but probably not less significant Jewish immigrant writers' voices have received very scarce critical attention, if at all.

The Jewish immigrant autobiography sub-genre seems to present quite a dichotomous picture of either compassionately depicting immigrants' suffering, dreadful experiences, and harsh conditions in New York sweatshops and tenements or, conversely, extolling the remarkable success of Jewish immigrants while merging into the American melting pot.[1] Not much research, however,

1 YIVO (Yiddish Scientific Institute), established in 1925 in Vilna, Lithuania, relocated its activity to New York in 1940. In 1942, it organized a competition for the best autobiographical sketch by Jewish immigrants in America. The organizers asked the participants to write a piece

has been dedicated to the displacement and uprootedness of young Jewish female immigrants in America and to the nostalgic feelings they have carried for many years in the process of their not always successful acculturation and/or assimilation into American reality.

The goal of this paper is hence threefold. First, it intends to revive a forgotten voice of a Jewish immigrant female writer, Rose Gollup-Cohen, whose autobiography describing her childhood in Eastern Europe and a later life phase in America has not entered the literary canon. Moreover, employing mainly psychoanalytical methodology as well as feminist critique, the paper is aimed at delving into the nostalgic feelings such writers have been experiencing throughout their adult life in America, yearnings that frequently have been dismissed as overly sentimental or even neurotic. Finally, the paper addresses both the therapeutic qualities and the destructive powers of compulsive writing, and demonstrates how the writing process, in general, and that of producing autobiographical prose, in particular, helps an immigrant to cope with anxiety and distress experienced in the new homeland. It seems that Gollup-Cohen uses writing in the attempt of reconstructing her imagined "idyllic sphere" whose essence, she feels, is crumbling and vanishing. On the other hand, however, compulsive writing may lead to obsessive behaviour, resulting in losing awareness of one's surroundings, neglecting one's family and depression. The biographical sketch written by Leonora O'Reilly (1919) about Rose Gollup-Cohen, and Anzia Yezierska's (1927) semi-(auto)biographical/semi-fictional story "Wild Winter Life" based on Rose's life will shed additional light on the latter's nostalgic yearnings, deep sorrows, and her compulsive writing spree.

While many Jewish immigrants in America just briefly refer to their former life in Russia or Poland, or at times shortly and often dolefully record their and their families' misfortunes in their native land, a few writers such as Rose Gollup-Cohen (1880–1925) and Lucy Robins Lang (1884–1962) provide a much more detailed and every so often a nostalgic record of their childhood's formative years in Eastern Europe.

on the theme "Why I left Europe and what I have accomplished in America." Although the organizers encouraged the contestants to write about their former life in Eastern Europe, most of the 223 submissions (just 20% of which were written by women) deal with the writers' "accomplishment in America," almost totally disregarding their childhood or youth in Russia, Galicia, or Poland. The importance of the project is undeniable in terms of archiving personal documents and letters and sharing the communal hardships during the first years of adjustment. Some critics, including Daniel Soyer (who edited and published together with Jocelyn Cohen in 2008 some of the winning autobiographical works of YIVO 1942's competition), maintain that the formulation of the theme "Why I left Europe and what I have accomplished in America" facilitated "descriptions of the social dislocation that first caused, and then was exacerbated by the migration process itself" (Cohen and Soyer 2006, 225). Nevertheless, it seems that this, as some other initiatives organized by Jewish bodies, encouraged or even pushed immigrants into writing "bootstrap narratives" that rather than centring on individual experiences, including traumatic ones, or offering support, celebrate and endorse the competitive ideal of success.

Nostalgia, according to Filiberto Fuentenebro de Diego and Carmen Valiente Ots, is a term that "was first proposed in 1688 by Johannes Hofer [...] It referred to a state of moral pain associated with the forced separation from family and social environment" (Fuentenebro and Ots 2014, 404). Since then, numerous medical, psychological, and sociological studies were dedicated to studying the symptoms and outcomes of the condition.[2] Nostalgia was often considered as the incapacitating claim to preserve ideals and principles that are about to become outdated in the name of progress. While some researchers, particularly those writing in the first decades of the twentieth century, and often confounding nostalgia with homesickness, treated nostalgia as an "immigrant psychosis" (Frost 1938, 801), claiming that immigrants "found themselves the victims of social forces they could neither understand nor alter" (Frost 1938, 807), more recent research repeatedly, though not unanimously, distinguishes between nostalgia and homesickness, and views the former as having positive ramifications. Krystine Irene Batcho, after performing several important studies on the nature and effects of nostalgia, concludes that:

> the largely negative picture of a fearful, unhappy, dependent person which had dominated many years of nostalgia theory is replaced by a more positive image of an individual with the capacity to feel intensely and for whom other people are a high priority. This view suggests that the nostalgic person is neither trapped in the past nor afraid to live in the present or for the future. (Batcho 1998, 430)

Svetlana Boym, the author of several influential studies on nostalgia, similarly to Batcho, does not see nostalgia as the enemy of progress. Boym shows that progress and nostalgia are "doubles and mirror images of one another" (Boym 2007, 7), as both are tied to modernism. For her, nostalgia marks the rapports between individual biography and the collective biography of groups or nations. With that same thread of thought, Gollup-Cohen's nostalgic writing reflects the collective yearnings of a whole generation of Jewish immigrants in America (Boym 2007, 9).

Rose Gollup-Cohen's Nostalgic Longings

Rose Gollup-Cohen immigrated to the United States in 1892 with her young aunt, Masha, while her mother, sisters, and brothers remained in Belarus, waiting for Rose's father to send tickets and money required for their travel. The father

2 The definition of nostalgia has been significantly altered over time. Subsequently to its Greek roots *nóstos* and *álgos* meaning 'homecoming' and 'distress,' respectively, nostalgia was considered for centuries a potentially incapacitating and at times even deadly medical condition conveying extreme homesickness and anxiety. Castelnuovo-Tedesco, for example, refers to nostalgia as

escaped his native country due to compulsory enlisting to military service in the Tzar's army, arrived in New York in 1890, and managed to save the funds necessary to pay travel fare for his daughter and younger sister, working as a presser in a textile sweatshop. In 1918, Rose published her autobiography, *Out of the Shadow: A Russian Jewish Girlhood on the Lower East Side*, which has been widely read by American readership, translated to several languages, and gone through several editions, but, oddly, it has received scarce critical attention.

Upon arrival to New York, Rose, the dreamy, sensitive girl who used to play in the fields and woods of her village and vividly envision imaginary sights and friends lost her fanciful childhood fantasies and abruptly became a hard-working sweatshop labourer. Her memories about her childhood in a Belarusian village, populated by a mixed Jewish and gentile population, include heartfelt longings for the bygone past. While barefoot, at times shabbily clothed and scarcely fed, she remembers how

> as soon as I sat down [in the fields], the twigs and flowers turned into fanciful girls and boys who adored me. I named each one of them and myself I called Dena. And then we went romping about in the fields. I was extremely happy among these imaginary companions […] Among these companions there was one who at first was just a name I liked. But after a while at the thought of the name I saw a vision of a tall, dark, handsome youth […] So real did this imaginary brother become that when I found myself alone in the dark, trembling with fear, I would call out "Oh, Ephraim, where are you?" [...] Then my two hands would clasp each other, and I seemed to feel safer (Gollup-Cohen 1995, 25–26).

Rose's (then, Rahel's) nostalgic memories include not just her joyful play in Nature and the happy time she spent with her siblings, playing by the lake or planting vegetables in their little garden, but she also recollects the affection and heartiness of her blind grandmother, who taught her how to spin and to pray and told her numerous biblical stories and folktales. The grandfather, a more reserved and less pious man than the rest of the family, pampered the grandchildren with occasional treats brought from a neighbouring town. Rose's childhood was never an idyllic one, since the Jews in Belarus as well as in Russia and Poland time and again suffered from pogroms, persecution, and forced enlisting of husbands and fathers to the army.[3]

"a regressive manifestation closely related to the issue of loss, grief, incomplete mourning, and, finally, depression" (Castelnuovo-Tedesco 1980, 110).

3 According to historians, the murder of Tsar Alexander II in 1881 and the pogroms it brought about produced a mass immigration of Jews from Russia, Belarus, Poland, and the Pale of Settlement that lasted for more than three decades. According to Van Onselen, "A drop in the cost of rail fares and a sharp fall in the price of steerage passages on over-traded international

Nevertheless, when roaming about the countryside, hearing "the echoes which seemed to come from the dense mysterious looking forest across the lake," and when dancing in the fields clasping "hands with the children […] spin[ning] around and around until [they] fell breathless and dizzy" (Gollup-Cohen 1995, 42), Rose feels as the happiest child in the world. Before departure to New York, she suffers deep regret at leaving her homeland and particularly her grandmother, who, due to old age and poor health, is to remain behind.

Leaving home and arriving to the dreary, deprived, and threatening New York tenements populated by strangers from various countries, on occasion suffering from anti-Semitic remarks and often abused by greedy employers, Rose loses her childhood at the age of twelve. The father works from dawn to late evening, and when asked by Rose whether everyone "in America live[s] like this? Go[es] to work early, come[s] home late, eat[s] and go[es] to sleep?" (Gollup-Cohen 1995, 74), he replies that eventually Rose will get married and be freed from the hard daily drudgery. The choices that stand for a young and poor female immigrant are limited: either being employed as a domestic aide and residing with her wealthy employers or getting married and either working partially as a seamstress or tending her husband's shop or, in case the husband is able to provide for the family, becoming a homemaker. Schooling was no option, but ironically, due to Rose's failing health caused by hard physical labour followed by long-term hospitalization, while in infirmary, she manages to learn to read in English and is allowed to proceed with her education.

Ruth's (Rose's) nostalgic yearnings seem to act as a double-edged sword. On the one hand, they allow her to withstand the harsh immigrant reality as memories provide some repose and temporary elation. Batcho suggests that under certain conditions, "nostalgia can help the individual to maintain a sense of connectedness with parts of self over time, and with other people throughout life. Such connectedness could help to foster a firm sense of continuity of self and to sharpen one's sense of identity within a network of personal relationships" (Batcho 1998, 430). For Gobodo-Madikizela, "the fundamental role of nostalgia is to restore a sense of continuity in identity" (Gobodo-Madikizela 2012, 256), which in Rose's case is of significance, as for her the immigration process does not fare well, breaking down her old world without offering a viable alternative.

On the other hand, tragically, the nostalgic reminiscence of her childish playfulness and bliss are unattainable, hence leading to depression, and eventually to suicide. Drawing on the work of Karl Jasper and referring to Freud's studies of hysteria, Elisabeth Bronfen maintains that "the nostalgic suffers from pleasurable memories she would like to re-enact, but which she cannot because she has been displaced from the one site promising such a satisfying fulfilment" (Bronfen 1998,

shipping routes saw two to three million Jews flee central and eastern Europe to join the great migration west in the 'Age of capital'" (2007, 120).

272). In psychoanalysis, nostalgia is viewed not just as yearning for the past but also as a process of romanticizing the past. Freud refers to "screen memories" as a combination of many different memories; an inaccurate account of the past in which feelings are contained or missed after their actual occurrence. Freud also conjectures that childhood memories are essentially memories of memories and that memories actually provide a twisted sense of the past. Accordingly,

> it may indeed be questioned whether we have any memories at all from our childhood […] Our childhood memories show us our earliest years not as they were but as they appeared at the later periods when the memories were aroused. In these periods of arousal, the childhood memories did not, as people are accustomed to say, emerge; they were formed at that time. And a number of motives, with no concern for historical accuracy, had a part in forming them, as well as in the selection of the memories themselves. (Freud 1899, 322)

Such screen memories relate to the way memory operates and to how it may be distorted. According to Boren, "Freud's screen memories lend credence to the notion that nostalgia is often a psychological defence; that it derives from falsehoods and uses these misinterpretations of the past as the foundation for future behaviours" (Boren 2013, n. p.). Tragically, Rose may be trapped in either nostalgic yearnings of her past or in her screen memories that, on the one hand, provide her with a sense of security, defend her from social hostility and harsh existence, and allow her to sustain a temporary sense of connectedness with her former self but, on the other hand, keep her grounded, consequently preventing her adjustment to and assimilation in her new country. In "Wild Winter Love," Ruth despairingly cries: "I'm a woman without a country. I'm uprooted from where I started; and I can't find roots anywhere. I've lost the religion of my fathers. I've lost the human ties that hold other women. I can only live in the world I create out of my brain" (Yezierska 1927, 488). Heightened sensitivity and developed imagination may be a blessing for a writer, but when they feed an obsession, they are a curse.

Ruth's (Rose's) heightened sensitivity, paired with empathy, and developed sense of justice (organizing labour protests and helping to manage trade schools for poor girls) may also lend themselves to Rose's nostalgic reminiscences. Batcho conjectures that "perhaps it is the capacity to feel more intensely or to be sensitive to affective triggers which results in the nostalgic individual's greater likelihood to feel both the 'bitter' and the 'sweet' which constitutes the characteristic mixed affect of nostalgia" (Batcho 1998, 420).

In a rare article published in 1919 about Rose, Leonora O'Reilly (1870–1927), an American feminist, suffragist, and trade union organizer, who met Rose in 1897

(when the latter was seventeen), testifies that Rose was "like a peasant girl-woman. Shy and wise […] She did things well […] She talked very little. She listened very intently […] Rose set to make things attractive. Her hands are tools when she has no others, when she has others, she knows how to use them" (1919, 103–104). After her long illness, Rose was referred by Lillian D. Wald[4] to work at a sewing workshop established by O'Reilly for immigrant women. This place offered much more humane working conditions than the textile sweatshops usually managed by Jewish employers, where Rose had been previously employed. In 1901, Rose helped O'Reilly to open and manage a trade school for girls aimed at saving them from the "horrors of the present and past where workers are hands and hands only […] stimulate ambition in the young working girl […] give her a sense of the dignity of labour and a self-respect" (O'Reilly 1919, 104).

Shortly after her release from the hospital, Rose married Joseph Cohen, a tailor with whom she had a daughter, Evelyn. She then stopped working but continued her education, attending classes at Breadwinners' College at the Educational Alliance, the Rand School, and University Extension at Columbia University and assisting Leonora O'Reilly's at a girls' trade school. Though busying herself as a mother, wife, and O'Reilly's aide, it seems that Rose's main ambition was centred on writing her autobiography. O'Reilly testifies that Rose admitted that the book "was spelling out of her, Joseph and Evelyn ate burned supper. The voice of the book was calling her […] they [the whole family] had read its every word over and over again. Joseph had laughed and cried" (O'Reilly 1919, 105).

Strangely, though, the autobiography records neither Rose's married life nor the birth of her daughter nor her writing career. It ends quite abruptly with Rose's father buying a small grocery shop and proudly relates what seems the family's greatest achievement – her brother's enrolment to Columbia University and winning a prestigious academic prize. Since there is no record in Rose's autobiography of the writing process, the struggles she went through when writing, rewriting, and then publishing the work, there is a sense of her humility but probably also that of self-effacement.

The Therapeutic and Destructive Powers of Writing

Seemingly, writing the story of Rose's younger self, recalling and reinstating her childhood bear both therapeutic and traumatic ramifications. The book consumed Rose's entire existence, and she spent several years writing and rewriting

4 Lillian D. Wald (1867–1940) was an American nurse and social worker who founded the internationally known Henry Street Settlement in New York City in 1893. According to Emma Rothberg, "beyond her work with the Henry Street Settlement, Wald was a tireless advocate for the rights of women, children, immigrants, and laborers. She helped start the United States

it. The struggle she goes through when writing is quite evident in Leonora O'Reilly's account, which, while hinting at Rose's changing moods and certain obsession, somehow admiringly shifts the focus from Rose's compulsive writing thrust to her kindness and skilfulness. In a poetic passage, O'Reilly maintains that "life has taught her (Rose) to write. Nature cast her in the mold," but, nevertheless, society "may crash her kind to earth" (O'Reilly 1919, 105), as people of Rose's sort are susceptible to criticism and hurt, being "the peasant people of all lands, singers of songs, tellers of tales" (O'Reilly 1919, 105) whose dreamy makeup makes them ill-prepared for social violence and brutality. O'Reilly repeatedly refers to Rose as "a peasant girl" (O'Reilly 1919, 105) implying Rose's innocence, her melancholia, and her nostalgic yearnings for her childhood landscape.

Rose's continuous struggle to adapt to American culture both psychologically and socio-culturally without losing her original self is at the heart of her writing, aimed at both reinstating her native identity and proving herself as a capable American mainstream writer. On the one hand, Rose's writing undertaking fills her with enthusiasm, alertness, and a state of high energy and provides her with gratifying engagement. According to some studies, reliving one's autobiographical memories (AM) has strong therapeutic powers leading to emotion regulation and identity functions such as improving current mood states and maintaining a coherent identity. Bluck, Alea, Habermas, and Rubin maintain that autobiographical memories offer "directive (planning for present and future behaviours), self (self-continuity, psychodynamic integrity), and communicative (social bonding) functions" (Bluck et al. 2005, 93). Moreover, the autobiographical genre lends itself to serving as a form of self-reflexive and hence positive criticism since it often uses the writer's experience as a lens through which to view an absent community, and it calls for changeability and self-fulfilment. According to Linda Park-Fuller, "in acts of telling, speakers often come to understand events in new ways – in ways of their own construction – and such self-generated knowledge can serve to liberate them from the diseases they suffer" (Park-Fuller 2000, 24).

On the other hand, Rose's wish to excel in everything she does, including in writing, turns her literary endeavour to an obsession. "Compulsive writing" disorder, "Graphomania" or Hypergraphia, lately referred to by psychiatrists and psychologists as an irresistible pathological urge to write a lot,[5] may be responsible

Children's Bureau, the National Child Labor Committee, and the National Women's Trade Union League. She supported and worked for a women's right to birth control and was a part of the women's suffrage" (Rothberg 2020, n. p.).

5 According to Alice Flaherty, "neurologists have found that changes in a specific area of the brain can produce hypergraphia — the medical term for an overpowering desire to write" (Flaherty 2004, 16). Though the neuro-psychoanalytic causes of hypergraphia and the discussion of how obsessive writing is connected to the wiring of our brains is beyond the scope of this paper, it is important to note that recently lots of research have been done in this area. For additional

for Rose's depression and eventually for her suicide. In "Rahel and 'Out of the Shadow,'" O'Reilly insinuates that everything Rose did was accomplished faultlessly; for instance, when taking care of the workers' children in camp, Rose's "ability to take infinite pains is a sign of genius" or when summarizing Rose's continuous effort, O'Reilly says it was "a 24-hour-a-day piece of work" (O'Reilly 1919, 104). The same is true when Rose devotedly attends to her sick husband or to her baby daughter's needs.

This perfectionism both as a labourer and later when joining the union and taking care of her fellow workers at the sweatshops and workers' children in camps and trade schools accompanies Rose also as a writer. When writing, she is wholly immersed in the experience, neglecting her family and her basic needs. She stops eating, she almost does not sleep, and she almost loses contact with the outer world. Rose confesses to Leonora O'Reilly that "the book was spelling out of her […] The voice of the book was calling her" (O'Reilly 1919, 105). She feels that she is compelled to write it even though "Joseph and Evelyn ate a burned supper" and in spite of the sleepless nights and the heavy toll writing takes on her physical and mental health. Rose is constantly anxious about who will publish the book in the first place, and, if published, who will read it (O'Reilly 1919, 105). O'Reilly reports that while writing, Rose's hair became grey and her cheeks lost their roundness, but she could not stop writing as "[n]ature cast her in a mold that compels her to do whatever she does well," including writing (O'Reilly 1919, 105).

Without pathologizing Rose, it is quite clear that her obsessive writing derives from a fervent internal force, maybe a sense of gratification, a wish to boost her self-esteem or nostalgic yearnings for the past, rather than from outer pressures. Alice Flaherty claims that compulsive writing "usually has themes that are highly meaningful for the author, often philosophical, religious, or autobiographical" (Flaherty 2004, 22).

Rose Gollup-Cohen died in 1925 at age forty-five under uncertain circumstances. Thomas Dublin in his introduction to the 1995 edition of Cohen's biography speculates that she might have committed suicide, jumping into the East River in New York (Dublin 1995, XV). He also maintains that her siblings and nephews refused to relate to her tragic death. In 1927, Anzia Yezierska, whose semi-autobiography, *Bread Givers*, was published several years after Gollup-Cohen's *Out of the Shadow*, decided to write a short story based on Rose's life, entitled "Wild Winter Life," which was published in the well-reputed *The Century Magazine*. Doubtlessly, Yezierska was being acquainted with Rose, possibly admired her and was inspired by the latter's writing. It may be speculated that Cohen's tragic and untimely death at the age of forty-five under uncertain circumstances led Anzia Yezierska to write this autobiographical but possible

materials related to the above-mentioned topic, see Peter Van Vugt, et al. (1996), Charles Brenner (2004), and Lennard J. Davis (2005, 2008).

also semi-biographical[6] story ending in the protagonist's suicide. The story's heroine, named Ruth Raefsky, is so consumed with her wish to write a book that "she seemed wrapped up inside herself. Not seeing, not hearing anything around her" (Yezierska 1927, 485). The husband, a tailor, fully supports Ruth's wish and encourages her to attend evening writing classes and devote her time to writing. Ruth describes how the writing process tears her "flesh in pieces for every little word" and "a consuming passion flared up in her eyes […] Her tightly clenched hands trembled with nervousness […] Here were brains and intelligence. Here was a woman who knew what she wanted to say, but was lost in the mazes of the new language" (Yezierska 1927, 486). Ruth feels estranged, as the "cold-hearted Americans" cannot understand her story or sympathize with her "feverish turmoil" (Yezierska 1927, 486).

In this story, Anzia Yezierska impressively affirms Rose's compulsiveness, mentioned in a subtler way in O'Reilly's account, describing "those years of toil by day and night, tearing up by the roots her [Rose's] starved childhood, her starved youth, trying to tell, in her personal story, the story of her people" (Yezierska 1927, 491). Yezierska, who, similarly to Rose, wrote her autobiographies after leaving the Jewish ghetto, may understand Rose's physical and temporal displacement. No longer living in the ghetto at the time when they write, the ghetto nonetheless continues to be an integral part of Anzia's and Rose's identity, as is their native land. Asking a hypothetical question: "How could they [people outside the ghetto and/or the gentile public] understand the all-consuming urge that drove her to voice her way across the chasm between the ghetto and America" (Yezierska 1927, 491) regarding her and Rose's breached identity, Yezierska neatly summarizes the personal struggles immigrants face. For the Jews in the East Side New York ghetto, Rose is "the Other," a writer and a woman who moved out to join the goyim (the gentiles); the American public, however, cannot understand Rose's "urge" to tell her story, as it is a tale of "a Russian Jewish peasant" (O'Reilly 1919, 105) with whom they can hardly sympathize, as for them, as an immigrant, a woman, and a Jew, she is a foreigner. In an extremely powerful and gloomy passage, O'Reilly summarizes well the chasm between Jewish immigrants and the American "society, we, you and I, life as it is lived today, may crush her and her kind to earth, wring their hearts with the horror of it all, wash our hands till they are white and soft in the sweat of their toil" (O'Reilly 1919, 105).

Seemingly, society awards a female writer the right to attain improved opportunities; nevertheless, at the same time it refuses such claims. The gap between the type of woman she imagines herself becoming and the outer reality results in the feeling of loss and confusion. When she chooses writing

6 In "Wild Winter Love," Yezierska actually retells her own relationships with John Dewey, a Columbia University philosophy professor, intertwining it with her own tragic love affair with the editor Clifford Smyth and with Gollup's-Cohen's wretched relationship with her gentile lover.

over motherhood and marriage, the decision shakes her whole life and instils hesitation and unease.

During the tedious writing process, Ruth almost stops functioning as a mother and wife, skips meals and hardly sleeps, until she suffers a nervous breakdown. The book's publication and subsequent success brings neither happiness nor repose to her ailing soul. Ruth leaves her daughter and husband and rents an apartment where she lives on her own until she meets a married gentile lawyer, who becomes her mentor and lover. She feels that this man is the only one who understands her without judgment; being with him is "like traveling in foreign countries. He excites my [her] imagination and releases my [her] imagination" (Yezierska 1927, 490). With this man, she can nostalgically recount her past, pouring herself "out at his feet, in poems of my [her] people, their hopes, their dreams" (Yezierska 1927, 490). Ruth's (Rose's) nostalgic recollections, which were dismissed by her Jewish friends, incite her lover's admiration as he listens to her "with the wonder of a child listening to adventure. It's all so fresh and new to him, my [her] world, that it becomes fresh and new to me [her]" (Yezierska 1927, 490). Sadly, Ruth's romance does not last long (just one "wild winter," as the story's title indicates). Her lover, a middle-aged man, fearing a public scandal, terminates the affair. Ruth (Rose), though at that time a popular writer, cannot withstand the shock, and she commits suicide.

Immigrants' Name/Identity Changing

Assimilation and acculturation, though often highly cherished by American society, seem to pose a threat to people of Rose's kind. The pressure to leave behind aspects of who she is in favour of a new, assimilated identity by changing her name, giving up on religious practices she valued as a child, and conforming to the rigid working practices of a sweatshop overwhelm her. While Mary Antin and Anzia Yezierska (in most of her literary oeuvre) convey the immigrant's desire to live the American Dream,[7] Rose feels that giving up her former identity uproots her from the familiar things of her past. When working in a sweatshop, the owner's wife, Mrs Nelson, kindly but resolutely suggests that Rahel (Rose's Jewish name) changes her name to Ruth, claiming that "every loafer who sees a Jewish girl shouts 'Rachel' after her. And on Cherry Street where you live there are many saloons and many loafers" (Gollup-Cohen 1995, 82). Eventually, although

7 Over the last two decades there, has been renewed interest in the work of Yezierska by sociologists and literary critics, mainly thanks to her documentation of women's experience of immigration and sweatshop labour. In the late 1980s, Mary Dearborn writes: "By and large, however, the immigrant endorsed the agenda of Americanization […] Yezierska wished fervently to make herself over as an American" (Dearborn 1988, 40).

it is not mentioned in Gollup-Cohen's biography, she decides to change her name to "Rose" rather than to "Ruth," probably as she feels that it sounds less Jewish. Interestingly, though, Rose still keeps her last maiden name, perhaps as the only remnant of her past/lost identity.

When discussing the common practice of name changing among immigrants in the first three decades of the twentieth century, in the attempt of immersing themselves into the American "melting pot," Watkins and London suggest that "naming patterns are but one of a bundle of markers of a distinctive culture. Because personal names are relatively easy to alter, they are likely to be a leading indicator of culture" (Watkins and London 1994, 197). Carneiro et al. rightfully assert that although "an American name provides a change in one's social identity, making integration easier […] adopting names that are common in the dominant culture may not necessarily imply a change in one's outcomes" (Carneiro et al. 2020, n. p.). Changing one's name, especially under pressure, and while living in an unreceptive environment, may be detrimental to one's personality. Her name is part of Rose's self-concept, and it also gives her a sense of security and protection, as it was selected by her parents and used by her beloved grandparents, and hence bears a valuable nostalgic meaning. Avner Falk claims that "names, which form so important a part [sic] from the very beginning of life, when the mothering person addresses the baby by his name, or 'name of affection' […] come to symbolize the identity of the person" (Falk 1976, 651). Accordingly, changing her name is undeniably a blow to Rose's self-perception, and it may be one of the reasons that undermine her confidence, leading to a sense of estrangement, anxiety, and despair.

Interestingly, Leonora O'Reilly's in her biographical account about Rose entitled "Rahel and 'Out of the Shadow'" – written quite late in Rose's life, after the latter gained a reputation of a writer and published under the name "Rose" –, refers to Rose as "Rahel" (the name's Hebrew version, not even the anglicized rendering – "Rachel"). It may be speculated that as the relationships between these women were close, O'Reilly, daughter of Irish immigrants belonging to the low working class, a social worker, and a suffragist, was sensitive to the emotional harm changing one's name can bring about, and thus uses Rose's original name. In Yezierska's "Wild Winter Love," the protagonist is called "Ruth," probably echoing the name Rose's employer, Mrs Nelson suggested that she adopts. In this case, though Yezierska veils the biographical source of her tale, she still alludes to its disguised protagonist autobiography in which Gollup-Cohen describes the attempt of Mrs Nelson at changing the former's name. Certainly, changing her name was of importance to Rose, as in "My Childhood Days in Russia," a short story Gollup-Cohen publishes in the *Bookman Literary Journal* in 1918, the incident of name changing is retold almost in the same words as in her autobiography.

Conclusions

Rose Gollup-Cohen's almost forgotten autobiography voices the hardships many young Jewish female immigrants experienced when arriving to America at the end of the nineteenth century and in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Such women often had to endure their families' and communities' demands and expectations when toiling in textile sweatshops to help pay for the remaining family members' passage to America. Simultaneously, they were required to maintain home culture and adhere to Jewish values (such as early marriages to candidates chosen by the father, keeping a kosher kitchen, etc.).

Education and artistic endeavours were "luxuries" such women were not entitled to. Rose Gollup-Cohen, though physically sickly and of a highly sensitive nature, manages to overcome the destitute lot of the meagre immigrant existence in New York's East Side tenements, gain education, and become a well-read writer. Nevertheless, such an extraordinary achievement has come with a heavy price. Rose, at once haunted and elated by the nostalgic memories of her past in Belarus and driven by an irresistible and overwhelming desire to become a writer at all costs, suffers from depression, which tragically leads to self-destruction and suicide.

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"A Sea Change into Something Rich and Strange." Margaret Atwood's *Hag-Seed:* A Metatextual Approach

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Abstract. Ever since it was published, Margaret Atwood's *Hag-Seed* (2016) has been scrutinized for its peculiar engagements with the Shakespearean pre-text at the cross-section of various discourses, from literary and media studies, through drama pedagogy, even to prison studies. Drawing on the prison metaphor from the original and recontextualizing it as a contemporary prison performance is just one of the multitudinous forms and ways in which *The Tempest* is incorporated into Atwood's novel. Thus, though it is quite difficult to designate a sole term for what she (un)does with the classic, one striking issue anyone may encounter is its intertwining metatextuality which encapsulates many of its core interpretations as a *rewriting* and/or *adaptation*. The present paper aims at unravelling the many layers, means and functions of this particular type of metatextuality and/or metatheatricality found in the novel. We look at the polyphonic nexus of texts and contexts that defines Atwood's novel as an experiment that reconsiders, with a gesture of metatextual homage, the prospects of rewriting – a practice Shakespeare himself was highly familiar with – in the contemporary age. Nested in the Genettean structuralist framework (Genette 1997 [1982]), our approach is meant to expand its applicability taking into consideration Deleuze and Guattari's concept of rhizome to investigate Atwood's rewriting as an instance of "rhizomatic metatextuality" as well as the strategies of interpretation, appropriation, and reconstruction in fan fiction rewriting (see Jenkins 1992). Placing metatextuality as the central interpretive key of the novel, we shall discuss the roles of theatre (and art,

in general) represented in *Hag-Seed* as an aesthetic and art history account, as well as the status of the interpreter or the intended audience of both the novel and the play within.

Keywords: Shakespeare, adaptation, metatextuality, metatheatricality.

1. "Whereof what's past is prologue"

1.1. Margaret Atwood's *Hag-Seed* – An Interpretive Hub at the Cross-Section of Various Discourses

Entering Margaret Atwood's fictional woods of *Hag-Seed*, prompted by the commission of the Hogarth Shakespeare project on the occasion of the 400th anniversary of the Bard's death, one may encounter "the difficulty of assigning a label" (Muñoz-Valdivieso 2017, 108) to what she (un)does with *The Tempest* in it. Within the widespread contemporary practice of reprising literary works of the past (Maisonnat, Paccaud-Huguet, and Ramel 2009, vii) and, more precisely, within the overwhelming amount of Shakespearean reworks which "has resulted in a kind of subgenre" (Giménez Yuste 2019, 6), Atwood's novel stands out for its peculiar engagements with the Shakespearean pre-text which gave rise to a series of contemporary discussions. Thus, the novel has been investigated through the lens of literary theory, exploring possible interpretive keys such as: debates on *adaptation* and *appropriation*, along with the versatile issue of *metatextual adaptation* (Bartnicka 2021) and/or *(meta)theatricality* (Vanhaudenarde 2019, Rarenko 2021); treating it as a *neo-Shakespearean retelling* (Muñoz-Valdivieso 2017); proposing approaches that delve into *postcolonialism* and *postmodernism* (Puttaiah and Sowmya 2021); scrutinizing the trope of prison, also entailing concepts like Michel Foucault's *heterotopia* and Victor Turner's *liminality*, among others. Asserting its applicability for interdisciplinary approaches, the novel also poses issues of interart relations fruitful for film and media studies, as it may be discussed in connection with, and by references to, screen adaptations of *The Tempest*, entailing inter- and multimediality (Ciobanu 2021) or related to the global *Shakespeare in prison* phenomenon, involving drama pedagogy and prison education (Cavecchi 2017, Ward and Connolly 2020). In a more general framework, the novel may be a point of interest for social studies and psychology, through its incursions into overlapping issues of culture and society, precarity and creativity, anxiety and trauma processing, etc.

1.2. *Hag-Seed* as a Multilayered Metatextual Adaptation

Irrespective of the path we might choose to analyse the novel, what remains of interest is the fact that Atwood's rewriting is not merely an adaptation of the Shakespearean play to the contemporary context but also a reconsideration of *adaptation* itself. While surveying the wide transgenerational and transmedial practice of adaptation, Linda Hutcheon notes that "[w]hatever the motive, from the adapter's perspective, adaptation is an act of appropriating or salvaging, and this is always a double process of interpreting and then creating something new" (2006, 20). Apart from demonstrating that the stakes of the classic are still valid in our contemporary world, Atwood challenges the practice of rewriting, customizing it to her own aesthetic fabric of art and creation. Her way of connecting with the timeless predecessor gives rise to a unique metatextuality devised as a dialogical interface between the novel and the play, through which she simultaneously reimagines the classic in a new guise and also overtly incorporates the process of its – recontextualized – interpretation. For her, the stake is prominently to freshly relate to the standards set up by the predecessors, to occasionally recharge her cells of artistry from the inexhaustible stores of literary history since "[a]ll writers learn from the dead. As long as you continue to write, you continue to explore the work of writers who have preceded you; you are also judged and held to account by them" (Atwood 2002, 178 – qtd. in Muñoz-Valdivieso 2017, 125).

What is perhaps the most striking issue in Atwood's gesture of reimagining a classic in the contemporary scene is not as much the technicality of *what* she does or *how* she does it as a rewriting *per se* but rather the many layers she orchestrates. In our research, we propose to take further the possibilities of approaching her work as a "metatextual adaptation" as discussed by Bartnicka (2021, 22) or as being "self-reflexively metafictional" as Puttaiah and Sowmya argue in their analysis (2021, 334) by focusing on the manifold ways in which *The Tempest* is addressed in Atwood's reprise. Her work stands apart by dint of resonating with the iconic text in a polyphonic, polymorphic manner, pulling several strings at once. In this overtly challenging, kaleidoscopic *tour de force*, "the resonances of *The Tempest* [...] are at the same time obvious and discreet, blatant and nearly invisible" (Muñoz-Valdivieso 2017, 109), and thus the Shakespearean classic undergoes multiplication, incessant transformation, not as a fixed vantage point but as a mobile presence in a perpetual state of becoming. The cobweb of metatextuality devised in *Hag-Seed* combines multifarious devices of metatextuality and displays several ways in which a classic can be rewritten, and thus we can safely say that it can even be regarded as a "textbook of metatextuality," a guidebook of what is to know about this literary "machinery."

2. Approaches to Multilayered Metatextuality

In what follows, we propose to test the applicability of several theoretical frameworks to the ways in which Atwood operates the machinery of metatextuality in her Hogarth Shakespeare commission. As a point of departure, we regard Atwood's novel as a polyphonic, rhizomatic nexus of texts and contexts, as an experiment that reconsiders, with a gesture of metatextual homage, multiple prospects of rewriting – a practice Shakespeare himself was highly familiar with – in the contemporary age. For this, Gérard Genette's structuralist framework in which he outlines his typology of transtextuality provides an indispensable foundation. Nevertheless, as we will see, positioning the multilayeredness of Atwood's rewriting practice in this frame will necessitate going beyond the Genettean framework and embracing further horizons. Therefore, the discussion of metatextuality will address Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the rhizome and, thirdly, it will be widened to its applicability to fan fiction rewriting theory. To this end, we will look at the ten strategies of interpretation, appropriation, and reconstruction elaborated by Henry Jenkins.

2.1. *Hag-Seed* and Transtextuality

Gérard Genette famously defines transtextuality as "all that sets the text in a relationship, whether obvious or concealed, with other texts" (Genette 1997, 1). In the order in which the French narratologist enlists the five types of transtextual relationships, intertextuality, that is, the actual presence of one text within another, is definitely the more salient in Atwood's *Hag-Seed*. Fragments from, references to *The Tempest* virtually inundate *Hag-Seed*, and are deposited in several forms in the channel of the rewriting: in the chapter and subchapter titles (e.g. *High Charms*, *Abysm of Time*, *Pearl Eyes*, *The Island's Mine*, *Rich and Strange*, etc.), in the form of overt and covert quotations, misquotations, allusions and paraphrases, deploying iconic and lesser known text passages and playfully de/recontextualizing them (e.g. "o brave new world;" "Sea-changing, you might say;" "Our revelth now have ended. Theeth our actors" [in the original: "Our revels are now ended. These our actors"]). Intertextuality does not only extend to *The Tempest* but to further plays by Shakespeare (when thinking about the theatre, Felix, Atwood's Prospero, speaks about "a local habitation and a name," a phrase borrowed from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; "The readiness is all" – he expresses himself in a Hamletian manner, getting ready for revenge) and miscellaneous literary works.[1] The adapted version of *The Tempest* to be performed by the Fletcher Correctional Players is a rewriting(-within-rewriting) of the original dramatic text, paraphrased in contemporary colloquial language

1 For further cases and examples of intertextuality, see subchapter 2.3. of this paper.

and light, playful style: "I'm the man, I'm the Duke, I'm the Duke of Milan, / You want to get pay, gotta do what I say. / Wasn't always this way, no, no, / I was once this dude called Antonio, / I was no big deal and it made me feel so bad, so mad, / Got under my skin, 'cause I couldn't ever win, / Got no respect, I was second in line, / But I just kept smilin', just kept lyin', said everything's fine" (Atwood 2016, 140 pdf).[2]

Second in Genette's line, paratextuality, implying secondary signals, or paratexts bound to the text, reveals not only the connection between Atwood's and Shakespeare's texts, as attested by the title – it is Prospero who calls Caliban, son of Sycorax, "hag-seed" –, subtitle – *The Tempest Retold* –, prologue – displaying the screened end product of the recorded performance *in medias res* –, and epilogue – a summary of the original play –, but also the embeddedness of Atwood's work into a wider contemporary discourse on Shakespeare and *The Tempest*, including screen adaptations, theatrical and festival performances, specialist literature on theatre, Shakespeare and prison literature, listed in the Acknowledgements. All these paratexts establish a contractual force (see Philippe Lejeune's generic contract or "pact"); in other words, there is an explicit contract which, at the very least, alerts the reader to the existence of a relationship between the novel and Shakespeare. The paratextual frame overtly establishes all possible links with the source text and its discursive contexts, thus creating a hub of "Tempest studies" that simultaneously belongs to *belles-lettres* and literary criticism.

The latter aspect is particularly reinforced by the third type of transtextuality, namely metatextuality, implying a critical relationship between text and metatext. The preparations for the prison performance of *The Tempest* occasion an enclave of metatextual commentary embedded in the body of the rewriting, focused on multiple prison-related meanings of Shakespeare's play. It is a key moment of the rehearsals when Felix elicits the prisoners to discover references to prison in the play, Act III, scene 20 of *Hag-Seed* even containing a chart of prisoners, prisons, and jailers on Prospero's island. Locating metaphorical prisons in the real context of the prison is a way for the prisoner-players to connect to the play, to seek relief and find liberation in "playing prison" via literature. Nevertheless, this metatextual insert, together with myriads of other metatextual comments scattered all over the work, displays *The Tempest* together with a consolidated background knowledge on Shakespeare's dramatic universe and the afterlife of his plays (e.g. "Lavinia, Juliet, Cordelia, Perdita, Marina. All the lost daughters. But some of them had been found again. Why not his Miranda?" [Atwood 2016, 25]; "*The Tempest* spent the whole eighteenth century as an opera" [Atwood 2016, 129]). In this way, it is indeed safe to say that "students will learn more

2 Throughout the article, we refer to the non-paginated pdf version of Margaret Atwood's *Hag-Seed. The Tempest Retold* (London and New York: Hogarth, 2016). In what follows, the references will contain the number of the respective pdf page.

about the deeper meanings of *The Tempest* from this singular novel than from dozens of academic studies" (Bate 2016 – qtd. in Muñoz-Valdivieso 2017, 119).

The fourth category proposed by Genette, architextuality, referring to the generic status of the text, poses intriguing questions pertaining to *Hag-Seed*. Albeit being patently a narrative text with all its classic components, from exposition, through conflict and climax, to resolution, which constructs a contemporary revenge story from the bricks and stones of an old tale which undergoes prosaification, still, it preserves, or rather recreates, the classical five-act pattern, together with scenes equal in number to those in the original play. The scene titles contain concrete temporal references, from Felix's plans to organize the Makeshiweg Festival to his packing to leave the prison and having his old job back; however, the temporal references indicate an occasionally non-chronological order, thus displaying a narrative feature. Further on, while as regards the narration–dialogue ratio the narrative parts are predominant, the sentences are short, consistently in the present, and highlight setting details and modes of acting and spelling, thus bearing striking resemblance to the enunciation mode of stage instructions (e.g. "The floor is gray, of that composition substance that wishes to look like granite but fails. It's clean, with a slight polish. The air in the corridor is static and smells of bleach" [Atwood 2016, 75]; "'He's going to go on like that for hours,' says Tony to Sebert, *sotto voce*" [Atwood 2016, 195]). In this way, Atwood's rewriting invents a hybrid genre, in between the novel[3] and the play, endowing the receiver with a sense of productive indecision, never in a secure place in the relational scenario of the rewriting mode.

Finally, as concerns the fifth category, hypertextuality, i.e. "any relationship uniting a text B ([...] hypertext) to an earlier text A ([...] hypotext), upon which it is grafted in a manner that is not that of commentary" (Genette 1997, 5), Atwood's hypertext maintains a similar indecisiveness as mentioned above in that it does not conform smoothly to either the category of "simple or direct transformation" (extracting from the hypotext a set of actions and characters and tackling them in a different style) or "imitation" (telling a different story in a style appropriated from the hypotext). As a direct transformation, *Hag-Seed* basically transposes the action of *The Tempest* to twenty-first-century Canada. Yet, in maintaining a dramatic structure and character, it may also be categorized as being a stylistic imitation, a pastiche that reinvents the form in a new guise and tries to find suitable contemporary contexts and registers. Since Atwood's "text in the second degree" attempts at recreating *The Tempest* at several levels and layers, it integrates both options of transformation and imitation, deliberately transposing the hypotext, in a true Shakespearean spirit, into something "rich and strange." In fact, the idea of transformation is at the core of the source text, this and countless other adaptations attesting to its adaptability to new contexts across spatial and temporal boundaries.

3 Nevertheless, in what follows, we will call it a "novel" and its parts as "chapters."

2.2. *Hag-Seed* as a "Rhizomatic Metatext"

For the ways in which *The Tempest* is simultaneously assigned several roles, its synergistic force permeating several levels of this rewriting assembly, we propose the term "rhizomatic metatextuality" and argue that the connections formed in the halo of these "roles" can be best conceived of as a rhizomatic structure, as famously elaborated by Deleuze and Guattari, any point of which "can be connected to anything other, and must be" (1987, 7). *The Tempest* is incorporated in *Hag-Seed* in a rhizomatic manner: 1. at the diegetic level: 1a. reproducing its "storyline" in a contemporary theatrical context; 1b. the protagonist, Felix, directing *The Tempest*; 1c. the process of performing and recording the play in prison; 1d. *The Tempest* as an end product recorded in two versions; 1d1. for the prisoners; 1d2. for the enemies, Tony and Sal, for taking revenge; 1e. *The Tempest* also being staged at a mental level by keeping Felix's daughter, the dead Miranda alive in his imagination; 2. at a metadiegetic level: 2a. the interpretation of *The Tempest* together with the prisoners; 2b. several references to the universe of Shakespeare scattered throughout the play; 2c. metaleptic jumps in-between the mentioned levels; 3. at the textual level: intertextual references to *The Tempest* rhizomatically permeate the entire novel: 3a. in the titles of parts/acts and chapters/scenes; 3b. within the text: 3b1. in marked form; 3b2. in unmarked form; 3c. the text of the performed play is a rewriting in contemporary language registers; 4. at the medial level: 4a. *The Tempest* is staged as an instance of interactive multimedia theatre; 4b. the metatheatricality of *The Tempest* is amplified in the contemporary context; 4c. intermediality: the prison performance involves not only theatre but also music and film. What is more, by the multifarious modes of metatextual connection to the "original," by bringing into discussion not only the Shakespearean text but also the manifold contemporary literary, cultural, social, and political discourses and practices around it, Atwood's project dissolves the genealogical linearity of source text and adaptation and seems to smoothly fit into the conception that Douglas Lanier calls "Shakespearean rhizomatics," in which the application of the term "rhizome" is aimed at shifting the accent from the authority of the Shakespearean text to the power of Shakespearean adaptation, that is, "the multiple, changing lines of force we and previous cultures have labelled as 'Shakespeare,' lines of force that have been created by and which respond to historical contingencies" (Lanier 2014, 29).

2.3. *Hag-Seed* and the Strategies of Fan Fiction Rewriting

Beyond the Genettean framework of hypertextuality and Deleuze and Guattari's rhizomatics, Atwood's novel may also be investigated through the lenses of fan fiction, relying on the strategies of fan fiction rewriting elaborated by Henry Jenkins

in his volume entitled *Textual Poachers. Television Fans and Participatory Culture* (1992). Jenkins provides a list of ten strategies of interpretation, appropriation, and reconstruction most commonly found in fan fiction culture: 1. recontextualization; 2. expanding the timeline; 3. refocalization; 4. moral realignment; 5. genre shifting; 6. cross-overs; 7. character dislocation; 8. personalization; 9. emotional intensification; 10. eroticization (Jenkins 1992, 165–180).

Although Jenkins's book has primarily in view the rewriting practice in contemporary media and visual culture, the strategies of fan fiction rewriting assembled by him are also applicable to rewriting within the medium of literature. In fact, the strategies elaborated by Jenkins can be regarded as transmedia practices, in strong connection with the broad phenomenon of transmedia storytelling (cf. Jenkins 2006) as well as the transmedial expansion of narratology (Ryan 2006). Besides, as we have seen in the previous subchapter, Atwood's rewriting also gets inspiration from, and makes reference to, filmmaking and multimedia practices, and thus it can be safely placed in the wide field of (trans)mediality.

