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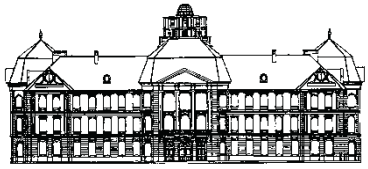

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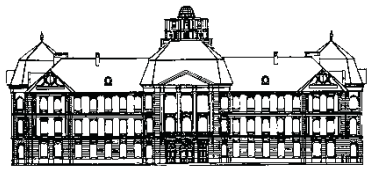

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A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Demonstrating the continuous development and expansion of the discipline, the present issue offers the reader a wide selection of the latest research results in the field of American Studies. The current volume includes essays and book reviews in such traditional fields as literature, history, and education to be complemented by inquiries into media and popular culture studies as well. We are also pleased with the diversity of authors ranging from doctoral candidates via post-doctoral to senior researchers.

STUDIES

Salam Alali primarily focusing on the concept of black joy, explores the manifestations of afrofuturism in Zora Neale Hurston's two novels. Péter Csató probes and evaluates the critical reception of one of Thomas Pynchon's short stories highlighting the instability of interpretation along with the respective subversion of the authorial position. A joint effort of Rita Difiore and Barna Szamosi investigates the options of applying the Project-based training method in language education. The authors analyze the results of a related survey in order to justify the need for a new perspective in research methodology instruction. Rita Difiore also presents a case study discussing the reliance on students' first language in ESL education. The article's main conclusion is that the use of the original language helps cognitive processing during the learning of the second language. Péter Gaál Szabó investigates the evolution of Malcolm X's Pan-African perspective and explores the conditions behind his call for the development of a more inclusive and intercultural identity. Sunyat Swezine discusses the ways the American Dream concept is criticized and re-interpreted in Lana Del Rey's two music videos. Livia Szélpál's analysis explores and expands the critical and genre-specific approaches to Zora Neale Hurston's posthumously published work, while András Tarnóc examines how the prisoner of war narrative genre is subverted in content, function, and form in Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse Five*.

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Rasha Deirani introduces a text examining the attitude of the Korean-Canadian diaspora to the global appeal of various components of Korean popular culture known as the Korean wave or the Hallyu wave. Máté Gergely Balogh's contribution

reviews a work discussing the activity and legacy of the Assembly of Captive European Nations, a multinational political exile group during the years of the Cold War. Zoltán Peterecz introduces a book discussing the ways naval expeditions in the middle section of the nineteenth century promoted the United States' efforts to catch up with contemporary international powers. Yamina Hafian reviews a work describing how Black philosophy, literary criticism, or the Black Vernacular Phenomenon challenges western philosophical and cultural traditions.

We are pleased to welcome future contributions from the American Studies community ranging from doctoral students to senior established researchers. Demonstrated by the present publication, we reiterate our commitment to provide a professional forum for discussing and analyzing the continuously evolving manifestations of American civilization.

Afrofuturism in Zora Neale Hurston's Novels *Their Eyes Were Watching God and Moses, Man of the Mountain*

Salam Alali

Introduction

Their Eyes Were Watching God and *Moses, Man of the Mountain* are purposively selected because they meet the objectives of this study. Although both have different structures and thematic preoccupations, both texts possess parallels for the critical understanding of the utopianism that underpins Afrofuturism. In *Their Eyes*, there is Janie who clings to the hope of a better future from beginning to end, while in *Moses* the Israelites also possess similar hope for a better future in the Promised Land. The symbols of utopia are rooted in being situated in the right place and being free from slavery. In *Their Eyes*, the symbolic place is both geographical and psychological (the right marriage or being in love with the right man); in *Moses* symbolic place typifies geography – the freedom from slavery in Egypt and the hope of the Promised Land. I explore these tendencies by drawing parallels between Janie's journey from her first marriage to that of Tea Cake and the Israelites' journey from Egypt through the wilderness.