On numerous occasions, Atwood explicitly or implicitly refers to herself as being Shakespeare's fan and, as such, she engages in various strategies of interpretation, appropriation, and reconstruction of the classic play in a somewhat similar way as fan writers generally do (see Jenkins 1992, 165–182).[4] Thus, perhaps one of the most noticeable ways in which the novel reconstructs the original piece of work is by "recontextualization." Apart from changing its basic setting, Atwood "completes" the classic narrative with "missing scenes" meant to "fill in the gaps [of the play] and to provide additional explanations for the characters' conduct" (Jenkins 1992, 165). Such "missing scenes" are those which tell how Felix ends up in the prison setting, for instance. While Prospero immediately finds himself on the island (i.e. his "prison") shortly after he was embarked, his alter ego, Felix, goes through various hardships until he reaches his "island" (i.e. the prison). The novel includes additional episodes of him searching for a new life and job. There are scenes of his time spent at the farmhouse with the Maude family (see chapters *Poor Full Cell*, *Abysm of Time*) and scenes of him plunging into obsessive behaviour like spying on his enemies while preparing his revenge (see chapter *Rapt in Secret Studies*). These instances of him struggling before his arrival to the prison may serve as background knowledge for the character's future actions, but they may also be set to raise the readers' empathy towards him. As a matter of fact, throughout the novel, Felix is profoundly self-reflective, which may play upon the readers' compassion as well.

On the other hand, the novel substantially expands the timeline of the play. Similarly to recontextualization, this strategy is also meant to exploit

4 Or, rather, as a professional guide into the possibilities of fan fiction. What is more, the author is active on the *wattpad* online platform, where she corresponds with readers and writers and shares her ideas on the art of writing: *https://www.wattpad.com/user/MargaretAtwood*.

the characters' backgrounds, which are not fully explored within the original work, expanding its "framework to encompass moments in the characters' past" (Jenkins 1992, 167), which may explain their actions. One difference between the two approaches is that recontextualization generally refers to past events, while expanding the timeline also entails writing beyond the ending of the original. This type of addition may occur when fan writers reject the original version of the characters' fates, often as a refusal of unpopular endings or when they try to explain controversial plot twists. "The destruction of old narrative situations opens room to explore possibilities that fall beyond the parameters of the original" work (Jenkins 1992, 169). In this sense, the Shakespearean play leaves Prospero's fate without closure. *The Tempest* ends with him hovering on the stage, waiting for the audience's approval. The novel, on the other hand, gives Felix a "happy ending," he embarks on a cruise trip and also gets closure: he sets himself free by freeing his Miranda. Thus, there remains nothing to be solved regarding his fate. Furthermore, the timeline is expanded in the case of other characters as well, though they exist within the frame of the metatext. Thus, Felix and the inmates also discuss the "afterlife" of the Shakespearean characters. As their last assignment, the inmates create their own versions of what would happen to these characters beyond the timeline of the play. These post-play lives of the characters reflect on the many questions Shakespeare leaves his readers/audience with. In the novel, on the contrary, readers may find alternative endings. For instance, Ariel, who ultimately is an air spirit, after being freed by Prospero, starts tackling climate change and helping wherever he can; Antonio would eventually (try to) kill everyone on the way home because, being evil as he is, that's what anybody could expect from him; Miranda, on the other hand, would (try to) save everybody on the boat; Gonzalo would go back to the island and would found his ideal republic with some other good men like him; and, lastly, as for Caliban, after a few considerations, he is found to be Prospero's son, and with his father's help he would become a world famous musician in Milan.

Another rewriting strategy Atwood turns to in her novel is "refocalization," which consists of shifting the attention from the central figures and focusing rather on secondary characters. One of the outcomes this strategy may bring forth is that, by means of refocalization, rewriters may "reclaim female experiences from the margins of male-centered texts" (Jenkins 1992, 171) and develop narratives which allow women to achieve their full potential within the newly created perimeters. In this regard, Atwood's novel seems to "empower" its female characters, compared to the male-dominated Shakespearean patriarchy. The only female character in *The Tempest,* Miranda, is rather passive with respect to his father's plot of revenge. Her fate, if not predetermined, is much dependent on her father's will. On the whole, she embodies the obedient daughter, a virtue very much appreciated in a world where power is yielded by men. Her power mainly

rests in her love for Ferdinand, which is the only reason she would raise her voice against her father while trying to ease her beloved's hardship. Otherwise she is quiet and meek, rather a good listener. In the novel, on the contrary, Miranda's character is split into two comparatively more vigorous and compelling, self-governed individuals. On the one hand, there is the spirit of Miranda, Felix's projection of his deceased daughter. Although a ghost, she actively engages in her father's plans, often scolding him for his wrongdoings or poor thoughts. Even if she exists only in Felix's mind, nobody else being able to see her, she still manages to play an important role in his decision-making processes.

As a matter of fact, remodelling Miranda's character is one of the major changes Atwood operates on the play. In the novel, Felix's daughter dies at the age of three due to meningitis, but he fabricates a self-created illusion that she is still with him, only invisible. In an interview, the author herself explains her choice for Miranda's death. According to Atwood, in modern day, it would not be possible to create a character who could live isolated from other people. A teenage girl only living with her father, with no contact with others, would not be possible to comprehend by contemporary readers. This is why she lives on only in her father's imagination.

Anne-Marie Greenland, on the other hand, the actress who plays Miranda's role in *The Tempest*, is also very energetic, independent, and self-reliant, making her own choices. She does what she wants to do, speaks freely as she wants to, sometimes irrespective of the preset rules (e.g. she curses quite often) and so on. For both of them, Felix stands as a father figure who rather gives in to their wishes.

The most extreme form of refocalization is "moral realignment." Rewritings may "invert or question the moral universe of the primary text, taking the villains and transforming them into the protagonists of their own narratives" (Jenkins 1992, 171). These stories explore what the fictional world would look like if events were told from their perspective. Such tales blur the boundaries between good and evil, as they reverse the original narrative. Atwood's novel does not change the vantage point of the actions, but it surely makes the readers ponder upon its characters' moral justification. The protagonist, Felix, just like Prospero, may be regarded as a villain himself since it is questionable whether his act of revenge is morally justifiable. Similarly to the play, in the novel, all events are presented through the sole perspective of the main character, the reader/audience learns only about how he felt, how he saw and lived the things that happened to him, without absolute certainty about the reasons of the other characters, except for what the protagonist thinks they might be. This kind of narrative point of view leaves room for questioning the characters' reliability and puts obstacles to the advocacy of their moral conduct. In a more philosophical reading, the play (and the novel) extrapolate(s) issues like righteousness, integrity, and justice: "Is extreme goodness always weak? Can a person be good only in the absence

of power? *The Tempest* asks us these questions. There is of course another kind of strength, which is the strength of goodness to resist evil; a strength that Shakespeare's audience would have understood well" (Atwood 2016, 230).

"Genre shifting" is also popular among fan writers. Genre does not only constitute a set of textual features, but it also represents a cluster of interpretive strategies. Therefore, changing the genre may bring about changes in the balance between plot action and characterization. Selecting a certain genre may shift the primary emphasis from events that serve as background or motivation for the dominant plot to moments that define the character relationships (Jenkins 1992, 173). Though turning the play into a novel was commissioned by the Hogarth Shakespeare project, it still bears certain repercussions which are noteworthy. On the whole, both the novel form (prose) and the play (dramatic representation) may be suitable for characterization. Still, a play would rather focus on actions which are performable on stage, while the novel offers the necessary space for characters to evolve. In this regard, in the novel, the emphasis is not as much on the plot (the act of revenge) *per se* but rather on Felix's development into letting go of his revenge. In this interpretative key, the novel may be read as Felix's *bildungsroman*. Although Prospero also undergoes a certain transformation in the play, his self-reflective episodes are much less frequent.

Atwood's novel occasionally blurs the boundaries between different texts leading to "cross-overs" (Jenkins 1992, 174). This type of intertextuality merges texts which share common genres or are set in the same setting or utilize common characters. In this regard, *Hag-Seed* incorporates cross-overs of Shakespearean and other literary texts. For instance, discussing Antonio's evil nature and the possible justifications for his actions, Felix proposes a parallel between the character in *The Tempest* and Macbeth, introducing a direct quote from the latter play:

> But the more evil he did, the eviler he got; it was like Macbeth, for those of you who were in it. It was like the blood speech, right? '*I am in blood / Stepp'd in so far that should I wade no more, / Returning were as tedious as go o'er,'* and some of us know about that first-hand, right, because once you get going on a thing you think it's chickenshit to back off, and you need to finish it. Get it done. Whatever it is. (Atwood 2016, 222; emphasis ours)

Breaking down the boundaries between the two texts may suggest how different characters may function the same even in radically different environments. In other cases, quotes from *The Tempest* blend into the situation in which the character of the novel finds himself or plans to carry on, suggesting that the hypertext not only coexists with the hypotext but also mirrors it, as if characters of the novel would identify themselves with the characters of the play or, in any case, as if their "real" lives would mirror the fictional lives of the characters from the play: "Ah yes. He

can see how it could unfold: Tony and Sal, surrounded by goblins. Herded by them. Menaced by them. Reduced to a quivering jelly. *Hark, they roar*, he thinks. *Let them be hunted soundly. At this hour / lies at my mercy all mine enemies*. He looks around the classroom, smiling benevolently" (Atwood 2016, 119; emphasis ours); "'And how many of those were there? Dumped girlfriends?' Already she's sounding possessive: of an unreal actor playing Ferdinand, the facsimile of a non-existent swain. '*Full many a lady*,' says Felix, quoting, 'but not a patch on you. You're perfect and peerless, remember?'" (Atwood 2016, 128; emphasis ours).

Other times, the (inter)textual reference is so embedded in the novel that it is not explicitly marked, as if being part of a possible "repeated discourse" phenomenon: "It's all there," she says. "From before. In my head. It was just waiting – stored in, you know, *the dark backward and abysm of time*. One of my roomie's hearing my lines for me. I'm almost word-perfect" (Atwood 2016, 126–127; emphasis ours). But the most curious cases of textual cross-overs in the novel are those quotations from *The Tempest* which are not used referring to or as part of the (re)production of the play, including its metatextual instances, but as built in the main character's obsessed mind working:

> Right next to his ear he hears his Miranda's voice. It's barely a whisper, but he hears it.
> *All hail, great master, grave sir, hail! I come*
> *To answer thy best pleasure, be't to fly,*
> *To swim, to dive into the fire, to ride*
> *On the curled clouds; to thy strong bidding, task*
> *Ariel and all his quality*.
> Felix drops his staff as if it's burning him. Did that really happen? Yes, it did! He heard it! (Atwood 2016, 162; emphasis ours)

In other cases, the quote is shortened, its ending being paraphrased:

> But now she whispers, I would, sir, were I human. She's such a tender-hearted girl. Has 8Handz heard her? No, but Felix has. "*Hast thou*," he says, "*which art but air, a touch, a feeling of their afflictions, and shall not myself* be kindlier moved than thou art?" "Are we back in the play?" says 8Handz. "Am I supposed to say, 'I would, sir, were I human'?" "No, it's fine," says Felix. "Just muttering. But you're right, that's enough vengeance. Not a frown further. Time to reel them in. Cue the Goblins. (Atwood 2016, 205; emphasis ours)

Apart from *The Tempest*, there are quotations from other literary works as well, such as the reference to a seventeenth-century poet, Richard Lovelace: "'Yes, it's a

prison,' he says. 'Though «*Stone walls do not a prison make, Nor iron bars a cage.*» But they do contribute to a cage-like ambience.' 'What play is that in?' says Anne-Marie. 'Not a play,' he says. 'A poem. The man who wrote it actually was in prison – he chose the wrong political side'" (Atwood 2016, 131; emphasis ours).

Yet another strategy fan writers resort to in their rewritings is "character dislocation," by means of which "characters are removed from their original situations and given alternative names and identities" (Jenkins 1992, 175). In this sense, there are indisputable correspondences between the characters of the play and the characters of the novel: Prospero – Felix Philips, Antonio – Anthony Price, Alonso – Sal O'Nally, Gonzalo – Lonnie Gordon. But changing the characters' identities takes other forms too (with)in the fabric of the novel. For instance, Felix also assumes the nom de plume *Mr. Duke* (as a direct reference to the play), and the inmates who play the characters of the play also get to choose alter egos or stage names such as 8Handz (playing Ariel), Leggs (playing Caliban), WonderBoy (playing Ferdinand), Krampus (playing Alonso), Bent Pencil (playing Gonzalo), SnakeEye (playing Antonio), and so on. In fact, almost all the characters of the play have double correspondences in the novel. On the one hand, there is the correspondence based on the overt parallel that may be drawn between the play and the novel, and, on the other hand, characters have stage or acting doubles as well. For instance, Miranda is present in the novel, on the one hand, as Felix's ghost daughter, but, on the other hand, she is also played by Anne-Marie Greenland during the performance of the play; the role of Ferdinand is initially given to WonderBoy, but he also has a correspondence in the person of Frederick, or Fred O'Nally, and so on.

Lastly, rewritings may also employ "emotional intensification" (Jenkins 1992, 178) as a reconstruction strategy. Emphasizing moments of narrative crisis in the adaptation as compared to its original may appear due to the fact that readers and, generally, the audience may place a greater importance on issues of character motivation and psychology than the writers of the original piece of work might have intended to. In this respect, there is an emotional intensification in the case of the main character of the novel, for instance. Though there is a psychological insight into Prospero's thoughts and inner development as well, his main concerns and self-reflective manifestations in the play are still circumscribed by his plans of vengeance and, finally, his forgiveness. But while carrying out his plans, he does not doubt his moral rightness. Felix, on the other hand, is much more complex, and there is a greater focus on his emotions and thoughts in the novel. He often questions himself, struggles to justify his actions, and seeks approval from his daughter. His self-reflections include different areas from ordinary issues, like what to wear or eat, to sophisticated and, ultimately, existential ideas like freedom and art, good and evil, life and death.

As Jenkins notes, "some of these approaches to fan fiction writing expand textual boundaries, constructing histories or futures for the characters," others resort to foregrounding marginalized characters, to reverse codes of good and evil, further ones "playfully manipulate generic boundaries, defamiliarizing stock conventions so that the same narrative may yield many different retellings" (Jenkins 1992, 180). Most commonly, fan fiction selects one particular strategy of rewriting. The fact that, to a more or less extent, Atwood resorts to almost all strategies listed by Jenkins, also attests to the ambition of her professional project that obviously transcends the limitations of fan culture, the polyperspectivity of her approach, her art of combination in a deviceful, exuberant manner and perhaps akin to the mixing principle Shakespeare himself had a penchant for as an avatar of postmodern thought.

3. The Performative Power of Metatextuality

After looking at the ways in which Atwood's commission of reimagining Shakespeare emerges as a rhizomatic adaptation, resulting from an intricate liaison with *The Tempest* and relying on the combinatorics of rewriting strategies, in what follows, we seek possible responses to the question what this metatextual dialogue actually *does*, performs, in what ways it addresses and involves the contemporary reader/spectator. Due to the multiperspectivity of Atwood's project, the possible answers may lead in several directions, perhaps beyond the confines of this argumentation. Nevertheless, besides an ample look at the challenges of metatextuality as an interpretive process, we propose to particularly take into account the metatheatrical aspect of the work, with special attention to the double layer of the intended audience within and outside the concretization of theatre to prison performance.

3.1. Metatheatricality

Constructed upon the foundations of *The Tempest* as a metatheatrical play, *Hag-Seed* virtually indulges in metatheatrical references, resonating with, but also going beyond, the Shakespearean theatrical view, rethinking the role of the theatre in a contemporary frame. Prospero's island (also) being interpretable as a metaphor of the stage, *The Tempest* "offers a challenging meta-dramatic reflection upon the relationships between the artist, the work of art and the spectator as well as the tendency to combine different spheres of reality or illusions; it ultimately encourages actors and spectators to consider art as a means to earn one's own freedom (metaphorical and psychological, if not literal)" (Cavecchi 2017, 2). In a live dialogue with these theatrical resonances, *Hag-Seed* recreates Prospero's island as Felix's Prison Shakespeare project, in a frame where freedom is the least

metaphorical and the lack of it is the most palpable life experience. Felix, like Prospero, turns up as a figure of authority who resorts to the magic power of the theatre in his "prison island."

The reader notices perhaps the most instantly those references that remind of the Shakespearean vision of the theatre as dream, illusion, and magic: the very first chapter, *Seashore*, starts with Felix brushing his teeth with "the *illusion* of a smile. Pretense, fakery, but who's to know?" (Atwood 2016, 20; emphasis ours). Further on in the same chapter, "*Let's make magic!*", Felix exclaims, preparing for the Makeshiweg Festival (Atwood 2016, 21). Chapter 30, *Some Vanity of Mine Art*, starts an entire discourse of Felix's about the mysterious nature of dreams as one of the key elements of *The Tempest*,[5] spiced up with overt quotes from the play: "DREAMS, he should have written on his whiteboard. It's surely a main keynote. *My spirits as in a dream are all bound up*. How many people in the play fall asleep suddenly or talk about dreaming? *We are such stuff as dreams are made of*. But what are dreams made of? *Rounded with a sleep*. Rounded. It chimes so exactly with *the great globe itself*" (Atwood 2016, 165).

Felix's unconventional theatre-making experiment with the Fletcher Correctional Players – no doubt, a remake of the Shakespearean play-within-the-play – occasions reflections, on the one hand, upon the directed play, including his didactic methods used to introduce the prisoners into the meanings of the plays and the nature of its characters, while also outlining the afterlife of *The Tempest*. On the other hand, it contains reflections upon the theatre in general, the functions of art/theatre represented in the novel as an aesthetic and art history account. The process of rehearsals within the prison provide insight not only into the layers of interpretation of *The Tempest*, with special focus on references to prison, but also into directing methods with all their "accessories," from casting, costumes, through props and setting, to special effects, of course, applied to prison conditions:

> Having tweaked the text, they'd rehearse, work on the soundtrack, and finalize the props and costumes, which Felix would gather together for them outside and trundle into Fletcher. There were limits, of course: nothing sharp, nothing explosive, nothing you could smoke or inject. Potato guns were not allowed. Nor, he discovered, was fake blood: it might be mistaken for real blood, went the official reasoning, and act as an incitement. (Atwood 2016, 60)

Besides, there are references to the universe of the theatre as experienced by the actors under the authority of the all-controlling director figure ("The theatre isn't a republic, it's a monarchy" [Atwood 2016, 133]), and especially the hardships awaiting female actors, as reflected by the sketched storyline of Anne-

5 Besides theatre, dream is the next most frequently recurring motif in the novel.

Marie Greenland, "one-time child gymnast" (Atwood 2016, 60), the only free and female artist involved in the project to play Miranda's role. Special accent in the meta-theatrical discourse is laid upon the multiple roles theatre fulfils, from being an educational tool ("We'll be showing them [the politicians] that theatre is a powerful educational tool" [Atwood 2016, 179]), through its therapeutic effects, most relevant in the prison context ("I told the Deputies it's a really wonderful example of discipline cross-fertilization, showing the way the arts can be used as a therapeutic and educational tool, in a very creative and unexpected way!" [Atwood 2016, 70]), to its liberating, purifying powers ("It's theatre, Felix protests now, in his head. The art of true illusions! Of course it deals in traumatic situations! It conjures up demons in order to exorcise them! Haven't you read the Greeks? Does the word *catharsis* mean anything to you?" [Atwood 2016, 76]).

The magic power of theatre, transcending reality and offering alternative realities, is perhaps the most effectively suggested by Felix directing a mental play in which his long-dead daughter is still alive ("Miranda would become the daughter who had not been lost; who'd been a protecting cherub, cheering her exiled father as they'd drifted in their leaking boat over the dark sea; who hadn't died, but had grown up into a lovely girl. What he couldn't have in life he might still catch sight of through his art: just a glimpse, from the corner of his eye" [Atwood 2016, 25]). By keeping her alive in his mind, Felix plays God, just like Prospero, and fuels an "illusionary world as an eternal alternative to the ephemeral reality. The ending, however, shows that Felix's projected Miranda is just as transitory as his real daughter" (Vanhaudenarde 2019, 51).

The all-encompassing view of the theatre also leaves room for (humorously) critical reflections to its sterile, idealistic place devoid of the low parts of life, evidently, with significant exceptions, thus extending the span of meta-theatrical discourse to Samuel Beckett: "It's an omission in much literature of the theatre, Felix decides: nobody bathes or even thinks about it, nobody eats, nobody defecates. Except in Beckett, of course. You can always count on Beckett. Radishes, carrots, pissing, stinky feet: it's all there, the entire human corpus at its most mundane and abject level" (Atwood 2016, 108). All in all, the abundance of metatheatrical references directly correspond with, but also expand, Shakespeare's metatheatre from a contemporary perspective.

3.2. The Multiplied Frame of the Intended Audience

The employed "play-within-the-play" structure entails a multiplied frame as concerns the side of the receivers. "The show goes on" both within and outside the prison, the interpretation of art/theatre gaining particular overtones both at the level of the intended audience of the play inside the novel and at the level of the intended audience of the novel itself.

3.2.1. The "Insider" Perspective

The play-within-the-novel adapted to the prison context opens up the discourse of "Shakespeare in prison," a real-life practice that carries literature behind the bars with the aim of involving inmates into creative and constructive projects with the aim of weighing down their maladaptive behaviour. Such is the Shakespeare Behind Bars programme, successfully operating in the US since 1995; according to its founder and producing director, Curt Tofteland, it has the effect of a kind of drama therapy on inmates: "[i]n exploring the motives of characters, they gain insight into their own motives; in recognizing the cause and effect with the arc of a scene, they analyse the consequences of their own choices" (qtd. in Lehmann 2014, 91). Several other works by Margaret Atwood testify her interest in the prison setting, which turns *Hag-Seed* into a scenery that "translates" the metaphorical layers of *The Tempest* into one particular concretization, an actual space that activates meanings in this direction (e.g. prison as heterotopia, liminal space, precarity, etc.).

3.2.2. The "Outsider" Perspective

With this work of hers, Atwood assumes the task of mediating *The Tempest* to contemporary readers. Thus, the novel provides a frame of interpretation for the play, not only as a creative recontextualization but also as an explicit metatextual commentary. The question arises: can this limited context fully reflect the richness of the Shakespearean source text? Does it not "imprison" the original? Being as playful as it is, the novel may pose "ironic nods to both Shakespearean canon(s) and contemporary culture" (Giovannelli 2018, 2). For instance, though fully aware of the fictitious nature of the plot and its characters, readers still might wonder about its reliability in the sense of a "credible" story. There might arise the question: Is the prison world too intellectualized? Or is it the intent to caricature/irony? Not only the inmates have great, sophisticated philosophical/moral ideas on the world, also playing roles like the king – though they seem rather schoolboys than troubled men with a dramatic past –, but Felix himself seems sometimes idiotic, but still an exceptional mind, skilful enough to design such a comprehensive revenge plan. This intricacy, here and there contrariety, is perhaps one of the sources of "the tempest" in the novel, if there is any. By including the interpretive commentary of *The Tempest* in the body of the novel, the author cannot fully avoid the traps of didacticism, with attempts to overcome it by the same rhizomatic layeredness that maintains the interest of readers who also seek textual *jouissance*. Atwood compensates for what may be lost by enlarging the prison reference, by introducing several other metatextual references.

4. "Gentle breath of yours my sails / Must fill, or else my project fails"

As we have seen, Atwood's revisiting of the classical Shakespearean play gave birth to a unique experimental rewriting which challenges and, at the same time, surpasses the traditional approaches to adaptation, introducing a particular fabric of metatextuality. Its artistry also relies on mastering an unparalleled junction of "fidelity" and originality. On the one hand, the novel bears the restrictions imposed by the Hogarth frame, i.e. making sure that readers find enough clues to establish its connections to the original play. But unlike other novels commissioned by the same project (such as Edward St. Aubyn's *Dunbar*, a modern retelling of *King Lear*, or Anne Tyler's *Vinegar Girl*, a retelling of *The Taming of the Shrew*), in which the relations to the Shakespearean pre-text are rather implicit or, in any case, concealed in the sense that they may be fully read without necessarily drawing the parallel between them and their original, Atwood's novel overtly thematizes the classic which has an actual presence in the novel in a way in which readers cannot be unaware of it, even if they intend to. On the other hand, beyond the "play within the play within the novel" structure, which allows readers to establish various correspondences between the two works of art, the manifold layers of metatextuality enrich the interpretive nexus of Atwood's reprise. Thus, balancing between keeping a recognizable Shakespeare play and creating a twenty-first century work of fiction is just one of the stakes masterly achieved in the novel.

In Atwood's conception of rewriting, the play and the novel coexist in a symbiotic manner, emerging from and building on each other. Not only the fictional world of the novel mirrors that of the play – in terms of the plot, naturally, being adjusted to its new context but keeping the mixture of comedy, tragedy, and romance –, but, in turn, the play also comes into existence (or it "rejuvenates") for contemporary readers through the metatext found in the novel. Thus, the explicit dialogue between the characters of the novel and the source play further enhances the reading experience of contemporary readers. All the more so since the novel plays on the very meaning of literary contiguity and on readers' expectations. As a metatext, it may be placed on a wide spectrum that "ranges from adoration to leg-pulling," "wondering or smiling at Shakespeare, but not mocking" (Puttaiah and Sowmya 2021, 328).

As a matter of fact, "the readers of *Hag-Seed* might be cast as textual cooperators/liberators opening the door to the 'circulation of social energy' (Greenblatt 1990, 157) while finding their way through Atwood's hypertextual maze" (Giovannelli 2018, 47). While also inviting, besides the corpus of existing interpretations, various institutional practices and socio-cultural discourses into the creative process, Atwood urges the contemporary reader to think rhizomatically – can

one *not* think rhizomatically? – about Shakespeare as a live heritage, which is heterogeneous and which cannot be separated from its contemporary contexts.

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Beyond Reproduction: An Epistemological Search for a "Woman" in Manjula Padmanabhan's *Escape* and *The Island of Lost Girls*

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Abstract. Who is a woman? In a gender-fluid typical world, the answer to this question invites a serious exposition of non-linear and non-binary possibilities. As the biological definition becomes more inclusive of fragmented identities, it becomes extremely complicated to arrive at a simplistic, innocent truth of recognition. Within the third-world dynamics, this question invites more dimensions. Set against the backdrop of mass female genocide on the occasion of perfecting cloning, Manjula Padmanabhan in her works of futuristic dystopian fiction, *Escape* (2015) and *The Island of Lost Girls* (2017), has taken up this issue of womanhood and furtively trodden to arrive at a philosophical space that allows the modernist epistemological notion of a "woman" as a well-defined category to reincarnate within a postmodern paradigm to help locate women beyond the generic nuances of reproduction and menial labour. Through analysing the selective works, this research article aims at arriving close to the model of womanhood and depicting the plurality of truth in action.

Keywords: epistemology, dystopian fiction, woman, reproduction, Indian fiction.

Introduction

Dystopian literature is an essentially neutralizing device (Horan 2018, 8) with a hegemonic predominance of a narrative *novum*[1] validated by cognitive logic (Suvin 1992). It abrogates one or more fundamental factors of existence to accommodate extreme possibilities that eventually leave readers and critics alike with philosophical and socio-cultural concerns, hitherto estranged in conscious oblivion. In *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) by George Orwell, the notion of privacy suffers a complete withdrawal under the totalitarian regime of Big Brother,[2] and the subjects (citizens) are under incessant surveillance. Similarly, in *Brave New World* (1932) by Aldous Huxley, the faculty of choice is completely obliterated. For science fiction, the introduction of the *novum* (into the social order in cases of utopian and dystopian fiction)[3] within a familiar narrative not only triggers a cognitive shift (Suvin 1980, 12) but also inspires an epistemic rearrangement (Calvin 2016, 12). This research paper takes into account two works of Indian feminist dystopian fiction: *Escape* (2015) and *The Island of Lost Girls* (2017) by Manjula Padmanabhan. Despite being a lightly connected duology, the narrative space of the second book is more global, while the first book is suggestively limited to a futuristic Indian landscape. *Escape* offers an extreme image of patriarchal oppression besides presenting a contrasting image to the prequel; *The Island of Lost Girls* presents a subtle subversion of feminist ideals. Within the scope of the contemporary world order where the recognition of the non-binary gender identity is slowly coming into prominence, the concerned works depict womanhood in the light of the postmodern rendition of fragmented identity. Instead of reasserting the holistic perception of the mythical womanhood, smeared in essentialist characterization through femininity and the pragmatics of reproduction, the works showcase a constantly shifting identity. The recognition of gender-based violence is equally affected by the other dimensions of identity (besides gender), i.e. race, class, and caste (Crenshaw 1991, 1242). The dimension of intersectionality keeps redefining and reshaping the category of women. The practice of standardization of identities becomes more problematized in the context of a third-world nation, as identity politics fails to recognize "intra-group differences." The intersectional components add variegated dynamics to the struggles and possible modes of emancipation for women belonging to different castes, classes, and religions.

1 According to Darko Suvin, the *novum* represents an exclusive and strange newness incorporated within the narrative of science fiction texts. They determine one end of the literary subject matter, while the other end would be the exact recreation of the author's empirical environment (1980, 4).

2 Big Brother is a fictional character and a symbolic representation of the totalitarian regime of Oceania.

3 As proposed by Darko Suvin in *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction* (1980).

The dream of conjuring a single-gender world is not new. The idea of single-sexed societies through gender-based separation has inspired thought experiments on gender to identify the inherent flaws within the feminist or masculinist principles that fail to cater to the comprehensive needs of individuals belonging to a specific gender identity (Attebery 2002, 107). Within fictional narratives, this imagination created works like *Herland* (1979), *The Female Man* (1975), and more. Bearing testimony to scientifically established processes like parthenogenesis,[4] these authors created spaces where the process of reproduction becomes peripheral and taken care of. Women, the only gender identity existing in these societies, function perfectly to run the system. The imagination of an all-male world essentially spawns out of non-fictional truths reflecting patriarchal hegemony, violence against women, female foeticide, female infanticide, constantly deteriorating gender ratio, and so on (Akhter 2020). The first film subscribing to these issues in India is Manish Jha's *Matrubhoomi: A Nation without Women* (2003). The audience is presented with a fictional Indian village (in Bihar) where there is no woman (owing to years of systematic gendercide[5]). The desperate father of five young men accidentally discovers a young woman and convinces (with financial support) her father to marry her off into a coerced space of fraternal polyandry. Padmanabhan's works might be approached as an expansion of Jha's imagination. The reception of this duology usually ascribes the generic identity of experimental science fiction to these works where the author has addressed the "growing gender hierarchies and imbalances, and the fragility of attempts at forging resistance to modes of bio-politics" (Saint 2021, XVI). The existing body of critical works around these dystopian works does not go beyond the idea of the nation, womanhood, sexual violence, and problematized queer identity. Incidentally, being a believer of the non-binary, Padmanabhan consciously steers clear of tags. When asked whether she would like to call herself a feminist, she candidly replied: "No. I do not think about feminism very much anymore. Feminists can be extremely vicious towards other women. We should look beyond gender" (Rao 2019). She believes that women were previously treated with care and compassion because childbearing and rearing were considered crucial for human survival. But owing to the contemporary phenomena of overpopulation, the act of childbearing and rearing are slowly losing their previously assigned significance (Nath 2016). This allows her a space to explore the extremities of gender violence. Padmanabhan once said:

4 Parthenogenesis is a form of reproduction in which an egg can develop into an embryo without being fertilized by a sperm.

5 Gendercide refers to the irrational, agenda-driven practice of killing individuals of a specific gender.

> In the case of *Escape*, the idea presented itself originally as a newspaper "middle" which would take the form of a page from the diary of the last Indian woman left alive […]. I kept thinking that despite all the positive stuff going on, it seemed more likely that women – Indian women anyway – appeared to be on the decline. So that was the context (Deshmukh and Jagtap 2019, 1; emphasis and ellipsis in the original).

Research Objective and Method

The proposed research approaches the impact of the selected texts on available epistemological models concerning the socio-cultural position of women in India and how it challenges and problematizes the monolithic understanding of women as a class, race, or category of human existence. Following the methodology of hermeneutics and close textual analysis, the paper further attempts at drafting how Padmanabhan successfully used this nuanced, postmodern understanding of gender and womanhood to stay true to what she believes in.

The Socio-Cultural Fabric of India and the Context of the Selected Works

In India,[6] the socio-culturally deep-rooted preference for male heirs dictates the insouciance towards female children and their deaths (unborn or newly born) through malicious practices like gender-based discrimination, violence, female foeticide, and female infanticide (Kapur 2020). The fact that the country registers more women than men for the first time after seven decades of independence in the National Family Health Survey-5 (NFHS-5)[7] (Kapur 2021) is certainly overwhelming. But, unfortunately, this does not dictate the changes sensitive citizens dream of as the sex ratio expert Jashodhara Dasgupta insightfully puts that the NFHS counts only a limited number of women who belong to specific demographic categories, and there is a bias in it due to the small sample size (Kapur 2021). The representation of the increasing number of women in selective

6 The nation of "Brotherland" in the texts in concern "has a close resemblance to India though it is never mentioned" (Shrivastava 2016), but the narratives are peppered with cultural suggestions and references including attires, food habits, and conversational exchanges. Samira Nadkarni said: "I loved being able to see a dystopian world that I could recognize as specifically Indian and whose machinations didn't need a lot of exposition for me" (Mehta, Nadkarni, and Mike 2016).

7 Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India, with the International Institute for Population Sciences scans and observes the population throughout the country to obtain reliable and updated information on fertility, family planning, mortality, and maternal and child health through the National Family Health Survey (NFHS).

and limited indices like these neither represents emancipation nor alters the status of repression. Rather it creates a strange anomaly where the issues of gender-based oppression get subsided being subsumed under the politics of numbers. Conscious recognition of this probable, ambient horror allows a wide berth to Padmanabhan's dystopian imagination of a land where women are exterminated imprudently. Their need as a source of reproduction as part of the civilization to carry the lineage of the species forward has suddenly met an end, as the process of cloning was perfected to create variegated human beings (the generals, the drones, and the replicas) as deemed fit to perform selective tasks. The Generals were a group of morphed (with upgraded intellectual and physical compatibility) men with regressive patriarchal values, with a unified vision of creating a world free from the multifarious nuances of gender heterogeneity. The short-lived drones, "the midget slaves who perform your menial tasks" (Padmanabhan 2015, 256) performed the menial labours, domestic chores that are intrinsically associated with women. And the replicas (copies of surviving males) maintained the population count.

Within this dystopian space, the two central characters of the duology, Meiji – the last surviving girl – and her uncle (later revealed as her father), Youngest, deconstruct and reshape the understanding of womanhood. While *Escape* depicts their journey and struggles to run out of Brotherland, *The Island of Lost Girls* presents the desperation of a father in saving his child. Youngest had undergone sexual reassignment as a bargain with the General to step into the island where men are forbidden to enable Meiji to have a peaceful life and perform an act of espionage. He chose to retain his masculine consciousness within a woman's anatomy. The second book navigates around two parallel threads of exploring womanhood (both physical and psychological). Meiji's scuffle to find peace around her natural anatomy (which has long been kept a secret by her Uncles) on the island is presented against Youngest's (or Yasmine's) fight to accept his sexually reassigned body.

The vision of the Generals to initiate this process of cleansing becomes conspicuous through one of the interviews:

> General: The first task was to create a core group of like-minded individuals. Dissent is the enemy of progress.
> Interviewer: So… a group of clones?
> […]
> Interviewer: Why was it necessary to eliminate females?
> General: Females are driven by biological imperatives that lead them to compete for breeding rights. Whereas collectives breed cooperatively. In order to control breeding technology and to establish the collective ethic, we had to eliminate the females. (Padmanabhan 2015, 255–257)

The reasons that triggered this execution emerged from the hubris of an extreme manifestation of misogynistic toxicity and a drive to abate anything remotely concerning the "feminine" idiosyncrasy. During one of the acts of sexual deviance and violence on Yasmine (the sexually altered self of Youngest) in the second book, the General foregrounds the perspective of being enamoured by the presence of a man's mind in a woman's body (Padmanabhan 2015, 102). The monologue depicts how women were not identified beyond their corporeality. The nuances of femininity, identified by essentialist feminists, adhere to something close to a political necessity to unite women to form a resistance against a common struggle (Stone 2016). Ironic though it is, the unifying, universal characteristic that the Brotherhood used against women is something similar to what they are envisioning. As the General boisterously adduces, "We are the past, the future and the present. We have broken through the shackles of individuality" (Padmanabhan 2015, 356–357). If the biological imperative renders women weak and thrusts them towards a headless craving for breeding, then the impetus of creating a neural network sharing brethren with a completely eradicated sense of subjectivity is no different. What problematizes the narrative even more is the depicted outcome at the onset of the duology of realizing the radical (feminist) dream of ectogenesis.[8] Instead of liberating women from the shackles of patriarchy, it obliterates their identity, necessity, role, and function.

Locating Reproduction as a Defining Standpoint for Womanhood

From Simone de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* (1949) to Shulamith Firestone in *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution* (1970), the root of gender-based oppression has empirically been located in the woman's biology. The "tyranny of reproduction"[9] has been identified as the primary deterrent coupled with childcare owing to the delayed cognitive development of human infants. "While the directionality of the definitional connections between 'mother,' 'woman,' and female reproductive function is complex, there is some evidence for the thought that female biology is foundational to the way 'woman' and 'mother' are defined" (MacKay 2020, 348). In the concluding section, MacKay

8 Ectogenesis is the method of developing embryos artificially outside the uterus. Made familiar in Aldous Huxley's *A Brave New World* (1932), this process brings forth the possibility of growing a complete human being from a sperm and an egg. This method has been at the centre of radical feminist debates, as they believed this can liberate women from the troubles of pregnancy.

9 This phrase was used by Shulamith Firestone in her feminist manifesto, *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution* (1970), as she firmly believed that the idea of pregnancy is "barbaric" and the source of all oppression for women. This can only be resolved if the practice of ectogenesis is perfected by transferring the embryo into artificial gestation.

furthers the problems associated with a complete realization of ectogenesis, as this might irreversibly alter the gender-biology matrix and demands a rethinking of the social roles of women (MacKay 2020, 353).

For feminist dystopian fiction, the horrors (mostly unidirectional and introduced through the *novum*) usually address one primary epistemological concern: "How do we define a woman?" Though, unlikely, the situations with their atmospheric shock leave a trail of far-fetched but often-thought-of speculations orbiting around the purpose of a woman in a society and how she might identify herself. Earlier, the treatment of womanhood within these dystopian spaces (during the 1970s and 1980s) belonged to a modernist spectrum with the generic crisis. For works like *The Female Man* (2010) by Joanna Russ, an overarching sense of femininity persists following a subtle critique of these oppressive ideologies. *The Handmaid's Tale* (1996) by Margaret Atwood can be considered a take on reproductive choice and bodily agency. But these concerns remain delimited to the white woman's troubles in the name of considering women as a homogeneous group. Melayna Williams in her 2017 article, "For Black Women, *The Handmaid's Tale*'s Dystopia Is Real – and Telling," on the *Hulu* adaptation of the novel discusses how liberal and conservative women have collectively struggled to address the failure of mainstream feminism(s) in voicing the plights of the women of colour, and the critique and consideration of third-wave or intersectional feminism under the influence of the mainstream feminism(s) still suffer the erasure.

The unavailability of representative voices of marginalized women slowly started getting mitigated in works like *The Passion of New Eve* (1977) by Angela Carter or *The Parable Series* (1993–1998) by Octavia E. Butler. Most of the contemporary fiction belonging to this genre has become more inclusive, e.g. *The Power* (2016) by Naomi Alderman, *The Book of the Unnamed Midwife* (2016) by Meg Elison, *Red Clocks* (2018) by Leni Zumas; and more localized, e.g. *The Water Cure* (2018) by Sophie Mackintosh, *Gather the Daughters* (2018) by Melamed Jennie.

South Asian dystopian fiction is a fairly new genre, hence to claim a recurrence of themes will be injudicious. But borrowing from Urvashi Kuhad's attempt in *Science Fiction and Indian Women Writers* (2022) to introduce a set of themes delineated in Indian science fiction, we might boil down the settings of South Asian dystopian fiction to cloning, gender bias, sexual violence, epistemological violence, and a few more. Among the themes of gender-based violence, some of the recurring tropes widely range from a legal implementation of female foeticide to the extermination of women as a race (as seen in the texts of contention of this research paper) or the use of women as a mere reproductive device (*Before She Sleeps* [2018] by Bina Shah) or taking away the rights to gender identity (*Generation 14* [2008] by Priya Sarukkai Chabria) or the use of psychological and physical violence within the safeguard of law to control women in an unnerving ambience of fear (*The Lesson* [2015] by Sowmya Rajendran) or the consciously

directed epistemological violence to extirpate the practice and pleasure of asexual female companionship (*Before She Sleeps* [2018] by Bina Shah). One of the most intriguing aspects of these feminist dystopian narratives is the preponderance of the notion of reproductive choice and bodily agency.

Women's reproductive roles assign them their secondary social status and are considered to be their essential social role to add meaning to their existence (McDaniel 1988, 1). As previously mentioned, the radical feminist vision around liberating women from the "naturally" bestowed upon compulsion of motherhood backfires in the duology. The totalitarian government decides upon eradicating women, as the idea of motherhood runs out of significance and childcare has lost its meaning. But the reception of the text essentially invites concerns and queries that remain unanswered. The artificiality of cloning is used to create a band of neural-network-sharing masculine subhumans and the droneries. As this is perceived to be the first generation of clones, Brotherland[10] still abounds in men, and cloning becomes integral to the maintenance of the count of the populace. Though the families, who had given up their women voluntarily, were awarded favours and droneries, still the horrors run their parallel course for men as well. The episodes of sexual perversion on boys and young men as presented through the character of Swan (the owner of an estate where Drones are produced through cloning) become a case in point. During a heated argument among Pigeon, Bamboo (two of Swan's human workers), and Youngest, the readers are offered a glimpse of the sexual aberration at work: "'You weren't here,' […] 'You don't know what he did.' 'We each had our younger brothers when we came,' said Pigeon. […] 'He only recruited those who could offer him that price. First, he used the young ones. Then he made us watch him use them. Then he made us use them […]'" (Padmanabhan 2015, 239). Besides, the extermination of women leaves out the question of gender non-binaries. What happens to them remains a mystery. The second book showcases the marginalized existence of the non-binaries through the character of Aila (a trans-woman who helped Youngest reach the island) who barely manages to survive in the Zone[11] and experiences recurrent acts of violence. How were women identified during the early hours of the extermination project? The text suggests that the primary focus was probably on the anatomical appearance that determined their identity. The General's recognition of Youngest as a perfect "reverse" (a man in a woman's body) instead

10 The Brotherland and the Brotherhood consisting of the generals with a shared neural network appears as a subtle subversion of the emerging idea of "sisterhood" during the second wave of feminist movements in the USA and parts of Europe. The appeal of theorists like bell hooks to form solidarity among women despite their variegated demands and divergent nature of oppression is parodied through the projection of the Brotherland where the dream of an all-male society is believed to become the final stage of human evolution.

11 The Zone is the space that sustains the economy of this futuristic world through war games between clans.

of a "feem" (a female) delineates the idea. But the revulsion towards women was rooted deep into the feminine behavioural patterns and the conviction that it was the biological impulse that drove them. Hence, the notion that the replacement of biological reproduction with cloning determined the fate of the women appears to be a partial truth. Within the totalitarian discourse of the Generals, the man/woman binary is conformed into and the masculine emerges as the superior:

> Yasmine is my own private creation, my personal sex-machine. His private parts were restructured to suit my needs. He was perfect as a man, gorgeously muscled, tall, dense, powerful. But now he is a man who, while retaining his masculine nature, nevertheless has the body-parts of a Vermin and – ah – now he is beyond superb. (Padmanabhan 2017, 99)

The island does not project its preference for or celebration of reproductive values, but their fixity on Meiji's virginity does not go unnoticed. While most of the girls bear serious scars of either physical or psychological devastation, Meiji appears to be pristine and thus reflects the potential of fertility: "She has a quality of absolute innocence. It's like a titanium shield, that innocence. [...] You may call it virginity if you want, Zera. Or moral purity, Maia. But I maintain that it's something beyond either of these" (Padmanabhan 2017, 174). Women who supposedly resist the oppressive principles of Brotherland eventually end up becoming the other end of the binary extreme.

Feminist Epistemology and Defining the "Woman"

While the modernist schools (per se, liberal, Marxist, radical, and socialist) of feminism tend to approach the issues of the identity of a woman to arrive at a generic category of women as a race, postmodernism (and postmodern feminism) completely abandons this approach and embraces the fluidity of the term. Postmodern philosophy succumbs to the idea of the multiplicity of truth and how it is susceptible to circumstantial changes. As the position of the subject determines the truth, therefore identification of womanhood becomes more of a subjective than an objective concern. Even a close historical observation of the "woman question"[12] in India entails how the iconic model of womanhood has been

12 The position of a woman in India has been a point of contention for the colonizers in rendering validity to the narrative of their civilizing mission. The phrase "woman question" addresses the nuances of this socio-cultural and socio-economic position of women in India.

changing. During the *Swadeshi movement*[13] the emergence of the "new woman"[14] was a socio-cultural need that put the traditional grand narrative of the "Indian woman" in question. Empowered with education, they were expected to strike a fine balance between the occidental and the oriental models (Shrivastava 2009, 14) and contribute considerably to protecting the spiritual principles (which were considered defining components of Indian values) of children. Development in the field of science and technology, socio-political movements, universalization of education, and other progress have changed the approach towards women in India to a certain extent and enabled them to develop a sense of agency.

Since the third wave of feminism and the advent of intersectionality, women's category has been under scrutiny (Zalewski 2000, 40–42). The fragmented identities bear mutually exclusive fragmented crises and concerns. What started as a holistic movement to address a common struggle in the USA and parts of Europe soon suffered its claim, as theorists like Kimberlé Crenshaw in "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Anti-discrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics" (1989) or Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in "Can the Subaltern Speak" (1988) or bell hooks in *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism* (1981) started disseminating the viability and significance of intersectional politics and introduced an essential difference in the nature of oppressions encountered by non-white, non-first-world women.

The two conflicting threads of feminist epistemology, the modernist approach and the postmodernist approach, primarily deviate on the ground of the idea of a holistic, wholesome "truth" (as mentioned previously), seen as a continuation of the Enlightenment dream, which instead of oppressing individuals would eventually liberate them (Zalewski 2000, 45–47). Whereas the modernist feminist schools adhere to the notion of this innocent truth, the postmodernists run completely against this stream. For them, the idea of truth is fragmented, and there is an inherent pluralism (Hassan 1986, 503) to it, which is susceptible to temporal and cultural changes. The meta-narrative of a woman's identity[15] that functioned as an anchor during the initial days of the gender battle (women's suffrage or property rights for women) changed over time to arrive at discourses like gender performativity (Butler 1988, 520). Modernist feminist epistemology brought in consciousness raising as a significant component for introducing women's perspectives (Firth and Robinson 2016, 5) within the existent epistemological spectrum, which later got perfected through feminist standpoint theory (Gurung 2020, 108).

13 The *Swadeshi* movement was part of the Indian independence movement that focused on the importance of self-sufficiency as a nation and actively contributed to the development of Indian nationalism.

14 The new woman is a representative figure of womanhood in India that nurtures the traditional values and the takeaways of Western education together.

15 The meta-narrative of women's identity locates them as a homogeneous group, the members of which are subjected to similar forms of oppression and marginalization.

Though aggrandized through contextual illustrations by setting the plot against the rise of a ruthless, patriarchal, robotic, subhuman totalitarian power, the attitude of Meiji's family members is analogous to what happens with most of the women in India. The course of action deemed fit to save Meiji was to put her under a prolonged drug-induced adolescence and an epistemological distancing from her body (Padmanabhan 2015, 20). "Women have been raised in such a manner that talking about menstruation and sexual desires in front of a man is a big no" (Aujla 2021). Patriarchal oppression segregates women from their bodies and creates a forbidden territory of vulnerability. With the advent of the fourth wave of feminism and cyberspaces like Menstrupedia,[16] Breast Cancer India,[17] online social movements like #metoo,[18] and progressive digital media content are taking a fresh epistemological turn in India. Besides body positivity, women are rediscovering their bodies, choices, and agencies. Circumstantially, the contemporary time appears lush for texts like *Escape* (2008) and *The Island of Lost Girls* (2015) to bloom, as the narrative shock might just get deservingly absorbed. "I loved that all through *Escape* and *The Island of Lost Girls*, Padmanabhan keeps pushing back on this idea of what girlhood and womanhood should feel like" (Mehta, Nadkarni, and Mike 2016). A pornographic magazine was slipped into Meiji's room by a drone named Bone with human DNA. This intrigued her into exploring her body, and Meiji's first experience of seeing her genitalia in a mirror disgusted her: "Yes. I used a mirror, so that I could see what I was doing. It looked yucky. Just like in the pictures" (Padmanabhan 2015, 329). Meiji's revulsion reflects the socio-cultural conditioning of othering a woman's body from herself.

Since her childhood, Meiji was denied her true identity by her uncles: Oldest, Middle, and Youngest (arguably her father). She underwent a chemically induced prepubescent stasis, which could turn out to be detrimental – "[i]f we hold her any longer at this threshold, she will never cross over it" (Padmanabhan 2015, 13). With the consequences of this stunted growth, she was forced to put on a prosthetic penis. "'It's known as a prosthetic device,' said Middle, 'but you can call it your pee-pee if you like'" (Padmanabhan 2015, 70). They did not want her to feel different, and all were directed towards saving her and escaping the regime. Meiji oscillated between two extremes. After reaching the island designed to shelter saved women/girls who had fallen prey to emotional and physical violence, from all over the world, she realized that the only way to survive is to stay true to the norms. Despite being unwilling, she was ideologically

16 As a start-up, Menstrupedia offers educational materials to corporates, government organizations, NGOs, and so on to help educate children and adolescents regarding sexual health, puberty, and growing up.

17 An online initiative by the NGO The Pink Initiative to make the populace aware of the country (India) about breast cancer.

18 #metoo is a global movement against sexual harassment, sexual violence, and rape culture. The victims publicly voice their experience on social media platforms.

forced into embracing her womanhood. This forceful acceptance is similar to the overarching practice of modernist feminist politics. "'The feeling of discomfort passes very quickly,' said Vane. 'Nakedness is our natural state, but we are taught to feel ashamed or defenseless when our skin is bare-[…]'" (Padmanabhan 2017, 151). Unknowingly the seeds of epistemological violence were planted from the moment Meiji became the last surviving female soul after "The Change." Her body had constantly been misrepresented, and the flawed interpretation of her existence was depicted as the truth. The question of agency stands equally mutilated on the island as it was in the Brotherland. Women were not allowed to choose for themselves the point on the spectrum of womanhood. They were expected to embrace the established order reasserting the binary of masculine/feminine, and unfortunately it was bodily generated.

Another facet of womanhood has been brilliantly constructed through Youngest/Yasmine where the emphasis is on the body and the anatomy. Yasmine never recognized his reassigned body. He was trapped in it that the world perceived to be a woman's. "He felt like a stranger to his own body. It was his and yet it was completely unfamiliar. It was attractive to him [...]. He felt in awe of it. Afraid almost. Saddened" (Padmanabhan 2017, 52). He could not deny his heteronormative desires when Aila recognized them in his eyes, as "she had kindled genuine desire within him. 'You is still want womanses?'" (Padmanabhan 2017, 53). The reception of the female body as a site of violence has long been considered a common notion. The identification of women through their physical bodies is the root cause of patriarchal oppression. The General and his clone brothers would only recognize women as vermin, scum, and filth, but uncannily they compelled Youngest to convert his body into that of a luscious woman to sexually violate her repeatedly. Though Youngest denies the installation of pleasure-generating nerves, still he was raped. Despite despising the General, Youngest kept on submitting to his barbaric whims, and his lack of choice triggered his fancy. Things appeared to be similar for Youngest, as he was allowed to be included in the populace of the Island. He was convinced into embracing his female corporeal self through forcefully induced pleasure (orgasm). What he had consciously chosen to denounce was imposed upon him: "He heard his breathing change./ His back arched up of his own accord./ His consciousness melted away./ Cries emerged from his throat in a voice he had never heard before" (Padmanabhan 2017, 327–328).

Padmanabhan cautiously treads between the two schools of feminist epistemological approaches. Both her works simultaneously ascertain the validity and the fragility of these stands. Considering Meiji as one of the pivotal points, the readers can witness how discordantly her womanhood unfolds in front of her, forcing her to respond incongruously. While her father (allegedly), her uncles, and her circumstances (in and while escaping Brotherland) impel her to remain

impervious to her womanhood in the first book, the second book is an outrageous exposition of her identity, as she is forced to experience bodily sensations previously she has hardly been allowed to divulge into. Meiji's perspective as a vantage point unearths the true essence of being a woman as part of the man/woman binary within a fictional space. But we eventually arrive at a gender-fluid communion by the end of *The Island of Lost Girls*. Meiji suffers involuntary segregation from her body. Her illusory corporeal oddity appears to be so drastic to her that she recognizes it as a monstrosity: "'I want to know whether or not I've become a monster yet,' she said. 'Woman,' said Youngest" (Padmanabhan 2015, 308). While Meiji is in constant denial of her physicality, Youngest, with a coerced sex reassignment surgery, creates a strange paradox. Both womanhoods are persistently being denied and forced. But, eventually, they make peace with their broken selves. Padmanabhan deftly showcases how everyone has their version of the truth when it comes to defining the self. Her celebration of subjectivity and fluidity of gender identity takes a brilliant postmodern turn and shapes a new understanding of womanhood. For Padmanabhan, "it's important to look beyond gender and beyond body-based boundaries […] to find a higher definition of self" (Pandey 2018). The way Meiji embraces her body and attempts at understanding it despite being discouraged and having no points of reference other than those pornographic magazines sets the tone of self-revelation throughout:

> 'I want you to act your age. If you want to be treated with respect, then you got to behave with dignity –'
> 'Yesterday I pushed my fingers inside –'
> 'What?'
> 'You told me not to do it, but I did. I pushed my fingers in. And there was nothing in there.'
> […]
> 'Yes. I used a mirror, so that I could see what I was doing. It looked yucky. Just like in the pictures.'
> 'Will you promise me you won't do it again?'
> […]
> 'No,' said Meiji. 'I won't promise. It's my body. I want to understand –'. (Padmanabhan 2015, 328–329)

Conclusions

The research article opens on a note of epistemological inquiry concerning the search for definitive model(s) of womanhood but ends up foregrounding an ontological response. Rather than investigating how one can define a woman, we

must focus on the question "what/who is a woman?" The search for an objective framework becomes redundant within the postmodern condition of being. It is the subjectivity that renders meaning to a self. When asked about the blurred gender roles, bent sexual norms, and broken sexual binaries, Padmanabhan replied: "Yet even in today's world, with female genital mutilation and male circumcision, selfhood is a very complex issue" (Nath 2016). She neither cared about the binary nor the existing epistemological models that define womanhood within the limits of female anatomy, the pragmatic functions of motherhood, caregiving, fostering the domestic space, and reflection of femininity. Padmanabhan's stance is furthered in the works of Judith Butler. She discusses the assumption abundant in feminist theory concerning the existing identity of the category of woman. Though this recognition is integral in initiating feminist interests, goals, and political representations within the discourse, it simultaneously limits the range of the gender spectrum (Butler 2006, 38). Padmanabhan breaks free from this grand narrative submerged in the binary of pitting women against men. The selected works, through the characters of Meiji, Youngest/Yasmine, and Alia, highlight the significance of the subjective association. All of them are women but unlike each other. Their truths of womanhood harness multiple senses of exclusivity. They are free from the static teleological requisites for becoming a woman.

The initial objective of equal rights to that of men has changed its course of action to slide into a terrain of gender subjectivity. "How does one identify as a woman?" is not a question that inspires a monolithic response. To keep the feminist resistance going, one must strive to look for harmony between the importance of subjectivity and a few grounds of shared interests. Karissa Sanbonmatsu (2019) in her TED talk "The biology of gender, from DNA to the brain" asks the question: "What does it mean to be a woman"? Being a trans-woman, she offers us an insight into the realm of this subjectivity by elegantly striking a fine balance between "the shared sense of commonality" and the acceptance of individuality (TED 2019). Knowing one is a woman and acknowledging that it is not the only available possibility might help us reach the postmodern corpus of womanhood. In India, the nature of the reception is different. While most women are absorbed into the ideological model of sacrifice and suffering to serve others blurring the difference between self-care and self-indulgence, what they mean to the social order and where they belong are mutually exclusive and equally significant. It is their faculty of being human that is at stake more than their identity as a woman. The choice of gender, though primary, is still in search of a space of acceptance, comfort, and fluidity.

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Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Feminist Manifesto as a Compilation of Her Major Topics

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Abstract. Her award-winning novels and thought-provoking TED talks propelled the Nigerian writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie into the public consciousness and sparked a worldwide discourse about feminism in the late 2010s. Adichie uses her work to empower women all around the world to dismantle gender constructs, stereotypes, and sexualities designed to enslave women in society. Several researchers have successfully construed common motifs in her fiction. This paper draws on recent studies undertaken by Moffat Sebola, who affirms that Adichie's *Dear Ijeawele, or A Feminist Manifesto in Fifteen Suggestions* (2017) is not only a list of proposals; with closer examination, the manifesto reveals the recurring themes throughout Adichie's writing. Furthermore, for analytical convenience, Moffat Sebola (2022) selects only seven of Adichie's fifteen suggestions, identifies the elements that reflect her authorial perspective, and utilizes them as filters in analysing the author's novels. The main objective of this study has been the presentation of the elements of Adichie's fiction in all fifteen manifesto statements. In order to achieve this objective, themes of womanhood, femininity, love, history, culture, gender equality, and otherness are discussed in separate sections with examples from her novels. The first section of the paper provides a brief overview of African feminist fiction within which the work of this third-generation Nigerian writer is embedded.

Keywords: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, feminism, otherness, womanhood.

Introduction

The primary characteristic exhibited by third-generation Nigerian writers is their persistent preoccupation with the postcolonial turmoil that serves as the underlying foundation of the domestic realm inhabited by the central protagonists (Hewett 2005, 73). Adesanmi and Duncan state that the representative traits that define Nigeria's third-generation writers are derived from the tropes of nomadism,

exile, displacement, and deracination (2005, 16). According to Adesanmi and Duncan, these writers have developed an artistic approach characterized by the portrayal of anguish, which serves as a means to depict their aspirations that have been tragically stunted by the Nigerian societal structure. The term "aesthetics of pain" effectively characterizes the literary endeavours of numerous contemporary women writers, such as Adichie, who have delved into the realm of women's corporeal encounters through their works of fiction and poetry.

The twentieth century marked the culmination of two centuries of struggle for cultural roles and socio-political rights for women all over the world. The historical trajectory of feminism in Africa diverges from that of the Western context. According to Minna Salami, "all strands of African feminism are informed not only by discourses about patriarchy but also about colonisation, imperialism, heteronormativity, ethnicity, race, and class, as well as human rights issues, such as poverty reduction, violence prevention, and health and reproductive rights" (2022, 2).

Furthermore, Davies asserts that literature produced by contemporary African women possesses an inherent transgressive quality, characterized by a series of boundary crossings. This literature serves to challenge established notions and definitions pertaining to subjectivity and the act of writing. There are numerous obstacles that prevent women from asserting their voice. The challenges encompass a wide spectrum, ranging from the endeavour to confront the patriarchal frameworks inherent in one's specific society to the recurring dearth of literary female predecessors (Davies 1994, 4).

One of the most acclaimed contemporary African writers, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, openly proclaims in public and also elaborates further in her works that she is a feminist. Regardless, it would prove to be erroneous to study her works only through the lens of Western feminism. Adichie was not merely presented in this article as a feminist; rather, the emphasis was placed on her work as an African feminist. Her work, *Dear Ijeawele, or A Feminist Manifesto in Fifteen Suggestions* stands at the foundation of this study. After a thorough analysis of the fifteen suggestions, I have investigated two major themes that constitute the recurrent themes of her prose. These themes, which reflect Adichie's philosophy, authorial vision, and ideology, are presented with examples from her novels and essays.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Works and the Main Characteristics of Her Fiction

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is one of the most promising and award-winning writers in Africa, whose works have been translated into numerous languages. The authoress was born and raised in Nigeria and much of her writing deals with

subjects that have close ties to her home country, including its history, its ordeals, and its challenges.

Purple Hibiscus, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's debut novel, was released in 2003 and eventually won the Commonwealth Writers' Award for the best first novel in 2005. After that, she wrote the novels *Half of the Yellow Sun* (2006) and *Americanah* (2013), in addition to a number of essays and short stories. Adichie is well-known not only for her works of fiction but also for her speeches and essays. The topics she discusses in her two incredibly well-attended TED lectures are echoed across the artist's other creative endeavours. She gave a talk entitled "The Danger of a Single Tale" at the TED Global Conference in 2009, in which she presented the effects that stereotypical portrayals can have in both fiction and real life. In her 2012 TED Talk entitled "We Should All Be Feminists," she presented a list of suggestions on how to raise both boys and girls in order to have a more equitable world. In 2017, the author published a book with the title *Dear Ijeawele, or A Feminist Manifesto in Fifteen Suggestions*, which is a detailed version of the previously mentioned TED Talk.

Her manifesto began as a letter written in response to a friend's inquiry about how to raise a girl to become a feminist. She elaborated on it as an answer to her friend's question, including fifteen suggestions. At first glance, Adichie's work may appear to be nothing more than a parenting manual, but upon further inspection, it becomes clear that it is in fact a synthesis of her authorial perspective, ideology, and feminist worldview. This list of ideas includes some of the important topics that have been discussed in her books and essays with a dominant feminist touch that has interwoven them, as the title of the book suggests.

After a thorough analysis of Adichie's suggestions, I have identified the following reoccurring themes: the significance of one's heritage, culture, traditions, and sense of identity; womanhood, femininity, and love; importance of education and otherness. It should go without saying that each of these categories is deeply intertwined with the others, and the main perspective is feminism. In the following, I will go into further detail regarding each issue, providing examples from Adichie's novels.

Femininity, Womanhood, and Love

Chinua Achebe's examination of the interconnections between religion and colonialism, and their consequential impact on traditional Nigeria is complemented by Adichie's contribution, which expands the scope of the investigation to include the dimension of gender. Adichie engages in "feminist revisioning", or reinterpretation, as Adrienne Rich (1972, 18) terms it, employing the tactics of "appropriation" and "inversion."

Adichie asserts that the concept of "feminism" has undergone a significant distortion, resulting in the erosion of its intrinsic principles and the loss of its authentic essence. In a passage taken from her book entitled *We Should All Be Feminists*, she says: "The word feminist is so heavy with baggage, negative baggage: you hate men, you hate bras, you hate African culture, you think women should always be in charge, you don't wear make-up, you don't shave, you are always angry, you don't have a sense of humour, you don't use deodorant" (2014, 11).

In fact, matters are considerably less complex. One's stance on the complete parity between males and females can be categorized into two distinct beliefs: either one subscribes to this notion or one does not. In the previously mentioned literary work, the author presents her own definition: "a feminist is a man or a woman who says, 'Yes, there's a problem with gender as it is today, and we must fix it; we must do better'" (Adichie 2014, 48). Explaining the usage of the notion "feminist" for a wider meaning, she says: "'Why the word feminist? Why not just say you are a believer in human rights or something like that?' Because that would be [...] a way of pretending that it was not women who have, for centuries, been excluded. It would be a way of denying that the problem of gender targets women" (Adichie 2014, 41).

In the subsequent discourse, I shall elucidate a selection of her propositions pertaining to femininity, womanhood, and love within the framework of feminist ideology. Promoting gender equality is one of Adichie's central preoccupations. Adichie's second proposition addresses the matter of how parents ought to allocate domestic responsibilities within the household. Adichie posits that, within an ideal societal framework, it is desirable for spouses to assume an equitable distribution of responsibilities pertaining to household management and the rearing of their offspring. This proposal is closely interconnected with the first proposal and advocates for increased paternal engagement in childcare, thereby affording mothers greater autonomy to pursue alternative endeavours. The following quotation exemplifies the previous point: even though "our culture celebrates the idea of women being able to 'do it all' […] domestic work and care-giving should be gender-neutral" (Adichie 2017, 11).

According to Adichie, there is a prevailing notion that our gender plays a determining role in our aptitude for specific tasks or our reactions to specific situations. The inherent constraints imposed by gender significantly shape our identities and restrict our potential as individuals. From this perspective, it is argued that gender ought to be perceived as an inherent characteristic, akin to an innate facet of human existence that is universally present from birth. However, the author argues that this assertion is completely false. The user posits that the imposition of gender roles on infants is primarily a result of societal influence, whereby they are socialized to exhibit distinct behaviours based on their assigned gender. An illustrative instance of this concept is as follows: "Children should be

seen according to their strengths or weaknesses, in an individual way, not on a scale of what a girl or boy should be. They should be measured on a scale of being the best versions of themselves" (Adichie 2017, 19).

In the eighth part, with the subtitle "Teach her to reject likeability," Adichie goes on to discuss the topic of integrity and gender equality, focusing on the disparity between meeting other's expectations, being likeable versus being integral and capable of making decisions. The following is an illustration of this idea: "Girls should be taught to be honest and brave, they should be encouraged to speak their minds, to say what they really think, to speak truthfully. They should be praised when they take a stand that is difficult or unpopular because it happens to be their honest position" (Adichie 2017, 37).

In the seventh proposition of her feminist manifesto, the author presents a critique of the belief that marriage should be regarded as an achievement. Furthermore, she claims that girls, in contrast to boys, are socialized to aspire to marriage, resulting in a lifelong preoccupation with the institution of marriage. The author contends that every married woman should be afforded the choice to retain her maiden name, yet acknowledges the pervasive societal pressure to conform to traditional norms. Consequently, the author argues against the expectation that women undergo marital adjustments that are not similarly demanded of men (Adichie 2017, 34).

Investigating her novels, one of Adichie's characters in *Americanah*, Aunt Uju, distinguishes herself from other characters by her willingness to submit herself to any type of relationship for the assurance of comfort, driven by her motto: "You do what you have to do if you want to succeed" (Adichie 2013, 119). Her initial attraction to the American man, Bartholomew, appears to stem from a desire to replicate her life with her ex-lover, The General, and she abandons him when she realizes he cannot bring her success. Adichie places Aunty Uju's constant self-deception in contrast to Ifemelu's voyage of self-honesty.

Another issue worth mentioning is that Adichie investigates the connection between the colour of the skin and the implications it has on a person's life. In the tenth suggestion of the manifesto, the authoress concludes that among Africans, those with a lighter complexion are more commonly perceived as attractive. The importance of skin colour stereotypes as a factor in establishing racial identity is also emphasized, as illustrated by the subsequent citation: "I think you Yoruba because you dark and Igbo fair" (Adichie 2013, 14). Having fair skin is not only linked to attractiveness but is another feature that plays a significant role in the selection of a partner. The following quotation exemplifies the previous idea: "I was happy when I saw your picture, you were light-skinned. I had to think about my children's looks. Light-skinned blacks fare better in America" (Adichie 2009, 184).

The next theme that predominates throughout Adichie's writing is an issue that greatly preoccupies African women. In addition to the colour of their complexion,

the topic is the texture of their hair. She warns that young girls are perceptive of the type of attractiveness that is valued in the mainstream world. They will notice that whiteness is highly appreciated and experiment with various means of lightening their skin. Furthermore, they will observe that valued hair textures are straight or wavy and that valued hair falls rather than stands up. Adichie advocates for black women to embrace their individual hair textures.

In the provided excerpt from *Americanah*, the authoress celebrates the hairstyle of the main character's mother, drawing a parallel between this hairstyle and regal adornments: "It was black-black, so thick it drank two containers of relaxer at the salon, so full it took hours under the hooded dryer, and when finally released from pink plastic rollers, sprang free and full, flowing down her back like a celebration. My father called it a crown of glory" (Adichie 2013, 41).

By emphasizing the more admirable qualities associated with being black, Adichie hopes to instil a sense of pride among black women. The process of black women becoming comfortable in their own skin is essential to their emancipation from idealized notions of beauty, if they are able to withstand any and all types of pressure to modify who they are as individuals in order to fit into preconceived ideas of what attractiveness constitutes. Adichie seizes every opportunity to encourage and inspire African women to believe in themselves. She goes further, saying in her manifesto that it is illogical to have a single conventional beauty standard when taking into account the myriad of diverse sorts of cultures that exist: "Girls should be aware that both slim white women and non-slim non-white women are attractive" (Adichie 2017, 45).

In the twelfth and thirteenth suggestions, Adichie refers to resistance against oppression and patriarchy when speaking about sexuality, love, and romantic relationships. The sexualization of the female body is frequently found to go along with the process of commodifying the female body (Sebola 2022, 5). When endeavouring to delineate the concept of love, according to Adichie, it is paramount to consider the prominent factors of respect and admiration: "whatever kind, however you define it, but I think of it as being greatly valued by another human being and greatly valuing another human being" (Adichie 2017, 55).

The Significance of One's Heritage, Culture, Traditions, and Sense of Identity

In accordance with the ninth recommendation outlined in Adichie's list, it is advocated that girls should receive instruction on their cultural heritage. It is imperative that individuals are nurtured to develop a strong sense of cultural pride as part of their identity. Individuals ought to wholeheartedly embrace the aesthetically pleasing aspects of their cultural heritage, which notably prioritize

communal harmony, collective decision-making, and diligent effort. Furthermore, the linguistic expressions and traditional sayings within their culture exhibit remarkable elegance and impart profound insights (Adichie 2017, 39).

In one of her lectures, Adichie asserts the following: "Our histories cling to us. We are shaped by where we come from. Our art is shaped by where we come from" (2012, 1). There is a consistent engagement with Igbo epistemologies throughout Adichie's writing, which underscores the continued significance and influence of the past in our contemporary lives. Adichie locates her writing within a lengthy tradition of Igbo literary and cultural production by invoking the oral tradition. Moreover, she recognized the significance of this literary and cultural inheritance throughout her literary career (Itang 2018, 28).

Similarly to her great predecessor, Chinua Achebe, Adichie has equally retained both the awareness of her responsibility towards her society and her art of using English as the medium to communicate with the world and her people. Her novel entitled *Half of a Yellow Sun* employs textual strategies that are firmly grounded in the cultural tradition of orality. The African oral heritage and the Igbo language have not only offered the author a valuable repository of cultural memories and histories, but they have also served as a source of inspiration for employing linguistic and oral techniques in her written work. Holloway refers to this particular genre of novel as "the written talk" and identifies them as texts that exhibit a "persistence of speech" (1991, 15). *Half of a Yellow Sun* serves as a manifestation of the marginalized perspectives that have endured suppression for an extended period under patriarchal, colonial, and neo-colonial structures. Adichie has skilfully constructed a recursive discourse that effectively amplifies the voices being represented (Ghabeli 2021, 197).

Moreover, the text of the previously mentioned novel maintains its reliance on the indigenous Igbo language and culture through the preservation of traditional formulaic structures of storytelling, within which contemporary political, social, and personal circumstances are intricately interwoven (Egbunike 2017, 17). Another notable characteristic of oral languages and their poetry is their inclination towards an empathetic and participatory tone, as opposed to an objective one, when addressing their subject matter and characters (Ong 2002). The final characteristic of the orally based narrative style pertains to its situational nature, as opposed to being abstract and philosophical (Ghabeli 2021, 199).

The direct incorporation of Igbo words, phrases, sentences, proverbs, and occasionally longer extracts of poetry into the primarily English text demonstrates the influence of the rich oral heritage on the novel. This inclusion of Igbo elements serves to decentralize the text. The utilization of an episodic structure, coupled with a diverse range of perspectives and a fluctuating narrative voice that blurs the boundaries between the narrator, the character, the author, and even the reader, can be traced back to indigenous oral traditions (Ghabeli 2021, 199).

Additional cultural elements can be investigated in Adichie's 2003 novel, *Purple Hibiscus*, in which Adichie skilfully portrays characters who effectively convey their African (specifically Igbo) cultural identity through their use of language. The characters demonstrate the preservation of their African traditional values through the use of language. In addition to the use of linguistic devices, Adichie moulds her characters based on their personality features. Aunty Ifeoma is modelled after the traditional Igbo women who served as complements to the men in their respective jobs, and Adichie designed her in that image. Aunty Ifeoma instils in her kids a strong belief in Africa and a sense of pride for their heritage; she also educates them on the principles that guide African societies. Ifeoma, as an Igbo woman, educates her children to perform their domestic chores independently. She expresses her cultural heritage by teaching her children to speak Igbo and allowing them to speak it freely. This is in contrast to Eugene, who does not allow his children to speak Igbo in public places because he believes his children are civilized, implying that those who speak Igbo in public are not civilized. This demonstrates that he does not take pride in his ancestry in any way (Ghabeli 2021, 66).

Another expressive character, Amaka, continues in her mother's footsteps by refusing to accept an English name during her confirmation, stating that "When the missionaries first came, they didn't think Igbo names were good enough. They insisted that people take English names to be baptized" (Adichie 2003, 204). In doing so, Amaka is protecting the traditional history of her people, just as her mother did before her. She attaches great importance to her Igbo name and is unwilling to use any of the English names that have been suggested to her as a confirmation name. Amaka's decision not to take an English name is symbolic of Africa's decision not to accept foreign dominance and incorporation into its culture. Due to the fact that Africans continue to appreciate their own cultures, traditions, norms, values, and way of life, Amaka's stance is representative of Africa's stance against the exploitation of cultural practices. Amaka is aware that African names connect Africans to their cultural background and ancestry, despite the fact that she is still a young child.

The missionary school system placed African people on the margins, and this mentality has had long-term consequences both metaphysically and psychologically (Adichie 2010, 96). Adichie emphasizes how important it is for parents to show their children intentionally "the enduring beauty and resilience of Africans" (Adichie 2017, 39). The superiority of white achievement and white beauty standards prevails in accordance with the power structures of the world. Adichie's mission is to defy such ideologies and inspire youngsters to take pride in their African culture and traditions.

Furthermore, Adichie is well aware of the fact that traditional beliefs and outdated concepts that have been passed down through generations in a given

culture can cause some of its members a great deal of suffering. The patriarchal structure has been predominant in Nigerian society for generations, which is why "biology is often used to explain the privileges that men have, the most common reason being men's physical superiority. Evolutionary biology is often used to explain male promiscuity" (Adichie 2017, 48). Adichie stresses the importance of never relying on such ideas, even though they seem to justify established societal norms, "question our culture's selective use of biology as 'reasons' for social norms" (Adichie 2017, 48). To demonstrate this, contrary to tradition, in *Half of the Yellow Sun*, Adichie presents female characters that are strong and courageous enough to fight alongside males in the Biafra war. They "thrust a fist in the air, and shout, 'Give us guns!'" (Adichie 2006, 185).

Moreover, Adichie constantly emphasizes the importance of disseminating literacy, as she believes that education is not only a fundamental human right but also a prerequisite for poverty reduction, the development of prosperous, resilient economies, and the maintenance of tranquil, stable societies, as indicated by the subsequent excerpt: "Books will help her understand and question the world, help her express herself, and help her in whatever she wants to become" (Adichie 2017, 25). In her sixth proposal, she largely discusses the influence that words may have on children and the significant effect that this can have on their lives. She concludes that one should question language, as "language is the repository of our prejudices, our beliefs, and our assumptions" (Adichie 2017, 26).

Otherness

Adichie is renowned for advocating for the rights of African people and expressing opposition towards their marginalization through her literary contributions, exploring themes related to migration, displacement, identity crisis, Othering, and racial issues. The authoress appreciates and values the concept of otherness while also placing importance on the significance of embracing and respecting differences. According to her perspective, the veracity of her society lies in the presence of disparities, which pertain to the multitude of variations among individuals. Individuals exhibit a diverse range of characteristics, encompassing their physical attributes, personal inclinations, aspirations, perspectives, linguistic abilities, and lifestyles, among other factors. Adichie says in the fifteenth suggestion of her manifesto: "Make difference ordinary. Make difference normal" (Adichie 2017, 59).

Her 2013 novel, *Americanah*, courageously delves into the intricate fabric of Nigerian, British, and American societies, exposing the impact of discriminatory forces on individuals striving to adapt to their new and complex environments. According to Amonyeze, "*Americanah*, a keen analysis of race and identity in

contemporary Western societies, is an insurrectionary narrative challenging the negative perception of the African immigrant and interrogating Western norms of cultural assimilation, metaphysical constructs of self, temporality, and history" (2017, 1).

In the aforementioned novel, Adichie effectively describes the unfavourable portrayal of Africa and the marginalization of its migrants from the dominant culture. The authoress depicts the experiences of Nigerian immigrants who hold exaggerated views regarding America and the United Kingdom and who exert great effort to accomplish their aspirations, only to ultimately return to their country of origin with a sense of disillusionment.

The narrative of *Americanah* humanizes the undocumented immigrant by showcasing his economic struggles and the resulting desperation that led him to engage in unlawful acts such as identity theft. "Adichie's redemptive narrative of Obinze's failure overseas and feat of success in the backwaters of Nigeria highlights the possibility that marginalized persons can defy the racist master narrative and write their own success story" (Amonyeze 2017, 1).

Frequently, the phenomenon of racial Othering is portrayed in a dichotomous framework of white versus black, in which whiteness is viewed as a position of advantage or superiority. Furthermore, *Americanah* delves into the marginalization of black people in American and British culture, as well as the intra-marginalization of black Africans by their fellow Africans in the diaspora. This aspect of her work renders it multifaceted in its engagement with various postcolonial discourses.

The adverse perception of the identity of Adichie's main characters, highlighted by their physical properties and status as migrants, undoubtedly poses a challenge to their survival. As a result, achieving complete assimilation into a society where racial stratification exists can be difficult without making some sort of concession. The process of renegotiating and transforming one's identity through transgression and cultural hybridity holds great significance in Adichie's *Americanah*.

The intersection of Otherness, transgression, and hybridity sheds light on the interaction of racial issues. Adichie's diasporic characters demonstrate that in the pursuit of integrating the "Othered" identity, the authentic identity may be modified or even suppressed. These characters are compelled to transgress their identities in order to assimilate into predominantly white spaces due to the significance of their blackness. The aforementioned transgressive measures manifest in various forms such as abandonment or concealment of one's true identity through alterations in hairstyle, accent, identity theft, body size, and fraudulent marriage or immigration scams.

As evidenced by the subsequent quotation, the protagonist of *Americanah* demonstrates an awareness of her own unfamiliarity with American customs

and linguistic patterns. This notable realization represents her initial step towards re-establishing her Nigerian heritage, embracing her authentic identity, and discontinuing the imitation of the accent, which deviates from her usual behaviour: "She had won, indeed, but her triumph was full of air. Her fleeting victory had left in its wake a vast, echoing space, because she had taken on, for too long, a pitch of voice and a way of being that was not hers" (Adichie 2013, 175).

Adichie highlights the traumatic impact of Otherness on those who experience it. The author emphasizes that linguistic racism, which involves discrimination based on accent and is often associated with the concept of Otherness, represents a nuanced means of establishing social hierarchies. Frequently, it initiates feelings of inferiority that can result in social isolation, diminished self-assurance, reduced self-regard, and heightened apprehension.

Ultimately, after recognizing her inability to conform to certain cultural norms of her adopted community, Ifemelu embraces her Nigerian accent, abandons her hair extensions in favour of a more traditional African hairstyle, and begins to take pride in her cultural heritage. According to the claims made by Amonyeze, "She opts for an English language that will be able to carry the weight of her African experience. Achebe describes this type of language as 'a new English,' still in full communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit new surroundings" (2017, 1).

Adichie's work illustrates how differences in skin colour serve as a direct hindrance for African transnational migrants in their ability to access social privileges. The experience of being Black presents obstacles to one's perceived visibility and competence, necessitating a continuous demonstration of these qualities. As observed in *Americanah*, where the highly professional characters are compelled to transgress their true selves in order to achieve their goals, "I have to take my braids out for my interviews and relax my hair… If you have braids, they will think you are unprofessional. […] You are in a country that is not your own. You do what you have to do if you want to succeed" (Adichie 2013, 119).

Conclusions

The findings of this study clearly show that the African perspective of feminism has much broader connotations than the Western one. Although some people on the continent incorrectly associate the term feminism with an anti-male, anti-culture, and anti-religious movement, African feminists do not seek subjugation of males but gender equality. African feminism addresses a range of socio-historical factors unique to the continent, including colonialism, imperialism, and human rights concerns.

What is more, the performed analysis proves that Adichie's manifesto is not merely a parental guide for raising feminist daughters but also a compilation of

her major topics and a reflection of her ideological and philosophical perspective. The three groups of themes that have been identified in the fifteen suggestions interweave all of Adichie's works.

The investigation has revealed that Adichie's repertoire of subjects encompasses a significantly wider range than those referenced in the manifesto. The veracity of this claim was substantiated by the findings made during the course of the investigation. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie delves into significant themes within her literary works such as colonialism, emancipation, rootlessness, oppression, and displacement. These topics are notably absent or minimally addressed in the manifesto. Due to the enormous amount of material, further investigations on selected topics are needed.

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Melinda Nadj Abonji's Prose from a Transcultural Perspective

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Abstract. This paper explores the ways in which transculturality manifests in the prose of Melinda Nadj Abonji. Besides *Tauben fliegen auf* [*Fly Away, Pigeon*] (2010), her well known and highly acclaimed novel translated into several languages, it also looks at her latest novel, *Schildkrötensoldat* [Tortoise Soldier] (2017). It is concerned with articulations of the experience of transculturality, closely related to the experience of territorial displacement. *Tauben fliegen auf* describes the life of a family of migrant workers in Switzerland whose background sets them apart from the milieu in which they live. Variations on national identity take on a key role. In the novel *Schildkrötensoldat*, a young man of modest intellectual abilities struggles to find his identity in the face of the threat of the Yugoslav Wars. In the language of her novels, Melinda Nadj Abonji recreates the transcultural interrelationships. Besides the sensitivity to metalinguistic issues, her novels make existence in a multicultural milieu tangible by incorporating multilingual text units. Multilingualism, however, not only characterizes the speech of the characters but also defines the discursive position of the narrator, which is the most distinctive and salient poetic feature of her prose. The possibilities of translating multilingual texts are also discussed in this paper.[1]

Keywords: transculturality, territorial displacement, multiple identities, multilingualism, literary translation.

The theory of transculturality was developed by Wolfgang Welsch in the early 1990s. Although the term itself was used much earlier, in the 1940s, by the Cuban anthropologist and ethnomusicologist Fernando Ortiz and other scholars have subsequently made important insights into transculturality, Welsch's theory has not lost its relevance even in the light of recent discourse forms and continues to serve as a relevant foundation for researchers in the field.

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For a long time, transcultural interpretations have existed on the fringes of science, and it is only in the last decade that they have begun to emerge rapidly as a new discipline in the humanities and social sciences. As a result, various definitions of transculturality have been formed, all of which may be relevant to the discipline. From our point of view, the definition of Daniel G. König and Katja Rakow proves to be the most applicable:

> The […] most recent definition uses the term "transcultural" to describe a particular method of approach that, from a thematic point of view, deconstructs concepts such as "society," "class," "nation," "culture," or "civilization." Methodologically, this definition encourages analysis of phenomena that question supposed boundaries. It obliges the researcher to analyse phenomena from various angles and thus to insist on the multipolarity, multiple perspectives, and transformative dynamics inherent to the research subject. (König and Rakow 2016, 95)

Although König and Rakow refer to the ideas of the South Asian art historian Monica Juneja, Wolfgang Welsch's idea is also close to this approach, who, after about fifty lectures, articles, and studies, put his theory into book format in 2017, reviving and clarifying some of his basic concepts. Welsch's well-known thesis is that the perception of cultures as self-contained spherical structures is untenable; the prefix "trans-" in the sense of 'transcending, crossing over' indicates that cultures do not stop at national borders but are interconnected in a system of networks. The volume *Transkulturalität: Realität – Geschichte – Aufgabe* [Transculturality: Reality – History – Mission] presents the historical dimensions of transculturality from Greek culture to present day. It brings examples from sculpture, painting, architecture, poetry, dance, and music, indicating the characteristics of the interlocking branches of art and also highlighting the nature of the genres (Welsch 2017).

Initially, transcultural case studies focused on thematic aspects: the biographical background of the authors and the circumstances surrounding the genesis of the work, which is still inevitable today since autobiographical representation is predominant in the studied texts. Some theoreticians argue that certain literary texts cannot be understood without knowing the background of their authors, their complex life paths, multiple identities, and the diversity of their cultural and national affiliations (Danigno 2013, 135).

No doubt the thematic conclusions themselves provide us with insights for our literary understanding. However, research now seems to be moving away from the mere description of these characteristics and is more concerned with the features that provide the basis for drawing conclusions about the aesthetic aspects of texts that fall within this literary paradigm. The focus is increasingly shifting from a

productive and often disturbing thematic orientation to the literary process and the resulting aesthetic quality.

Territorial Displacement of the Author

This paper attempts a transcultural interpretation of Melinda Nadj Abonji's novels, the highly acclaimed *Tauben fliegen auf* [*Fly Away, Pigeon*] and the subsequently published *Schildkrötensoldat* [Tortoise Soldier]. Territorial displacement, multiple identities, and translingualism of transcultural authors are considered common features of all transcultural texts. In the case of Melinda Nadj Abonji, we must not overlook the fact that her relocation was not voluntary. She was born into a family of former Yugoslavian migrant workers who emigrated to Switzerland during the Tito period. The parents left their homeland in the hope of a better livelihood; however, a recurring motif in their autobiographical narratives is that they also wanted to escape the humiliation and the traumatic experiences of the socialist regime. Melinda Nadj Abonji and her sister were brought up by their grandmother. She was five when the family was reunited and she moved to the West. The story of her novel *Tauben fliegen auf*, published in German in 2010, recalls this autobiographical event. The question of identity, however, is more complex: the author grew up as a member of the Hungarian community in the northern province of former Yugoslavia, in Vojvodina, so her cultural identity and the language she acquired was not Serbo-Croatian, the language of the state, but Hungarian, the language of the minority community (see also Toldi 2011a–b). Melinda Nadj Abonji is a so-called translingual author, one of those writers who "for various reasons, have 'rejected' their mother tongue and write either in the language of their place of residence or in both languages" (Roguska 2017, 25). Melinda Nadj Abonji did not reject her mother tongue deliberately when she was five, but she was exposed to a foreign language environment at a very young age and used her mother tongue only in the family setting. As a matter of course, her working language became German.

Territorial Displacement of the Literary Text

The novel *Tauben fliegen auf* tells the story of the Kocsis family, who emigrated from Vojvodina to Switzerland and visits the homeland from time to time, during the annual holidays or on the occasion of big family events (celebrations, funerals). Thematizing the movement between the abandoned world and the new one is a transcultural aspect, while we are aware that in the new world, the ties with the one left behind are not broken.

In the role of the narrator we find Ildikó, the adolescent girl. Two main settings define the novel, one of them being the world of childhood in Óbecse, the proximity of the grandmother. The novel opens with the story of an arrival: with their first possession, a brown Chevrolet, the migrant worker family return to their once abandoned environment, a dusty lowland town. The scene is presented from the narrator's point of view, evoking intimate emotions, recalling a bygone, nostalgic world close to her heart. The other location is Switzerland, a family-run café on the banks of Lake Zurich, called Mondial, which represents the ultimate measure of success, the emigrant family's existential goal, and a guarantee of their social security.

At every level, the central organizing principle of the novel is duality. The parents have one view of the situation, while the children, Ildikó and her sister, have another one. "The novel is also an attempt to contrast the children's memory narrative with the parents' memory" (Czeglédy 2016, 94).[2] The multipolar approach is tangible from the very first pages: the father, drawn with very strong features, frets that nothing ever changes in his abandoned world, while his daughter perceives the lack of change as something positive and hopes not to notice any alteration that would disrupt the return to her once carefree life.

The novel is about the struggle of the narrator to find her personal identity; due to her situation and age, she is sensitive to questions of belonging: who I am, where I come from, what I have left behind, what my life has become. These are the dilemmas of the individual, who is not even sure whether she lives among Swiss who are German or Germans who live in Switzerland. In such circumstances, she is confronted with her parents' exemplary efforts at absolute assimilation, with the imperative to be Swiss, i.e. to identify with something whose outlines she cannot even see clearly.

Furthermore, the concept of the migrant is also layered in the world of the novel. Apart from the "indigenous Gastarbeiter," there are also refugees fleeing the Yugoslav Wars of the last decade of the twentieth century. The staff of the café is also an ethnically mixed community: Serbs, Croats, Serbians from Croatia, Serbians from Bosnia, who have diverse ethnic customs and convictions, carrying the burden of their (recent) past.

The novel presents the identities that the characters embody. The most fleshed-out character, the father, voices his thoughts on the subject at every opportunity. He is not Hungarian but instead has the identity of a Hungarian from Vojvodina. And as the head of the family, he feels it is his responsibility to show his daughters what he envisions an ideal husband to be like:

> the last thing he'd want is a Serb, no Russian either, or a Swiss, the ideal man would be Hungarian, best of all a *vajdasági magyar*, a Hungarian from

2 Translations from Hungarian specialist literature are by the author, É. T., throughout the article.

> Vojvodina, someone you wouldn't have to explain history to, who knows what it means to be part of a minority and because he knows that he has emigrated to Switzerland, a Hungarian from Vojvodina who is successful here in Switzerland in a proper profession, so nothing to do with words, painting or music. (Nadj Abonji 2014, 136)

Speaking about this, the narrator relies on stereotypes, portraying his father ironically. This kind of identity construction is distorted, taken to extremes, and deliberately exaggerated, which becomes even more obvious in what follows. The list of national character traits does not end here, for his future son-in-law must also possess the following qualities:

> he'd also have to have hair on his upper lip, to wear his hair cut short and always be the first to pull his wallet out, discreetly, he would never let a woman pay for him and prefer heavy, manly food – the opposite of those pale men who eat as much salad and vegetables as cows eat grass –, his clothes would always be neat, especially his shoes. (Nadj Abonji 2014, 181–182)

The *Tauben fliegen auf* has two distinct layers: the world of parents who are unable to transcend the migrant discourse and the mindset that maintains national boundaries, and there is a transcultural level, the world of young people who find the parents' attitudes and mentality unacceptable, as enforced by Ildi's first-person narrator. They avoid stereotypes: they do not experience the West as Eldorado, and their former home is not the source of all misery either. The younger girl is the first to be emancipated and, simultaneously, the discourse of "we" in the narrative is taken over by the perspective of the "I" (Gauss 2010). This clearly foreshadows the older girl – the narrator – eventually embarking on her independent journey of self-realization. Territorial displacement also entails a transformation of the concept of homeland and, along with it, a change in their attitude towards the problem of national affiliation. From collective identity, the focus is clearly shifting to individual identity. At the end of the novel, Ildi's move to a house populated mainly by immigrants marks the path towards a new identity.

It was seven years later that Melinda Nadj Abonji's next novel was published. The *Schildkrötensoldat* is not an autobiographical narrative; however, territorial displacement and identity play a major role in it, though with a slightly different overtone than in *Tauben fliegen auf*. The transcultural identity implications are exposed very early on in the novel. The protagonist, Zoltán Kertész, is the child of a Hungarian Gypsy father – Lajos Kertész – and a presumably Serbian mother. All we know about his mother is that her name is Zorka, and she is quite light-blooded. National affiliation is the least of Zoli's problems: he is mentally impaired. Not from birth, only since his father dropped him from the boot of his

motorbike: he fell off like a sack of flour and bumped his head. After the incident, he has changed completely. The accident was caused not – or not entirely – by his father's negligence, not even by Zoli's clumsiness, but also because his baker master, for whom he worked as an apprentice, took advantage of him to the extreme, making him work so hard that he got exhausted. Zoli recovered from the accident, but he was never the same again.

From then on, he can only work as stock handler in the bakery, and there is only one place left where he can still feel at home: the garden, as his name [Kertész] suggests. By watering the garden and tending the flowers, he finds inner peace, harmony with himself and the world. He can feel what others cannot; he is on the same wavelength with the flowers. He can see what is hidden from others, despite the various rude remarks that are thrown at him on a daily basis. It is hard to keep count of how many insulting names he gets. He is called a garden maniac, a loser, a bum, a slob, an idiot, illiterate parent's brat, a bastard, a leper, a clown, a coward, a freak...

He can no longer dream of becoming a baker, which could have been a great social advancement for him. He would have been a sought-after man in his village, someone who would have earned the respect of everyone. He could have helped his family financially, and as a baker he could have "bleached with flour" his father's 'black' heritage. There is an inherent ambivalence in his personality: he does not meet people's expectations of him; he is different from what is expected from him. His environment refuses to acknowledge his limitations. His mother believes he can be retrained to be "normal," so she urges him to enlist in the military service where he would be disciplined and fixed. His father agrees that the military will turn him into a man. Zoli is humiliated in his manhood too when he is asked what is between his legs, a flower or a cock. But if he were to return home as a veteran soldier, he would be celebrated as a hero, as in the folk songs.

For the most part, the novel is set in Vojvodina. The barracks where Zoli is recruited can be referentialized, it can be found in Zrenjanin. Nevertheless, the driving force behind the events is territorial displacement. Zoli is forced to step out of his comfort zone and leave the homely environment of the garden for the barracks, the site of inhumanity and torture. This kind of displacement is far more transformative than territorial displacement in itself, and it leads to lasting trauma or even loss of lives. In this passage, the reader who is more familiar with the region will often notice that the author substitutes the missing details of reality with fiction.

In the army, Zoli is going through hell. He behaves like a tortoise, working hard but slowly and accurately, tucking his neck and hiding in his shell when necessary. He has no conflicts with the multi-ethnic community, only the cruel training pushes him to his physical limits. He begs his mother to take him home from the barracks, saying he is needed at home for his earnings, but she refuses

to help him. Despite not being understood, he survives the training. But his only friend, Jenő, with whom he marches, who is tied to Zoli's backpack by his superior so that Zoli has to drag him along during the military exercise, dies after the ordeal. For, no matter how much his strength is waning, he is not allowed to stop. Zoli blames himself and decides to stop eating. The military, however, does not tolerate passive resistance. They simply stuff food down his throat like he's a goose. From then on, his physical and mental condition starts to decline rapidly. His speech becomes incomprehensible, his behaviour even more infantile. On the eve of the infamous Battle of Vukovar, the day before the immediate combat mission, he collapses. He is admitted to the military hospital, from where he is discharged with a diagnosis of epilepsy. Four months later, Zoli was found under the table with a piece of bread in his throat. He choked to death.

In the novel, the state of displacement is conveyed through the narration of alterity: society casts out those who are different and weaker. The migrant context is brought into the novel by Anna. We find out relatively soon that Zoli died, Anna, the niece, gets a phone call from Zoli's father. From Zurich, she takes a train home immediately. On the way home, signs of utter neglect appear before her eyes: flickering signs at the bus station, illegible timetables. Every corner stinks of urine, the rubbish bins are hanging tilted, piles of rubbish litter the streets. The war is already raging and while Anna's stream of thoughts evokes the social situation, her impressions of the reality of the war hinterland get condensed into a single, dynamic image born from a feeling of displacement in a non-place, in a Marc Augéan sense:

> When the darkness, the dustless air of the summer night, the soft, erratically regular rhythm of the crickets, the scattered flickering lights tell me that behind the darkness another life awaits me; when this night trip gets mixed up with the memory of countless previous night trips; when memories brought to life in dark colours now almost tear my heart out, for this journey is unlike any other, is different from all the others, because for years there has been an irreversible degradation, until recently, to the point of carnage that no one thought possible; when the hours-long traffic jam at the border crossing at Tompa, between Hungary and Serbia, the chaos and confusion there no longer allows one to imagine that a miraculous power inspired by the beauty of the night could suddenly put an end to the killing, the murder, the massacre; so that when you can no longer ignore the bus full to the brim, the passengers, including myself, talking about everything but war; now, when the border police are ransacking the whole bus, giving orders to each other in barking voices, spitting, rubbing their palms at the prospect of a thriving business, then I know for sure that this time I have not come to visit my relatives but to see Zoli, Zoltán. The blinding headlamps at the

> border crossing have only one purpose: to burn into my consciousness the phrase so that I never ever forget: Yugoslavia, the country where you were born and grew up, no longer exists. (Nadj Abonji 2017)[3]

Beneath the emotionally charged sentences, however, the narrator's rationality is at work. She comes home to investigate the incident, to visit the scene, to recall Zoli's days in the barracks, to "find the beginning of the end." She does not want to blame anyone, she just wants to understand why he died and to retrace his path.

The novel is based on the alternation of narrative perspectives. Originally written as a play and performed in Basel in 2014, it was published as a novel in 2017, only to be staged again. It has two first-person narrators: one is Zoltán Kertész, who is most often called Zoli, and the other one is his cousin Anna, whom Zoli consistently calls Hanna because he prefers its softer, sweeter sound. The two narrators' chapters are alternating. The titles of the passages told by Zoli are written in all capital letters, and within the words, the letters are connected by a hyphen. This is not just a visual sign, it has a significance too: it refers to Zoli's passion for crosswords – he is known as the king of crosswords – and the fact that he stammers. Hanna's chapters are numbered in Arabic numerals. There are other ways too in which the perspectives of the two narrators stand apart: in Zoli's chapters, there is no sentence capitalization at the beginning of paragraphs, no punctuation at the end, and his sentences are often unfinished or agitated. Zoli's role as a narrator is in fact paradoxical, as he speaks about himself while it turns out that he is already dead. Yet it is not a dead person speaking, the narrative point of view conveys a sense of immediacy all the way through. He experiences the world in a synesthetic unity of the senses (Jelisavčić 2022, 939), his thought process often follows the pattern of automatic writing. Hanna, on the other hand, is an intellectual, a language teacher living in Zurich, who has sleep disturbances and sometimes reaches for stimulants; however, her narrative style is objective. There is a perceptible alternation of rhythm between the two narratives. Zoli's narrative is fast and chaotic, while Hanna's, characterized by long sentences, is slow, powerful, and rational. The critical reception associates the figure of Zoli with that of Gregor Samsa, and the novel's narrative is most closely compared to Faulkner's narrative position in *The Sound and the Fury* (Jelisavčić 2022).

One of the novel's ambivalences is that the simple-minded Zoli, who is going through his ordeals, has a more serene perception of the world around him than the deeply disillusioned Hanna.

3 Translation by the author, É. T.

Translanguaging and Translation

Another characteristic feature of transculturality is translanguaging. It is the condition when the working language of the writer is not the same as the first language s/he has learned. By thematizing the language or by using the logic of the language, the transcultural writer creates a textual world in which the abandoned language comes into play, often as a subtly concealed background text, shaping both worldview and poetics (see Toldi 2019 for more). The language of Melinda Nadj Abonji's novel *Tauben fliegen auf* is a display of linguistic perfectionism, a case of a perfect language change. German critics have repeatedly praised her for the exceptional linguistic performance: "Abonji's story is excellent, but the real delight is the language of the novel" (Becker 2010). Her language is "very beautiful," "melodious and irresistible" (Diener 2010).

The novel is interwoven by metalinguistic utterances. The writer is involved in the question of foreign language acquisition, but she illustrates the discriminatory cases of the lack of perfect language skills with the example of her parents, who were first-generation migrant workers. The inclusion of Hungarian sayings, proverbs, folk and art songs in the original language, i.e. Hungarian or German, clarifies the environment she is talking about or referring to. At the same time, it evokes the Swiss German language spoken by the Yugoslavian migrant workers. The narrator does not speak Serbian, and when she meets a boy who is fleeing to Switzerland to escape the war, English becomes the language of communication. The Hungarian words, the large number of cultural realia, and the incorporation of Hungarian phrases into the German text suggest that the original text can also be perceived as a translated text (more in Toldi 2019).

The novel *Tauben fliegen auf* won two awards at the same time, the Best German Book and the Best Swiss Book awards, which launched a series of translations. Translating translingual authors' texts is a real challenge for a translator. The Hungarian translation by Éva Blaschtik (*Galambok röppennek föl*, 2012) is concerned with "reintroducing" the "foreign" into the translation. For it is precisely the specific atmosphere that makes the German text special and that is lost in the Hungarian translation. A great deal of transculturality is lost, the cultural specificities are eliminated. In Hungarian, nothing particular survives when we read the name of a Hungarian dish as *paprikás*, which is one of the most common words, or when we call grandpa *papuci* and Aunt Panni *Panni néni*. Therefore, to compensate for the lost foreignness, the Hungarian translator retains some of the German culture-specific terms in the original German language. But even so, she cannot eliminate domestication in her translation, so she alters one of the characters' names. The narrator, the eldest daughter in the family, is called Ildikó, which is fine, as it is a common name in Hungarian. Her sister, however, is called Nomi. This is not a typical Hungarian name; it is extremely rare, therefore

the translator renames her Bori, a name that sounds similar and is also widely used, but it is associated with a slightly older person than the character in the novel. It is possible that Melinda Nadj Abonji chooses this name precisely to show that the younger generation is no longer attached to the culture they have left behind like the parents do, even when it's a question of identity. Although the Hungarian translation does not detect this aspect, it still manages to balance successfully between the foreign and the native.

A Serbian translation by Dragoslav Dedović was also published at the same time as the Hungarian one due to the novel's thematic content and its referential local context (*Golubije srce* 2012). The translator's task is not easy either: he has to identify and match Hungarian cultural realia, which he does not always succeed in doing. Often he cannot find the Serbian equivalent and translates literally. For example, in the phrase *isten, isten!* (Nadj Abonji 2010, 42), he fails to recognize that this is a toast greeting, correctly: *Isten-isten!* In Serbian, the regretful *Bože, Bože*, i.e. 'my God, my God' is uttered (Nadj Abonji 2012b, 43). In Tess Lewis's English translation, it is as if they were drinking to God's health: "To God! To God" (Nadj Abonji 2014, 30). However, I do not think that the translators did not recognize the phrase *Isten hozott benneteket* ('Welcome,' literally 'God has brought you') but rather they considered it to be an intimate phrase and therefore translated it literally (in the German text this appears in Hungarian). In Serbian and Bosnian, it is *Bog vas je doveo* (instead of *dobrodošli*), and in English it is translated as the biblical-sounding 'The Lord has brought you' instead of simply 'Welcome.' The Serbian translator also had to render the incorrect German speech of the Croatian and Bosnian characters in a corrupted form of the Serbian language. To compensate for the foreignness, where he can, the translator domesticates and corrects the linguistically incorrect sentence almost everywhere, minimalizing the errors.

Mira Đorđević's Bosnian translation (*Golubovi lete u nepovrat* 2015) goes the farthest in terms of domestication, to the extent of adding footnotes to foreign words and cultural realia. For example: "*Förderalizmus*, sagte Vater, und wir lachten mit butterverschmierten Mündern, was wirst du fördern?" – reads *förderalism*: "Instead of federalism (referring to the father's uncertain knowledge of the language)," and then adds another footnote after the sentence: "Fördern – German: to promote, to support" (Nadj Abonji 2015, 93). The Hungarian translation makes the meaning explicit, incorporating the explanation into the body of the text: "*Förderalism*, said father, instead of *Föderalism*, and we laughed, our mouths full, what is it you want to *fördern*, to support" (Nadj Abonji 2012a, 130). The English translator finds a suitable distorted form of the word, and thus manages to transpose the original German equivalent, leaving the most on the reader: "*furtheralism*, father said and we laughed, our mouths full, what is it you want to further?" (Nadj Abonji 2014, 97). He assumes that the reader understands

there is a mix-up of words. The Serbian translation eliminates the error, does not quote the word in the wrong form, but then inserts a pun: "*»federalizam«,* kaže otac, i smejemo se sa ustima umrljanim maslacem, šta ćeš sa tolikim federima?" (Nadj Abonji 2012b, 125). The humour comes from the sound of the word *feder*, which means 'spring.' "What do you want with all those springs?" – they ask the father. But it is not clear why the otherwise perfectly suitable word becomes funny, why they make a joke of it.

The translation of the title also deserves a special note. Out of the four translations I have looked at (Serbian, Bosnian, Hungarian, English), the Hungarian is the one that best captures the original meaning, evoking the symbolism of the doves flying upwards (*Galambok röppennek föl* [Pigeons Flying Up]). The upward orientation is no coincidence either: the peace doves were flown upwards during the socialist era, but in a figurative sense the girls' flight from the family nest can also be interpreted as an upward movement, a step forward. In English, the pigeon is urged to fly away [*Fly Away, Pigeon*]. The Serbian translator's gesture of domestication is perhaps the most over the top in translating the title. For *Golubije srce* ('Dove Heart') is a phrase borrowed from a Hungarian song that is sung at a family celebration, thus it alters the meaning, shifting it towards the song-singing, stereotypically sweet-and-sad perception of Hungarians in the South Slavic region. The Bosnian doves fly away in a direction of never return (*Golubovi lete u nepovrat*), in a highly sensitive, metaphorical translation.

The Bosnian translation is annotated by the translator, Mira Đorđević, who highlights the multiple perspectives of the narrative. Not only does she note that the novel is connected to the history of disintegration of Yugoslavia, and provides an opportunity to observe the differences among cultures, languages, social and political attitudes both in the spaces of the abandoned homeland and the longed-for prosperity, but she also highlights the novel's curious German language. She points out the striking length of the sentences, in which humour, nostalgia, and the gravity of the migrant theme alternate in a well-paced rhythm. According to her, the author even gives up the syntactic regularity of the German language in favour of the musicality of the sentences. The "sometimes bewildering narrative style" (Đorđević 2015, 207) lends the text a specific melody and a peculiar sound and, in particular, a strongly marked rhythm, achieved through the use of unusually long, rolling sentences punctured by a multitude of commas. The translator considers this structuring of sentences a grammatical error but acknowledges that in order to structure the rhythm, Melinda Nadj Abonji deliberately employs this seemingly arbitrary punctuation so she can deliver her message in a single long breath. Commas do not interrupt the flow of thoughts or the emotional charge of the narrative as full stops would. Parentheses also play an important role in the text, not from the point of view of rhythm but from that of meaning, because they help the protagonist to express her own latent thoughts.

The novel *Schildkrötensoldat* makes the relationship between language and music even more explicit, especially because Zoli's simple-mindedness frees the narrator from the constraints of a strictly logical narration. At the same time, the narrative is an experimentation with language, which is no small task to translate. The Serbian translator, Dragoslav Dedović, achieves this the best, alternating between the strict logic of Hanna's text and Zoli's extreme, experimental attempts of self-expression. The title appears in a literal translation (*Vojnik-kornjača*), using a hyphenated structure instead of the compound structure common in German.

Not to the same extent as in the novel *Tauben fliegen auf*, still, Hungarian words, culture-specific expressions, idioms, typical building names appear in the German text, and the translator retains those that have no Serbian equivalent (for example, *kánikula* 'heat wave' is kept in Hungarian, but *palacsinta* 'pancake' is not). A few Serbian words also appear, as well as brand names specific to the region (Jelen Pivo). The bilingualism of the region is also reflected when he writes in Serbian and Hungarian: "Autobuska Stanica. Autobusz Állomás." The spelling mistake in Hungarian here reinforces the referential authenticity.

Once again, the translator domesticates. The mother, Zorka, presumably of Serbian nationality, sings. The lyrics of the song have been recognizably translated from Hungarian to German: "in der Liebe befiehlt kein Richter" – "Szerelemben nekem nem parancsol a bíró" ('in love no magistrate can give me orders'); "eine Knospe war ich, als ich geboren wurde, eine Rose, als ich Soldat wurde" – "Bimbó voltam, mikor én megszülettem, rózsa voltam, mire katona lettem" ('I was a bud when I was born, a rose when I became a soldier'). These are translated literally; however, there are some original solutions too. For example, *wenn die Theiss aus Tinte wäre* is the equivalent of the Hungarian folk song *Ha a Tisza tinta volna* ('if the Tisza were ink'). The translator, however, finds a Serbian song with a similar meaning: "Pokraj mene više nisi, čamcem plovim sam po Tisi" ('you are no longer with me, I'm rowing alone on the River Tisza'), but for the sake of accuracy and to avoid omitting the ink, he modifies the Serbian song by adding the word "black" as an adjective for Tisza (Nadj Abonji 2020, 163). This is how the blonde Tisza becomes black in the Serbian translation.

As a translingual writer, Melinda Nadj Abonji successfully incorporates elements of her "emitting" medium into her German prose. The novelty of *Schildkrötensoldat* is that it also contains intertextual references, including quotations from Ödön von Horváth and Miloš Crnjanski. The cultural references drawn from the different languages, the insider elements make Melinda Nadj Abonji's texts distinctive, often even poetic. By contrast, the domesticating translations homogenize the text and go against transcultural tendencies.

Osterweiterung or Balkan Turn?

The integration of the oeuvre of transcultural authors into national literatures takes – or can take – two different forms. On the one hand, it is seen as part of the national literature of their chosen working language. At the time of its publication, critics specifically pointed out that *Tauben fliegen auf* was a testimony to the fact that German literature would be innovated both thematically and stylistically by writers with a migrant background (Gauss 2010). Since then, this idea has also been given a theoretical framework. In this paradigm, however, the classification of the author, who is well known in Swiss and German literature, is uncertain, since as a translingual author with a Hungarian cultural background her place would be among the authors of the "Osterweiterung" (Bürger-Koftis 2009), while her thematic choice would place her in the "Balkan turn" (Previšić 2009) paradigm. But the identity of her characters and narrators defies both options. In the novel *Tauben fliegen auf*, the identity of Hungarian from Vojvodina as an identity category results in a double exclusion, even within a transcultural framework. This duality is also the fundamental driving force behind the *Schildkrötensoldat*, in which Serbian cultural references are more prominent, which is perhaps why it has not been translated into Hungarian so far.

On the other hand, most of the transcultural authors are also considered part of the literature of their source culture, regardless of the language. The idea of Mihály Szegedy-Maszák has greatly contributed to the spread of this approach in Hungarian literature. He was the first to draw attention to the fact that literature and language do not necessarily overlap in Hungarian literature. He considered an appendix of Hungarian literature those works and authors who can be classified as such through their cultural ties (Szegedy-Maszák 2007, see also Toldi 2011a).

The spelling of Melinda Nadj Abonji's name also raises the question of national affiliation. Above all, Hungarians of Vojvodina are bothered by this, as in the official Serbian state language the spelling of Hungarian names in the registers is deformed. Because of this official procedure, the Hungarian community in Serbia/Vojvodina feels discriminated, and even humiliated or disadvantaged. However, Melinda Nadj Abonji thinks there is nothing wrong with the spelling of her name. Although in her novels she explores the quest for identity and the theme of national identity, its transformation and variations, in her statements she declares that national identity is not important because it is always charged with heated political connotations. For her, there is no such thing as national identity, it is more important to find one's personal identity (Nadj Abonji 2012c). The underlying structure of her novels also hinges on this idea.

The latter aspects support the Welschian concept that the traditional understanding of cultures is overly nation-oriented. Transculturality, in which individual choice plays a major role, is precisely what dissolves the national

character. He goes so far as to claim that man as a biological being is essentially transcultural since the total human genome does not exceed ten percent, but in the course of evolution, as in the lifetime of the individual, humans undergo changes that repeatedly break through their limitations. Transculturality is thus an entity that defines the very essence of being human (Welsch 2017, 57).

Classifying the literary works of transcultural authors within a national literary paradigm often confronts us with the transformation of traditional notions regarding literary belonging, both in the literary field and within the ever-changing interpretive frameworks. This is no different in the case of Melinda Nadj Abonji either. Although there have been recent attempts to include her in Hungarian or Serbian literature, her true medium is not the literary canon of the different countries but a transcultural space that transcends national boundaries.

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The Representation of Love in *Manon Lescaut* by Abbé Prévost

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Abstract. This work analyses the way in which the representation of love in the novel *Manon Lescaut* by Prévost highlights some important aspects that mark the perception of love in the eighteenth century. Following the literary tradition of Classicism, according to which passionate love is a source of evil and even of the protagonists' death, in Prévost's novel, the Chevalier Des Grieux's passionate love arises from the concern of the Age of Enlightenment to emphasize the importance of individual identity, which implies the freedom and courage to decide on one's own life, the refusal of one's positioning in an inherited hierarchy, at the top of which there lies the paternal or divine authority. To illustrate this conviction, Prévost builds a love story in which the male character occupies the privileged place, and femininity does not represent strangeness or otherness but an artificial entity, one created from within the male figure to capture his departure from the original, paradisiacal state of moral perfection. Under these circumstances, the construction of the female character becomes a tribute to the literary tradition of the representation of charm and beauty as sources of the extreme degradation of the male character.

Keywords: love, passion, eighteenth century, divine authority, individual identity, femininity.

1. Introduction

The eighteenth century witnesses a remarkable turn in the literary representation of love, which, in the previous century, had been valued in its relation to duty and rules. The inner demand of literary heroes placed virtue at the forefront since it was meant to be placed above sentiment. Fulfilment came precisely from the heroic renunciation of passion, considered obscure and dangerous by the classics whose ideal consisted of self-mastery, a return to duty and common sense. In the

eighteenth century, "everything boils down to moralizing and pleasing," as Denis de Rougemont emphasized in his well-known study dedicated to love in the West. With the exception of the tragedies of Corneille and Racine, the end of the century, from a literary perspective, was characterized by "order, suitability, and merit, while love, opposed to virtue, represented desire and temptation leading to excess" (Rougemont 1987, 241; my translation).

The following century is marked by profound transformations regarding the vision of passion, which undergoes a philosophical and moral rehabilitation. In his study entitled *L'invention du sentiment. Roman et économie affective au XVIII^e siècle*, Philip Stewart analyses the shift in the affective paradigm, a significant element of this century, which entails a transition to a new way of feeling, much more nuanced and closely linked to a revaluation of the individual (Stewart 2010, 67). Thus, the focus shifts from self-control to its analysis, from the public and social dimension of sentiment to its internalization. Attention moves from the display of experience to an inner reality, characterized by the uniqueness of the individual. Liberated from the restrictive ropes of reason, sentiment can manifest itself freely, authentically, and spontaneously. The reading public expects a different literary illustration of sentiment, and this gives rise to a diversity of characters shaped by spatial, temporal, and social factors. Under the circumstances, Rousseau's novel, *La Nouvelle Éloïse*, is published in seventy-two editions by the end of the century, captivating readers, despite being criticized by literary scholars. The new, more authentic sensitivity is one of tears, representing "a path to virtue" (Ion 2012, 2002). The ideal of striking a balance between passion and reason vanishes, and passion no longer opposes virtue, making it therefore possible for one to find happiness, which is no longer an enemy of duty.

In this new context, the sentimental novel of the eighteenth century experiences extraordinary expansion, being eagerly read by readers attracted to the confessional discourse of characters who sincerely recount their sufferings caused by despondent love. The act of confession is necessary for "sensible people," as Prévost calls his readers in the preface to his novel *Manon Lescaut*, which we will delve into in the following pages.

2. *Manon Lescaut* – A Moralizing, Innovative Novel

Published in 1731, *Histoire du Chevalier des Grieux et de Manon Lescaut* presents, as the author himself states in the preface, "a poignant example of the power of passions" that blind a young man, "endowed with a bundle of qualities and brilliant merits," distancing him from a happy life, disturbing him to such an extent that he willingly plunges into misfortunes and troubles that he foresees

but does not avoid despite being able to. Living in a constant state of suffering, the knight Des Grieux is "a contradictory character, a mixture of virtues and vices, a constant contrast between beautiful sentiments and ugly deeds" (Prévost 1972, 8; my translation). The moralizing purpose of the story is to provide the public with "events that can serve the understanding of morals," an example that "more suitably guides the impulse of the heart" (Prévost 1972, 9; my translation).

Montesquieu accounts for the success of the novel by emphasizing that love motivates the actions of Des Grieux, even if they are rudimentary, and it is also the love that Manon bears for the knight that makes the public judge her less harshly despite the character of the female protagonist (qtd. in Ion 2012, 1203). Another aspect that appeals to the public is the confessional discourse. In the cited study, Philip Stewart emphasizes that the first-person novel is the place where sentiment is invented (Stewart 2010, 70). In literature, there is a shift from the pleasure of listening and telling heroic stories, permeated with bravery or proof of divine manifestation, to a literature of spontaneous confession (Foucault 1995, 49). This change in discourse establishes a power relationship, says Foucault, between the one who confesses and the interlocutor. Thus, Prévost's novel is a long, spontaneous confession of the protagonist in front of the narrator, a good and generous knight who promises to offer the public an immediately written story, without any additions. Therefore, the public has a role; it becomes the authority that can forgive or condemn the actions of the protagonist. The confessional discourse diminishes the ontological dimension of the hero, which depends on the forgiveness of the interlocutor-authority. And it is not only the reader who has this role but also other characters to whom Des Grieux confesses: his father, Tiberge, Mr. T. And yet, the sincerity of confession, the anguish, and the suffering open the path to forgiveness and the hope that even the greatest of sins can be forgiven.

But how is love represented in *Manon Lescaut*, a pioneering novel of European sentimentalism? Simon May, in *The History of Love*, associates love with "ontological rooting;" specifically, the need for love stems from an irresistible attraction to offer ourselves stability, resilience, security, and roots. In the author's view, at birth, "we are thrown into the world," and love is our reaction to the vulnerable, uncontrollable relationship we have with the world. Thus, we love those people who promise us "ontological rooting," regardless of whether they are good to us or not, whether they care about us or not, whether they value us or not (May 2014, 21). However, does Des Grieux seek an "ontological basis" in the love that Manon bears for him, as the author calls it? We do not believe so since Des Grieux is not thrown into the world; on the contrary, he throws himself. All the obstacles he encounters, all the unfortunate adventures he experiences are a response from the world, which desires him back to that state of grace which the character departed from. In order to be with Manon, Des Grieux overcomes

any obstacle, even sacrificing his moral integrity. We can speak of a gradual uprooting. First and foremost, it must be noted that the character departs from all perspectives, from a state of paradisiacal balance, as we could call the moment before Manon enters his life. We mentioned earlier the moralizing purpose of the novel. The knight's infernal journey can only begin from a perfect state of conformity to moral, divine, and social order. In this way, his wandering and downfall become more painful.

Firstly, upon seeing him for the first time, Des Grieux's external beauty inspires the narrator with such nobility and purity, "he has in his eyes, in the features of his face, and in all his movements such delicacy and nobility," that after two years the narrator immediately recognizes his "all too beautiful face" (Prévost 1972, 14; my translation). This beauty of his face is accompanied by other attributes of social and moral perfection:

> I was seventeen years old, and was finishing my studies at Amiens, whither my parents, who belonged to one of the first families in Picardy, had sent me. I led a life so studious and well regulated, that my masters pointed to me as a model of conduct for the other scholars. Not that I made any extraordinary efforts to acquire this reputation, but my disposition was naturally tractable and tranquil; my inclinations led me to apply to study; and even the natural dislike I felt for vice was placed to my credit as positive proof of virtue. The successful progress of my studies, my birth, and some external advantages of person, made me a general favourite with the inhabitants of the town. I completed my public exercises with such general approbation, that the bishop of the diocese, who was present, proposed to me to enter the church […]. (Prévost 2021, 12 pdf[1])

Noble, pure, educated, and virtuous – this is Des Grieux when, walking alongside his wonderful friend Tiberge, he catches sight of Manon, a charming young woman whom he falls in love with deeply and irrevocably, from the very first moment. The two are antagonistic from the beginning: his innocence is opposed to "a desire for pleasures" that had already taken hold of the girl sent by her parents to the convent to become a nun. Manon, of common origin, opposes him with an ordinary family, without material means. The ontological superiority of the masculine is countered by a tempting feminine presence, confident in her charms, far from social and moral purity and Des Grieux's nobility. And yet, Manon becomes the knight's "mistress of the heart." The uprooting we mentioned earlier is, first and foremost, a spatial one, and it begins with their flight from Amiens. Without thinking of the

1 We refer to the non-paginated pdf version of Abbé Prévost's *Manon Lescaut* (The Project Gutenberg eBook of *Manon Lescaut*, 2021 [release date: 1 March 1996], [eBook #468]). In what follows, the references to Prévost 2021 will contain the number of the respective pdf page.

consequences, Des Grieux gives up everything to follow his love. The character's attitude reflects several aspects that deserve to be highlighted.

First and foremost, the affective paradigm shift entails breaking away from conformity and norms and pursuing individual happiness, which becomes possible through the "discovery of personal identity" (May 2014, 194; my translation), a crucial aspect that entails the courage to make decisions about one's own life and to follow the path of love, even if this means descending into hell. All of this would not be possible without the decline of divine power that marks the Enlightenment era. The theorists of absolute monarchy connect the king's authority with that of God and the father. God is the model of perfect fatherhood, the king is the image of God on earth, and the father, within a family, is a scaled-down replica of the divine and royal father. However, these three authorities are interconnected, and by the end of the century revolutionaries will kill the king, thereby killing the authority of the heavenly Father as well as the earthly father (Badinter 1986, 197–198). Therefore, the emancipation of the self implies liberation from the authority of the Father and, implicitly, from that of God. In *Manon Lescaut*, this is precisely what happens. The figure of the father is linked to social order, morality, and family honour, a role that is passed down to the son through the inherited hierarchy from generation to generation. Although he loves his son, the father is characterized by authority, rigidity, and even irony towards his son, who cannot believe that Manon has deceived him: "Twould be a thousand pities, my poor chevalier, to make you a Knight of Malta, with all the requisites you possess for a patient and accommodating husband" (Prévost 2021, 24).

Any attempt by Des Grieux to convince his father to accept Manon, or at least see her, is destined to fail. As a symbol of moral power, norms, and rules, the father does not understand his son, whose attitude seems unforgivable to him. The love for Manon is seen as a deviation from the norm, and the father's duty is to do everything in his power to separate him from Manon, a girl who is inferior and inadequate in every respect. He commands his rebellious son to go home, but Des Grieux firmly refuses. Because he fails to set him back on the right path, the father would rather see him dead than devoid of sense and honour: "I would rather see you lifeless, than infamous and depraved" (Prévost 2021, 134). The rupture between the two is inevitable and final. Here we find ourselves in what Michel Foucault called in *The History of Sexuality* the "dispositif of sexuality," dominant in the West during the eighteenth century, which emphasizes sensations and bodily pleasures, as well as the issues surrounding attraction. The father belongs to a different world, dominated by the "dispositif of alliance," centred on upholding the law and the relationships aimed at transmitting rules, goods, and names, with reproduction being the key. The father is not the only obstacle standing in the way of Des Grieux's happiness. The hierarchical line against which the knight rebels, represented by the father and the older brother of the

infatuated young man, extends socially through the power of money, embodied by Monsieur de G. M., "an old voluptuary, who paid prodigally for his pleasures" (Prévost 2021, 49), and politically through the governor in America, an absolute ruler of the place.

3. The Construction of a Female Character

Enthralled by his own beliefs, heroic in his tenacity to find happiness, Des Grieux fails to understand that Manon is his greatest obstacle. The construction of the female character in the novel is lacking substance. Compared to the male figure, who experiences continuous pain and turmoil, Manon has a superficial inner structure. There are three distinct elements that she displays: accessibility, ambiguity, and captivity. All of these stem from the contradictory vision of femininity that dominates the Enlightenment era and which deserves closer examination. As previously mentioned, Prévost was indeed a pioneer in constructing personal identity, which is realized outside the realm of society and is strictly tied to the laws to which the character consents autonomously. The knight listens to his heart and determines his own life. He has complete freedom to return to the initial state dominated by paternal authority, or, alternatively, to follow only the voice of his heart, gradually eliminating all external constraints. His love is a form of emancipation, but it does not necessarily entail the emancipation of the representation of femininity, whose status is far from privileged, as Michel Vovelle asserted: "the Enlightenment era is truly the era of women. But it is a woman who remains subordinate and minor: lacking civil and political personality, she is excluded from centres of power and exists legally only through men" (Vovelle 2000, 289; my translation). The ideal female figure of the century, shaped by Rousseau through Sophie, Émile's life companion, is submissive, her purpose being to provide happiness to her husband. Much is said about women. They are analysed and classified, but only from the perspective of the male gaze. Thus, the fair sex distinguishes itself through ardour of feelings, jealousy, maternal tenderness, and superstition (Duby and Perrot 2002, 392). Woman cannot be equal to man; the reference is made from the perspective of the male sex. She is half of the human sex; undoubtedly, there are common aspects between man and woman that relate to the species, but the fundamental difference lies in the power that sex holds over women. According to Rousseau and Diderot, man is masculine only sometimes, but woman is constantly dominated by sex. All manifestations of women exhibit an intensity that man is incapable of showing. She can swiftly transition from hysteria to ecstasy, and in Diderot's famous essay *Sur les femmes*, he defends the cause of women, stating that they should not be treated like imbecilic children; on the contrary, they should be placed above

the law because, as Diderot justifies, a terrible organ possesses them, and their entire lives revolve around the uterus, which dictates all their actions as it wishes (Diderot 2004, 19). Therefore, in an era that emphasizes equality based on natural rights and reason as the driving force of human progress, when discussing women, it is emphasized that they relate to nature differently compared to men. If men mediate their relationship with nature through reason, women cannot do the same; they are directly connected to nature through the senses that govern their existence. No matter how much their virtues may be praised, from the perspective of the male demiurgic worldview, without a doubt, women are inferior.

Returning to Manon, we will focus on three attributes of the character: accessibility, captivity, and ambiguity. First and foremost, it should be noted that she is the only female character in the novel. The absence of a nurturing mother figure is equivalent to the absence of a guiding model on the path of virtue. However, this situation is not accidental; rather, it is part of a strategy in constructing the character. Would Manon be the same if a protective mother were guiding her destiny? Certainly not. Yet Manon is thrown into a male-dominated universe that highlights the contradictory vision of women. We are far from purity and courtesy, the virtues of chivalrous love. The era is dominated by "darkness and wickedness," as Denis de Rougemont emphasizes in *Love in the Western World*, and the woman of chivalrous heroism, an ideal creature and a symbol of the purity of a love that can transcend the boundaries of the visible, remains in the shadow of the past (Rougemont 1987, 244).

Constructed as a mirror image, Manon is the exact opposite of the male character. There is no doubt that she is beautiful. So beautiful, in fact, that she instantly captivates the young novice: "She struck me as being so extremely beautiful, that I, who had never before thought of the difference between the sexes, or looked on woman with the slightest attention – I, whose conduct had been hitherto the theme of universal admiration, felt myself, on the instant, deprived of my reason and self-control" (Prévost 2021, 13). However, this beauty corresponds to a moral inferiority. Against her will, her parents send her to the convent to curb her "desire for pleasures." In contrast to the noble lineage of the knight, Manon comes from a modest family without titles or wealth. The girl's parents are absent from her life. In other words, moral authority, the element of balance, is lacking. The appearance of her brother brings no good. He is unscrupulous, ready to offer her to old and wealthy men. Furthermore, he admits that he reconciled with his sister in order to exploit the material advantages that come from selling Manon's beauty. Thus, the girl does not have the saving option, whereas Des Grieux systematically refuses to be saved. This loneliness in the world should lead Manon to make Des Grieux the "foundation of her ontology," but the character lacks internal consistency. She is accessible and easily conquered. When she realizes that Des Grieux comes from a wealthy family, that he is noble, she is flattered and becomes

more interested in her young admirer. The difficulty does not lie in conquering the girl but in preserving her. The two perceive love fundamentally differently, and her ontological inferiority is evident.

Moreover, it appears that only Des Grieux is in love, while the entire discourse is "filled" with Manon, who remains detached both in love and in speech. This situation is highlighted by Simon May in *The History of Love* when he refers to the changes that have unfolded over centuries, shaping the history of this sentiment. Thus, the eighteenth century marks a shift in the status of the lover, who becomes authentic through love, but there is a risk that the importance of the one who loves surpasses that of the beloved to such an extent that the beloved "almost fades away" (May 2014, 39). Manon's accessibility takes her out of the centre and offers her only to Des Grieux, who will begin a true struggle to keep her, not to conquer her. The absence of external constraints and liberation from a predetermined destiny, such as life in a convent, could represent for Manon the path to love, in complete freedom, especially since the feeling is mutual. However, we do not encounter here the embodiment of the woman portrayed by Diderot in the cited work. Manon is not characterized by sentimental passion that leads to hysteria and self-abnegation. On the contrary, when they run out of money, and Des Grieux proposes marriage to lead their love on a natural course, to conform morally and socially and to secure their financial well-being, it is the girl who resists: "I mentioned the project to Manon, and explained to her that, besides every motive of filial love and duty, the weightier one of necessity should also have some influence; for our finances were sadly reduced, and I began to see the folly of thinking them, as I once did, inexhaustible. Manon received the proposition with considerable coldness" (Prévost 2021, 18). Incapable of deep emotions, the young woman seems to be guided only by immediate desires, for the fulfilment of which she does not hesitate to betray her lover, proving that she is accessible to anyone who offers her money and entertainment. Under such circumstances, the only one who maintains the passion of love is the male character, who seems not to understand Manon as a person but rather falls in love with the idea of love itself and the affirmation of his own freedom. This is where the ambiguity of femininity representation in the novel arises. Manon can be identified with the "first woman," according to the typology established by Gilles Lipovetsky in his excellent study *The Third Woman*, as a "deceitful and immoral being, fickle and ignorant, envious and dangerous" (Lipovetsky 2000, 182; my translation).

This vision of femininity has extraordinary longevity, dominating the medieval period and extending into modernity. Its origin stems from the fear men have of the temptation that leads to their downfall. From the very beginning, feminine charm is irresistible but carries a malevolent connotation, suggested more than once in the novel: "Her mind, her heart, her gentleness and beauty, formed a chain at once so binding and so agreeable, that I could have found perfect happiness

in its enduring influence" (Prévost 2021, 17). Enchainment and enslavement characterize the relationship between the two. Enchanted by his belief, Des Grieux is captive to the charm of a diabolical femininity, associated in the novel with death: "It is now for you to consider what course you will adopt; for my afflicted heart is no longer capable of sustaining such shocks" (Prévost 2021, 109). The knight believes that marriage would have been the only salvational way to restore the moral dignity of the two.

On the other hand, Manon's captivity is more complex. Firstly, she is trapped in superficial desires that define her attitude and place her under the sign of contradictions, as acknowledged by the knight himself:

> Manon was a creature of most extraordinary disposition. Never had mortal a greater contempt for money, and yet she was haunted by perpetual dread of wanting it. Her only desire was for pleasure and amusement. She would never have wished to possess a sou, if pleasure could be procured without money. She never even cared what our purse contained, provided she could pass the day agreeably; so that, being neither fond of play nor at all dazzled by the desire of great wealth, nothing was more easy than to satisfy her, by daily finding out amusements suited to her moderate wishes. But it became by habit a thing so absolutely necessary for her to have her mind thus occupied, that, without it, it was impossible to exercise the smallest influence over her temper or inclinations. (Prévost 2021, 45)

Another form of captivity for the female character is captivity in the realm of the imaginary. Des Grieux projects Manon into an idyllic, imaginary universe dominated by harmony, where life means as follows:

> I thereupon pictured to myself in anticipation a course of life peaceful and retired. I fancied a retreat embosomed in a wood, with a limpid stream of running water bounding my garden; a library, comprising the most select works; a limited circle of friends, virtuous and intellectual; a table neatly served, but frugal and temperate. […] This project flattered my inclinations extremely. But after all the details of this most admirable and prudent plan, I felt that my heart still yearned for something; and that in order to leave nothing to desire in this most enchanting retirement, one ought to be able to share it with Manon. (Prévost 2021, 30)

This intimate tableau, fulfilled only by the presence of Manon, foreshadows the image of femininity that will dominate the end of the Enlightenment century and the first half of the following one. It refers to what Gilles Lipovetsky – in the study already cited in this work – called the "second woman," an angel of

the house, a gentle, tender, luminous being who lives only to watch over the tranquillity of the household, to bestow warmth and tenderness upon family members (Lipovetsky 2000, 161).

However, everything remains at the stage of projection because it seems that Manon is not yet ready to be placed on a pedestal and adored. It is not yet time for her to enter the gilded cage of the home, as will happen with her literary counterparts who will parade on the pages of late-eighteenth-century prose and dominate a significant portion of the literature of the following century. Manon remains trapped in her lack of ontological substance precisely to better highlight the superiority and complexity of the masculine figure. Furthermore, her construction is doubly mediated: first by the knight's memory, then by the narrator who puts the story of the lovesick on paper, not without promising the reader that the rendition is faithful to the knight's recollection.

The ending of the novel offers a surprising solution. The escape to America will not be beneficial to the hero's love, even though the foreign land could represent salvation. The two young lovers free themselves from any moral and social constraints, and Manon finally understands what true love is and is ready to become for the knight what she had only been in his imagination until then. From now on, the two love each other equally and can be each other's "foundation" or "home" in the world. They are once again forced to flee due to the governor's prohibition on their marriage, another authority, this time political, but Manon cannot resist anymore. In complete solitude, in the midst of the American desert, Des Grieux buries his beloved with bare hands and then awaits his own death: "I committed to the earth all that it had ever contained most perfect and peerless. I then lay myself with my face down upon the grave, and closing my eyes with the determination never again to open them, I invoked the mercy of Heaven, and ardently prayed for death" (Prévost 2021, 156).

This is the moment of the total fusion of the couple after Manon, shortly before dying, has the revelation of love. In the wake of so many misfortunes, the infernal Manon does not fall into Inferno but freezes in memory. Death purifies her and offers her to another time, the time of literature, to readers who absolve her of any guilt.

4. In Lieu of a Conclusion

The choice of the novel *Manon Lescaut* (1731) is motivated, on the one hand, by the fact that Prévost is considered a founder of the European sentimental novel and, on the other hand, by the interesting psychological structure of the male character who follows his heart in the daring attempt to construct his own destiny. The unfortunate story of the chevalier Des Grieux is intended to serve

as a model for readers who must learn from the example and experiences of the character in order to "more appropriately guide the impulses of their hearts," as the author asserts in the Preface. Therefore, the aim is moralizing. Hence, the initial state from which the character's downfall begins, the journey towards the character's hell is depicted as a paradisiacal one, perfectly in accordance with moral, religious, and social order. Seeking to provide a counterexample, Prévost creates a character whose heroism does not arise from respect for moral or social norms but rather from a revolt against any form of constraint even if the price the chevalier pays is uprooting, both spatially, as distancing from home, and in terms of disobedience to any form of authority.

Two aspects need to be clarified: on the one hand, Des Grieux's rebellion would not be possible if the dawn of the new century did not allow for individuals to discover themselves, the right to forge their own path to happiness, following their own will, even if it entails rejecting any externally imposed role. On the other hand, the independence of the heart, which chooses to follow its own path as it desires, would not be possible without the weakening of divine power or the "ruin of patriarchy" (Badinter 1986, 196). The representative figure of patriarchy in the novel is the chevalier's father, whose attempts of guiding his son onto the right path, governed by moral and social norms, are destined to fail.

Moreover, the novel highlights an interesting difference in the approach to character construction. The complexity of the male character is juxtaposed with the schematic structure of the female character. Manon is captive within the novel. The reader learns about her only through Des Grieux's evocation, which is a double-filtered construction: first by the knight's recollection and then by the narrator who puts the story onto paper, not without promising the reader that the rendition is faithful to Des Grieux's evocation.

Another aspect to be emphasized is the ambiguity of the female character. Manon oscillates between being an immoral, frivolous creature whose irresistible charm is a feared power, a source of the hero's downfall and descent into hell. However, Manon also embodies a delicate, gentle, tender creature placed on a pedestal to be adored. Reduced to superficiality caused by the bondage of pleasures and the need for material comfort, the female character appears to be sacrificed in favour of the moral lesson offered to the reader. Manon's escape to America leads her to understand the true dimension of Des Grieux's love for her. Just when she could potentially assume a new role, that of luminous femininity, and her image could be salvaged, just when life could flow peacefully, Manon dies. Thus, she freezes in memory, in the ambiguity of her status, a sign that the Age of Enlightenment is not ready for women's emancipation.

Prévost's novel aims to be a moralizing plea for the destructive power of inappropriate love; however, the author's intention is revealed precisely by the intensity with which Des Grieux defends his love, which, from the hero's

perspective, can only be good. The knight's heroism lies in the tenacity and determination with which he fights for his immeasurable love. The meaning of life is given by sentiment even though it cannot be separated from suffering and pain. The written evocation of the love story after the beloved's death highlights the sensitivity of the hero and reclaims the nobility lost in the whirlwind of transgressions committed in the name of the sentiment.

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Myths, Science, and Literature – Different Fields, the Same Essence

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Abstract. The present study aims at analysing the relationship and establishing the similarities between ancient Eastern myths, literature, and today's leading scientific views such as quantum physics. In ancient times, the mythic worldview was the only one being widely accepted, a dominancy that lasted up into, roughly put, the mid-nineteenth century, when most sciences as known today started to flourish and overtook the place of mythology, invalidating it. Nowadays, however, ancient myths and modern sciences have begun getting closer to each other and, at a deep insight, one may discover that they reveal the same truth. Thus, the paper shall discuss and compare ancient Buddhist texts with leading quantum theories and literary works by Béla Hamvas and Sándor Weöres that facilitate the comprehension of the essence.[1]

Keywords: myths, quantum physics, literature, reality.

"All is One." (Heraclitus)

Introduction

One of the oldest and most intriguing questions is undoubtedly how the universe works. There have been many attempts to unravel it throughout the centuries in various fields, starting from ancient mythologies through literature to contemporary scientific views. Each of the above-mentioned areas has reached its own results and has long tried to validate theirs as the ultimate truth, often in contrast to each other.

Thus, for example, with the rise of sciences – anthropology, psychology, and natural sciences – towards the end of the nineteenth century, mythologies were dismissed as valid means of explaining the world and its phenomena.

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According to Edward Burnett Tylor, myths were characteristic of primitive cultures, representing people's endeavour of explaining their surroundings and the occurrences they did not understand. However, when scientific research and data described and elucidated the same thing or happening as myths had done, the latter were degraded to mere stories (Tylor 1920, n. p.).

In the twentieth century, there were efforts to reconcile mythology and sciences. In psychology, Sigmund Freud, Carl Gustav Jung, and Joseph Campbell either made use of myths in therapy, used them in connection with archetypes belonging to the collective unconscious, or saw them as metaphors of individual inner growth and evolution (Abrudan 2003, 12). Mircea Eliade in his oeuvre as a historian of religion also highlighted the value of myths and mythology. In his view, myths relate things that occurred at the beginning of times. Knowing the myth means that one possesses the knowledge of the origin of the phenomena and is thus able to control them. Myths are relived through rituals and the stories told. They are not abstract. Mythical time – the moment when something new, important, and powerful manifested – is repeated (Eliade 1963).

One of the domains where there has been virtually no resistance to myths is literature, which, in fact, can be regarded as its continuation. According to Northrop Frye, rites and myths together stand at the base of oral literature, with mythology as a system of symbols being a permanent archive for the latter. In his view, the evolution of literature is to be thought of as a circular movement starting from myths of origins to modern ones (Frye 1971). Literature builds a modern myth itself. If one thinks of Roland Barthes's theory of the way modern myths make up a secondary semiotic system, this is definitely true of literature, which uses language as a primary system and empowers it with a new meaning through the way it combines the elements, themes, and symbols (Barthes 1972).

As far as the relationship between mythology and modern sciences is concerned, there are three possible directions. According to the first one, myths and scientific views are opposite to each other. This interpretation goes back to Tylor's perception mentioned above. Another path would be to consider today's scientific worldview as a myth itself, i.e. science is the myth of modern man since it is the system that guides his/her life, having taken the place and role of mythology in our culture. This point of view can be traced back to Jung's theories on archetypes:

> All the most powerful ideas in history go back to archetypes. This is particularly true of religious ideas, but the central concepts of science, philosophy, and ethics are no exception to this rule. In their present form they are variants of archetypal ideas created by consciously applying and adapting these ideas to reality. For it is the function of consciousness not only to recognize and assimilate the external world through the gateway of the senses, but to translate into visible reality the world within us. (Jung 1924, 342)

If we look at the Big Bang theory, for example, it consumes the basic elements of a myth. This cosmological theory has mythical images such as the "bang," an initial explosion or ignition that starts everything, the idea of the beginning of the universe or the world, marked in a distant, non-human place.

The third way of looking at the relationship between myths and modern natural sciences is the one adopted in this paper, namely to view them as complementary since they both represent attempts at deciphering and explaining the same reality, i.e. how the universe works. I would also like to take this further by proving through a direct comparison that ancient Buddhist cosmology came to very similar results as today's quantum physics does. Using different languages and different perspectives, both fields describe reality in a very close manner and draw related conclusions. Thus, the truth value of these ancient Buddhist myths is re-established by means of modern sciences. The link between them often becomes clearer through certain literary texts that bridge the apparent communicational gap by merely bringing ancient ideas into the foreground again. Through the way literature works with, presents, and interprets these worldviews, it often makes them more accessible to the readers who are thus able to comprehend them better.

Buddhism and Quantum Physics

In this part of the paper, I shall present and compare basic concepts of Buddhist philosophy and leading theories in quantum physics. The comparison involves the perception of reality according to ancient Buddhist texts and its equivalent in quantum mechanics with a special insight into terms such as emptiness vs the quantum field, mind and unity vs quantum entanglement. In the analysis, I am going to rely on two texts, *The Heart Sutra*[2] and *The Mahamudra Prayer*,[3] which represent core teachings of Mahayana[4] Buddhism, as well as on Heisenberg's, Einstein's, Planck's, etc. theories.

2 *The Heart Sutra* – sutras refer to discourses attributed to the Buddha – is one of the oldest and most important texts of Mahayana Buddhism, dating from around 661 CE. The sutra appears in form of a dialogue between Shariputra and Avalokiteshvara – both belonging to the circle of Buddha's closest disciples. However, it was the Buddha remaining in a meditative state who had inspired their words. Online source: *https://www.rigpawiki.org/index.php?title=Heart_Sutra#Text* (Last accessed 12 July 2023).

3 The *Aspiration Prayer of Mahamudra* was written in the thirteenth century by the Third Karmapa Rangjung Dorje, the head of the Karma Kagyu subschool. The text is about the ultimate nature of the mind, about Buddha nature. Online source: *https://www.shambhala.com/rangjung-dorje-the-third-karmapa-a-guide-for-readers/* (Last accessed 12 July 2023).

4 Mahayana Buddhism means the great, or universal vehicle of attaining Buddhahood, or enlightenment, which serves all sentient beings' liberation from the sufferings of the life cycle. Online source: *https://www.rigpawiki.org/index.php?title=Mahayana* (Last accessed 12 July 2023).

According to Buddhist cosmology, everything, i.e. all phenomena, arise and return into emptiness. In *The Heart Sutra*, phenomena are called body, but the text reveals that thoughts and emotions are also included:

> Listen Sariputra,
> this Body itself is Emptiness
> and Emptiness itself is this Body.
> This Body is not other than Emptiness
> and Emptiness is not other than this Body.
> The same is true of Feelings,
> Perceptions, Mental Formations,
> and Consciousness. (*The Heart Sutra* 2014, n. p.)

Thus, reality as we perceive it arises from emptiness. However, Buddhist emptiness should not be interpreted as if there was nothing in a nihilistic way. It much rather refers to an infinite source of potentiality, i.e. empty should be understood as full of endless possibilities. The relationship between emptiness and phenomena can be compared to the ocean and the waves. Their essence is the same, i.e. water, but while the ocean is vast and maybe incomprehensible in its totality, waves come and go in infinite numbers and forms.

The concept of Buddhist emptiness seems to resemble what is called "quantum field" in quantum physics. According to quantum physics, a quantum field is an electromagnetic field from which all matter materializes. This field possesses all potential matter, out of which we only perceive what is observable to us, i.e. we only see the tip of the iceberg, yet there is much more of it under the water that remains unseen to us. Thus, "everything that makes up our reality arises from this electromagnetic field" (Kuhlmann 2023, n. p.).

At a first look, emptiness as the source of all perceivable phenomena is similar to the quantum field, which is the source of all matter, where phenomena and matter are considered to cover the same entities, i.e. our observable reality. Therefore, the next step is to try to define observable reality or matter. According to Albert Einstein, "It seems as though we must use sometimes the one theory and sometimes the other, while at times we may use either. We are faced with a new kind of difficulty. We have two contradictory pictures of reality; separately neither of them fully explains the phenomena of light, but together they do" (qtd in Harrison 2002, n. p.).

Observable reality, at least its tiniest bits, can – according to quantum physics – be viewed either as waves or as particles. If defined as having the characteristics of a wave, then observable reality is something non-material. If regarded as a particle, then observable reality becomes something material. Thus, observable reality can be perceived in a dualistic way. The wave–particle duality theory

refers to the fact that physical entities – light or electrons – possess wavelike and particle-like characteristics at the same time. In 1905, Einstein proved that light also has to be thought of as particle-like in addition to its definition as an electromagnetic wave (*Britannica* 2023). In 1924, Louis de Broglie suggested that, on the other hand, electrons and other tiny pieces of matter are to be considered to carry wavelike properties (*Britannica* 2023). In 1928, Niels Bohr then concluded that a phenomenon can have both wave and particle aspects, and there is a complementary relation between these (*Britannica* 2023). However, we are only able to observe one aspect of the object at a time. If we regard something as solid matter, we are in fact observing just one of its qualities. If we look at the same object as a wave, we cannot locate it anymore in space and time. It can be understood as being everywhere in the universe.

Matter is made up of atoms, whereas an atom is approximately 99.9 per cent space. Thus, all objects surrounding us consist of mostly empty space. These feel solid because the atoms are constantly pushing away from each other, and there is a fluctuating energy around them that keeps them together (English 2020, n. p.). The regions of space where the energy is intense constitute matter. Thus, field is the only reality (Einstein and Infeld 1938). However, this field is empty space, which seems to prove the ancient belief of Buddhism that everything arises from and returns into emptiness.

Another central concept of Buddhist philosophy next to emptiness and reality is the true nature of the mind – whereas mind does not have to be mistaken for the brain, or thoughts and emotions, which are merely appearances of the conscience. Therefore, mind in these ancient texts is more of a synonym for essence, nature, and energy. It is emptiness as defined earlier and the awareness of it at the same time (Sogyal Rinpoche 2023, 78–93). *The Mahamudra Prayer* underlines this interpretation:

> All phenomena are projections of the mind.
> Mind is not "a" mind; the mind is empty in essence.
> Although empty, everything constantly arises in it. […]
> Appearance is only mind, emptiness is only mind,
> enlightenment is only mind, and confusion is only one's own mind.
> Arising is only mind; disappearance is only mind. (Nydahl 1991, 24)

Whereas we have previously stated that observable reality arises from and returns into emptiness, now we learn that this emptiness is synonymous with the true nature of the mind, i.e. Buddha nature or enlightenment.

Max Planck arrives at a similar conclusion when he states that matter as such does not exist. Everything originates and exists only due to a force that brings the particles of atoms to vibration and holds them together. "We must assume behind

this force is the existence of a conscious and intelligent Mind. This Mind is the matrix of all matter" (Planck 1944, n. p.).

Nevertheless, until one achieves the true nature of the mind, there can be many obstacles that obscure perception: "Bodhisattvas[5] who practice the Insight that Brings Us to the Other Shore see no more obstacles in their mind, and because there are no more obstacles in their mind, they can overcome all fear, destroy all wrong perceptions and realize Perfect Nirvana" (*The Heart Sutra* 2014, n. p.). Thus, we perceive reality according to the clarity of our mind.

The idea that our perception defines the reality that we see resembles Heisenberg's concept of uncertainty and the result of the double-slit experiment. According to the concept of uncertainty applied to atoms and subatomic particles, the position and the velocity of an object cannot be measured exactly, it remains unpredictable (*Britannica* 2023). On the other hand, when they tested the speed of light, scientists concluded that whether light was perceived as a wave or a particle depended on the fact whether they were being observed or not. When not observed, they took up wavelike behaviour, but when observed, the particles took up locations and acted as solid matter (Wong 2021, n. p.). This point of view can be compared to the Buddhist idea of the mind's role in perceiving reality. Our perception defines our reality, and the clearer our mind and perception is, the clearer we see reality.

The last parallel to be discussed in this paper is that between the concept of oneness/unity of all phenomena and quantum entanglement. In ancient Buddhist texts, the term oneness/unity is closely connected to emptiness and the true nature of the mind. Since all phenomena are empty in essence and are projections of the mind, they are related to each other and cannot, or rather should not, be regarded as separate entities: "That is why in Emptiness, Body, Feelings, Perceptions, Mental Formations and Consciousness are not separate self-entities. The Eighteen Realms of Phenomena which are the six Sense Organs, the six Sense Objects, and the six Consciousnesses are also not separate self-entities" (*The Heart Sutra* 2014, n. p.).

Separation is considered an illusion and is the result of an obscured way of seeing: "The basis of purification is the mind itself in its union of clarity and emptiness. […] It is not the opposites, nor both, nor something else, but rather their union the middle way. May we realize the true nature of the mind, which is beyond extremes" (*The Mahamudra Prayer*) (Nydahl 1991, 23–24).

The equivalent of oneness in quantum physics would be quantum entanglement. This phenomenon refers to the fact that two subatomic particles can be linked to each other and still be separated by eons in time and space. In spite of being

5 Someone who has the compassionate wish to attain enlightenment in order to help all beings. Online source: *https://www.rigpawiki.org/index.php?title=Bodhisattva* (Last accessed 13 July 2023).

separated in this manner, they would still influence one another (Emspak 2023, n. p.). The idea of the quantum field from which everything arises and the phenomenon of quantum entanglement suggests that everything in the universe is interconnected and interdependent.

Buddhist Cosmology in the Works of Hamvas and Weöres[6]

Literary texts often mirror and translate ancient myths bringing them closer to the readers again. In this paper, we shall look at how Eastern mythology appears in the works of Béla Hamvas and his disciple Sándor Weöres, comparing the results with quantum theory too.

Béla Hamvas (1897–1968) is considered the first Hungarian writer who measured himself against a universal rather than a local canon. His voice was new within Hungarian culture, it represented a philosophical-traditional point of view, which was radical and multi-layered, not only a mere personal report about exotic things but a completely new spiritual attitude (Péntek 2017). Hamvas's oeuvre encompasses a wide range of works from translations of theoretical and mythical texts to writing essays and literature. Of interest to the present study are his translations of and essays on Eastern mythological texts, especially Buddhist sutras and teachings. For example, Hamvas translated *The Heart Sutra* in 1955 (see Hamvas 2003, 381–382), which is one of the fundamental texts used in this paper too. The translations can be regarded as a kind of interpretation; however, most importantly, their influence is to be felt in the essays and in the whole viewpoint of his literary writings.

The main line of thought in Hamvas's oeuvre is the quest for truth, which, according to him, is possible through creation and arts (Hamvas 2020). One of the characteristics of truth according to the writer is the ability to see beyond appearances (Hamvas and Kemény 1989), to look at what is under the mask that people are wearing and the way these masks can be taken off akin to Nietzsche (Thiel Lőrinczné 1999). Hamvas draws on Greek philosophy and states that the Greek did not look at things on a pure vertical or horizontal level. Their sight was always both vertical and horizontal at the same time, it was sphere-like and three-dimensional (Thiel 2022, 129).

There are at least two striking similarities in this concept to both Buddhist texts and quantum theory. The first one would be that truth appears in connection with totality, undivided, not separated, e.g. is sphere-like, which is close to the

6 I wish to specify that this chapter does not aim at a thorough traditional literary analysis, i.e. prosody, rhyme, etc., but primarily focuses on the ideas, themes, worldviews presented in these literary texts that can be compared to Eastern views and quantum theory.

concept of oneness/unity in Buddhist texts and to that of the quantum field too. In his essay *The Aphaia-Temple*, Hamvas talks about the fact that each point on Earth can say something about what is beyond the earthly since nature can never be separated from the supernatural and the miraculous (Hamvas 1994, 43). Phenomena are to be considered visible signs of the vast unseen, an image which resembles the tip of the iceberg already mentioned in the quantum physics part.

The second resemblance is therefore related to seeing and perception. In his short work entitled *A kínai tusrajz* [The Chinese Tint-Drawing], Hamvas (2006) highlights his concept of unity. Chinese tint-drawings have two elements, namely the black lines and the white space. According to the writer, it is fundamentally wrong to interpret these drawings beginning with the black lines and considering white space as nothing/void. In fact, the white space operates as the field where the black lines can appear. This idea is similar to the way Buddhists think of reality, where everything arises and returns into emptiness the way the black lines emerge from the white space on Chinese tint-drawings or things appear in the electromagnetic field in quantum physics. A key role is played also by the subject, "the place," where reality can be perceived (Hamvas 2006, 246). The Chinese tint-drawing gets a meaning only through the eyes of the I, the subject, who should view it in its totality with the white space against which the black lines receive truth value (Thiel 2022, 131). Thus, Hamvas's text also illustrates the way our perception shapes our reality and reminds us of yet another issue already discussed, i.e. the role of the mind and the nature of the mind.

The I, the subject is regarded by Hamvas (2006, 195) as both finite and infinite. It is the place where you can best see from; however, it is non-seeable itself. It is the place wherefrom one can see the whole at once. This constitutes the paradox of life, similarly to the way black and white act on the canvas. Reality is not mere appearance which may be experienced through our senses, it reaches far beyond the boundaries of the I (Thiel 2022, 132). I would call it an *entangled* relationship – borrowing the term from quantum physics on purpose. Since, according to Hamvas, it is not the form that shapes space but vice versa. The individual who understands that the colour white on these drawings, emptiness, space, and the infinite subject do not represent the outside but the inside has the optimal view (Hamvas 2006, 247). Thus, we and our reality are defined by the matrix of the mind both in the sense of what we think, we become and of the true nature of the mind.

In Hamvas's view, the aim of any individual's life should be to become or return to the authentic human state. Therefore, in his writings, the author always tries to give practical advice to every theory he takes over from any religion, mythology, or philosophy. One of the key terms to cover this process used by Hamvas himself is *realization*. In one of his best known writings, *Mágia szutra* [The Magic Sutra] (2001), he enlists one hundred points that he considers essential in putting the theories which stem from tradition into practice. Tradition for Hamvas spreads

from the New Testament to Chinese, Hinduist, and Buddhist texts, but also Hebrew, Arabian, Greek, and Egyptian ancient writings, as well as European philosophical and literary works since "[…] the sacred tradition of mankind is the same everywhere" (Szakolczai 2005, 110). Though due to this plurality of sources Hamvas's oeuvre seems eclectic at first, he is guided by the sole principle of choosing texts, which lead him and anyone reading him to achieve the authentic human state, i.e. to the realization of an authentic existence (Thiel 2014, 198). The endeavour for this basic authenticity resembles in my opinion what in Buddhist texts is called the realization of the true nature of the mind, the Buddha mind.

The hundred points focus around the concept of freedom. According to Hamvas (2001, 245), the only moral to keep in mind is freedom. Freedom is an ontological notion for him, which is obtained only by those who live life in unity with existence without any restrictions to the rules of society, history, or physical reality, which lead to a misinterpretation of liberty (Hamvas 2001, 245). Thus, realization can be reached by a free person, and it is an individual task. You can share your experiences so that the others can learn from them, since the goal is common, yet everyone has to walk on the path by him- or herself (Hamvas 2006).

The way Hamvas interprets freedom resembles the concept behind the nature of the mind. Hamvas's freedom is a state which is free of hindering obstacles, just like in *The Heart Sutra* discussed earlier. It requires a state of alertness, which is transparent and is void of any obscuration. Like in Buddhist philosophy, Hamvas considers that ancient texts belonging to tradition are meant to awaken people to set out on the journey towards their authentic state, towards freedom, i.e. self-liberation.

According to Hamvas, everyone is capable of reaching this state by willing to change one's life. In *Mágia szutra* [The Magic Sutra] he summarizes this concept in the axioms "existence is always and fully there in every human being; reality has to be accepted and recognized in its totality; all possibilities have to be taken into possession" (Hamvas 2001, 240).[7] These three axioms constitute the starting point of realization.

In essence, all people are equal, which again is a thought present in Buddhist sutras and in quantum physics as well. "[T]he true nature of being is always the Buddha essence" (Nydahl 1991, 25) equals the line in *The Mahamudra Prayer*, whereas quantum physics establishes the existence of energy and empty space as common factors within all matter living and non-living, which in my opinion resembles the reasoning of Hamvas too.

The second axiom refers to reality, which for Hamvas does not only encompass the apparent world but also the transcendent one – it means totality itself, the unity of existence (Thiel 2014, 201). As mentioned before, this illustration of

7 All quotes from works published in languages other than English were translated by the author of the present paper.

reality can be compared to Buddhist views that consider space-like emptiness as the source of all phenomena. In quantum physics, reality stems from the quantum field and is also a practically infinite container of possibilities.

Hamvas's third axiom indicates that there is a vast number of possibilities which have to be taken into possession, i.e. they have to be activated (Thiel 2014, 201). However, in order for the right choices to be made and the right possibilities to become reality, the I/the subject has to find him-/herself in a place in-between, in the centre of one's inner self. The middle position resembles superposition in quantum physics – connected to wave-particle duality and the double-slit experiment. It refers to the state when we do not know yet which of the possibilities is going to be or become real, e.g. Schrödinger's cat (Bernstein 2023). The superposition or middle position is reached once one eradicates the boundaries between body, soul, and spirit (Hamvas 2001, 255).

Another concept in Hamvas's oeuvre closely connected to this middle position and to making the right choices is that of imagination, or imagining life (Thiel 2014, 202). We have already seen that Hamvas highlights the importance of thought and perception in shaping reality. Nevertheless, when interpreted together with the three axioms, imagination becomes the central metaphor in the process of realization. Creation and realization are successful depending on what occupies the central position of one's imagining life. In that position, the individual is always free, no one can tell him/her what s/he may or can think of or not. Thus, in order to reach the authentic human state, one has to recognize the power of imagination, i.e. the matrix of the mind, and strive towards the true nature of the mind.

Sándor Weöres (1913–1989), poet, writer, literary translator himself, also published in the fields of literary theory and philosophy. His deeply philosophical works include *A teljesség felé* [Towards Completeness] (prose poem, 1945); *A szerelem ábécéje* [The Alphabet of Love] (poems, 1946); *Elysium* [Elysium] (poems, 1946); *Gyümölcskosár* [The Fruit Basket] (poems, 1946); *A testetlen nyáj* [The Disembodied Flock] (prose poem, 1947).

Sándor Weöres visited many places in the East (India, China, etc.); he was a great admirer of Eastern cultures. Taoism and Buddhism had a great influence on him. He translated the Chinese philosophical poem *Tao Te King – Lao Tzu's Book of the Way and of Righteousness*. In addition to these personal experiences, he was greatly influenced by Béla Hamvas's personality and oeuvre. Thus, Eastern views came to him as filtered by Hamvas too, especially in the 1930s and 40s. He was also acquainted with the philosophy of Heidegger and Jaspers due to Hamvas (Loboczky 2007, 136–137).

Similarly to that of Hamvas, Weöres's aesthetic worldview is built up of the most diverse philosophies and sources varying from Greek to Taoist and Buddhist mythology, as well as European existentialist philosophy. Accordingly, his oeuvre is a multi-layered and multi-faceted synthesis of these. He focuses on

the peculiarities, which strive towards the universal, timeless character of all phenomena, highlighting the important role of reflection. In his thesis paper on the birth of poetry, for example, Weöres calls the genre he writes in meditation and confession (Loboczky 2007, 136) – terms borrowed from Eastern and Christian mythology, but nevertheless proving once again Hamvas's influence on him –, while meditation is a kind of reflective process.

One of the guidelines in Weöres's poetry is the idea of *All is One*, the unity of existence and non-existence. In many of his poems, there appear a set of antithetic notions next to each other, whereas these dual pairs underline the non-dual character of existence, the permanent change and cyclicality of the world (Loboczky 2007, 137). In his prose poetry volume entitled *A teljesség felé* [Towards Completeness] – which he dedicates to Hamvas, who he names his master – Weöres writes:

> Ten Balconies[8]
>
> Total existence: life-less.
> Total eternity: time-less.
> Total functioning: change-less.
> Total power: power-less.
> Total knowledge: data-less.
> Total wisdom: thought-less.
> Total love: feeling-less.
> Total goodness: direction-less.
> Complete happiness: joy-less.
> The full sound: sound-less. (Weöres 2000, 137; my translation)

Paradoxically, totality seems to be defined by the lack of the very things it should include; however, interpreted from the perspective of Buddhism, we know that this emptiness is in fact the source of all phenomena. Moreover, the play with words in the poem also illustrates the idea of unity and oneness, which is above duality, i.e. is non-dual. The corresponding lines from *The Mahamudra Prayer* would be:

> It is not existent – for even Buddhas do not see it.
> It is not non-existent, being the basis for samsara and nirvana.
> It is not the opposites, nor both, nor something else, but their union the middle way.
> May we realize the true of mind, which is beyond extremes. (Nydahl 1991, 24)

8 All poems by Weöres were translated by the author of the present paper.

Dualistic perception is based on extremes and is considered to be illusory in Buddhism because it does not acknowledge emptiness and oneness. It hinders individuals to reach the true nature of the mind, which is limitless. Duality is a misconception according to views in quantum physics, too, if we think of the quantum entanglement theory, which dismantles the idea of separateness on the subatomic level.

Similarly to Hamvas, Weöres does not only speak on an abstract level but brings his macro-observations down to the level of the individual. In *Who Are You?* he writes:

> If you abstract yourself from all that you know to be your being:
> that is where your being actually begins.
> Do not mistake your body, your mind, your person for your being.
> It is only your auxiliary; it is only a bat, a guardian of your needs
> and a stooping burden.
> Your body is not you, for it is only matter, ever changing:
> at forty, you have not a single part of your twenty-year-old body.
> But neither are you your emotions and your intellect, for you are not the person
> You were when looking from the cradle. Who art thou? the boundless,
> That which at thy conception appeared within the bounds.
> If you consider your delimited person as yourself, perform a
> a Copernican inversion: consider the boundless wholeness as yourself, your person
> as a temporary bound, a mere apparition, a "not-me."
> Where feeling, numbness, thought, thoughtlessness,
> change, immutability cease to exist; where you would think there was nothing:
> there your very being begins. (Weöres 2000, 29; my translation)

The poem touches upon science with the ever-changing nature of body cells; thus, technically speaking, we are not the same at either point in our lives even if we perceive ourselves as such. Our bodies are constantly changing, and so are our thoughts and emotions. These have an impermanent character and can therefore be named illusory; they cannot be grasped. The verses can also be interpreted from the viewpoint of the relation between emptiness and form, while existence is the infinite play of the way these phenomena arise and return into emptiness. The terms *emptiness* and *form* may also be paralleled by the quantum field and matter.

The last concept to mention here is that of the imagination, which, as we could see above, is linked in Hamvas's works to perception and the matrix of

the mind. In my opinion, Weöres uses the term in a similar way. In the poem with the same title, he defines imagination as the only way of restoring reality in the sense of truth:

> Earth is the purgatory of lies; here everything is a lie around us:
> the pseudo-reality of space, the pseudo-reality of things,
> the pseudo-muchness of ourselves. And
> in the human mind even truth dances: all is true and
> nothing is true at the same time.
> The only way out of the flood of lies is precisely that: imagination.
> In the midst of all this fake reality
> it is up to your imagination to restore the true reality. […]
> On earth, all that comes into being and passes away is called reality;
> it is only imagination that seems to create its creatures out of nothing.
> The pseudo-nothing from which imagination draws is reality; and
> in the many separate pseudo-realities, only that is real which seems nothing
> and imaginary inside us: the imperceptible, common essence, the changing
> the unchanging existence behind the changing manifestations. (Weöres 2000, 15; my translation)

Thus, again, these lines highlight the recurring idea of what we think we become and that our perception needs to be clear in order to be true and real. These are the attributes needed to live a complete life.

Conclusions

The paper started with the hypothesis that there are meeting points between ancient Eastern, especially Buddhist cosmology, literature, and quantum physics. The direct comparison between Buddhist terminology and quantum physics seems to have proven that the concepts of Buddhist emptiness and the quantum field, the nature of the mind and the matrix of the mind – which both refer to the way we perceive our reality and to the fact that all phenomena are projections of the mind –, as well as oneness and quantum entanglement are used in similar ways. They denote the same essence. Thus, we can return to the introduction of the paper, where myth and science were thought to describe and explain the same reality, and we could see that they actually do so in a resembling manner. Today's quantum research has arrived at comparable results to what is being said about the way our universe works in Buddhist texts stemming from more than 2000 years ago. Scientific reasoning gives back the truth value of these so-called myths.

The last part of the paper showed through the oeuvre of the Hungarian writers Béla Hamvas and Sándor Weöres how Eastern myths are present and presented in literature as well and can be compared to the enlisted concepts from quantum theory too. They can ease the comprehension of these phenomena by using a more accessible language to the audience. They bring ancient traditional texts into the focus once again, underlining their current viability, but also the fact that literature is a continuation of myths. These kinds of literary texts invite the readers to embark on the quest for truth and stay open to mythological views and find them in today's world, for example, in modern sciences. These texts make us think out of the box, go beyond the boundaries set by the different systems, to recognize the matrix of the mind.

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Appendix:

TÍZ ERKÉLY[9]

A teljes lét: élet-nélküli.
A teljes öröklét: idő-nélküli.
A teljes működés: változás-nélküli.
A teljes hatalom: erő-nélküli.
A teljes tudás: adat-nélküli.
A teljes bölcsesség: gondolat-nélküli.
A teljes szeretet: érzés-nélküli.
A teljes jóság: irány-nélküli.
A teljes boldogság: öröm-nélküli.
A teljes zengés: hang-nélküli.

KI VAGY TE?[10]

Ha elvonatkoztatod magadat mindattól, amit lényednek ismersz: tulajdonképpen lényed ott kezdődik.
Testedet, értelmedet, személyedet ne cseréld össze lényeddel, önmagaddal. Csak segédeszközöd; csak batyu, mely szükségleteid őrzője is, görnyesztő teher is.
Tested nem te vagy, hiszen csak anyag, mely folyton cserélődik: negyvenéves korodban húszéveskori testedből egyetlen parány sincsen.
De érzelemvilágod és értelmed sem te vagy, hiszen még nem volt, mikor te már a bölcsőből nézegettél. Ki vagy? a határtalan, mely fogantatásodkor a határok közt megjelent.
Ha elhatárolt személyedet tekinted önmagadnak, végezz copernicusi fordulatot: a határtalan teljességet tekintsd önmagadnak, személyedet pedig ideiglenes kötöttségnek, puszta tüneménynek, „nem-én"-nek.
Ahol megszűnik az érzés, érzéketlenség, gondolat, gondolattalanság, változás, változatlanság; ahol azt hinnéd, hogy semmi sincsen: tulajdonképpeni lényed ott kezdődik.

A KÉPZELET[11]

A Föld a hazugság tisztítótüze; itt minden hazug körülöttünk: a tér ál-végtelenje, a dolgok ál-valósága, önmagunk ál-sokasága. S az ember-

9 Sándor Weöres: *Ten Balconies*.
10 Sándor Weöres: *Who are you?*
11 Sándor Weöres: *Imagination*.

agyban még az igazság is táncol: egyszerre minden igaz és egyszerre semmi sem igaz. A hazugság-áradatból az egyetlen kivezető út éppen az, amely leghazugabbnak látszik: a képzelet. A sok ál-valóság közt képzeletedre van bízva az igazi valóság helyreállítása. Nem a hegy és nem a völgy a valódi, hanem a szépség, melyet képzeleted a hegyek-völgyek formáin élvez; és a jelenség világ ál-végtelenjéből képzeleteden át vezet az út a benned rejlő igazi végtelenbe.
Más a képzelet és más a képzelődés, ahogy más a beszéd és más a fecsegés. A képzelődés az élet törvénye szerint működik és az éhen maradt vágyakat köddel eteti; a képzelet a lét törvénye szerint működik, és amit megteremt, műalkotást, tettet, gondolatot: valódi és igaz.
A Földön mindaz, ami keletkezik és elmúlik, valóságnak neveztetik; csak éppen a képzelet tűnik olyannak, mintha teremtményeit a semmiből húzkodná elő. Az ál-semmi, ahonnét a képzelet merít: a valóság; s a sok külön-lévő ál-valóságban csak az a valódi, ami bennük semminek, képzeltnek rémlik: érzékelhetetlen, közös lényegük, a változó megnyilvánulások mögötti változatlan létezés.

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The Topos of Journey in Antal Szerb's Novel *Journey by Moonlight*

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Abstract. The topos of journey in literature is anything but contemporary, it dates back to Homer who in the *Odyssey* first developed the idea incorporated into a literary work on the subject. The themes of journey, of nostalgia and restlessness, present in the *Odyssey* as a guiding principle and driving force, can also be found in Antal Szerb's *Journey by Moonlight*. From the very beginning, from how the main character of the novel, Mihály, introduces his trip to Italy, it is clear that it cannot be a conventional journey but one towards the discovery of himself. He arrives in Venice, a unique city because it is close to the border which divides Central and Eastern Europe from Western Europe, yet it presents the essence of Italian life. It is no coincidence that Mihály, although he embarks on his honeymoon with the confidence of a newlywed, is immediately thrown out of his peace of mind, and his psychological drama begins. He is given the chance to get away from a domestic atmosphere laden with norms and expectations, and the Italian trip, with its strong exoticism, offers him a taste of a different kind of existence, away from ordinary life, and becomes the road to and for self-understanding.

Keywords: the topos of journey, Antal Szerb, *Journey by Moonlight*.

Introduction

Antal Szerb (1901–1945), despite having been a literary historian who has to his credit many essays of literary criticism and monumental works on the history of literature that can still be used profitably today, is known to a wider audience mainly for his novels. Of these, *Journey by Moonlight* (*Utas és holdvilág*) is perhaps the most successful one, and it is widely considered as Szerb's masterpiece (Havasréti 2013, 387). Based on this novel, plays, films, radio programmes, audio books, photo albums have been made, and the book has also gained a certain notoriety

abroad thanks to the translations into English, German, Polish, French, Italian, Spanish, Dutch, Serbian, and Hindi. Yet, when it was published in 1937, the reception of the novel was not overwhelmingly positive; in fact, some considered it an immoral work (Erdősi 1999, 303; Havasréti 2011, 428).

The novel was originally published in Hungarian in 1937. It appeared in English in 2001 (the first translation by Len Rix was published by Pushkin Press), while throughout this essay I will refer to the more recent 2016 translation by Peter Czipott, published by Alma Classics Ltd.

Journey by Moonlight has multiple layers of meaning – it can be decoded and understood in various ways. From a nostalgic perspective, it can be seen as a romantic throwback to youth, to the Ulpius house's children's hermetically sealed world and their role-playing games lurking and lusting for death. In a figurative sense, it can be considered as an "educational metaphor" used symbolically to represent an existential journey which has a task: the self's accomplishment through research and renewal. In this regard, M. T. Moscato (1994, 103–104) writes:

> Indeed, the figure of the journey expresses a metaphor of the educational process in an inseparable way from the broader metaphor of human life, and its symbolic power lies precisely in this. In the theme of travel, it is the whole of human life in its complexity that is described as a "journey" and "transformation," that is, as an "intentional movement" towards a goal that is only hypothetically defined.[1]

Finally, the novel can be read as a travel novel set in 1937 Italy. The travel motif can be interpreted in several ways. On the one hand, it can refer to Szerb's personal experiences in Italy, on the other hand, to the tradition of travel literature related to Italy and, finally, also to the symbolic journey that the main character of the novel, Mihály, accomplishes through a geographical change of location towards the depths of his childhood and of his soul, and generally towards the primordial mythological deep layers of culture. In what follows, I will discuss these different aspects of the topos of journey, focusing mainly on Szerb's background in this regard and his protagonist's passionate interest in Italian culture and history, which is intertwined with the pilgrimage of self-search.

1 "In effetti la figura del viaggio esprime una metafora del processo educativo in maniera inseparabile dalla più ampia metafora della vita umana, e proprio in questo risiede la sua potenza simbolica. Nel tema del viaggio è l'intera vita umana nella sua complessità che viene descritta come 'cammino' e 'trasformazione,' cioè come 'movimento intenzionale' verso una meta solo ipoteticamente definita" (the English translation is mine, E. R.).

The Theme of Travel in Szerb's Oeuvre

Szerb's oeuvre is connected in many ways to the theme of travel. In addition to his great love of travel, it is the theme of many of his writings; among others, an alternative guidebook about Budapest (*Budapesti kalauz marslakók számára* [*A Martian's Guide to Budapest*], 1935) and a travelogue (*A harmadik torony* [*The Third Tower*], 1936) recorded during his trip to Italy in 1936. Szerb's own trip to Italy is an important precursor to *Journey by Moonlight*, which appeared a year later, in 1937. Some passages of the novel recall the author's Italian experiences reported in his travel diary. A few extracts from *The Third Tower*, which is subtitled *Journeys in Italy* and can be considered as the non-fiction companion to *Journey by Moonlight* (Havasréti 2013, 387), are worth quoting here, as they underpin some of the issues only lightly related to in the novel.

Szerb initially wanted to go to Spain, but the outbreak of the civil war, marking the beginning of the dictatorship of General Franco, very close to the ideology of fascism and as such supported by Nazi Germany and fascist Italy, prevented him from fulfilling his plan. Italy, however, could still be a travel destination, as he points out:

> Then it occurred to me that I simply must go to Italy – while Italy remains where it is, and while going there is still possible. Who knows for how much longer that will be; indeed, for how much longer I, or any of us, will be able to go anywhere? The way events are moving, no one will be allowed to set foot outside his own country. […] No doubt the totalitarian state will sooner or later decree that the true patriot is the one who stays at home. And this is why, whenever I travel to Italy, I go there as if for the very last time, and why, when I first set eyes on any of its towns, it is as if I am not just returning, but bidding it farewell. Dostoevsky writes that we should live as if our every minute were the last moments of a man condemned to death: that way, we would grasp the ineffable richness of life. My impressions of Italy always feel like the last visions of a dying man. (Szerb 2014, 12)

This passage reflects the shades of fascism and Nazism starting their own journey towards war and is charged with intense personal nostalgia.

Both *The Third Tower* and *Journey by Moonlight* open in the back alleys of Venice, a city considered by Szerb the centre of the world, at least one of them. He articulates the essence of Venice's eternity as follows: "Venice is the centre of the world. Or rather, one of its centres, for the world has several. […] Venice is the city of intimate closeness. The most human-scale of all cities. Here Western culture's Faustian rush to infinite expansion comes to a halt. Venice cannot 'develop.' It cannot become any larger than it already is" (Szerb 2014, 15).

In *Journey by Moonlight*, Venice perfectly fits the plan of the narrative. Venice, the city of love, the place for romantic couple holidays, with its beautiful Gothic architecture and hosting some of the best galleries and museums full of art treasure, has a hidden side forming a parallel universe to the crowded shopping and sightseeing districts around Piazza San Marco and the Rialto. The real magic of Venice lies in its back alleys (*calli* in Italian) that most tourists do not visit. In this labyrinth of narrow side streets and footbridges, one can discover the unknown corners and forgotten canals of the city that exert an irresistible charm and offer an opportunity to lose oneself in unexpected experiences. The opening sentence of the novel is like a warning to the reader: "There had been no trouble at all on the train. It began in the back alleys of Venice" (Szerb 2016, 5).

The two works cited before, *A Martian's Guide to Budapest* and *The Third Tower*, as well as *Journey by Moonlight* form a close unit: the duality of the traveller's private world of experience and the geographical-cultural framework of the trip play a major role in them; the tradition of Bildungsreise, i.e. educational journey, is also an issue that generally defines Szerb's works which implies the textual readability and symbolic interpretability of cities and landscapes (Havasréti 2011, 429).

The Tradition of Hungarian Travel Literature

Most of the foreign trips of Hungarians from the fifteenth to the eighteenth century were directed to Italy. The first Hungarian intellectuals arrived in Padua and Bologna or in Roman schools, primarily for study purposes. Among the first testimonies of travel literature, we find the *Italian Travel Diary* (*Itáliai útinapló*) from 1552 of the Transylvanian Saxon Martin Brenner, a village doctor from Hermannstadt, and Mihály Forgách' *Speech on the Journey and Its Glory*[2] from 1587, in which the author argues that travel is necessary, fair, useful, and pleasant.

The nineteenth century proved to be the age of travel and journeys, which were made to complete the educational and cultural process, for professional, political, sentimental, family, personal reasons and more. Unlike those of previous centuries, most of these movements were accompanied by punctual and daily reports, expressed from time to time in epistolary, diary, and intellectual form. Among the destinations, the Italian Peninsula was the sought-after destination for trips that can be placed in the tradition of the Grand Tour, responding to needs dictated by the political, ideological, and cultural transformations of the "century of nationalities." The nineteenth century is also the century of the birth of worldwide

2 Original title: *Oratio de peregrinatione et eius laudibus, cum ex insigni Argentoratensi quo ante missus fuerit celeberrimam Witebergensem Academiam venisset in inclyto nationis Ungaricae Coetu Witebergae scripta et habita Michaele Forgacz libero barone de Gymes. Witebergae, 1587.*

travel guides. The guides – often referred to simply as "Baedekers" after the inventor of modern guidebooks, Karl Baedeker (1801–1859) – contain information about routes and travel facilities, descriptions of noteworthy buildings, sights, attractions, and museums, written by specialists; maps and historical and cultural information are also often included. Italy's power of attraction was not limited to curious Hungarian enthusiasts, but it contaminated many artists throughout Europe, including celebrities such as Johannes Brahms, Friedrich Nietzsche, Thomas Mann, or John Ruskin. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, intellectuals manifested the desire to explore landscapes steeped in history and the past, against the backdrop of the delightfully mysterious Italian art. In Hungary, Endre Ady, Mihály Babits, Dezső Kosztolányi, Attila József, and many others, in particular artists related to the literary magazine *Nyugat* 'West,' represented the love for Italy through literature. In Szerb's novel, we find references to some of them (e.g. Endre Ady and Mihály Babits).

These approaches are also important from Szerb's point of view as a writer whose text does not lack references to Baedeker. Tourism is a lens through which he creates the position of the outside observer and the initiate at the same time; it can simultaneously create an alienating and participating – thus ironic – perspective.

The Pilgrimage of Self-search in *Journey by Moonlight*

The road you travel along is the symbol of life, research, and knowledge in literature and the symbol of the desire for elsewhere, which can also serve as a stratagem for contemplating the question of existence. This happens, for example, in the case of Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) or in that of *Candide* (1759) by Voltaire, where the authors use the journey as an excuse to argue on society and humanity.

In *Journey by Moonlight*, Italy becomes the background against which a man's desperate race in search of his lost self will take place. Italy is described not just from the perspective of the casual traveller but also through the eyes of a literary critic who knows it well from its portrayal by Goethe, Byron, Shelley, and several other authors to whom Szerb refers explicitly. After Venice, the protagonist's journey continues through the regions of Emilia Romagna (where he visits Ravenna and "sweet" Bologna), Tuscany (where he visits "noble" Florence, Fiesole, Siena, "the most beautiful Italian city," Arezzo, Cortona, Terontola), Umbria (where he visits Perugia, Assisi, Spello, Foligno, Spoleto, Gubbio, Norcia), and Lazio with Rome, the city that Mihály particularly appreciates: "All the other Italian cities shrank into insignificance next to Rome" (Szerb 2016, 151). It is an itinerary worthy of a professional Baedeker tour guide.

Havasréti (2011, 430) assumes *Journey by Moonlight* to be a book of social distinctions, where Szerb's comments on travel are based on the logic of "differences and distinctions." This is indicated at the beginning of the novel:

> As befitting highly intelligent people possessed of enormous self-awareness, Mihály and Erzsi strove to find the proper middle way between snobbery and anti-snobbery. They didn't exhaust themselves attempting to accomplish everything Baedeker demanded, but even less did they seek to belong to those who return home and boast: "The museums… well, of course we didn't visit any museums!" – and then look smugly at each other. (Szerb 2016, 5–6)

For Mihály and his wife, Erzsi, a trip to Italy is not a means to satisfy the primitive hunger for entertainment of mass tourism, it is not a demonstration of fulfilling one's duty arising from highly valued education but a kind of "experience project" that includes cultural motivations, bourgeois prestige needs, and the satisfaction of entertainment needs. Later on, this peculiar attitude, balancing on the border of snobbery and anti-snobbery, turns out to be an illusion: while Mihály's trip to Italy turns into a journey leading to the depths of his own soul, Erzsi has to face the disintegration of the bourgeois conventions connected to the trip and inevitably to her own life.

Mihály's mistake, the fate that pushes him to get on the wrong train at Terontola station, thus moving away from his wife, represents the author's artistic means of offering a chance for redemption to the protagonist, who is eager to find out what's there beyond the conventions of his bourgeois life that he has been forced to adapt to for too long.

The debate about man's desire to seek and discover himself has been widespread and exhaustive since the dawn of literature. The story is actually the same as faced by dozens of other literary works of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, namely the search for oneself in a world that seems completely foreign, where everything is impenetrable, incomprehensible and complicated, and where the person ends up no longer recognizing oneself. The unstoppable desire to travel comes from people's feeling of dissatisfaction. Dostoevsky, Gogol, Kosztolányi, Karinthy, Kafka, Sartre, Camus, and many others have addressed this topic, not surprisingly, as this sentiment was typical of their era.

Journey by Moonlight deals with the same phenomenon, only in a different way, so delicately, humanly and with such empathy that I would dare to define it as unique. This is probably the key to the success of the novel even after eighty years it was penned. There is mystery, there is nostalgia, there are desires and fears that merge almost indistinguishably. Antal Szerb reveals the most hidden and darkest places of the human mind. All this, unlike his peers, without triggering

the slightest disturbing feelings or a sense of oppression, and indeed, giving us a light book, which results to be almost funny.

It is the story of a profound reflection on one's identity, the narration of a spiritual and introspective journey which, following a misunderstanding, shows the protagonist the limits imposed by a society in which he can no longer reflect himself and from which he feels strongly conditioned. He confesses what follows to one of his old friends' circle, Ervin, the first of them to find meaning in life, not in the world that they were familiar with but by withdrawing from it to a monastic life:

> Mihály couldn't resist the confessions that strove to erupt from him. As he talked, everything that he'd sensed instinctively since his flight came to the surface: how much of a failure he felt his adult – or mock-adult – life and marriage had been; how he had no idea what to do next and what to expect from his future; and how he might recover his true self. And mainly, how much he suffered from his nostalgia for his youth and the friends from his youth. (Szerb 2016, 126–127)

It echoes what Erzsi wonders at the very beginning of the novel: "How much longer […] can this fiction be sustained?" (Szerb 2016, 10), where fiction means the effort to maintain the appearance of adulthood. Through the figure of Mihály, Antal Szerb reflects on self-fashioning, the public self-representative behaviour of the well-educated literate citizen, one's outwardly projected image created towards society, for others, to gain recognition from others. "Self-fashioning," a term introduced by Stephen Greenblatt in 1980, refers to the process of shaping public identity and personality to reflect socially and culturally acceptable models: "[…] self-fashioning is in effect the […] version of […] control mechanisms, the cultural system of meanings that creates specific individuals by governing the passage from abstract potential to concrete historical embodiment" (Greenblatt 2005, 3–4). Mihály's portrayal offers a form of self-representation based on culturally inspired procedures. The protagonist of the novel tries his best to create his own public self-image, and for a long time, for fifteen years, he struggles to assume a socially respectable role while working in his father's company. When he becomes Erzsi's husband, to play the new role, he must give up his former identity.

The story is set in the thirties. A couple from Budapest arrives in Italy for their honeymoon. The two newlyweds, apparently happy and model bourgeois citizens, hide restlessness and emotional instability. Mihály appears to be an intelligent, precise, orderly person who corresponds to the model of the perfect bourgeois imposed by the society of his time. However, once he begins his physical and mystical pilgrimage, he is bound to re-evaluate his life and experience up to that

point. In the world of *Journey by Moonlight* Mihály reaches a fatal turning point in which he tries to reconstruct his identity, and the tool for this process is the narrative oftentimes made up of monologues.

A flashback story, which is pivotal to the whole novel, commences after bumping into one of his old friends in Ravenna, János Szepetneki. The unexpected appearance of this long-lost classmate makes him recall his nonconformist youth. His narrative begins by exploring memories dating back to the Ulpius house, which represents for him the world in which he can move easily, without imposed external rules. Mihály suffocated memories of the past at the Ulpius house for a long time to live his life as an adult citizen. During the honeymoon in Italy, the symptoms of suppression appear: the escape from Erzsi and the illness in the form of tiredness and exhaustion triggered by the solitary walk in the alleys and the memory of his friend Tamás Ulpius, who took his own life. This process is called regression in psychoanalysis (Freud 1973, 383–385; Jung 1993, 32). During the time of Antal Szerb, the Freudian psychological trend was extremely popular, and this is well reflected in the description of the protagonist's struggles: as if Mihály were in permanent dialogue with his subconscious on the one hand and his superior self on the other.

In the Ulpius house, the group of friends centred on Éva and her brother Tamás sought escape from the quotidian conventional bourgeois life and found refuge in private theatricals where death was a constant presence. In Italy, Mihály, looking for Éva and waiting for her, feels the childhood sense of loss and anxiety again. After having met her in Rome, in his longing, he asserts an Éva-centred theory of existence through which his life until then can be divided into two parts: searching for Éva and spending time with Éva on the one hand and being without her on the other. "The time he spent searching for Éva was much more existent, much more true in its reality, than the months and years without Éva; whether it was good or bad, no matter how dreadful the anguish and sense of doom that came with it, he knew that this was life, and without Éva there was no other reality than thinking of Éva and waiting for her" (Szerb 2016, 198). The two states of existence separated by Mihály also divide the plot of the novel in two.

One pole is represented by the adaptation to social norms, to a bourgeois existence after breaking away from the Ulpius house and the detachment from childlikeness represented by Éva: namely his corporate work, earning his father's recognition, his marriage with Erzsi, which means at the same time his inclusion among adult and serious people. This state of existence will also include the period after his returning home, which the novel does not present, only foreshadows it.

The other state of being relates to Éva's presence or the search after her. However, Éva is a kind of a symbol here, too, that of victimhood represented by childhood, the games at Ulpius house and with Tamás. The feeling of loss, the attraction to Éva and Tamás and their duality can be linked to this second period.

Mihály perceives these years as much more realistic, whether good or bad, as for him it meant an active form of suffering or enjoyment, having in this way an advantage over the passive middle-class life: "When I entered the atmosphere of the Ulpius house, my constant feelings of shame disappeared, and so did my nervous symptoms. This was the happiest period of my life, and if some scent or play of light awakens its memory in me, even now that excited and dizzying happiness courses through me: the only happiness I ever knew" (Szerb 2016, 28–29). In the novel, the alternation of the two states provides the dynamism, the basis of Mihály's research and its direction. The main change is between the married life with Erzsi and the wandering in Italy realized by the *action gratuite* of missing the right train.

The most distressing feelings and fears of people do not come from nature but from social existence. It is part of the development of the personality that operates prevention mechanisms. If the anxiety becomes unbearable, or one cannot satisfy their own needs, one starts using self-defence mechanisms. Escape is such a mechanism and a motive at the same time. The self excludes the possibility of coping and experiences deep conflicts as a predestined failure; one gets stuck, weakens his perception of reality, goes back to childhood or into a constructed, unreal dream world, becomes nostalgic, suffers, and loses the power to act. The fleeing person becomes lonely, the feeling of insignificance and weakness intensifies, and, in many cases, the desire to die appears (Fromm 2002, 21, 89, 129). The honeymoon shown in the novel is symbolic, and the train only takes Mihály, who longs to return to his childhood, to one more station of former adolescent complexes, showing him the path to himself. According to Freud, travel is one of the most common symbols of death, it leads to self-discovery and an encounter with oneself (Freud 1985, 272). Each station evokes signs, fears, and emotions. For Mihály, every passage through Italy is extremely important, it has a value beyond the movement itself.

Venice is mysterious and exciting. Its peculiar atmosphere can manifest for the traveller the threshold of life and death. Mihály arrives in Venice with Erzsi for their honeymoon, a passage that would be an initiation rite to enter the bourgeois world, a passage that the woman has already experienced with Zoltán, her first husband. Ravenna is a city of transience; it does not live in the present. It awakens the feelings of youthful death wish and adolescent self-pity. Under such influences, Mihály tells his wife about his youth, but she cannot interpret it. Florence is a city of ominous signs, with constant bad weather. Struggling towards self-knowledge, Mihály realizes that he is unfit for adulthood, and he has been trying to conform in vain. He gives in to his instincts and wants to relive his teenage years. The trip to Siena leads to a casual and pleasant encounter with the American girl Millicent Ingram. This foreign woman represents youth. After Mihály's unhappy marriage to Erzsi, Millicent symbolizes freedom and

adventure, something unexpected. Wandering through the mountain landscapes, fears and visions accompany Mihály's journey. The vision of the dead Tamás Ulpius creates in him a longing for death and awakens his memories of Éva.

The scariest place on the trip is Rome, where Mihály arrives alone, led there almost by a superior will. In an alley of the city, a stranger gives him a mysterious letter from which he learns that Éva is in Rome. She appears and demonizes our protagonist with the story of Tamás Ulpius's death. Mihály is coward to die, no matter how much he wants to. He avoids this confrontation as well and escapes into the unconsciousness of drunkenness at a baptism he is invited to. In his dreams, he sees that his life instinct is stronger than his desire to die (Csiszár 2002, 335–340).

During Mihály's travels, Erzsi's attempt to escape takes place on another thread. What Mihály is looking for in the wonders of adolescence Erzsi wants to find in love. Mihály does not think in accordance with the maturity and age of his personality, and as a result he cannot undergo experiences, such as travels, that would have a role in the development of his personality:

> Mihály was now seeing Italy for the first time – at the age of thirty-six, on his honeymoon. He had covered the map in the course of his long-extended years of wandering. He'd spent years in England and France, but he had always avoided Italy, sensing that the time was not yet ripe: he wasn't prepared for it. He assigned Italy, along with siring offspring, to the category of grown-up matters, and in secret he even feared it: he feared it the way he shied away from strong sunlight, the scent of flowers and extremely pretty women. If he hadn't got married and if his intention hadn't been to begin his wedded life with the standard Italian honeymoon, he might have postponed the Italian journey until his death. Even now, he had come to Italy not on a visit but on a honeymoon, which is a different matter altogether. (Szerb 2016, 5)

There is no solution for Mihály. His journeys, feelings, and emotions lead him to senseless wandering and inability to grow up and develop. He does not realize that it is not loneliness, that it is not longing, but it is his own helplessness and immaturity that are the causes of his suffering. He represents an era, a specific state of mind, a tragic type of a tragic era. His childish self, his being stuck cannot escape from the minimum requirements of his era and his own personality. He must conform, the solutions he seeks and finds will not help. It seems like a positive conclusion to his suffering that he chooses life although he does not yet know how and what path to take. But at least he decided: "He could do nothing else but go home. There would have been one other solution, but… those external circumstances from which he had wanted to flee into death had, it seemed, ceased to be" (Szerb 2016, 259).

The Italian world, full of secrets, makes Mihály transform his outer journey into an inner one. Mihály's monologues, his self-talk, and his self-definition constantly challenge the limits of linguistic expression. The novel also represents a challenge to the various literary genres of the time such as the psychological novel, the travelogue, the novel about the rebellious generation. In the 1930s, Hungarian novel underwent a transformation, mainly under the influence by Szerb's contemporary, Sándor Márai (1900–1989), who created the model of the narrative of the "rebellious youth" and in those same years developed themes closely connected to travel, understood as the discovery of the world and of one's own identity, still very present in today's literature. Sándor Márai's *Zendülők* [*The Rebels*, 1930] also deals with a group of adolescents graduating from high school towards the end of the First World War, just like Mihály and his friends, and likewise rebelling against their bourgeois origins. More strikingly still, Márai's rebels also act out a private theatrical experience with ominous overtones, and one of their circle also perishes. Márai's *Egy polgár vallomásai* [*Confessions of a Bourgeois*, 1934] also features a secret society formed by children to defy the adult world. Critics have often compared both *Journey to Moonlight* and *The Rebels* to Cocteau's *Les Enfants Terribles* (Havasréti 2011, 427; Lezard 2001; Szávai 2003, 334). Yet Szerb is unique in presenting youthful rebellion from the nostalgic perspective of the (surviving) characters grown to adulthood. The result is a multifaceted work full of ideas in which the inner journey is the master with a return to the happy and carefree times of childhood, far from the obligations and rigid and suffocating social conventions.

Conclusions

In *Journey by Moonlight*, the protagonist is a man who lives an experience of profound self-search with an attitude of strong self-analysis. Antal Szerb asks serious and recurring questions about human existence in a philosophical-metaphysical key, where nostalgia turns out to be the undisputed protagonist of life. To this end, he places great emphasis on the issue of free will (cf. Schopenhauer 1906), which is largely delimited by the social pillars of conventions and expectations. Mihály both tried to integrate into society and to step out of it, playing and ignoring the practical side of life. However, none of them matched his personality completely because Mihály cannot be perfect either as a conformist citizen or as a rebellious outsider. He is the archetype of the seeker, as Szepetneki, one of Mihály's old friends, states to Erzsi: "Mihály is not cut out to be a husband. He… how should I put it… he's a seeker… He's been seeking something his entire life, something that's different. […] Honestly, I confess I never did understand that man" (Szerb 2016, 142).

One of the cornerstones of the protagonist's inner journey turns out to be the father figure. In the life of Éva and Tamás Ulpius, the paternal thread as a representation of ancient patterns and stereotypes is weak, almost non-existent since they hate their father whom they see as the suffocating force of society (the father wants to marry Éva and send Tamás to work in the office). In contrast, Mihály surrenders to the old power without any opposition. When his father comes to Italy to take him home, he sees him as an old man and worries about him so much so that Éva, Italy, and his mortal plans do not mean anything anymore. For Mihály, there remains the victim's role, a bitter feeling of self-abandonment, the possibility of re-conformation in the wake of those conventions from which he has tried to escape to live his individual dimension.

The journey in Italy leads him to inevitable self-revelations and to self-surrender to his true self. This experience allows him to breathe and feel free for the first time, it helps him undress of the mantle of society and the coercion exercised by it. In the end, conformity triumphs over non-conformity. Erzsi goes back to her first husband, Zoltán, and Mihály returns to his family. But it all ends on an overall optimistic note: "He must stay alive. And he too would live: like rats amidst the ruins. But he'd live, nonetheless. And as long as one lives, something might yet happen" (Szerb 2016, 261).

While the vivid descriptions of places and events are rooted in reality, there is simultaneously a surreal, dream-like quality to the stories with mystery, intrigue, and plot twists. It is a wonderfully subtle, surprising and original book, beautifully written, unpredictable, playful, intelligent and quietly profound, combining serious and grotesque elements in a way only Antal Szerb is capable of doing.

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Not Only by Accident. Arthur Koestler's Reception in Post-war Hungary, 1945–1948

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Abstract. This article is the first part of a series of publications on Arthur Koestler's reception in Hungary during its transition to Communism. Given the author's iconic status as an anti-Communist writer, it is reasonable to suppose that his texts would have been banned and his name rarely uttered, much less printed, in Hungary before the 1989 regime change. It is thus not surprising that this view is virtually uncontested by scholars both in Hungary and beyond. Yet, as shown here on the basis of thirty-one articles published between April 1945 and June 1948 in Hungarian dailies, journals, and magazines, at least in this early and transitional period, Koestler's writing is not only frequently mentioned but actively discussed. Furthermore, through a closer analysis of the contents of these texts, five specific categories of mentions are identified: (1) Koestler cited as a journalist reporting on contemporary events; (2) his opinion quoted as that of an authority figure; (3) polemics towards Koestler's views; (4) reports on the foreign reception of Hungarian literature, including Koestler; and (5) Koestler used as a public scapegoat.

Keywords: Arthur Koestler, reception, Hungary, 1940s, Communism.

1. Introduction

There is apparently a consensus amongst Koestler scholars that Arthur Koestler's name was either largely unknown or at least taboo in Communist Hungary until the more liberal decade of the 1980s. While this is a logical supposition, given Koestler's status as an icon of anti-Communist fiction,[1] it is nevertheless barely

1 At the very least, in the period between 1940 (the publication of *Darkness at Noon*) and his 1955 public announcement of a "farewell to arms" in *The Trail of the Dinosaur and Other Essays*. Koestler's stance in both his fiction and non-fiction was staunchly political and anti-

more than a subjective impression made without a proper analysis of the author's reception in Hungary.

As part of a larger project, mapping Koestler's reception in Communist Hungary, below, I therefore analyse Koestler's presence in periodicals during the Communist takeover after the Second World War. As I show below, at least in this transitional period, during which Hungarian communists progressively strengthened their hold on politics as well as the public sphere, including the media, Koestler's name was far from taboo. On the contrary, his name was frequently mentioned, his texts and thoughts also often discussed, and Koestler even appears in major works of reference. The numerous mentions found in the Hungarian press can be divided into five distinct types: (1) Koestler is cited as a foreign journalist, reporting on, or providing commentary on, contemporary events; (2) his opinion is quoted as that of a major thinker or public figure; (3) polemics towards Koestler's views; (4) overviews of the foreign reception of Hungarian literature including Koestler; (5) Koestler as a public scapegoat, including cases in which he had no involvement. This, of course, is at least partially a result of the fact that, as explained in more detail below, at least at the beginning of the period, Hungary had a somewhat more liberal media policy than other countries of the Eastern Bloc, as well as multiple political parties, and this changed only gradually. At the same time, it is also important to stress that Koestler's appearance is not limited to the non-Communist press, with even official and semi-official Communist Party publications regularly mentioning him.

2. Koestler's Hungarian Reception as Seen by Contemporary Koestler Studies

The conviction that Arthur Koestler's name was largely unknown or even taboo in Communist Hungary until the more liberal decades of the 1980s is widespread amongst Koestler scholars. Béla Hidegkuti certainly claims this much, listing only three exceptions to an otherwise universal ban on all mentions of Koestler's name, and attributing those exceptions to editorial oversight (2005, 1072). Mátyás Sárközi's verdict sounds even more definitive: "In Hungary, until the 1980s, it was not possible to even mention his books, not even if those books were on the history of science, the nature of thinking, or the Khazars"[2] (2005, 47). Mihály Szívós identifies Koestler as a "persona non grata" of the system (2006, 26), and

Communist, an image further strengthened and promulgated in his output as a journalist. It is exactly this image that has survived ever since, regardless of Koestler's decades-long, and mostly unsuccessful, effort to redefine himself as a writer of scientific non-fiction (cf. Atkins 1956, 7; Levene 1985, 30–32; Gordon 1991, 149; Shorten 2012, 26).

2 All English translations of quotes from sources in Hungarian below are mine, unless noted otherwise.

consequently also of public discourse and cultural enquiry. Tamás Staller likewise calls Koestler a "*persona non grata* in the peace camp"[3] (2007, 10), extending the range of the ban to the whole Eastern Bloc. Robert Blumstock, writing a short time before the fall of the Iron Curtain, similarly not only remained cautious about possible future changes to Koestler's Hungarian reception but described the critical reception preceding the 1980s in a similarly negative albeit more cautious manner:

> As long as the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party defines the parameters of what is, and what is not acceptable literature, Arthur Koestler's books will never be best sellers in Hungary. […] By the time he abandoned political questions in mid-life, Hungary was behind the Iron Curtain, and his anti-Communist reputation was hardly appropriate for encouraging a welcome reception in Hungary. Although his subsequent endeavors […] were less tainted with political sentiments, acceptance continued to elude him and his work in the land of his birth. (Blumstock 1987, 39)

Visibly, Blumstock's verdict is more detailed, more nuanced, and seemingly even better informed than Hidegkuti's and Sárközi's simplistic and rather offhand assessments. This is especially impressive if one takes into consideration that Blumstock's study predates the other two by decades, and his research efforts were much more burdened with the physical as well as the less tangible boundaries erected during the Cold War. That said, in its most important outlines, his opinion is hardly far removed from Hidegkuti's and Sárközi's. In his view, as well, Koestler's texts were unwelcome and unavailable, and his name rarely mentioned.

Most of Koestler's biographers fail to provide a more detailed analysis. Michael Scammell, in his monumental biography, *Koestler: The Literary and Political Odyssey of a Twentieth-Century Skeptic* (2009), for example, merely proliferates the myth of Koestler's total inadmissibility in Hungarian public discourse. In fact, he refers to the exact same article by Aladár Komlós that Béla Hidegkuti considers an example of editorial oversight (2005, 1072), in the following manner: "Koestler's name appeared in print in Hungary for the first time since the end of World War II, in an article on Németh and his circle" (Scammell 2009, 496). Later in the same volume, while discussing the 1970s, Scammell admits that in that decade "[i]nterest in Koestler was also beginning to show up behind the increasingly porous Iron Curtain" (2009, 544). Yet, his view of Koestler's repute in Hungary is considerably direr:

3 For a discussion on the use of the term "peace camp" as a synonym for the Communist Bloc, see Roman Krakovský (2008).

> Koestler's work still didn't make it back to his native Hungary, however, even in samizdat. When George Mikes went to Budapest in 1979 and gave a copy of *The Sleepwalkers* to the director of the Európa publishing house, the latter had no idea who Koestler was, still less that he was a Hungarian and had written *Darkness at Noon*. The first samizdat translation of *Darkness at Noon* into Hungarian didn't appear until 1982, a year before Koestler's death, and the book wasn't officially published in Hungary until just before the Berlin Wall came down in 1989. (Scammell 2009, 544)[4]

Nevertheless, besides being either vague, mistaken, or overly careless in his wording, Scammell is at least painting a more nuanced picture than Hidegkuti, Sárközi, Szívós, and Staller. His slightly more complex view is most probably a result of his familiarity with Blumstock's article (see Scammell 2009, 596).

Some other biographies constitute a group of their own in that they steer clear of the question of Koestler's Hungarian reception completely. David Cesarani's (1998), Iain Hamilton's (1982), and Edward Saunders's (2017) volumes are cases in point. The same is true of Christian Buckard's (2004) and Michel Laval's (2005) biographies although the latter is otherwise unusually detailed in its discussion of Koestler's Hungarian roots and the various political changes in Hungary during Koestler's lifetime.

It would, of course, be logical to expect a discussion of the Hungarian reception from Koestler's Hungarian biographers, and, indeed, Zsuzsanna Körmendy's (2007) and László Márton's (2006) accounts are certainly more useful in this respect. This is especially true for Körmendy, who paints a picture in which Koestler is much more present in Hungarian intellectual life, even if neither officially nor universally. Following her account, it becomes apparent that, at least by the late 1960s and early 1970s, some groups of people, namely university students who were brave enough to ask for permission to access the library of the British Embassy, certain party functionaries at various levels, and those who could get access to samizdats or copies illegally smuggled into Hungary, would have been able to read some of Koestler's texts or works referring to them (Körmendy 2007, 543–546). While admittedly these groups are small, and they likely overlap considerably, it seems reasonable to assume that even they alone would have ensured a rather significant penetration of Koestler's oeuvre, at least amongst the intelligentsia, by the period discussed by Körmendy, i.e. the late 1960s – early 1970s.

4 At this point, Scammell either takes some artistic licence in his formulation, referring to 1988 as "just before the Berlin Wall came down in 1989" (2009, 544), or is factually wrong. Koestler's novel was published by Európa in 1988, most probably in July, and certainly no later than in August, given that, on the occasion of the book's publishing, the August issue of the journal *Mozgó Világ* reprinted the review that Mihály Sükösd (1988) originally wrote for Európa as a publisher's reader in June of the same year.

While her insights are certainly revelatory, one should not be satisfied with such a subjective, albeit informed, assessment. Although certainly not registering the penetration of samizdat publications, smuggled books, or top-secret translations produced for internal use only, one rather objective and well-quantifiable measurement of Koestler's reception in Communist Hungary is an analysis of his mentions in Hungarian dailies, magazines, and books. This is exactly the aim of this paper, focusing on the period between 1945 and 1948, based primarily on the holdings of *Arcanum Digitheca*, a full-text database of the Hungarian press.

These four years, immediately following the Second World War, are especially interesting from the perspective of Koestler's Hungarian reception. In the last stages of the war, with the German occupation of Hungary, Koestler's opportunities for publication, as well as visiting the country, arguably disappeared, given both his Jewish heritage and his anti-fascist and anti-Nazi activities as a member of the German Communist Party.[5] Since by the end of the war Koestler had already published the iconic anti-Communist novel, *Darkness at Noon* (1940), as well as other works critical of communism, such as *Scum of the Earth* (1941), it is reasonable to suppose that Koestler must have found himself amongst those suppressed by yet another regime. Yet, as shown below, the case was much more complex.

One possible reason for this was that, at the beginning of the period, Hungary, at least formally, could be considered a democratic state, not only because of her liberation from German occupation but primarily thanks to "the Declaration on Liberated Europe, in which the Big Three [i.e. the US, the UK, and the USSR] bound themselves to facilitate free democratic elections throughout East Central Europe after the war" (Békés 2022, 21). Just as importantly, besides free democratic elections and a multi-party system, this also meant that a wide range of daily papers, magazines, and journals were published, representing a just as wide and colourful political spectrum, even if with some, very tangible limits.

Nevertheless, one should remember that this certainly never meant fully unconditional democracy. In reality, already when "German occupation was over; Hungary […] fell under Stalin's 'jurisdiction'" (Molnár 2001, 295), and the process of increasing Sovietization started even before Hungary became fully liberated in April 1945: in the provisional National Assembly of December 1944, while *formally* the Communists held only less than one fifth of the seats of government, their *actual* political control extended to almost half of the ministerial posts (Molnár 2001, 296). Seemingly, the Communists' hold on the government loosened following the 1945 elections, "the only free elections in the Soviet sphere"

5 On Koestler's Communist and anti-fascist activities, see e.g. Koestler (1937a–c; 1952, 249–352; 1954, 11–392) and Scammell (2009, 77–163). On his Jewish identity, see especially Avishai (1990), Gordon (1991; 1994), McInnes (1999), Inbari (2021), Staller (2007), and Wasserstein (2009).

(Békés 2022, 39), given the landslide victory of the Independent Smallholders', Agrarian Workers' and Civic Party, "with 57 per cent of mandates" (Molnár 2001, 297). Yet, in reality, the Communists' influence hardly weakened, and possibly even intensified already in the days immediately following the elections, and increasingly so during the next two years (cf. Molnár 2001, 295–300; Békés 2022, 21, 38–42; Mueller 2010, 96, 105–106). As a result, a mere two years after the 1945 elections, in "August 1947, […] the new electoral law, various restrictive measures, and electoral fraud made the HCP the largest party, at 22 percent" (Békés 2022, 59). Yet, with all that, "the left-wing bloc was able to gather only 45 percent of the votes" (Békés 2022, 59), so it was ultimately only through forcing the Smallholders Party into a coalition with the left-wing bloc that they could form a government with "a 60.9 percent majority" (Mueller 2010, 106). With the non-fellow traveller members of the Smallholders' Party having been long eliminated, and the Social Democratic Party and the Peasant Party having gone through cleansings of their own (Mueller 2010, 106), albeit a "parliamentary façade was maintained […], from 1947, the semi-democratic regime had had its day" (Molnár 2001, 300–301). And while the elections themselves, even if somewhat manipulated and restrictive, could still reasonably be considered democratic, Hungary herself was democratic only in name, with parliament and country likewise under Communist control.

Afterwards, the Sovietization of Hungary further accelerated, culminating in the elections of 1949, where people could only vote *for* or *against* the "candidates of an artificial Popular Front, nominated in reality by the Communist Party" (Molnár 2001, 301), and where "[o]f the votes cast […], 5,478,515 were for the list of the People's [= Popular] Front, i.e., 95.6 per cent, and 165,283 against. The number of ballots invalidated was 86,721" (Kertész 1950, 51).[6] In fact, changes were so rapid that it is debatable at what exact point takeover could be considered definite. For the purposes of this article, it is sufficient to note that while the process was formalized in May 1949, it was arguably *de facto* final already in June 1948, at the time of the merger of the HCP and the SDP (Molnár 2001, 300–301). For the sake of convenience, I thus provide an overview of Koestler's Hungarian reception between April 1945 and June 1948.

Before doing so, however, it is also worth returning to the question of the freedom of the press and its changes in the period, which, understandably, closely mirror the political developments. Nevertheless, even given the aforementioned variety of periodicals, representing various shades of the political spectrum, one should certainly not imagine this period as one with an unlimited freedom of speech, not even at the beginning. While outlets representing a relatively wide range of opinions existed, Hungarian media were neither completely free nor uncensored in any period of the transformation. Already the Armistice of 20

6 More recent sources offer slightly different albeit less detailed data, but the general picture remains the same. Cf. e.g. Molnár (2001, 301): 96.27%; Pražák (2005, 102): 95%.

January 1945, or more specifically its "article 16 stated that the publication of periodicals was only possible on the condition of the Soviet-controlled Allied High Command's prior permission" (Sz. Nagy 2014, 105), ensuring that only periodicals deemed acceptable by the Soviets could get published. Yet, an even stricter form of control was introduced by the provisional government: on 1 March of the same year, a censorship of the press was instituted with the prime minister's decree no. 390/1945, establishing the central control of proofs before printing (Sz. Nagy 2014, 106). Albeit the papers of the parties of the Popular Front were given an exception from this regulation a month and a half later (Sz. Nagy 2014, 106), the decree retained active censorship for all other periodicals. While arguably governmental decree 11290/1947 mostly merely reinstated the rules codified in article 16 of the Armistice agreement, it is important to note that it nevertheless removed the right of decision from the hands of the formally independent, yet Soviet-controlled, Allied High Command and entrusted the minister of information with this role. This, in theory, might have allowed for more liberal policies, yet this was hardly the case since by 19 September 1947, when the decree was issued, as mentioned above, the government was practically, even though not formally, under Communist control. Perhaps just as importantly, the validity of the Decree was explicitly extended retroactively, applying not only to new requests but also to previously already permitted periodicals, effectively allowing for the closing of already established outlets. Just as importantly, yet another decree, 326/1947 of the minister of information, significantly narrowed the group of potential applicants eligible for such a permission: from this moment on, only in exceptional cases could natural persons apply for these permits, and even juridical persons' representatives had to submit birth certificates and certificates of good conduct in attachment to their application (Horváth 2013, 8). From 1948, permissions were no longer issued by the Ministry of Information but directly by the Press Department of the Office of the Prime Minister (Horváth 2013, 9). In other words, albeit some may have claimed that "the press was almost free" (Gati 1986, 14), Stephen D. Kertész's harsher assessment seems closer to the truth: "Freedom of speech did not exist. Even after the end of Russian censorship, the Communists effectively controlled the press through a system of licenses, allocation of newsprint, and the trade-union of the printers" (1950, 26).

Indeed, as Kertész mentions, there were two other effective methods besides limiting the legality of publishing activities: the distribution of paper and the use of labour unions for obstructing the publication of potentially critical outlets. As Gábor Sz. Nagy explains:

> It is no exaggeration to claim that paper supply is one of the most important issues of post-1918 media history, since this is not simply a problem of economics, but also of politics. Thus, it could serve as a highly efficient

> tool of censorship in the hands of power, given that in most cases it is very difficult to distinguish which of these two aspects is behind specific decisions. (Sz. Nagy 2014, 106)

This strategy was very effectively exploited by the Communists, who, "at first with the assistance of the AHC, and later through their own position of power, limited the opposition dailies' paper supply" (Horváth 2013, 19). An intriguing early case is discussed in detail by Gábor Sz. Nagy (2014). Szilárd Szajda (2003) goes as far as to claim that in that period manipulating the paper supplies was the most important method of exercising control over the press. In addition, the increasingly Communist-infiltrated labour unions could be utilized in a similar manner: under their pressure, "printers refused to handle articles unfavourable to or objected to by the Communist Party" (Kertész 1950, 36).

That is to say, while the media landscape of Hungary in the period was indeed varied, with multiple outlets representing various political parties and ideologies, it was certainly neither uncensored nor completely free. Overly critical papers could not even get published, and even those that did appear were under varying levels of pressure in the form of artificial, or at least artificially worsened, paper shortages, the labour unions' refusal to print specific issues or articles, or even more explicit forms of interference, including censorship or the revoking of licences. It is in this context that Arthur Koestler's media reception is situated.

3. Koestler in the 1945–1948 Period: A Frequent Point of Reference

In these four years of political change, Arthur Koestler's name appeared in thirty-one articles published in seventeen different periodicals, as opposed to once during the Second World War and twenty-five times in the pre-war part of the 1930s.[7] In other words, he was mentioned significantly more frequently in Hungary in the short transitional period discussed in this article than in the more than three times longer period immediately before it. Of those seventeen periodicals in the 1945–1948 period, eight were dailies, five weeklies, and the remaining four journals with lower periodicity. The periodical with the highest number of articles about him was the daily *Magyar Nemzet* [Hungarian Nation] (8 articles), followed by the weeklies *Haladás* [Progress] and *Új Magyarország*

7 During the war, i.e. between September 1939 and the end of March 1945, his name appears only in the April 10, 1943 issue of *Magyar Nemzet* [Hungarian Nation], in András Frey's (1943) article entitled *Megint van külpolitika* [There is Foreign Policy Once Again], discussing Koestler's *Scum of the Earth* in some detail. In the rest of the 1930s, Arthur Koestler is mentioned twenty-five times in total, in thirteen different periodicals.

[New Hungary] (both 3 articles), the weekly *Új Idők* [New Times], and the dailies *Szabadság* [Freedom] and *Szabad Nép* [Free People] (with 2 articles each). The latter two were, surprisingly, Communist dailies,[8] *Magyar Nemzet*, in this period, was a daily with strong democratic convictions, leaning to the right of the political spectrum,[9] and *Új Magyarország* was edited by Iván Boldizsár, a prominent, leftist member of the National Peasant Party (Horváth 2013, 14).[10] *Haladás* was one of the media outlets of the Hungarian Radical Party (Horváth 2013, 14), a social-liberal political formation (Péteri 1993, 291). Finally, *Új Idők* was a major conservative, middle-class weekly (Bata 2018, 112–113). In short, even a cursory glance at these periodicals shows an interest encapsulating the whole political spectrum, and a more in-depth reading, as it is shown below, does not contradict this view either.

Just as crucially, Koestler's status was stable enough to warrant his presence even in major works of reference. The first literary encyclopaedia published after the war, *Hungária Irodalmi Lexikon* [Hungária Literary Encyclopaedia] (1947), has an entry on Koestler, albeit with several mistakes. It lists 1882 as his year of birth, making him twenty-three years older than his real age and claiming that he was interned by the Germans during the war (Révay and Kőhalmi 1947, 287–88). The entry correctly identifies Koestler as a reporter of the *News Chronicle* in the Spanish Civil War, including his death sentence. Interestingly, it claims that *Thieves in the Night* (1946) is Koestler's best-known novel, adding that "its characters are Jews, Arabs, English people and American journalists: he elaborates on the Jewish question in its entirety in the guise of a Palestinian story" (Révay and Kőhalmi 1947, 288). This treatment is certainly not an effort to avoid discussing *Darkness at Noon*, which has a sentence of its own: its "topic is that of those disillusioned with the revolution (K. himself is one of them): the contrast of the revolutionary ideology and its practical execution" (Révay and Kőhalmi 1947, 288).

The second volume of the first general-purpose encyclopaedia published after the war, *Révai Kétkötetes Lexikona* [Révai's Two-Volume Encyclopaedia] (1948),

8 *Szabadság* only *de facto* controlled by the Hungarian Communist Party, indirectly and hiding behind the façade of a coalition of democratic forces while *Szabad Nép* officially and proudly declaring itself the central daily of the Party (cf. Sz. Nagy 2014, 106, 108).

9 At the time of its foundation, in the late 1930s, it had a strongly Catholic and conservative profile, but later went through phases of being an independent conservative daily, then being closely affiliated with the Independent Smallholders', Agrarian Workers' and Civic Party, and even later with the Independent Hungarian Democratic Party (Cf. Martin 2002, 105; Szajda 2003, 62).

10 The NPP was a radical agrarian party, with a programme to represent the interests of the poorest agricultural workers, from an emphatically nationalist but anti-fascist perspective, advocating agrarian socialism, but ultimately rather divided between at least two, or possibly three strong factions between a rather class-based, socialist, or even Communist left-wing, a more agricultural nationalist right-wing, and a moderate, centrist group of intellectuals (Cf. Szeredi 2014, 104, 117, 143; Barta 2016, 275–276).

also has an entry on Koestler. This is understandably much shorter, only a single sentence: "English journalist and novelist, lately increasingly serving reactionary interests" (Juhász 1948, 59). Koestler's year of birth is listed in an identically incorrect manner, as this information is from the earlier publication. What is more notable, however, is the critical labelling ("reactionary") in striking contrast to *Hungária*'s neutral discussion of Koestler's disillusionment with communism. This is arguably at least partially the result of the political changes during the time that has passed between the two publications.

Returning now to the periodical press, a closer analysis not only reveals that his writings are regularly discussed, but also allows for a categorization of the types of articles he appears in. The first category comprises the numerous cases when his articles published in English or German periodicals are reprinted or digested in Hungarian papers. These are typically Koestler's articles on the Jewish resettlement of Palestine. The daily *Világ* [World] published a digest on 22 November 1946 of one of Koestler's articles in *Weltwoche* on the situation in Palestine, referring to him as an "outstanding writer" (*Világ* 1946, 3). Koestler's name also appears in Elek Máthé's article (1947), *Ne csodálkozzunk!* [Do Not Wonder!], published in the 31 July 1947 issue of *Haladás*. Here, Máthé debates the main claims of an argumentative piece published by Sándor Ungár in the previous issue of the same weekly. He uses Koestler's *Thieves in the Night* to argue that Zionism and being religious are not mutually interchangeable, and many Zionists are non-religious (Máthé 1947, 7).[11] Likewise, on 13 September 1947, the magazine *Politika* [Politics], published and edited by major figures of the Independent Smallholders', Agrarian Workers' and Civic Party, reprints the letter Koestler sent to the New Statesman and Nation about the situation in Palestine (Koestler 1947, 10).

Szocializmus [Socialism], the official magazine of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary, reports in an essay by György Káldor, entitled *Tudomány és Társadalom* [Science and Society], appearing on 1 October 1946, on a series of radio talks broadcast on the BBC Home Service on Sundays, "The Challenge of Our Time," later published as a series of essays under the same title. While only the article's last two pages are devoted to an analysis of the broadcasts themselves (Káldor 1946, 458–459), its general focus also mirrors that of the radio broadcasts: "the lack of synthesis in modern thinking and in particular the wide gulf between the scientific and the humanistic approach to life" (Wyndham-Goldie et al. 1948, 12).

The second type of articles uses Koestler's writing as argument in polemics not fought with Koestler himself. György Parragi's long article, *Az értelmiség válsága* [The Crisis of the Intelligentsia] in *Magyar Nemzet* presents the thesis that of the three revolutionary groups of Hungarian society: workers, peasants,

11 It is worth mentioning here that with *Thieves in the Night* first appearing in its original English version in autumn 1946, *Magyar Nemzet* informed Hungarian readers about this fact as early as 30 October 1946 (cf. Tábori 1946a, 3; Scammell 2009, 280).

and the intelligentsia, the last one is in a double crisis. The first layer of this crisis, in Parragi's view, is economic: intellectuals are basically starving. What he sees, however, as more of a problem, is that they also have a spiritual crisis (Parragi 1946, 1). He sees this latter aspect as a phenomenon rather general than specifically Hungarian, building his argument on two sources: José Ortega y Gasset's *La Rebelión de las masas* [*The Revolt of the Masses*] (1930) and Arthur Koestler's *The Yogi and the Commissar* (1945a), devoting only three paragraphs to the former and seven to the latter. He sees Koestler as a major inspiration for the Hungarian left and calls him "a spearhead of humanist Socialism, whose works have especially raised the attention of left-wing intellectuals" (Parragi 1946, 1), adding that "although we […] do not share all of his views, yet his thoughts provide a useful guiding light in examining the spiritual crisis of Hungarian intelligentsia and its causes" (Parragi 1946, 2). Parragi's discussion is essentially only a summary of the main ideas of a single essay, *The Intelligentsia* (Koestler 1945a, 70–84), used in support of his own argument, but a fair one, reprinting some of Koestler's most critical thoughts without any dampening: "In [Koestler's] view, *the intelligentsia, even in its minority position, must insist on the independence of thought, the freedom of the spirit, on fundamental human beliefs, and on humanism*" (Parragi 1946, 1; emphasis in the original). Parragi even repeats Koestler's warning against lowering the intelligentsia to obedient, uncritical servants of the interests of the party (Parragi 1946, 2).

Parragi later extended his article into a public lecture that he held on 14 November 1946 at the Faculty of Law of the Royal Hungarian Pázmány Péter University (renamed only years later to Eötvös Loránd University) "in front of an audience of several hundred people" (*Magyar Nemzet* 1946, 3). A short report about his lecture refers to Koestler as a "humanist socialist" and lists him as an example, alongside the other thinkers quoted by Parragi, of people who "broke free of the narrow limits of partisan sectarianism, and joined ranks for universal, great human ideals, for natural law, the freedom of spirit, and a new humanism" (*Magyar Nemzet* 1946, 3). The aim of Parragi's lecture apparently was to convince his audience that the emerging Hungarian Republic must be based on freedom of thought and action, and a new humanism, while its citizens should make their voices heard whenever they saw tyranny and oppression or when universal human rights were trampled upon (*Magyar Nemzet* 1946, 3).

In a similar vein, László Madácsy, in his article entitled *Az ember és a béke* [Man and Peace], published in the 27 August 1946 issue of *Szegedi Népszava* [People's Voice of Szeged], quotes Koestler's 1943 prediction about post-war peace agreements:

> In a 1943 issue of the *New York Times Magazine*, Arthur Koestler writes, with prescient wisdom, that unless some unseen turn happens, victory and

> *peace will be conservative*. It will not bring any kind of permanent solution for the savagely mutilated Europe, nor any remedy for the errors rooted in capitalism, or significant progress for humanity. "It will bring an enormous temporary relief to the people of the Continent, it will bring salvation to millions whose life seemed doomed, and a certain minimum of liberty, decency, security. Briefly, it will be a new, perhaps slightly improved, edition of the pre-Hitlerian old order, a nineteenth-century postscript to the first half of the twentieth, which history has written in such abominable style." (Madácsy 1946, 5; emphasis in the original)[12]

Although Madácsy's article is pessimistically critical of the peace agreements and what followed them, the common feature in both his and Parragi's article is the use of Koestler's writing for initiating a public debate about democracy and the direction Hungary and Europe were taking at the time.

On 22 July 1945, *Néplap* [People's Daily], the official daily of the Hungarian Communist Party in Eastern Hungary, published a full-page article commemorating the Spanish Civil War. This text, written by Miklós Világ, lists Koestler as one of those who warned the world against the brutality of Spanish Fascism in vain: "Ehrenburg's world-famous indictment, *No pasaran!* was of no use, Koestler's books, *Menschenopfer unerhört*, [and] *Spanish Testament*, the (conservative) Duchess of Atholl's *Searchlight on Spain*, the writing of Malraux and Hemingway were of no use either. The world was progressing toward Fascism to crush humankind" (Világ 1945, 4). While it is questionable if the Duchess of Atholl is rightfully described as a conservative,[13] the reference to Koestler's book is even more notable. Not only does Koestler's name appear in a positive context in an official Communist daily five years after the publication of *Darkness at Noon* and four years after *Scum of the Earth*, but Világ also refers to *Menschenopfer unerhört* [Unparalleled Human Sacrifice] (1937), Koestler's relatively little-known first book on the Spanish Civil War. It would have been less surprising had he referred to its French edition, *L'Espagne ensanglantéé* [Blood-Soaked Spain, 1937], which "sold between 2,000 and 3,000 copies," a figure that "wasn't bad at such an early stage in the war" (Scammell 2009, 130), but the German original must have been much rarer. Matthias Weßel estimates that even the much more successful German edition of the other book mentioned by Világ, *Spanish Testament*, issued by the Swiss Europa Verlag in 1938, must have appeared at most in 5,000-6,000 copies,

12 The article's direct quote from Koestler's article is reproduced from the English original (Koestler 1943, 5). The rest is my own translation from Hungarian.

13 George Orwell (1945) once called the duchess "the pet of the Daily Worker" and alleged that she "lent the considerable weight of her authority to every lie that the Communists happened to be uttering at the moment." In fact, she was also known for some time as the "Red Duchess" although "[n]o one could have been more vociferous in her hatred of Communist oppression" (Masters 2001, 251).

but 3,000 is a much more realistic estimate, of which around 2,000 copies still remained unsold as late as 1944 (Weßel 2021, 125). With *Menschenopfer unerhört* [Unparalleled Human Sacrifice] having been published by "Willi [Münzenberg]'s Éditions du Carrefour" in Paris (Scammell 2009, 130), the number of copies sold was almost certainly only a fraction of Europa's numbers. Therefore, Miklós Világ's reference to Koestler's earlier two Spanish books potentially indicates a very close familiarity with his oeuvre.

It is not surprising, given Koestler's "take-no-prisoners style of argument and proneness to exaggeration in his polemics" (Scammell 2009, 441), that the third category of articles comprises those where it is Koestler's own writing that sparks public debates. The 15 August 1946 issue of *Haladás*, the weekly of the Hungarian Radical Party, prints an overview of new books by Hungarian authors in London. No author is listed, nor even a title, and while enthusiastic about the number of new English books by Hungarians, it merely lists authors and books with as short descriptions as possible. The text ends with the following, rather innocent-looking value judgement: "We left him as last, but he of course stands first, Arthur *Koestler*, who has one novel advertised these days in London, the one entitled *Darkness at Noon*" (*Haladás* 1946, 2). This is all what is about Koestler in the short report, and the remark about Koestler standing first might simply refer to his fame or the amount of his books sold, yet *Szabadság*, a paper that although it styled itself a "democratic daily," was in fact only "nominally multi-party, but [in reality] under strong Communist influence" (Sz. Nagy 2014, 111), cannot let that remark pass. It prints an anonymous reaction on 25 August to *Haladás*'s likewise anonymous article, entitled *Egy persze és ami mögötte van…* [One of Course and What There Is Behind It…]. It is not only the title that is unambiguously over-fixated on that one word:

> Well, it is worth stopping by for a moment at this "of course." Where does this nonchalant choice of words originate? The author of the report – of course! – is unlikely to have been influenced solely by the, truly existing, Koestler-fad in the West to have used such an unsparing formulation; much rather by what is hidden behind Koestler's, the new saint's, success. (*Szabadság* 1946, 2)

While this formulation is clearly promising, the text does not deliver on its own promise and never reveals what the secret of Koestler's success in the West could be. Instead, it seemingly reprints a critical remark voiced by Harold J. Laski in his review of Koestler's *The Yogi and the Commissar* that appeared in the 9 May 1945 issue of *The Manchester Guardian*. The word "seemingly" is warranted because Laski is misquoted. This is what one reads in *Szabadság*: "Professor Lasky [sic!] himself, theoretician of the English Labour Party, who can by no means be charged

with Communist sympathies, writes the following about him in *The Manchester Guardian*: 'Koestler's unforgiveable sin is that he delivers anti-Soviet arguments to the reaction that has run out of arguments…'" (1946, 2). In reality, Laski only mentions the Soviets once in his review, in a radically different context: "Granted Mr. Koestler's experiences, it is not difficult to understand why he should write with furious hatred of the Soviet Union and all its works, with disillusioned anger at the failure of Continental Marxism, and with cynical contempt for the Labour Party, Left intellectuals, and most of the aspects of that tradition in which he grew up" (Laski 1945, 3). Rather than deriding Koestler for being anti-Soviet, he fully understands his position, and even Koestler's criticism of Laski's own party. Nor are the quotation marks in *Szabadság*'s text warranted, as no such sentence appears in the original. The closest formulation is this: "he does not understand that he has now become the unconscious instrument of the very reaction he was so anxious once to destroy" (Laski 1945, 3). Instead of unforgiveable sin, Laski talks of an unconscious mistake arising from a lack of understanding. *Szabadság*'s use of Laski's review is arguably a case of tendentious manipulation, fitting well with the rest of the article, since it also alleges that Koestler "was cordially received in some English circles even before the war because of his anti-Soviet behaviour" (*Szabadság* 1946, 2). This is markedly untrue: Koestler applied for membership in the German Communist Party at the end of 1931, and became a member in early 1932 (Scammell 2009, 82). He stayed a member for six years until "[o]n April 22, 1938, he wrote a brief letter to the Writers' Association party caucus announcing his resignation" (Scammell 2009, 161). Even after leaving the party, Koestler "continued to number party members among his friends, and to remain within the Communist orbit, for at least another two years" (Scammell 2009, 163).

The fourth group of articles can be summarily called reception pieces: they are either reviews of Koestler's texts or provide a panoramic overview of his foreign reception, sometimes as part of the discussion of other Hungarian writers' texts. On 3 March 1946, for example, *Világosság* [Light], the official newspaper of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary digests a review of Koestler's only play, *Twilight Bar* (1945b), which originally appeared in an unidentified issue of *Danubian Reviewi*, which, if one is to trust *Világosság*, was published in New York (Strem 1946, n. p.). My scepticism is not unwarranted: Koestler is referred to as an American author. Interestingly, the paper uses Koestler's play to argue that "we might all inevitably perish […] unless one or another of those idealist visionaries who still believe in the possibility of human happiness *grabs control in the last moment and saves humanity*" (*Világosság* 1946, 6). A striking turn of interpretation for a disillusioned work published by a just as disillusioned Koestler.

Similar to daily papers, literary and political magazines also discuss Koestler's work, initially in a positive context. *Új Idők*, one of the period's most important literary magazines, writes the following in its 10 June 1946 issue:

> A new English essayist, George Orwell, whose name we already know from the columns of *Horizon*, *Tribune*, and other papers, devotes a major essay in his recently published book, entitled *Critical Essays*, to Arthur *Koestler*, a Hungarian-born titan of the English book market. Koestler worked as a reporter of *News Chronicle* in the Spanish Civil War, and he has been roaming the world since, writing his innovative books that have brought him world-wide fame. Orwell juxtaposes him to the living greats of political fiction, *Silone*, *Malraux*, *Salvemini*, *Borkenau*, Victor *Serge*, and based on his five English books, paints him as the archetype of the left-wing continental writer. (G. J. 1946, 344; emphasis in the original)

In fact, Orwell's essay, while certainly discussing Koestler's works in the context of the authors mentioned above, is hardly as enthusiastic and positive as *Új Idők*'s author, listed only under their initials.

Sorsunk [Our Fate], the Pécs-based literary magazine of agrarian writers, likewise provides an overview of the foreign reception of Hungarian literature, this time the French one, and is similarly proud and appreciative of Koestler's efforts and reputation:

> The name and works of the Budapest-born Koestler Artúr are now synonymous with "a man of freedom" seeing the world in its full complexity. His books (one of which, *Le Zéro et l'Infini*, was one of the most successful books in Paris) and articles are the greatest texts of true democratic freedom at present. […] His *Spartacus* [= The Gladiators] has been translated from English to French by the Paris-based Somogy. (Rezek 1947, 234)

As a further example of this generally positive view, Koestler is similarly mentioned as a successful writer in Pál Tábori's essay in the 9 January 1946 issue of the weekly *Új Magyarország* [New Hungary] on the difficulties for Hungarian writers to become visible in Britain (Tábori 1946b, 10).

This enthusiasm about Koestler's successes, and the willingness to discuss his thoughts in earnest, disappears by the end of the period. *Új Idők* provides a revelatory example of the progressive change. While in 1946, the contributor listed as G. J. still calls Koestler a "titan" and his books "innovative" (G. J. 1946, 344), in 1948, another initials-only contributor, S. E., reports briefly on Roger Garaudy's *Une littérature de fossoyeurs* [*Literature of the Graveyard*] (1947). This book would hardly be of much interest in and of itself:

> According to Garaudy, practically all of modern literature, whether in its pessimistic subject matter or in its aesthetic escapism, has come out

> against the joy of the new life. By the end, Garaudy's attack seems to achieve incoherence and approach within hailing distance of hysteria. […] Garaudy's little book at first presents its subject as the state of contemporary fiction, and the novel in particular, but […] he erases altogether the fictional nature of *Darkness at Noon*. That is typical of the attacks on Koestler. Also formulaic was Garaudy's charge that, in contrast to the modulated subtleties of correct Marxist thought, Koestler's gross either-ors were puerile simplisms. (Fleming 2009, 77)

Yet, in the *Új Idők* text, this book is presented as if it were completely objective in its treatment, and his author, whom John V. Fleming calls "an intellectual gadfly" (2009, 75), an absolute authority on literature:

> IT IS ABOUT "LITERARY FALSIFIERS" that Roger *Garaudy*, who belongs amongst the bests of French aesthetes and literary historians with a Marxist worldview, wrote an interesting little book. Whom does Roger Garaudy consider "literary falsifiers"? Jean-Paul Sartre, whom he calls "a false prophet;" François Mauriac, whom he labels "a proclaimer of servitude;" André Malraux, in whom he sees a propagator of the spirit of fascism; and finally, Arthur Koestler, who recently published a whole range of falsities in his works on the Soviet Union and Palestine. (S. E. 1948, 362; emphasis in the original)

Indeed, "Koestler would have had grounds for self-congratulation to have been included in such a group" (Fleming 2009, 75), but there is no hint of irony in the description of this book in *Új Idők*. In a mere two years, Koestler's reputation in the same literary journal has changed from "the archetype of the left-wing continental writer" (G. J. 1946, 344) to that of an anti-Communist liar.

Koestler's writing is similarly critically referenced in Sándor Cseresnyés's review of Aladár Tamás's *Gyanús emberek* [*Suspicious People*] (1947), published in the 27 December issue of *Új Magyarország*. Tamás's book is a novel/memoir of his captivity in Le Vernet Internment Camp. Cseresnyés, who himself was interned in French camps, discusses Koestler's *Scum of the Earth*, albeit without mentioning its title, and contrasts it with Tamás's later text. His view of Koestler's book is decidedly negative, even charging him with conspiracy:

> *Suspicious People* is not the first book written about Le Vernet, the disgrace of the Third Republic. Tamás's bunkmate, *Arthur Koestler*, who is also one of the novel's characters, *likewise wrote a book* about the camp. Koestler, who naturally held a very close and good relation with the Deuxième Bureau – since *he himself* also *worked in a "related profession"* –, only ended up

> in Le Vernet by mistake, and was soon released. Thus, he naturally drew a distorted image of the life of "C-island" since doing so was his aim. Besides, he assessed the anti-fascists of Le Vernet from the same perspective as his friend, the camp's intelligence officer. Therefore, Koestler's book is *false and slanderous*. (Cseresnyés 1947, 10; emphasis in the original)

While alleging that the disillusioned Communist, but still decidedly leftist and most certainly Jewish, Koestler, who documents his escape from the spreading Nazi influence in Vichy France in *Scum of the Earth*, was an undercover French spy is certainly an original and creative albeit baseless charge, the fact remains that Koestler's book is at least discussed in some detail in a major newspaper.

The 15 March 1947 issue of *Kis Újság* [Little Newspaper], the official daily of the Independent Smallholders', Agrarian Workers' and Civic Party, discusses the heated debates emerging in France as a result of the French publication of Koestler's *Darkness at Noon*: *Le Zéro et l'Infini*. Although the anonymous article mentions the lavish praise Koestler's novel received from some critics, it devotes the majority of its attention to summarizing, and also quoting at length, the Communist Georges Mounin's hard-line partisan criticism of the novel (*Kis Újság* 1947, 6). Thus, while it is certainly not very appreciative of Koestler's book, nor could one expect such a treatment from the official newspaper of a party governing the country in coalition with the communists, the novel is certainly discussed at length and in enough detail to raise readers' interest.

Yet, although the tendency in Koestler's changing reputation is clear, it would be a mistake to imagine that by 1948 there was a monolithic media policy of portraying Koestler in negative contexts only. In Lajos Kassák's literary magazine, *Kortárs* [Contemporary], Imre Pán published a short overview of new publications by Hungarian writers abroad and exhibitions by Hungarian painters and sculptors in its 15 March 1948 issue. This brief report contains no judgement of any of the authors and artists mentioned (either positive or negative) and finishes with the sentence: "In testimony that the [human] spirit transcends borders" (Pán 1948, 363).

Finally, the last group of articles does not even concern Koestler directly: his name only appears in them as an act of association by juxtaposition. *Szabadság*, a paper consistently negative in their discussion of anything remotely Koestler-related, published in its 27 June 1948 issue a short article, *Kapard meg az antibolsevista írót, kibújik alóla…* [Scratch the Anti-Bolshevist Writer, and There He Emerges…]. This text presents as breaking news that the author of the anti-Communist bestseller *Out of the Night* (1941), Jan Valtin, published the book under a pseudonym: his real name was Richard Krebs, and he used to be an agent of the Gestapo (*Szabadság* 1948, 4). In reality, these facts hardly count as breaking news in 1948. Valtin/Krebs admitted to this much already at

his hearing on 26 May 1941, seven years earlier, mere months after the book's publication, in front of the House Un-American Activities Committee (Dies et al. 1941, 8480). It is also apparent from his hearing that his Gestapo connections were widely publicized by the Communist Party of the USA years before Valtin even published his book. While the party's strategy thus seems puzzling at first, it makes sense. As Valtin himself mentioned during his hearing, he became at some point a double agent (Fleming 2009, 102). But when he left the German Communist Party out of disillusionment, as a person who knew too much, he became dangerous for the movement:

> Richard Jensen […] had Krebs's passport, and he used it to make a kind of "Wanted" poster with Krebs's photograph and the boldface legend "Beware! Gestapo Agent!" He circulated this worldwide through the ubiquitous Communist sections of seamen's clubs. The Comintern authorities rightly suspected that Krebs would head for America, and they made sure that a version of the poster was published, with commentary, in New York in *The Daily Worker*, in February and March 1938. (Fleming 2009, 126)

Ten years later, *Szabadság* followed the same tactics: it mentioned his involvement in the Gestapo, and withheld that he did that for, and with the approval of, the German Communist Party, hoping thus to discredit whatever he has to say about Communism (Fleming 2009, 101).

This, however, still does not explain what makes this case relevant at all in 1948. The answer can be found in a heavily publicized pair of court cases in France, related to Valtin's book but not involving Valtin himself: his name emerges in both cases because two French politicians, René Cance and Pierre Villon, are independently charged with being former spies based on Valtin's book (Bourgeois 2011, 29–30). This context, however, would remain completely unknown to the reader if it depended only on *Szabadság*. The daily makes absolutely no mention of the court cases and focuses only on discrediting Valtin, and, by extension, Arthur Koestler and others.

At the same time, not all papers choose to stay enigmatic about the French court cases. Imre Kelemen's article, *Herr Kreps* [sic!] *nem bír a "sárkánnyal"* [Herr Krebs Cannot Tackle the "Dragon"], published in the 6 July 1948 issue of *Szabad Nép*, the official daily of the Hungarian Workers' Party, is much more detailed and specific. While Kelemen misspells both the birth name (as Kreps instead of Krebs) and the pseudonym (referring to Valtin as Jean instead of Jan) and incorrectly states that Valtin wrote the book just a few months previously, he at least provides the major outlines of the Cance case correctly, except for insinuating that the case was also against Valtin himself, while it was only against the dailies that used the book as evidence (Kelemen 1948, 2).

Interestingly, both articles mention Koestler in connection with Valtin. In the *Szabadság* article (1948, 4), he is presented as an immoral supporter of the author of *Out of the Night* alongside a few other such personalities. Kelemen (1948, 2) goes even further, suggesting that these people acted as Valtin's character witnesses at court. Given the fact that both Valtin and Koestler were disillusioned former communists who wrote books criticizing communism, Koestler's endorsement for such an author was certainly not impossible. I have not been able, however, to find any evidence whatsoever of him doing so, neither at the time of the publication of the original book in 1941 nor seven years later.[14] It seems more likely that the charge is made-up, and Koestler, Malraux, Daladier and the others, along with Valtin, comprise rather a "wish-list" of the two articles' authors: if only they could all be discredited in a single stroke.

4. Conclusions

In short, then, an in-depth analysis of Koestler's reception in Hungary shows that in the period between the end of the Second World War and the Communist takeover in June 1948, Koestler appears in five distinctly identifiable scenarios in the Hungarian press. In the first one, Koestler is referenced as a journalist, with his articles typically appearing in digests or at times reprinted in translation. Just as frequently, he is quoted as a major thinker or public figure. Since these articles consider him a figure of authority whose name they invoke in support of their own arguments, their debate is not with Koestler himself or what he stands for. The third group, on the contrary, engages in polemics with Koestler's views. This is not too surprising, given not only the progressive Communist takeover of the press in the period but also Koestler's own tendency to polarize public opinion. Yet another group of texts aims to provide Hungarian readers with an overview of the foreign reception of Hungarian literature, including literature produced in exile. And, finally, in the very last category, Koestler is used as a public scapegoat: a famous ex-Communist renegade who can thus be publicly humiliated in connection with various cases and issues, whether or not he himself is related to them or involved in them.

14 There is no mention of either Jan Valtin or his book in any of Koestler's autobiographies (Koestler 1952; 1954; Koestler and Koestler 1984). His name does not appear either in his biographies (Hamilton 1982; Cesarani 1998; Scammell 2009; Saunders 2017; Buckard 2004; Laval 2005; Márton 2006; Körmendy 2007), nor is any such event mentioned in books specifically devoted to anti-Communist fiction otherwise covering both Koestler and Valtin (Fleming 2009; Rohrwasser 1991). Neither does Mamaine Koestler's published correspondence with her twin sister covering exactly this period mention Koestler's alleged involvement in the trial (Koestler, M. 1985). Finally, no such claim is made in either of the two extended articles on Jan Valtin's credibility as a historical source: Bourgeois (2011), Margain (2015).

With his own entry in two major encyclopaedias and his name appearing in thirty-one articles published in seventeen different periodicals over a period of four years, in early post-war Hungary, Koestler is hardly the invisible or taboo author one would imagine him to be based on most biographies. On the contrary: he is more visible than before or during the war. Granted, this is a transitional period, years during which Communist power is merely being established. Yet the change observable is hardly that of his name being mentioned progressively less frequently. On the contrary, he is just as much in the public eye towards the end of the period, only his assessment changes from mostly positive to overwhelmingly negative. This could potentially forecast his presence also in the period immediately following this one, the Rákosi era, but no such claim could be made without a similar analysis of Koestler's presence in the Hungarian press between June 1948 and October 1956, the topic of the article planned as a follow-up to the present one.

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The Semiotic Background of the Ineffective Investigation in the Weird Detective Story

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Abstract. The classical detective story is based on a teleological certainty offered by the narrative. In these stories, the detective successfully solves the crime, and the lawful order is restored in an assuring manner, so the closure of the narrative structure does not allow for an open ending in ontological terms. However, weird fiction and its most recent form, new weird, have a different approach to the teleological givens prescribed by the classical detective story (whodunit). The weird investigation is paradigmatically open-ended, and the detective most often fails to solve the case. The argument develops a distinction between two basic semiotic structures that characterize crime fiction. While all crime fiction is set in an environment that is based on simulation, the classical detective can revert the simulated semiotic structure into signs based on representation, thus the interpretation of the signs results in solving the crime. The weird and new weird stories, on the other hand, defy this representational logic, which is demonstrated by Howard Phillips Lovecraft's weird fiction and Neil Gaiman's new weird short story entitled "A Study in Emerald."

Keywords: crime fiction, simulation, semiotics, weird tale, new weird.

Detective stories abound in various types of investigators who set out to solve a criminal case to reinstate the lawful order disturbed by the crime itself. The work of the detective is the prerequisite of regaining the social or legal stability that is threatened by criminal acts. Whether the detective is a hyper-masculine hard-boiled one, a stereotypical spinster or a more gender-fluid police detective, the aim of the investigation is to re-establish the ontological certainty by epistemological means. Thus, detective stories have a teleological burden on the protagonists who are bound to restore law and find the answers for the mystery. The classical position of the detective is laden with the need of an epistemological assurance that attempts to find and rearrange the threads leading to a crime. However, there is a variety of subgenres that defy this logic. The paper argues that weird

fiction, a subgenre of speculative fiction probably most known for Lovecraft's "weird tale," and its early twenty-first century revival under the umbrella term of "new weird" frequently employ the detective figure to draw attention to the fact that not all mysteries can be solved, that sometimes the attempts to recreate order is doomed because of the information revealed by the investigation. The "weird detective" moves around in a fictional world filled with monsters, aliens, werewolves, vampires, and other supernatural creatures whose existence and actions defy Cartesian logic, thus any investigation based on the human version of ontology and epistemology is in vain and results in existential nihilism. The paper examines the trope of the ineffective detective figure in Howard Phillips Lovecraft's weird fiction and Neil Gaiman's new weird short story, "A Study in Emerald," and contends that this figure inevitably goes against the difference between the semiotic systems of representation and simulation.

The Detective Story and Simulation

The crime scene is a compulsory asset of the classical detective story. The sleuth arrives at the scene, gathers information through the narrative, analyses the clues and comes to a conclusion that finally results in solving the case via "the process of interpretation itself," which is a key component of all crime fiction according to John Scaggs (2005, 4). In semiotic terms, the detective's work is the interpretation of the available signifiers, and the original lawful and ontological order can be reconstructed after successfully finding, examining, and decoding the clues. However, when facing the case for the first time, the investigator only has an array of signs that are based on various models used by the criminal. These models include all the necessary elements of the crime such as motive, technical means of committing the unlawful act, and the possible attempts to mask the clues. In other words, what is taken to be real for the detective is a pre-manufactured array of signs that are based on and generated by an earlier action that needs to be investigated. Thus, the crime scene consists of signs that need to be decoded in order to find the underlying meaning, which is, in an ideal case, the solution to the enigma. However, when the crime scene is first encountered by the detective, this premade set of conditions "is produced from miniaturised units, from matrices, memory banks and command models – and with these it can be reproduced an indefinite number of times" (Baudrillard 1988, 167). The small units of the various clues building up the matrix of the crime and the statements of the witnesses serve as command models for the detective, thus the post-crime reality is constituted by pre-existing models for all the characters of the story including the sleuth, the minor characters, and the witnesses. Solving the case aims at eliminating such instances in the future so that the models

behind the crime would never again generate a similar event. The detective is aware of the fact that the reality of the case "no longer has to be rational, since it is no longer measured against some ideal or negative instance. It is nothing more than operational" (Baudrillard 1988, 167). It is the irrationality of the crime that excludes the ideal of normality, which serves as a counterpoint to the crime. However, the crime is already finished by the time the detective reaches the scene, and the criminal conduct is measured by the means it operated or by the way it was committed resulting in the obvious signs to be investigated. In crime fiction, the harsh reality of the unnatural, "unimaginable" occurrence of crime in the natural normalcy within the boundaries of the fictional ontology of the text renders the crime not belonging to the realm of the "real at all. It is a hyperreal, the product of an irradiating synthesis of combinatory models in a hyperspace without atmosphere" (Baudrillard 1988, 167). As all the clues found at the scene are based on models that are results of the previous action of the culprit, the crime scene turns to be a hyperreal set of signs that lack the surrounding context or atmosphere in which these very signs make sense.

The hyperreal signs of the crime scene are governed by the signification process of simulation that turns reality into hyperreality, a model-based reality which is prefabricated by the criminal and perceived by the sleuth. Therefore, the reality of the crime is replaced by the hyperreality of the criminal act, in which the signs (clues) can only be decoded by the extraordinary knowledge or talent of the investigator. Two different semiotic systems clash in the case of the crime scene: first, representation, in which signifiers can be interpreted, resulting in signified or referents, and, second, simulation that consists of simulacra, i.e. self-referential signs.

> So it is with simulation, insofar as it is opposed to representation. Representation starts from the principle that the sign and the real are equivalent (even if this equivalence is Utopian, it is a fundamental axiom). Conversely, simulation starts from the Utopia of this principle of equivalence, from the radical negation of the sign as value, from the sign as reversion and death sentence of every reference. Whereas representation tries to absorb simulation by interpreting it as false representation, simulation envelops the whole edifice of representation as itself a simulacrum. (Baudrillard 1988, 170)

As representation stands for the finished decoding process of the successful detective's work, simulation evokes the ongoing progress of investigation or an impossible case, a perfect crime that cannot be resolved. The classical detective of the whodunit has the capacity of finding the right interpretations of the clues so that the self-referential simulacrum, the simulated and imploded sign compressing

the signified and the referent can be decoded into the Saussurean sign based on the arbitrariness of equivalence between the signifier and its meaning.

In Arthur Conan Doyle's novel, *A Study in Scarlet*, the crime scene is a reality that Sherlock Holmes needs to take for granted, while the crime scene is full of signs that cannot be interpreted without finding the underlying models, for example, the motive, spatial characteristics, or the way the murder was committed. Consequently, the simulated hyperreal setting, for example, the crime scene itself has to be decoded via the means of representation in order to find the models that will finally result in the solution to the case.

> Models no longer constitute an imaginary domain with reference to the real; they are, themselves, an apprehension of the real, and thus leave no room for any fictional extrapolation – they are immanent, and therefore leave no room for any kind of transcendentalism. The stage is now set for simulation, in the cybernetic sense of the word – that is to say, for all kinds of manipulation of these models (hypothetical scenarios, the creation of simulated situations, etc.), but now nothing distinguishes this management-manipulation from the real itself. (Baudrillard 1991, 310)

The detective's work is to turn simulation back into representation so that the self-referential, imploded sign of the simulacrum can be reverted into the signifier/signified binary pair that will churn out the solution to the crime. The simulacrum short-circuits the extreme poles of the signifier and the signified, and "this confusion of the fact with its model […] is what each time allows for all the possible interpretations, even the most contradictory" (Baudrillard 1988, 175). The resulting implosion of the two poles of the sign brings along with itself the collapse of the binary into the self-referential simulacrum that no longer has a double nature based on surface and depth. In Doyle's *A Study in Scarlet*, the simulacrum of the crime scene that Holmes investigates is a simulated hyperreal that is based on the models set by the murderer, Jefferson. The clues left behind – "Rache" written on the wall in blood, footprints leading to the house in mud, the smell of the corpse – are the results of the models employed and utilized by the murderer. The crime scene is a hyperreal space or territory that has lost its reference, and it is Holmes's extraordinary talents and system of deduction that can crack the simulated spatial arrangement of the scene.

The simulated nature of the crime scene is an essential generic feature, thus the semiotic core of simulation envelopes practically all the various forms of crime fiction, e.g. the whodunit, hard-boiled detective fiction, police procedural, etc. As the investigation aims at the interpretation of the simulacra, the entire investigative process is based on finding the pre-existing models of the crime and reconstructing the missing story. In the traditional detective narrative, the explanation of the

crime is an essential component, thus the clues can be successfully interpreted and traced back to find a solution to the case. However, this process is based on the binary semiotic logic of representation, which is in stark contrast to the simulated crime scene. "Simulation is no longer that of a territory, a referential being or a substance. It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal" (Baudrillard 1988, 166). The deeds of the criminal constitute a range of models that build up the enigma of the crime itself. This enigma is rooted in hyperreality because the models are hidden for the spectator, and they remain disclosed in unresolved cases. The sleuth faces the hyperreal in the form of the simulated crime scene and needs to transform the simulacrum back into the binary logic of representation to gain a profound insight into the ontological background of the crime, where the signifiers and the signified can be clearly distinguished.

The simulacrum dissolves the binary of representation in both the diegetic and mimetic senses, as it liquefies the boundaries between the sign (signifier) and its referent (signified). As a result, the simulacrum takes over reality, and thus simulation becomes the prevalent mode of signification, while representation is reduced into a special subcategory of simulation (Baudrillard 1988, 170). The comparison of the classical and weird detective's possibilities to interpret the case and find a solution reveals the difference between the basic semiotic strategies underlying the classic and weird detective story. In the whodunit, clues constitute the semiotic basis of solving the puzzle by locating the meaning of the signifiers. Holmes's special interpretation skills enable him to arrive at a solution that is inaccessible to the institutionalized police – in Holmes's ironic words, "Gregson, Lestrade and Co." – or the general reading public. The second chapter of *A Study in Scarlet*, entitled "Science of Deduction", clearly indicates that Holmes is fully aware of how signification endows the sign with a referent and how interpretation can decode the sign so that the signified or the meaning can be isolated: "By a man's finger nails, by his coat-sleeve, by his boot, by his trouser knees, by the callosities of his forefinger and thumb, by his expression, by his shirt cuffs – by each of these things a man's calling is plainly revealed" (Doyle 2012, 737). Through the interpretation of these model-based signs generated by the criminal, Holmes moves along a logical sequence to arrive at the solution, so the simulated signs of the murder (clues, artefacts, setting, murder scene, the nature of the murder, etc.) can be interpreted, resulting in a logical solution that provides an undisputed and closed reading of the events. This is possible because, as David Geherin argues, "the classical whodunit is predicated upon a benevolent and knowable universe that the sleuth is confident can be forced to surrender a solution to any mystery if one diligently applies the laws of logic" (Geherin 2020, 161). By the extraordinary ability of the detective, the crime scene's hyperreality consisting of simulacra can be reverted to the status of the Saussurean sign where the signifier (clue) and the signified (evidence) can be differentiated and the meaning identified.

Investigation in Weird and New Weird Fiction

The necessity of turning the simulated semiotics of the hyperreal back into representation lies at the heart of the classic detective story. Tanja Välisalo et al. argue that "the crime genre and its settings are typically realistic – or mimetic – and the genre is often teleologically oriented, focusing on crime, investigation and resolution" (Välisalo et al. 2020, 401). This way "all the mysteries will be explained, all the problems solved, and peace and order will return," concludes Phyllis Dorothy James, the author of the Adam Dalgliesh mystery series, in her non-fiction book entitled *Talking about Detective Fiction* (2009, 75). Jesper Gulddal adds that the mystery is revealed by finding a solution to the crime, thus the narrative closure demonstrates that the pieces of the puzzle will finally fall into place in a final, exclusive, logical, and coherent picture sorting out any other interpretive possibilities (Gulddal 2020). To prove this encompassing semiotic practice of the genre, Gulddal employs the metaphor of the maze and likens the chain of clues to Ariadne's thread that enables the teleological operation of the narrative. The teleological revelation at the end of the narrative brings forth the explanation of the textual enigma by means of the interpretation of the signs: "The clue in classic detective fiction epitomises the mystery aspect of the plot while at the same time underwriting the genre's claim that the world is an orderly place that can be read and understood in much the same way as a book" (Gulddal 2020, 199). However, as Martin Edwards remarks, even the Golden Age detective novel was a satiric reaction to the all-knowing sleuth (Edwards 2020, 186). This indicates a turning away from the representation scheme that can crack simulation, because in a need of a renewal, the entire genre sought new ways of realigning the classic set-up of the early twentieth-century history of detective fiction (Zsámba 2021). It seems that when Umberto Eco shifts the semiotic decoding of the sign-function to a "matter of interference," i.e. the matrix of signifiers that have to be explored in order to churn out the semiotic essence of crime fiction (Eco 1976, 224), the referential givens of the classic whodunit themselves are questioned and shifted toward a semiotic structure based on simulation.

The tendency of moving away from representation towards simulation in the semiotics of classic detective fiction is most clearly exemplified by Howard Phillips Lovecraft's weird tale. Although Edgar Allan Poe had an apparent influence on Lovecraft, the Lovecraftian weird tale, especially the stories building up the Cthulhu mythos, counts as the essence of unresolved investigations. Defining the "true weird tale" (Lovecraft 2012, 5), Lovecraft identifies the model of cosmic horror with the invalidity of the laws of nature known and accepted by humans alongside the resulting cognitive chaos. In his volume of essays entitled *Supernatural Horror in Literature*, Lovecraft names the fear of the unknown as "the oldest and strongest emotion of mankind" (Lovecraft 2012, 3). The concept

of reality produced by environmental influences is the basis of human cognition, the fear of the unknowable and the supernatural, which makes the very idea of reality ambiguous (Cisco 2022), is a breeding ground for religion and superstition, fuelled by "an inexplicable dread of outer, unknown forces" (Lovecraft 2012, 5). In Lovecraft's prose, the recurring distortion of the subject's identity due to the religious or superstitious cults is linked to a shift in the social relations of society (Ralickas 2007, 371), based on the destruction of rationality, the total annihilation of logical frameworks: "a malign and particular suspension or defeat of those fixed laws of Nature which are our only safeguard against the assaults of chaos and the daemons of unplumbed space" (Lovecraft 2012, 5). Lovecraft's weird fiction shatters the foundation of the human existentialist approach to make sense of the world, as the human science-based epistemological means that govern the concept of the universe cannot be utilized to interpret and understand the supernatural ontology of demiurgic alien creatures.

After the publication of Lovecraft's stories, the Cthulhu mythos has significantly mutated to become one of the most prolific bestiaries of cosmic horror in popular culture. In this endless rewriting of the myth, which continues today in a variety of media forms, the claustrophobic, suffocating nature of Lovecraft's most successful stories and the recurring element of the texts, the nightmare, play a crucial role: "The repetition and inevitable fatality of the story is strangely alive and well in the work of Derleth and others, and indeed the 'Lovecraftian strategy' [...] persists to this day, and the Cthulhu myth continues to sprawl across the body of Gothic like a diseased but fascinating tumour" (Punter and Byron 2004, 144). The enduring popularity of the creatures of fictional myth may be rooted, among other things, in the fact that godlike aliens rewrite the scientific and rational conception of the universe and confront it with a power that is in fact completely indifferent to the earthly scale. The aliens of the Cthulhu mythos derive their power from the fact that they populate the universe as beings beyond all earthly measure – and beyond the countless monsters of science fiction history –, who typically resist all human-scale concepts and reduce human power to zero. One of the basic premises of Lovecraft's cosmic horror is that the Earth's civilization is at the mercy of a parallel, incomprehensibly powerful force in a shared universe and that this ultimately drives humans mad. Madness, in the Lovecraftian metaphysical scheme, is the only logical and meaningful response to the horrendous and horrific experience of existence (Goho 2009, 12).

The semiotic model of simulation in weird fiction relies on existentialist nihilism and philosophical pessimism. Pessimism has shaped the development of philosophy through a wide range of literary works throughout its parallel and contemporaneous history with philosophy (Sexton 2019, 90), which has unfolded in a wide range of philosophical and artistic disciplines from Heraclitus to Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Arthur Schopenhauer, Søren Kierkegaard, Friedrich Nietzsche,

and Albert Camus. Existential nihilism centres around the themes of the absurdity of existence, the incompatibility of freedom and happiness, the lack of control over human life, and the anxiety caused by the inability to believe in meaning and intelligibility. Similarly, the motto of *The Call of Cthulhu* also draws attention to the hopelessness and insignificance of the human race and, using this as a generating model, considers the following thematic pattern as its foundation:

> Of such great powers or beings there may be conceivably a survival… a survival of a hugely remote period when… consciousness was manifested, perhaps, in shapes and forms long since withdrawn before the tide of advancing humanity… forms of which poetry and legend alone have caught a flying memory and called them gods, monsters, mythical beings of all sorts and kinds… (Lovecraft 2008, 355; ellipsis in the original)

The quote comes from the publicist, novelist, and short story writer Algernon Blackwood, one of the leading authors of weird fiction in the first half of the twentieth century. Blackwood consciously used the thematic and stylistic models and patterns as a governing method in his adapted stories, and he also made his mark in weird fiction, the dominant sub-genre of speculative fiction of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Blackwood's texts redefined the genre's obligatory element, supernatural horror, which is probably best epitomized by the mysterious entities in his novella entitled *The Willows*, highly praised by Lovecraft. With the evolution of weird fiction, the main motif of existential fear remained untouched, but the category of the monster underwent a considerable change by the appearance of tentacled creatures, a characteristic feature of the subgenre, in contrast to its more anthropomorphic or typically humanoid counterparts in science fiction and fantasy (Miéville 2009, 510–516). Around the turn of the millennium, the weird is recovered as "new weird" in texts by Ted Chiang, China Miéville, and Jeff VanderMeer, among many others. According to VanderMeer:

> New Weird relies for its visionary power on a "surrender to the weird" that isn't, for example, hermetically sealed in a haunted house on the moors or in a cave in Antarctica. The "surrender" (or "belief") of the writer can take many forms, some of them even involving the use of postmodern techniques that do not undermine the surface reality of the text. (VanderMeer and VanderMeer 2008, xvi)

New weird echoes the stylistic and generic characteristics of the postmodern through continuous memetic regeneration, borrowing, appropriation, copying, and application (Nyikos 2020, 116), which shows the primary, dominant role of generic models (clichés and patterns), as well as their constant production

and incessant return. Besides fear, anxiety, superhuman presence, and the impossibility of cognition, existential nihilism is one of the most important fundamental models of the Lovecraftian tradition, an indispensable constituent in the survival of the Lovecraftian horror story in a new weird setting.

Weird fiction defies the rules of the classical detective story governed by the representational scheme of a possible and legitimate interpretation of the criminal case. Thomas Heise, drawing on the classic theoretical studies of Howard Haycraft and S. S. Van Dyne, concludes that resolving the criminal case depends on a "purely formal and geometrical" (Heise 2020, 222) structure of logical consequence. "Solving crimes [is] a process of deduction" (Heise 2020, 222), which takes a representational form where signs can be interpreted in a teleological sense. Gulddal adds that the interpretable signs must become "a core value of the genre" and "no clue must be withheld from the reader" (Gulddal 2020, 196) so that the representational process can be clearly observed involving "an ontology in the sense of an understanding of how the world is ordered and how its elements – people, actions, objects – interconnect to form a coherent whole" (Gulddal 2020, 197). Moreover, the possibility of disentangling the threads of the mystery in a clear reading is influenced by the ability to decode the "underlying 'truth' of space" (Heise 2020, 223), which can be cognitively mapped and recognized. Weird fiction, and its early twenty-first-century revival, new weird specialize in denying the representational background of the classical detective narrative. Instead, they employ a platform of simulation that fosters existential nihilism deriving from the impossibility of reading. In contrast with the tenets of the classical detective story, the logical decoding of signs and the method of deduction are doomed to fail, as the investigation has to face an insurmountable and incomprehensible non-human power, an "alien blood" (Hefner 2014, 654), which is an "indicator of things that are far worse than murder" (Hefner 2014, 668). As the final, all-encompassing reading of the case is unattainable for the detective, the case remains unsolved, thus the genre of detective fiction needs to be re-evaluated from the vantage point of a simulation-based semiotics.

Neil Gaiman's Hugo-winning rewriting, or rather, by his own admission, "Lovecraft/Holmes fan fiction" is an amalgam of Doyle's story and the Lovecraftian weird tale that sets out to redefine the representational scheme of the detective story and turn towards simulation. The intertextual play with *A Study in Scarlet* follows a "long-running tendency within crime writing to acknowledge, either obliquely or directly, its own fictional status," in which "metatextual play is common in both bestselling and 'literary' or experimental examples of the genre" (Bernthal 2020, 227). However, "A Study in Emerald" only loosely evokes the Doyle text, and the finished investigation of *A Study in Scarlet* turns out to be an unfinished one in Gaiman's story. The intertextual connection between the two texts is built on the difference between Holmes's supreme deductive skills based

on representation and the simulated setting of the unsuccessful investigation in "A Study in Emerald." From the beginning, Gaiman's story navigates in a metatextuality in which the story "self-referentially call[s] attention to the detectives' own positions as protagonists in detective fiction series, undermining the effect they desire" (Effron 2010, 155). This desired effect in "A Study in Emerald" can be identified with successful investigation, as it is based on the literary heritage of the unerring Holmes figure, but Gaiman's story exchanges the readable and interpretable case for an unsolvable one. The changes in the storyline, characters, and setting are due to the different semiotic approaches the two texts employ. "A Study in Emerald" is told by an unnamed narrator evoking Watson's narrative function in Doyle's novel. The new roommates set out to a crime scene resembling the one in *A Study in Scarlet*, but the word "Rache" is written on the wall in green blood. The pipe-smoking detective, frequently referred to as "my friend," reaches to a halt in the investigation, as it turns out that the killer is a restorationist, who killed the superhuman victim to take revenge for the sufferings the Great Old Ones imposed on humankind in the last seven hundred years since the aliens took control of the planet and rule all of the countries in a form of a monarchical dynasty, including "the Queen of Albion herself, and the Black One of Egypt (in shape almost like a man), followed by the Ancient Goat, Parent to a Thousand, Emperor of all China, and the Czar Unanswerable, and He Who Presides over the New World, and the White Lady of the Antarctic Fastness, and the others" (Gaiman n. y., 6). The killer manages to escape, and the case is not solved, as the detective cannot fight the powerful alien race. Although the culprit escapes, the reader can put together the pieces of information hidden in the narrative, and thus the reading process mirrors the investigation the detective conducts. However, what remains a simulacrum for the detective becomes representation for the reader. The decoding of the identity of the killer is based on information revealed by the narrative, as the narrator makes it clear that the criminal hiding behind the alias "Rache" is aware of the scientific paper the narrator wrote: "I corresponded with you quite profitably two years ago about certain theoretical anomalies in your paper on the Dynamics of an Asteroid" (Gaiman n. y., 8). *The Dynamics of an Asteroid* is a fictional book that appears in Doyle's *The Valley of Fear* written in 1914. In this novel, Holmes refers to this book as the work of his archenemy, Professor James Moriarty. In addition, "A Study in Emerald" ends with the initials of the narrator, from which it can be concluded that the story was most likely composed by Colonel Sebastian Moran, Moriarty's employee. Although there are minor discrepancies – the narrator signs the letter as "S_ M_ Major (Ret'd)" and *The Dynamics of an Asteroid* is mentioned as a book and not a paper in *The Valley of Fear* – between Doyle's fictional universe and Gaiman's story, it seems that the alien-killer culprit "Rache" is Holmes himself. However, the killer manages to escape,

and the investigation does not reach its goal on the diegetic level. Thus, the unfinished search for the culprit has to be ended by those informed readers who are knowledgeable of Doyle's works.

The relocation of Doyle's *A Study in Scarlet* into a weird setting is based on the very notion of the impossibility of interpretation and reading, which defies the rules set by classic detective fiction. In "A Study in Emerald," decoding the clues is impossible for the investigator, as representation enabling the division of the Saussurean sign into signifier and signified does not function. It is impossible to solve the criminal case because the underlying semiotic system of signification is governed by the logic of simulation resulting in a hyperreal setting and self-referential simulacra. The investigation can only be partially concluded on a metadiegetic level by considering the intertextual connections between "A Study in Emerald" and Doyle's Holmes stories. While the "notions of authenticity and believability are cornerstones of the crime genre" (Nilsson 2020, 241), the weird and new weird stories generally employ such supernatural forces that cannot be studied by means of human cognition. The various superhuman creatures in Lovecraft's weird tales and their new weird rewriting of Gaiman's cannot be investigated because the detectives lack the proper cognitive apparatus to understand the workings of supernatural monstrosities. The resulting existential nihilism is generated by the impossibility of finding explicable models behind the simulated crime and its irrational weird ontology, which proves for the weird detective that this "world of mystery is, as a rule, a world of darkness, violence and evil" (Gomel 1995, 346).

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Mediation and Mediators in Carlos Morton's *The Miser of Mexico* and *Trumpus Caesar*

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Abstract. This paper aims towards identifying those protagonists who occupy the position of mediator in the process of decoding the message by uniting detached ideologies in Carlos Morton's *The Miser of Mexico* (1989) and *Trumpus Caesar* (2021). On the level of the narrative, border-resurfacing and its impact on society are presented by anecdote and humour. Jon Yates's 2022 book entitled *Fractured. How We Learn to Live Together* mentions that in order to reconnect divided societies, ideologies, and races, the factor of laughter proves to be the most effective means: "If the person smiled, you knew you had someone in the mood to buy; if not, it was time to move on" (Yates 2022, 17). Slavoj Žižek in his work entitled *Did Somebody Say Totalitarianism? Five Interventions in the (Mis)use of a Notion* argues that humanity can restore communication with the Divine only by the mediated assistance of Jesus Christ, who "must sacrifice himself" (Žižek 2002, 50) in the process. In order to mend broken relationships, Carlos Morton's subjective-participative mediators assume the position of honest advisors, critics, non-judgmental and non-political entities, individual and self-sufficient characters, who by partial or total detachment point out the tragic in the comical. With the help of humour and satire, the playwright's protagonists in the dramas mentioned above captivate audiences by softening critical situations through mutual acceptance and tolerance.

Keywords: border narratives, dramatic mediation, subjective and semi-objective mediators, oracle-mediator.

I. Introduction

This paper focuses on identifying those entities or protagonists with an independent, self-contained existence which occupy the position of mediator in the process of decoding the message concerning dramas by Carlos Morton. It implements the notion of *dramatic mediator* in the context of introducing the

subjective-messianic-active-invested negotiating protagonists in the playwright's dramas: *The Miser of Mexico* (1989) and *Trumpus Caesar* (2021). George Packer's essay *How America Fractured into Four Parts* discusses, among many others, the idea of national identification concerning American culture with a history of self-empowerment and open-minded approach towards a "shared reality" (Packer 2021). According to Packer, identity is based on belief systems, identification, and self-reflection, which invites seriousness and awareness: "That long gaze into the mirror has to end in self-respect or it will swallow us up" (Packer 2021). In order to comprehend the occurring socio-political rupture of the present, one has to understand how a nation considered to be "the shining city on the hill" (Packer 2021) turned into Unjust America in a relatively short period of time culminating in oppression and psychological trauma. Reintegration is only possible through border-resurfacing on the level of the narrative, as Jon Yates's 2022 book entitled *Fractured. How We Learn to Live Together* mentions. In order to reconnect divided societies, ideologies, and races, the ludic factor proves to be the most effective approach. Broken discourse in every form needs a negotiator.

For identifying these mediating entities, I have used Slavoj Žižek's idea concerning the role of Jesus Christ as intermediary between God and Mankind: "in order for humanity to be restored to God, the mediator must sacrifice himself" (Žižek 2002, 50). Following this concept of negotiation and conflict resolution, the opposite poles are supposed to reach consubstantiality by disappearance. The absurdity, however, according to Žižek, lies in the fact that by making this humanly impossible, enormous sacrifice, this divine act might present the problem hindering reconciliation between God and Man: "Christ as mediator between God and humanity is – to put it in today's deconstructionist terms – the condition of possibility and the condition of impossibility between the two: as mediator, he is at the same time the obstacle which prevents the full mediation of the opposed poles" (Žižek 2002, 50).

Carlos Morton's negotiators initiate the individual healing process by inviting protagonists to witness the exact moment and place when their personal, existential rupture happened. These subjective, empathic, messianic arbitrators suggest that change is possible and hope must never be abandoned. His mediators constantly try to modify past history by a humorous, sarcastic quantum leap of events. Due to this fundamental alterity, elements of perception gravitate towards the same goal, and these negotiators can be considered philanthropic actors in close harmony with the protagonist(s), contributing to an external shock of self-awareness, undertaking the itinerary from non-identity to rediscovering themselves. Even if the individual's past actions and their consequences are immutable, his perception concerning the events must radically change in order to heal any caused wounds. It is at the end of the process that the mediating entity is immersed into the shaping of new identities to the extent of identification and self-sacrifice.

II. Mediation and Mediators: Argumentation and Etymology

Mediation is viewed as a process to artistic and personal self-discovery because it involves negotiation between two parties and triggers the acknowledgement of the protagonists' limitations concerning their inability to fundamentally change their past. These negotiators function as stimulating agents, establishing the relationship between cause and effect where the object of change has to recreate these intermediary spaces to re-experience the characters' unmodified past and gain fundamental transformation. Before reaching his noble goal, the negotiator, in these cases, will operate on the temporal systems of memory, family, and death.

Etymologically, the notion of *mediator* enjoyed a vast distribution from medium, counsellor, interlocutor, and interpreter to philanthropist, including contemporary methods of modern digitalization as well as being associated with litigation or divorce cases assisted by a third party. Mediation, according to Joshua Smilovitz, implies "bargaining" (Smilovitz 2008, 2) and empathy, a conflict-detecting and non-directive method first used by Carl Rogers in the nineteenth century. Psychologist Morton Deutsch observes a difference between "destructive" and "constructive conflict" (qtd. in Strasser and Randolph 2004, 141), as it is revealing the flaws of a certain relationship with two possible outcomes: a more harmonious understanding between those involved or permanent estrangement.

The negotiator does not hold any juridical, psychological title; he is mostly impartial aiming towards contributing to the resolution of the conflict by exposing the problem through a philanthropic attitude, theory supported by Angheş Diana-Ionela, who in her doctoral thesis *Medierea în viața socio-politică* [*Mediation in Socio-Political Life*] identifies the important functions of an intermediary as follows: "informatory function (reuniting non-connected parties), tactical and surveillance measures (due to mutual distrust, parties fail to reach an agreement) and connective and networking functions (facilitation by compromise)" (Angheş 2010, 210).

III. Absurd Identity

This study offers a comparative manner to analyse the above-mentioned dramas as well as mediated assistance to direct attention towards social-individual matters such as depression, fear, regrets, prejudice, and their impact on future generations.

Carlos Morton uses theatre to reawaken the past in order to raise awareness. He describes oppressors and the oppressed and uses farce and satire to reach a dramatic effect: "Whether he treats mythical, religious, and social themes and presents human beings in search of liberation there is always a sense of

humor in the character, situation and language" (Lomelí and Shirley 1992, 187). His influence is considered to be Luis Valdēz, the mastermind behind *Teatro Campesino* "founded as the cultural arm of farm workers' union in California (Huerta 2016, 2). It is a working class theatre making a statement, exposing the many problems that plagued their communities" (Lomelí and Shirley 1992, 187). Carlos Morton consciously uses myths of Mexican-American culture with a "sardonic view of humanity and a folkloric interpretation of classic patterns, skillfully employing characteristics of the classical rites to construct a comedy or a tragedy that deals with rituals" (Lomelí and Shirey 1992, 190). The dramatist reconstructs ancient themes and rituals, placing them into a more personalized Chicano context: in this sense, Carlos Morton considers theatre to be not only "a ceremonial activity, but a combination of ritual within a ritual" (Lomelí and Shirley 1992, 190) presenting a new perspective on life and its events.

There are three important factors that the *Teatro Campesino* can be discussed around: historical, socio-political, and certainly artistic ones. Historically, this theatre movement needs to be traced back to the Ancient Mayan concept of "zero" (Valdez 2022, 51) meaning that all individuals need to find their well-decided place in society, arriving into existence with nothing, ending with nothing. This artistic endeavour of "full emptiness and empty fullness" (Valdez 2022, 37) is characterized by a non-violent manner of presentation, spiced with Mexican folk humour in a bilingual environment. The actors were called "*payasos*" (Valdez 2022, 38), or clowns, which would breed a series of misconceptions in the public. Besides not being taken seriously at first, the actors were often considered to have womanizing, homosexual, or even worse tendencies. As the popularity of *Teatro Campesino* grew, it became a weapon, singing in the face of fear and intimidation, artistically employing four stereotypes of characters: the "*Huelgistas*," or the strikers, the "*Patroncito*s," or the growers, the "*Esquiroles*," or the scabs, and the "*Contractistas*," or the labour contractors (Valdez 2022, 40). The plays were called "*actos argumentales*" (Valdez 2022, 41) or simply *actos*, fifteen-minute improvised pieces with or without music, performed mostly in Spanish, influenced by Bertolt Brecht's conception about the provoking of a reaction from its audience. These *actos* shed light upon specific social issues, express peoples' feelings, satirize the opposition, and, most importantly, "show or hint at a solution" (Valdez 2022, 41). Thus, a mediated dramatic form involving ancient myths and ballads has been employed to present the conflict.

Whenever the need of getting a message across is concerned, the arbitrators in Carlos Morton's plays have to sacrifice themselves, becoming a Christ figure of hope and de-traumatization of horrible past events, inviting general acceptance, reclaiming fundamental parts of stolen identity concerning the protagonists. His dramas have an underlying theme: educating people by strengthening their historical, socio-political legitimacy. This matter, seemingly forgotten or neglected

as it may be, urges to be heard and understood even nowadays in a time when George Packer's theory about the first great American narrative of Free America has brought disappointment. Morton's characters deal with the harsh realities through mediators who support their realizations and endeavours precisely because reconciliation is not a painless struggle, but it contributes to spiritual purification. Carlos Morton, as an American citizen with Mexican heritage, most definitely belongs to the category of the disadvantaged for their otherness living on a territory with a multicultural collision somewhat forced upon him. Behind Don Profundo Quequemáfer's constructed identity of power and ambition in the play *The Miser of Mexico* there lies a disappointed, secluded man. Trumpus Caesar in the play bearing the same title becomes a tyrant, a person with distorted morals, seeking recognition and positive feedback for horrible, inhuman deeds. Carlos Morton himself becomes the dramatic mediator for his own, personal struggles, as an educated member of the second great narrative called by Packer Smart America, to complete the steps of self-acceptance in a land called free not only at the surface. In order to successfully graduate this adventure called life, one has to consider the union of body, heart, mind, and spirit, in other words to aim towards a personal spiritual balance and happiness before the popping of "life's fragile bubble" (Valdez 2022, 52).

Individuals joining the *Teatro* were mostly offsprings of farm workers, thus a very low level of literacy can be observed among its members. From a political point of view, this type of theatre was established as a "counter-culture revolution" (Valdez 2022, 6), a reaction supporting the Grape Strike, which took place between 8 September 1965 and 1970 and was a peaceful labour-movement in Delano, California, against the exploitation of farmers. Artistically, producer and playwright Luis Valdez established a theatre "of, by and for the striking farm workers" (Valdez 2022, 37) as well as stated in their mission: "We were the Farm Workers Theatre, as dirt poor as our name, but we had a life-aiming cause" (Valdez 2022, 37). It is without a doubt that *Teatro Campesino* has achieved its goal considering Peter Brooks' respectful acknowledgement concerning its activity as being "a living organic theatre movement […]-[(*their*)] baptism by fire had created an unusual theatre group that had rapidly found its way to precise and practical understanding of the theatre process" (Valdez 2022, 45).

IV. Memory, Family, Annihilation

In order to understand the present, unravelling the past is necessary to comprehend and balance the future. The artistic method that Carlos Morton uses is one triggered by borderline situations when the individual suffers an existential loss and his identity is questioned. Generally, his plays employ a benefactor, a mediator, serving as the *axis mundi* who the protagonists all gravitate around. The places

of these encounters involve bars, gambling caves, restaurants, houses, which become sanctified islands of safety and stability. These subjective-messianic-active-invested negotiators emanate a natural sensation of trust, between mediator and character, which exceeds the realms of humanly acceptable standards. On the other hand, negotiators are the ones placing characters into a void of decisive events. Not being able to see the obvious solutions, protagonists do not entirely manage to quantum-leap their problems, remaining in the absurd situation of never fully resurfacing victoriously despite the acceptance of their issue. In a world where morals are turned upside down, after being granted forgiveness, Morton's characters often celebrate their partial victory by dancing and singing, diminishing the borders between good and evil, renouncing the titles of illegal aliens, being reformed and no longer deformed.

Carlos Morton's drama entitled *The Miser of Mexico*, a play about a father who is conflicted when it comes to choosing between his fortune and the integrity of his family, is based on real historical events. From a socio-political point of view, the play is set in Juarez, just before the Mexican Revolution, which, just like in the case of Don Profundo's decline, resulted in the end of a long dictatorship. In Mexico, this is the political era of establishing a constitutional republic as a result of the widespread dissatisfaction with Porfirio Díaz's actions favouring wealthy landowners and industrialists. Thus, Don Profundo's character mirrors that of Porfirio Díaz's, whose reign was abolished by Emiliano Zapata's bloody attack on the local rural political leaders, the "*cacique*." As a result of these attempts, in the spring of 1911, the revolutionary forces took Ciudad Juárez, forcing Díaz to resign, and declared Madero president. *The Miser of Mexico* presents the entanglements and unusual ties inside the family of Don Profundo Quequemáfer and his children, Clemente and Elisa. The semi-objective-subjective, equally invested mediator pair of this play are Tan-Tan and Fanny. The first arbitrating entity has various qualifications from cook to coachman, functioning as a reliable information vessel between Don Profundo, a deep thinker, and the world around him. Tan-Tan's name has a duality: he exposes the problem in a cold, detached manner, being the only trustworthy company for Don Profundo, mirroring him. His provenience, age, family situation are unclear. The interwoven languages of English and Spanish which Tan-Tan mostly uses have a psychological undertone triggering a more intimate context since true, honest, heartfelt feelings are best communicated in our mother tongue:

> You are the butt of a thousand jokes, and your stinginess is legend. One person says you wouldn't lend him a light from your candle to light his cigar, because you were afraid it would lose some of its glow. This one tells the story that you once brought a lawsuit against a neighbor's goat for eating your grass. They say your nose is so big because the air is free. They say you save

> your spittle, so you can drink it later. Shall I go on? You are the laughingstock of the entire world. They never talk about you except by the name of miser, skinfit, cheapskate, *codo*, *tacaño y mezquino*. (Morton 1992, 130)

In writing the play, Carlos Morton was influenced by Jean Baptiste Poquelin's, or, more prominently, Molière's *The Miser*, which, according to the playwright himself, qualifies as a comedy, a literary genre not very famous in the seventeenth century. The written form of the play has also been different from public expectations regarding a dramatic literary work: "the public did not take to the play because it was written not in verse but in prose" (Molière 2000, 181). Another similarity that Morton's *The Miser of Mexico* and Molière's *The Miser* share is the comic elements that the servants as mediators contribute to the general atmosphere of the plays in question: "Comic servants can see what their master cannot" (Molière 2000, 182). In Molière's *The Miser*, there are multiple arbitrating protagonists. One of these mediators is Valère, who nurtures affectionate feelings for Élise, the daughter of the miser Harpagon. I personally named him a *Machiavellian oracle-mediator* due to the fact that he can influence and manipulate the characters' attitude by providing them with the required fake care and attention: "I find the best way to get on the right side of people is to pretend to fall in with their view of things, agree with their principles, encourage their foibles and applaud whatever they do" (Molière 2000, 185). He manages to gain the trust of Harpagon using his technique: "I'm lucky to have a man like him in my service" (Molière 2000, 200) to an extent of him acquiring "full parental authority" (Molière 2000, 199) over Élise. Valère is the gallant knight in shining armour who has previously saved Élise from drowning and whose provenience is a mystery until the end of the play when indeed his actions give him justice.

The miser's identity is also hidden at the beginning of the play. The spectator only receives indirect descriptions regarding his persona. La Flèche's words concerning Harpagon, the momentarily indirect protagonist, offer a detailed characterization of him: "I never came across anyone nastier than this bad-tempered old man, if you asked me, I'd say he is the very devil" (Molière 2000, 188). He further completes his description as follows: "And how the devil do you think anybody could ever pinch anything of yours? Is it likely you'll ever be robbed since you keep everything under lock and key and stand guard day and night?" (Molière 2000, 188). Harpagon's stinginess is further humorously elaborated by La Flèche:

> Of all human beings, our Mr. Harpagon is the least human being of the lot. Of all mortal men, he's the hardest, the tightest-fisted mortal man there is. There is no service you can do that would make him grateful enough to put his hand in his pocket. Praise, compliments, kindly cordial words,

> yes: plenty of those. But money? Forget it! You can gain his approval, be in his good books, but you'll get nothing out of that dry old stick. He hates the word "giving" so much that he won't even give you a "good morning." (Molière 2000, 206)

Furthermore, he also mentions certain distinguishable physical characteristics of the miser having "prying eyes" (Molière 2000, 188) and "forever snooping" (Molière 2000, 188) around.

Tan-Tan's informatory, less tactical interventions and somewhat self-imposed emotional detachment in describing Don Profundo Quequemáfer are inspired by Molière's Harpagon characterization of semi-objective mediator Maítre Jacques, who similarly to Morton's Tan-Tan serves multiple functions at the miser's household. In fact, placing the two mediating descriptions side by side one would obtain the complete picture of *The Miser* in general. Here is Maítre Jacques's testimony about Harpagon:

> Since you will have it sir, I'll tell you straight – you're a laughing stock everywhere. We get bombarded on all sides with jokes about you. There's nothing makes people happier than laying into you and telling stories about how mean you are. According to one tale, you have special calendars printed twice the number of fast days and vigils on them so you can save money by making everybody in your house abstain more often. Another says you'll always have a quarrel to pick with your servants on quarter-days or when they're leaving your service, just so you can have an excuse for not giving them anything. According to one chap, you once had the law on a neighbor's cat for eating up the leftovers from a leg of mutton. Another reckons you were caught one night stealing oats from your own horses and says that your coachman, the one before me, gave you a damn good hiding in the dark that you never said anything about. What more can I say? We can't poke our nose out of doors without hearing you being put through the mincer. You're a figure of fun, a bye-word for everybody and no one refers to you by your name: they all call you a miser, a cheap skate, a skinfit, a tight-fisted old shark. (Molière 2000, 218)

Tan-Tan and Maítre Jacques bear similarities with Shakespearian protagonists as well. They resemble Puck in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, presenting facts in a ludic way. By living outside this *axis mundi*, this centre and focal point, their partial attachment makes them perfect negotiators, working towards the heart of the family machine. If Tan-Tan in Carlos Morton's play was the detached semi-objective mediator, Fanny can be considered his subjective counterpart. She is extremely involved in the outcome of events, slightly modifying, "softening" the

general message. As the tactical, empathic, participative aunt of Mariana, a beautiful girl in love with Clemente, Fanny's behaviour exhibits care and attachment with the tendency to adjust the reflector according to the situation: "Mariana (*aside*): What a beast!" (Morton 1992, 132). Fanny: "It's just that she is overcome by your noble visage. Besides, good girls aren't supposed to display what their heart feels!" (Morton 1992, 133). In some cases, Fanny intervenes without being asked, she is the co-creator of events: "She says you cut quite a handsome figure" (Morton 1992, 133). Morton's *The Miser of Mexico* and Molière's *The Miser* share a mediator-protagonist in the person of Fanny, who in Morton's play is witty, chatty, but also a wise servant. Her mirror image, transgressing between dramas and ages, is Frosine, who in Molière's play is referred to as a "go-between" (Molière 2000, 182), suggesting a somewhat mysterious provenience, which in itself resumes her role as a subjective-involved arbitrator with the special gift for "arranging marriages" (Molière 2000, 208). As yet another Machiavellian character, she has a manipulative nature of telling interlocutors what they desire to hear. Despite her initial reaction upon meeting Harpagon, she addresses him in the following manner: "Goodness me, how well you're looking – the picture of health" (Molière 2000, 207), even going further by adding that he was in his "prime of life" (Molière 2000, 207). When presenting Marianne's modest family background to Harpagon, the reader witnesses a mastery of comic vocabulary: "she's been brought up on a very economical diet. Here's a girl used to living on salad and milk, apples and cheese…" (Molière 2000, 209). Frosine is present at Harpagon and Mariane's first official meeting. As the involved, very subjective mediator, she also modifies the message according to the situation at hand. Harpagon's compliments "you are a star" (Molière 2000, 221) and "the loveliest star there is in the company of stars" (Molière 2000, 221) are not returned by Mariane, who utters the following: "Oh, Frosine! What a face!" (Molière 2000, 221). These words in their final, somewhat dignified form become: "She's a little overcome. Young girls are always shy at first to show their feelings" (Molière 2000, 222). Frosine attempts to approach the beauty and the beast of the drama, who gravitate away from each other, as the following example shows: "Mariane (*aside to Frosine*): What a horrible man!" (Molière 2000, 222). Due to a purposefully erroneous reception of the initial message, Harpagon relies on Frosine to mediate the information that HE wants to hear. The end product is as follows: "She said she thinks you're wonderful" (Molière 2000, 222). Mariane's radical refusal of Harpagon, exclaiming "What a beast!" (Molière 2000, 222), is naturally also "edited" by Frosine, turning into very "gratifying feelings" (Molière 2000, 222) for the interlocutor.

Both plays end with the acceptance of ones' fate rendering no plausible solution. Both misers fade away into their indecision about which modality of affection to prefer: the love of family or the almost sickly affection for money and power. Morton's Don Profundo remains alone, while his loved ones are murdered or

have left him, and Molière's Harpagon finds comfort in counting his money in his solace: "And I'll go back and see my lovely money-box again" (Molière 2000, 251).

The dangers of social and financial power are further discussed by Carlos Morton, as he places Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* in a postmodern setting in his play *Trumpus Caesar*. Similar to Julius Caesar's tyrannical behaviour pushing ancient Rome towards tragedy, Carlos Morton considers former American President Donald Trump, alias the Orange Ogre's regime between 2017 and 2021 to have had equally devastating consequences. His play *Trumpus Caesar* opens with describing a country on the brink of a civil war, without moral values and a leader encouraging political turmoil and social, spiritual demoralization. *Trumpus Caesar* is a dramatic text of the three Americas mentioned by Packer; at the same time, it is an obvious adaptation of the classical political and social patterns depicted by Molière and Shakespeare. After a considerable estrangement from true human values, the resulting fraction, due to oppression and *psychological* trauma, would need a solution in the form of a possible forgiveness.

Carlos Morton's drama *Trumpus Caesar* addresses these past issues, when Rome-America was safe and whole under the protecting arms of moral integrity. Behind the perfect façade, citizens suffered from lack of employment, which inevitably triggered lack of security and mistrust in church, education, finances, and the media. The flourishing of small businesses brought along the sinking of the working class. The general atmosphere in Morton's drama mirrors the First Great American narrative mentioned by Packer about a Free America with the idea that anger and despair lead to irresponsible leadership which, instead of building up, diminishes socio-moral values.

At the beginning of the play, Trumpus is presented as an "overly ambitious ruler" (Morton 2021, 1), who alongside his Chorus of Trumpets makes up the semi-objective mediating entities reflecting one another's actions. The choir, being an ancient Greek influence, functions as commentator of events "acting as a bridge between scenes" (Morton 2021, 1). In the prelude, Trumpus is characterized as being: "a toy of the big boys" or a "thug with an orange mug" (Morton 2021, 1). As newly elected Council of Rome, Trumpus orders to ban Muslims and Hispanic people and to build a wall against the invasion of foreign nations, added to which are the personal cult and praise, all of these elements contradicting the Free American values preached by his forefathers. The symbolic political failure of Trumpus is foreseen as he and his wife Malpurnia are entering a "descending escalator" (Morton 2021, 3), a scene followed by yet another objective-factual intervention of the choir stating that Trumpus has clearly not risen up to the people's expectations regarding his competence in leadership. Simultaneously to these events, young, educated female protagonists enter the equation such as an intelligent woman called Kamala, a direct allusion to American Vice-President Kamala Harris, who as "the woman of the hour" (Morton 2021, 49) represents

the Second Narrative described by George Packer as the Smart America. Kamala is holding multiple diplomas, passes on her values based on "meritocracy" (Packer 2021), a term used to denote material gain according to work effort, to her children, which eventually leads to the presence of further malefic circles of "institutions with higher walls, and the gate is harder to open" (Packer 2021), producing exhausted, boasting yet humiliated future generations.

Trumpus and Vlad Putus's strong connection is emphasized by them both entering the country-yard at Caesar's Palace on a white horse. The linguistic humour and ludic exchange of ideas between the two great leaders is a direct allusion to their success: they are both great entertainers, wonderful showmen, which Rome-America seemed to lack after the September 11 events and the 2008 financial crisis, not to mention centuries of segregation and migration. Their intimate relationship counting many "Golden Showers" (Morton 2021, 17), as well as a "fraternal socialist kiss" (Morton 2021, 17) culminates in the mastery of language. Morton presents the ways in which these characters tease each other: Trumpus considers Vlad to be his "Evil Prince" (Morton 2021, 16) and Vlad Putus calls the emperor "Trumpie" (Morton 2021, 16) or "Darling" (Morton 2021, 43). Vlad Putus is the only protagonist in the drama Trumpus Caesar proposes his alliance to: "What if we build a Trumpus Tower on the River Don?" (Morton 2021, 17), to which his interlocutor replies: "Don ... know. But don't worry we make a deal, Trumpus, you The Man..." (Morton 2021, 17). At this point, Trumpus embraces the idea of connecting to another political power as a sign of reintegration, but only to suit his own interests.

Melpurnia's presence as the subjective-messianic-actively invested, involved mediator is obvious: by putting her reputation multiple times on the line for Trumpus, and compromising for wealth, she has gained a deeper, more spiritual insight into her husband's affairs. Melpurnia is the active counterpart of passive Trumpus, totally submerging herself into the issue at hand. She acts, talks, and sees more, while her partner focuses on less important problems, ignoring the red flags presented by her. Melpurnia's lucid description of her dream about Trumpus's downfall is remembered by the latter as the events described in it slowly become reality for the emperor:

> Thrice I have cried out in my sleep: He proclaimed himself Emperor! Help, no! They murder Trumpus! [...] Husband, must ominous omens / The sun rose not in the sky, but sneaked upwards like a snake / Like a guilty thief afraid to show its face. / The once proud flaming orb / Blushed like a faint light bulb in the smoggy heavens [...] Once blue sparkling lakes are sprouting algae, / Rivers turning murky brown, / The Gulf Coast snaked with oil. (Morton 2021, 19)

The Third Narrative described by Packer is related to The Real America, a country that seemingly embraces the weak and the fallen in a time of crisis because when political venom is administered to its citizens, they trust in the holy providence, at the same time being hostile to the outsiders with a non-white Christian background. Real America resembles a melting pot of nations, where the *pure white* individuals consider themselves the elite: "The village can fix their own boilers, and they go out of their way to help a neighbor in a jam. A new face on the street will draw immediate attention and suspicion" (Packer 2021). Trumpus's values and integrity are questioned when the "horrible plague" (Packer 2021), the Kung Flu is cast upon Rome, which is a direct allusion to COVID-19. Under these circumstances, Morton uses a Shakespearian twist presenting the ghost of Fredus Trumpus, the emperor's father. Trumpus can be considered a postmodern Hamlet with similar passivity as his literary ancestor. He refuses to wear a mask in public and instead of listening to science and inventing a possible cure for the horrible disease, he diverts his attention towards the stock market because, as he claims: "Sick, dead people are really making me look bad" (Morton 2021, 53). In these times of Trump-Trumpus's dictatorship, Clara Barton, "a government clerk" (Packer 2021), brought medical supplies during the COVID-19 pandemic claiming the extreme vulnerability of American citizens and the responsibility to act on their behalf. Fredus Trumpus, the indirect mediating entity, in agreement with his late wife, calls Trumpus an "idiot with zero common sense" (Morton 2021, 46) and a disastrous individual. He teaches his son never to admit being wrong and describes him as a "Dumkopf" (Morton 2021, 47), which leads to Trumpus's ultimate insult against Brutus and his political allies led by Kamala: "We don't want people from shit hole countries" (Morton 2021, 51), also preparing his downfall, as stated by Kamala's reply: "Your backward ways will do you in, / The cause of freedom is sure to win!" (Morton 2021, 51).

After Trumpus having received the positive result for his COVID test, it would appear that divine justice is served at the end of the play, not punishing the anti-hero but just acknowledging his human shortcomings and hopeful demeanour in the future. His transformation into a piñata as well as his literal falling apart suggest that his character traits are eliminated and this reborn character is being provoked to embrace a new form of existence with the promise that the fourth chapter in American history would be a just one.

V. Conclusions

In the present study concerning mediation and mediators in the dramatic literary genre, specifically in the case of postmodernist playwright Carlos Morton, I considered Slavoj Žižek's affirmation that arbitration is a divine process where Christ functions as the negotiator between God and humanity which ends with the mediator's disappearance in order for the process to be complete. I hypothesized that Carlos Morton in his plays *The Miser of Mexico* (1989) and *Trumpus Caesar* (2021) presents subjective-messianic-actively invested mediators and complementary semi-objective, indirect, and oracle types of arbitrators who aim towards remaking, fixing character's perception about past events. Thus, history can be replayed but never modified. These advocating types share the feature of being the catalysers of conflict in order to start the painful healing procedure towards self-discovery. Prior to the final realization and the inability of coping with the unchangeable, protagonists apply different methods from denial to refusal and complete rebellion against their situation. Negotiators operate on different temporal-historic-psychological systems to initiate the remedial process by suggestively approaching characters and periods in their existence with the help of memory, family, and final annihilation through empathic, participative, diplomatic, and predictable demeanour. Mediators are neutral agents, objective time and space travellers who appear at existential crises in order for the protagonists to gain fundamental transformation and as the objects of change to recreate these intermediary spaces of change.

The playwright's artistic world has the aim to educate spectators by strengthening their identity and self-reflection, but most importantly the realization that humankind, regardless of skin colour, religion, or other beliefs, needs a general look inward, which is possible with the help of mediation as a painful itinerary worth undertaking for the joy of spiritual purification. He is one of the playwrights whose artistic contribution is yet another manifesto that "only by claiming their own histories can the indigenous people of America begin to reclaim the legitimacy of their own evolution, stolen or obscured by 500 years of colonization" (Valdez 2022, 47).

I further hypothesised that in order to solve the existential problems, mediators appear exactly at the point when individual integrity is questioned, reuniting the broken pieces in the protagonists' lives. *The Miser of Mexico* and *Trumpus Caesar* present different types of mediating entities as humorous sources in Carlos Morton's plays, closing the existential cycle of life by depicting the present American society on the brink of senselessness led by unjust representatives mirroring the choices people have made under different motivations. Carlos Morton's tolerant, understanding, positive approach concerning the future is meant to serve as a lesson and a belief in the fact that upcoming generations would produce different, more dignified idols and examples to follow.

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Analogous versus Digital Reading. A Comparative Study

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Abstract. The growing digitalization of our world is not only changing the way we process information but also raises new questions regarding the manner in which we read and comprehend digital texts. The way the digital text structures information is different from how traditional printed texts do it. Therefore, the receiver needs new strategies of text acquisition. It is not the well-known generalities related to the subject that my proposed study intends to regurgitate. Rather, it aims to focus on and attempts to explore some so far mostly ignored or only tangentially (if at all) mentioned aspects of the matter such as: 1) the literary (e.g. fictional) versus non-fiction nature of the digital text; 2) how digital reading culture affects analogue (print) reading culture; 3) a comparative generational view, i.e. similar or diverging features of the above factors, depending on whether the receiver of the text is a Generation X or a Generation Z reader, the former raised on printed books being the product of the "Gutenberg Galaxy," while the latter is shaped both by the Gutenberg but primarily by the "Neumann Galaxy."

Keywords: analogue reading, digital reading, fiction and non-fiction, e-book readers, e-books.

Reading Research

In the digital world, it is still true that only humans can speak, read, and write even if, thanks to artificial intelligence, we can now talk about machine reading, speaking, and writing. The statement "only humans read" is particularly true if we start from the following definition: "reading in a semiotic approach is the deciphering of signs [...] narrowly, the deciphering of a special system of signs, writing. Decoding the written signs, but this is not enough: one must understand what is written. Reading is comprehension, even constant thinking, justification, reasoning" (Adamikné 2006, 18).

If we have defined the obvious (reading), let us do the same with the reader with the help of Mortimer J. Adler and Charles Van Doren's seminal work *How to Read a Book*, which is still valid in many ways: "By 'readers' we mean people who are still accustomed [...] to gain a large share of their information about and their understanding of the world from the written word." Reading requires "keenness of observation, readily available memory, range of imagination, and, of course, an intellect trained in analysis and reflection" (Adler and Van Doren 1972, 3, 14). As for the levels of reading, we are dealing with "analytical" (as opposed to "elementary" and "inspectional" or "skimming" [speed]) reading. The reader is "always intensely active" (Adler and Van Doren 1972, 19 and Part Two): s/he thinks, asks the text questions, expects answers from it, analyses, interprets. S/he is a demanding and thorough reader of literary fiction, because only s/he is capable of analytical reading. For this s/he needs concentration of attention. This reader is not a cassette player, with a play-back function only, who plays back the pre-packaged opinion that has been inserted, "without having had to think" (Adler and Van Doren 1972, 4).

The issue of the future of reading has been addressed by a wide range of disciplines, national and international research, in inter- and multidisciplinary approaches. More than 30 years ago, the International Reading Association (IRA)[1] drew attention to the consequences of the emergence of the digital world: the transformation of the media world and its expected impact on reading, among other things, alongside the rise of the computer (Adamikné 2003, 9). In the three decades since then, however, the issue of reading has become more nuanced and thus more complex owing to the emergence of smart devices and digital platforms as a result of IT developments. Reading and its various interdisciplinary aspects are a cross-generational issue:[2] its role in education, the practice and methodology of teaching reading, the psychological aspects, the sociological dimensions of reading, the relationship between learning and reading, and the related problems of reading comprehension, as well as the impact of the new opportunities/dangers of the digital world on all generations currently living together.

The topic of our paper is derived from these developments: we wish to focus on the difference between analogue (print) and digital reading, with a particular focus on the reception of fiction versus non-fiction / research literature[3] as well as on the generational differences in reception.

1 IRA 6th European Reading Conference: *Is There a Future for Reading?* (31 July – 3 August 1989, Freie Universität). Topics: reading, language, and culture; reading and language awareness; reading in the age of computers.

2 The presentations of the conference "Educating for Reading – Reading for Education," organized by the Hungarian Reading Association and János Neumann University on 28–30 November 2019, present good practices and research results from nursery to university.

3 In the present context, we distinguish between reading scientific literature and reading texts disseminating knowledge. Significant differences between the two reading modes can be

Marshall McLuhan sounded the alarm about the impact of communication technology (what he kept calling "electric technology") on literacy as early as the first half of the 1960s. While being concerned about the decline of book culture, he also points out that the linearity of literacy (the lineal, linear, serial progression of the text on the printed pages) has had an impact on the development of human thought. Therefore, McLuhan continues, the decline of the "Gutenberg Galaxy" may bring with it the decline of human thought. What is more, it could lead to a transformation of our human existence (in a negative sense) if reading declines and is replaced by other activities. The issue of linearity is of particular importance for our topic since, similarly to the way (analogue) texts are printed, one of the essential characteristics of analogue reading is linearity; namely, the linearity of processing the lineal printed text, reading for understanding. Because, due to electronic media and the interactivity of digital reading (text branching, hyperlinks, multimedia), the good reader of today is very different from the good reader of decades ago. From a reading-anthropological point of view, the e-revolution, the emergence of digital information carriers has brought about a far greater change than the printing of books, which was also a revolutionary technical innovation in its time[4] (Tószegi 2009, 2020).

Analogue and Digital Reading

In the context of analogue and digital reading, we need to talk about how the medium of information was changing in different historical periods, with what speed, where this process is going today, and how it is reflected in a generational approach.

Characteristics of the period from the end of the nineteenth century to about the middle of the twentieth century: prevailing print culture; schooling becomes universal; cognition is typically based on personal experience, but reading supplements it with printed information; the advent of radio;[5] young people's entry into the adult world is gradual. In the second half of the twentieth century: the emergence of television; young people gain instant access to the adult world, but there is still some filtering of information. At the dawn of the twenty-first century: the Internet becomes the leading medium; instant access to the adult world, without filtering or regulation (Námetovszky 2010, 4).

observed in terms of digital device use, reception, and different attention states. In other words, we are splitting into two what is, in the reading typology of one of the classics of reading theory, "knowledge-acquiring reading" (Adler and Van Doren 1972, 7).

4 It should be noted that the emergence of hypertext in e-texts has not brought about the radical transformation that some researchers had predicted (Golden 2009).

5 The Adler and Van Doren book was published before the advent of the Internet and digitalization. They saw radio and television as the competitors to reading.

As this brief historical sketch indicates, in addition to the fundamental social and economic-technological changes that have greatly influenced the sociology, philosophy, and psychology of reading, the acceleration of technological change is perhaps the most significant. David L. Ulin puts it this way: it is not the change of technology that is the biggest problem but the technology in which "the information and ideas flare up so quickly that we have no time to assess one before another takes its place" (Ulin 2010, 7). When new technologies replace old ones, the latter live on for a long time, parallel with the former, but quickly losing their economic and cultural power. Electronic media are also constantly repositioning themselves as the flow of e-information absorbs one medium and almost immediately creates another. It usually dissolves the physical form of the former; it divides its content into searchable chunks based on new logic; it adds multimedia elements, annotation and dictionary facilities, thereby changing the way texts are read, experienced, and thus understood. A one-page online text is very similar to a printed one of the same length, but they decidedly differ from a reading point of view. This is because "browsing" a web document requires a different kind of physical activity and sensory stimulus than the traditional "reading" of a printed text (Carr 2014, 118–119). According to the Norwegian literary scholar Anne Mangen, "all forms of reading are multisensory, that is, they affect several senses simultaneously" (Mangen 2008, qtd. in Carr 2014, 119). Mangen calls the relationship between the "material sensory-motor experience of the written work and the cognitive processing of the textual content" a "vital link" (Mangen 2008 – qtd. in Carr 2014, 119).

Specificities of printed texts: 1) realization – the text is present in its full physical volume, in which it is divided into parts, structured, thus helping the reader to discover and understand the logical relationships between the parts; 2) stability – the text takes a definitive form before publication, i.e. it cannot be changed at will; 3) statics – the text may be supplemented by two-dimensional illustrations and pictures, but these help the comprehension and better processing of the text's content, and are in fact illustrative; 4) linearity – printed texts must be read through in order to grasp their content (Zamfirache 2005).

These are the components of the "vital link" then. They play a fundamental role in immersing oneself in the text being read, in understanding it, in activating the state of deep attention that is essential for deep reading. In comparison, electronic texts are characterized by: 1) e-actualization – the text volume is virtual, the reader has to perform exploratory technical activity, i.e. using navigation buttons, scrollbars, and thus the structural layout now creates a link between text elements in a non-textual way (Gonda 2011); 2) instability – the text can be manipulated because of its easily modifiable body; 3) dynamism – multimedia material is also embedded in the text; it can capture and divert attention, and can therefore be a distraction. Carr argues that multimedia text further fragments content and distracts concentration (Carr 2014, 120); 4)

hypertextuality – associative pathways connect individual text sections; the user decides which pathway to follow; a digital text on an electronic interface can take advantage of hypertext; it is multi-centred, networked, open or closed text system in a digital medium, in which elements and nodes of texts are connected by hyperlinks (Zamfirache 2005, 71), that is, hyperlinkedness also means entering an "ecosystem of interruptive technologies" (Doctorow 2009 – qtd. in Carr 2014, 121). We can thus conclude that electronic text features are in no way identifiable with analogue text features, and as such do not represent a "vital link."

Digital text, as a fundamental tool of e-communication, organizes information differently from traditional text and therefore requires new strategies for processing and receiving it (Shmar-Dobler 2003). Browsing a web text, however, is a brain activity, stimulating several brain areas, and this can be interpreted as a positive aspect. Yet, attentiveness functions differently when using an online interface, and digital reading therefore impairs the ability to memorize information, to reflect on what is read, and to internalize the text (Durant and Horava 2015 – qtd. in Koltay 2016). This means that in digital reading, the hyperattention described by Katherine Hayles[6] is prominent, and the deep attention that is essential for text comprehension is relegated to the background. According to Jacob Nielsen (Pernice, Whithenton, and Nielsen 2016), Internet readers do not progress linearly through the text. The acquisition of information from an electronic platform does not require reading in the traditional sense, but rather scanning is a way of describing the manner in which the Internet text is read by the recipient. It is also a question of neuroplasticity. According to Maryanne Wolf's concept of neuroplasticity, the reader's brain circuitry is inherently plastic and is influenced by key environmental factors: what the reader reads (content and genre approach), how the reader reads (print or e-text) and how the text is formatted, what instructions are included (Wolf 2018, 19).

Digital Text as Fiction and Non-Fiction

In the digital space, reading fiction differs in several respects from reading non-fiction (e.g. scientific papers, scholarly texts; i.e. reading for information). When reading literary fiction, imagination is necessary for comprehension,[7] and fiction not only teaches and educates, but it also delights. It conveys experience and

6 Katherine N. Hayles's hyperattention is characterized by rapid shifting of focus between different tasks, predominance of multiple streams of information, high threshold of stimulation, low tolerance for boredom (Hayles 2009, 187–188). According to the creator of the concept, in our constantly changing and multi-focused digital world, we need this ability, and therefore deep and hyperattention need to be "combined," "both need to be cultivated." Alan Jacobs disputes this position and its effectiveness in reading (Jacobs 2011, 105–106).

7 Imagination is necessary for reading both literary and informative texts, but in a different sense.

not concrete knowledge (Adamikné 2006, 336). In Ulin's words, "reading is a journey of discovery, an excavation of the inner world" (Ulin 2010, 13). We should also bear in mind that the "superficial" or "immersive" form of reading in the digital age does not depend in an exclusive way on the nature of the medium (i.e. whether it is a text in print or on screen) but on the "actual purpose" of the activity (Golden 2009, 87), i.e. the purpose for which a text is read. If the purpose of reading fiction is mostly for pleasure, to provide an aesthetic experience, the physical reality of the book, its volume, its immobility cannot be neglected. These contribute to the relaxed atmosphere that is essential for the reception of a literary work. It is something that the e-text (regardless of the medium) is not suitable for (Kerekes and Kiszl 2014). It is as much as to say that the "vital link" components of the printed text support reading fiction as an experience: immersion in the text, comprehension, and the mobilization of imagination.

Drawing on the research results of neurobiologists, psychologists, web developers, and academics in general, Carr also comes to the same conclusion: when uploaded on the Internet, digital texts promote superficial reading and superficial learning, hurried and distracted thinking (Carr 2014, 151). There is actually nothing surprising in this; among the traditional types of reading, this is how reading a text for knowledge, or "knowledge acquisition" works (in general, but not when reading with academic interest and focused attention). Naomi S. Baron devotes a whole book to learning-focused reading of school-aged readers of all ages and categories, from lower school to college (Baron 2021). What is "hurried" and "distracted" reading to Carr, Baron attributes to the multiplicity of digital texts as opposed to print documents.

The difference is manifested in the scanning reading form of digital texts and the different attentional state. Digital texts, in addition to requiring a different strategy in our eye movements when reading them (the Nielsen F-pattern)[8] and because of the embedded hyperlinks, further disperse attention, i.e. perpetuate the hyperattentive state. Thus, the deep attention needed for understanding cannot be activated. If we take, then, the fiction or non-fiction nature of digital texts as determinants of reception, these differences (F-pattern and hyperattention) are fundamental in distinguishing between the two types of text, i.e. print and digital. A digital text is (in principle) suitable for reading a literary work, for understanding it and for absorbing its content if it does not contain hyperlinks and is presented on a medium that is most similar to a printed book, and if it provides the emotional state in which the text "comes through" and touches the reader, thus activating deep attention. Thus, the McLuhan theorem can be

8 According to Jacob Nielsen's F-pattern, when reading on the screen, our eye movement describes a letter F, which means that we read the lines at the top of the page, but only until about the middle, and then only vertically across the left-hand side of the page.

reversed: the message is not the medium itself but the text.[9] And this is where some of the components of the "vital link" make sense again.

On this basis, we would assume that among modern e-devices, the e-book reader fulfils the criteria, as the text on e-sites using e-ink is congenially similar to the printed form (margins, page mirror, pagination, typography, aesthetics). Moreover, they have the realization and linearity of printed text.[10] The emergence and spread of the by now several-generations-old Amazon Kindles, Barnes & Noble Nooks, PocketBooks, tablets, and iPads foresaw a decade ago that e-reading (and here we are thinking specifically of fiction) would inexorably advance and replace print book reading in the foreseeable future.[11]

Yet the digital media revolution has not happened, or is not happening as fast as predicted. In fact, it has produced surprisingly different results. While Amazon initially reported a steep increase in e-book sales (e-books accounted for less than 10% of total sales in 2008, rising to 35% in 2009) and a dynamic growth in the number of e-book readers (1 million devices sold in 2008, 12 million in 2010), this dynamic was broken in the following decade. It is now clear that the e-book revolution has not brought the change that was expected in the first decade of the century. It is due to a number of factors: rapidly changing technologies, device obsolescence, price/value ratio, environmental concerns, business interests and profits, reader attitudes, generational issues, and so on.

These are not insignificant developments, but for the purposes of the present paper we must stick to our narrower, specific topic and focus on the differences between digitalized literary fiction versus the digital text as non-fiction, scientific, professional literature, or a text disseminating knowledge (literary versus informational reading in Baron's terminology). If we start from the assumption that reading literary fiction is linear in its progressive nature, in this sense (and only in this sense) the experience of reading is linear. A digital text is still book-like and can in fact activate deep attention in a way reminiscent of the reflexes of analogue reading. So, an e-device (in this case, an e-book reader) could be used for more than superficial reading: it could be used for seriously grasping and absorbing digital fiction texts. Precisely because of its aforementioned book-like nature, it is modelled on a printed book in form and appearance, with no screen reflection thanks to e-ink; it is, therefore, easy on the eye and also linear. The technical aspect is that the back-up memory allows hundreds of volumes to be stored on a single

9 This is a reference to McLuhan's well-known statement that "the medium is the message," from the opening chapter of his *Understanding Media* (McLuhan 1964, 23–35).

10 E-book readers usually have font size and colour adjustment options, so they do not provide static text. They can be bookmarked and include text highlighting features, but these do not affect the length and linearity of the text.

11 The slowdown in the take-up of e-book readers may also be explained by the fact that Apple launched the iPad (a few years before the Kindle), and the new device already had built-in features that were even more capable of distracting attention.

device, and the battery lasts for weeks without recharging. In other words, all the positives would indicate that the rise of digital reading (in this case, e-fiction) is unstoppable. However, e-book sales statistics (which do not separate fiction from non-fiction, though), after an initial boom (with dynamic sales growth between 2011 and 2013), are now showing a downward trend year after year.

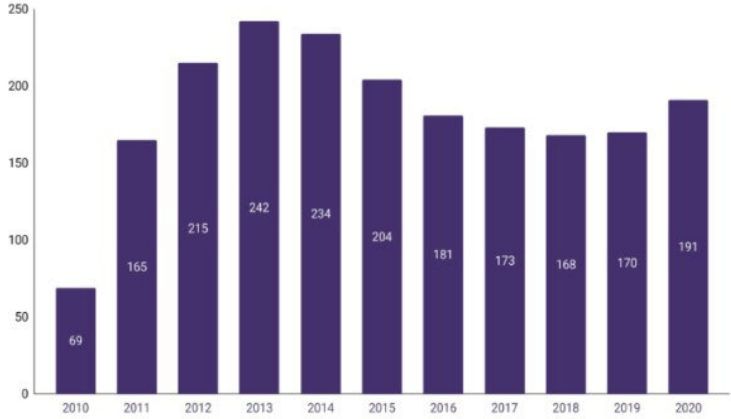

Figure 1. *Number of e-books sold per year (million copies)*[12]

In 2020, the year in which COVID-19 becomes a pandemic, the increase of 12.35% compared with the previous year of 2019 is certainly also due to the pandemic. But what factors could have been operating behind the declining pre-pandemic figures? A possible explanation might be the reader response determinant. If we take reading experience, the anthropomorphic nature of the printed book, the need for deep attention to absorb fiction in a meaningful way, digital media, i.e. the e-devices themselves, still cannot provide the same conditions of reception and reading experience as print books can. Even the most advanced built-in features of e-book readers seem to become counterproductive, precisely because the remaining elements of the "vital link" are gradually disappearing as a result of constant improvements. Increasing convenience functions take precedence over the classic mechanism of reading, thus promoting a predominance of hyperattentiveness. While fiction texts do not contain hyperlinks[13] that lead to distraction, the built-in features (e.g. Amazon's offline

12 Source: E-books sales statistics 2023. *https://wordsrated.com/ebooks-sales-statistics/* (Last accessed 23 July 2023).

13 It should be noted that the presence of hyperlinks in an informative or literary text is particularly beneficial. From an information-seeking point of view, it certainly is. However, the change in attentional state applies here too. Deep attention is required for a deep, meaningful reading of a linear text. Opening embedded links and moving on to another text disrupts this, regardless of the otherwise valuable information benefit.

book search and e-commerce) tempt us to "wander" a little in the web store while interrupting the reading of the text.[14] Or, at any time while reading, you can check, with a single click on "new mail," whether a new message has arrived in your inbox while you are reading. With such phenomena, "recent digital technology is creating a veritable storm of distractions, with the powerful force of B. F. Skinner's 'interruptive reinforcement'" (Jacobs 2011, 82–83).

As for the negative aspect of built-in distractions, it should be noted that they can also have positive effects – when reading literary fiction, for example, or when reading fiction in a foreign language for language-learning purposes. In the latter case, the built-in e-dictionary is an advantage that a printed book cannot compete with. Baron's longitudinal research on digital and analogue reading[15] may support the declining e-book sale figures mentioned above.

Table 1. *Digital vs analogue reading (Baron 2015, 82–85)*

Options	Format	US	Japan	Germany
Schoolwork done using	Hard copy	59%	75%	68%
	Digital screen	41%	25%	32%
Pleasure reading done using	Hard copy	73%	76%	69%
	Digital screen	27%	24%	31%
Long schoolwork text	Prefer hard copy	92%	77%	95%
Long pleasure reading text	Prefer hard copy	85%	74%	88%
If cost were the same, preferred medium for schoolwork	Hard copy	89%	77%	94%
	Digital screen	11%	23%	6%
If cost were the same, preferred medium for pleasure reading	Hard copy	81%	83%	89%
	Digital screen	19%	17%	11%

The target group of her *Words Onscreen* were Generation Z college students. Surprisingly, this generation also prefers analogue to digital reading (for almost all reading intentions and text types). Her findings in the field of pleasure reading support the above arguments in favour of analogue reading. The use of print also dominates in answers to learning-related questions (and reading the literature is prominent in this). Baron's 2021 *How We Read Now*, which targets reading intended for learning and devotes chapters to differences between reading in print versus reading digitally, convincingly argues that synthesising sense-making is more difficult for the digital than for the print reader. No wonder that

14 Please note: Amazon's offerings are not typically the most valuable literary fiction. Light, fun, bestselling literature is widely available, and it is very rare to find evergreen classics.

15 Baron asked American, Japanese, and German university students about their reading habits: whether they typically use print books or digital texts in different situations, for study or leisure.

she closes her Chapter 5 with these "cautionary notes:" a foregrounded work with online texts "risks marginalizing literary reading and longer texts in the school curriculum;" and it "potentially encourages less complex and reflective thinking than reading in print" (Baron 2021).

What are the possible explanations? One would assume that reading and processing literature is much easier in digital format. After all, the instability, dynamism, and complexity of e-texts allow for annotation and highlighting, and embedded hyperlinks as well as the access to additional, supplementary information all facilitate the learning process. On the other hand, deep attention is essential for the processes of comprehension and memorization, but it is almost impossible to activate it in a digital environment, when the reader, Baron maintains, handles multiple sources as opposed to a single printed text; and when readerly memory retains much less as a result, as reading comprehension tests indicate. What we can infer from the above data, however, is that the young generation's preference is for deep attention despite other available options, and this is why they use more print books for learning purposes. At the same time, it is a fact that the most recent literature is typically published in e-format, so that there is no choice between print and e-format in this case. 39% of Baron's respondents print out digital material first and then read it as an analogue text. 55% of students read the material online. So, a fairly high proportion of respondents opt for analogue text in this area too.

The Generational View[16]

Both interview subjects are literate (in fact, college-degree holder) people. The Generation X representative is a university teacher, educated in a pre-Internet world, but has excellent digital skills and follows the latest trends in terms of device use. She typically reads academic literature, but reading fiction for pleasure and relaxation[17] plays a major role in her life. The Generation Z interviewee is a PhD student with a high level of digital literacy. Her learning and information

16 Two comparative in-depth interviews with a Generation X (female 55) and a Generation Z (female 22) subject. We are aware of the limitations of in-depth interviews and plan to conduct focus-group interviews on this topic in the future.

17 In this case, it is a reading motivation category. Alan Jacobs, who is rather critical of the Adler and Van Doren monograph, does adopt the three categories of reading purpose and motivation of the latter authors: reading for information, reading for understanding (of life and the world), and reading for entertainment (Adler and Van Doren 1972, 7–10). However, Jacobs finds one category insufficient: instead of "reading for entertainment," he introduces the notion of "reading for pleasure" (Jacobs 2011, 98). This fits well with his recurrent basic idea that real reading is "reading at whim" (Jacobs 2011, 15). In a way, we must also defend Adler and Van Doren because for them "reading for pleasure" is not synonymous with "reading for the pleasure of reading." It means the undemanding reading of light, undemanding texts (Adler and Van Doren 1972, 10).

acquisition strategies are fundamentally linked to the digital space; moreover, her research focuses on the various contexts of digital space. She reads a considerable amount of the literature, and her reading of literary fiction is also outstanding.[18]

1. What do you think about reading and how do you spend your free time?

X: I consider reading to be part of my life. Not because it is intrinsic to my profession but because I need the emotional and intellectual relaxation that reading gives me. I was brought up in the world of printed books, where screen culture had not yet played an overwhelming role. In my childhood, books were a precious gift. We treasured them and typically read them. In my spare time, I still (unsurprisingly) prefer to read. Strictly fiction. My book-buying habits are related to this: I put on the shelf every book I buy with the determination to read it during my next holiday. I consider reading to be an essential human activity and cannot give up the pleasure of reading. I don't question the importance of visuality and do not wage a spectacular war against screen and Internet culture, but I am convinced that understanding the world is inconceivable without reading as a cognitive activity.

Z: Reading is essential for me, as I am currently studying. I read a lot of required literary fiction during my undergraduate and postgraduate years at the university and did not experience difficulty doing it. I love reading. But in my free time I prefer to watch films, listen to podcasts and music. I also read fiction, but only if I get my hands on a really good book.

2. How and in what form do you read the literature? What kind of note-taking do you do?

X: Reading the literature is very much part of my profession. In our digital, world it is typically e-formatted, so I have access to the latest literature almost exclusively in e-form. The first time I read it, I quickly check whether it contains information that is essential to me. If it does, I print it out and read it in hard copy, taking notes, underlining, and highlighting the most important ideas; in other words, I process the text. I download the e-version to my external winchester. Typically, everything is downloaded, with the materials stored in a logical folder structure. Still, when I need a long-forgotten study, I find it difficult to locate among the hundreds of files and almost always pull the printed, processed version out of the drawer.

Z: I encounter the literature in e-form. I borrow the handbooks of the definitive literature in my field from the library and make notes. I cannot afford buying them, but if I could, I would get them. I download the digital material, read it and print only the parts that are essential for me. When I have processed them, I throw the printed pages away but keep the e-form. I take notes on a computer, but I also use a notebook.

18 The in-depth interview consisted of twenty questions. Only responses intrinsically related to our topic are presented in this paper.

3. What e-tools do you have? How often and what do you typically use them for?

X: I have almost every tool available on the market. It is true that some of them are quite old. At work, I use a desktop and a laptop (often simultaneously), at home I have two laptops. I have an Apple iPad, a Kindle Paperwhite e-book reader, and two Android smartphones. Typically, I work on laptops (proofreading papers, writing research papers), I conduct my e-mail correspondence and send short messages using my phone. I also read the daily news on my phone, almost always visiting the same portals. If I don't like an article, I jump to the next topic after the first few lines. I carry my iPad along when I travel. As I'm on the move a lot, I also work on the train; if I need an e-device, I prefer to use the iPad, as it has a larger screen and a better navigation interface. I bought a Kindle Whitepaper ten years ago and had high hopes regarding it. I was convinced that reading the literature would continue to be done on this device so that I would not have to carry around heavy reference books. This did not turn out to be the case. My initial enthusiasm waned, the built-in features (highlighting, annotation, content search) were not satisfactory for me. Slowly, I had to realize that I would eventually buy a printed version of the textbook that I had bought in e-format. At first, I downloaded a lot of free English-language so-called "belles-lettres" from Amazon. I read a few of them and found them very effective from a language-learning point of view thanks to the built-in monolingual dictionary. Today, hundreds of e-books are available on Kindle, but I haven't turned my reader on for the last few years. In fact, I cherish the illusion that I'll just take the Kindle on holiday so as not to have to carry several volumes of printed books with me. I had to admit: I can't read hundreds of books in ten days on holiday anyway, especially if the Amazon selection doesn't suit my literary taste, doesn't offer me a valuable literary experience, and I don't enjoy reading as much as I would if I were reading a printed book.

Z: I have a laptop and an Android smartphone. I do everything on these devices. I find it completely unnecessary to buy other devices. I use office software on my laptop, everything else I do on my phone. If I download material from a database, I typically read it on the laptop because the smartphone screen is not suitable for reading long texts, not to mention the circumstance that I almost always interrupt my text reading and surf the web a bit. This is also typical of my use of the laptop. I don't own an e-book reader and don't intend to buy one in the future. It doesn't do more than a smartphone, it costs a lot, and an e-book is not cheaper than the printed version. If for some reason I do buy an e-book, I read it on my laptop.

4. Do you have a library at home? How often do you buy print or e-books?

X: Yes, I have a very large library. I buy print books regularly and my gifts to others are also books. I don't buy e-books at all, and now I don't download them any more even if I can get them for free.

Z: I have a small library of my own, and yes, when I can afford it, I like to buy print books regularly.

The responses of the in-depth interviews with Hungarian interviewees correlate on several points with the international research findings cited above, overriding the basic assumptions of generational theories in several respects. Starting from the focal points of the present discussion, i.e. the nature of the digital text as a reading medium and the impact of digital reading culture on analogue (print) reading culture, the following transpires. The Generation X interviewee, who is a digital immigrant, does not show a different pattern in terms of the use of technical tools and digital competences than the Generation Z representative of the digital natives. Their information-seeking practices differ minimally, both preferring analogue reading, even if there are fundamental differences in their use of digital tools. Similarly to Baron's research findings, our interviewees also process e-texts in print for learning and research purposes and prefer traditional books for reading literary fiction. All in all, therefore, it can be concluded that there is no clearly demonstrable generation gap or significant difference (between our interviewees) regarding the research questions. At the level of cognitive processes, irrespective of the nature of the text (i.e. whether it is literary fiction or non-fiction / research text), analogue reading is preferred.

Conclusions

The literature cited, the empirical data in the figures above, and the in-depth interview responses – in full awareness of the circumstance that these interviews are not representative, and a large number of samples will have to be collected in the future – outline the general idea that in the digital world of the twenty-first century both forms of reading (analogue and digital) are legitimized and find their users. Given the rapid changes in technical equipment and the development of information technology, one would think that the trend of our times will accelerate: sooner or later digital texts will take the lead, digital reading will gain strength, replacing analogue reading. Surprisingly, the data show that this is not the case: despite the digital revolution, the traditional "craft" of reading is still strongly linked to the product of the "Gutenberg Galaxy," the printed book. This is due to the often individual-specific psychic and intellectual characteristics of human emotions and intellect on the receiving end, to cognitive processes, and, especially in the case of learning, to memorization mechanisms on the one hand and to the specific activity traditionally known as reading on the other. In other words, what all this adds up to – to phrase it in terms of the linguistic idiom – is a meaning (in this case, *reading*, and especially what good reading means to a good reader) which is new and not identical with the sum-total of its constituent elements.

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