Discussion

Moses depicts the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt under the vanguard of the title character. Hurston's rewrites Moses' arc based on the "tales of the powers of Moses and great worship of him and his power…and THAT MIGHTY HAND" (Hurston 10, Author's Introduction). Moses "stands in the long tradition of adaptations of the Exodus narrative" (Zeppenfeld 45) and attracted contradictory reviews including from her biographer, Robert Hemenway, because "of how Hurston treated the Biblical figures" (Morris 312). Moses' provenance is interrogated and ambiguously narrated as multiracial. Hurston subverts the race in Moses and reifies the patriarchal authority that undermines Miriam's power. Moses is portrayed as the son of the Pharaoh's daughter, who marries an Assyrian Prince who dies later. Moses is significant in the African American tradition because he frees the Israelites from slavery in Egypt and the Pharaoh's oppression, and he transcends race, which this study will contend as afrofuturistic of a time when race will not be essential. The term "Afrofuturism" was coined by Mark Dery in 1994 (Daylanne K. English) to refer to

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a cultural aesthetic whereby the speculative art form is used to "reboot black identity, challenge white supremacy, and imagine a range of futures in full color" (Lavender III and Yaszek 1). Lavender and Yaszek define Afrofuturism as an "aesthetic practice that enables artists to communicate the experience of science, technology, and race across centuries, continents, and cultures." It constitutes an attempt by Blacks to creatively envision their future in defiance of the inherent racism in speculative fiction, especially the erasure of Blacks in the utopian future of speculative fiction. Afrofuturism offers a vision of the future that expands and includes the Black experience, challenging narratives that see blacks as outsiders or marginal members of society. In short, it recovers the past, asserts it in the present, and projects an egalitarian future for Blacks. Hurston describes the Pharaoh's power as overbearing to the extent of controlling Hebrew women's wombs, so Mark Thompson designates the killing of Hebrew male newborns as "penetrating the Hebrew womb" (395). Hurston casts a shadow on Moses' racial origin and ascribes it to Miriam being asleep while watching her brother. Miriam prevaricates that her brother has been taken by the Pharaoh's princess. Julia Zeppenfeld posits that "Hurston's Moses avoids clear-cut identification with the Israelites" (50) and appears as a messenger of God. Moses grows up in the palace, learns folk stories from Mentu, and becomes a gallant soldier. He also takes an interest in the oppression of the Hebrews and intervenes by killing an Egyptian, which leads to his voluntary exile. He meets Jethro, learns more hoodoo from him, and marries Zipporah. Hurston represents Moses as a hoodoo, another word for magic, practitioner who can chat with a lizard on Mount Nebo. Robert J. Morris contends that Moses' hoodoo is used trivially on Mount Nebo. However, his reflective conversation with the lizard does not signify triviality (313). On Mount Horeb, he encounters God who directs him to free the Israelites and lead them to the Promised Land. Gradually, he rekindles his love for the Israelites and returns to Egypt. He meets Aaron and Miriam, and they become part of the leadership structure of Israel. Moses eventually leads the Israelites out of Egypt after the demise of the Egyptians' firstborns. Hurston syncretizes Moses' hoodoo with the Judeo-Christian God's power and fictionalizes how Moses wields his power to awe and terrorize his opponents, such as Miriam. Moses, however, dies without leading the Israelites to the Promised Land. He subtly hands over the leadership mantle to Joshua. I will use afrofuturism to examine how race is subverted and how place serves as a source of utopia. Despite these achievements, Hurston's depiction of Moses' power tacitly questions any power that excludes womanhood from its being. Hurston uses Moses' treatment of Miriam to critique absolute patriarchal power.

Their Eyes Were Watching God is Hurston's best-known book. It is one of the classics of the Harlem Renaissance. It was first published in 1937. It centers on Janie Crawford, a middle-aged African American woman newly returned from

burying her younger husband, Teacake. The story explores how Janie seeks to find a place of joy for herself.

Janie arrives home in Eatonville to find a group of people sitting on a porch. These people are curious about her life in her time away and maliciously gossip about her. Her friend, Pheoby chides them. She pays Janie a visit during which Janie tells her life story. She begins her account from her initial naiveté, her grandmother's lofty aspirations for her and her life with her three husbands. She ends with Tea Cake's death. He proves to be the one true love of her life, who also facilitates her full self-actualization.

Their Eyes was not well-received by other prominent writers of the Harlem Renaissance, who criticized Hurston for racial naivety. In his review titled "Between Laughter and Tears," Richard Wright condemns *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, dismissing it for what he terms "facile sensuality" and for voluntarily continuing the minstrel technique (25), which trivializes the black race as a source of entertainment. Along with Wright, Ralph Ellison and Alain Locke heavily criticized her "portrayal of blacks as common folks working in the field" (Spencer 17). However, since its rediscovery, the work has been lauded as one of the most important books of the century. Hurston's thematization of Janie's search for place naturally yields studies on race, place, and womanhood. In Eatonville (place) and in her first and second marriages (place), place undermines joy and a desire for hope, while she seeks to transcend the sadness that is associated with Black women which connects race and stereotypical feelings. She seeks to transcend being the "mule of the world" that bears the world's burden and struggles referring to the way Black women are burdened by both race and gender oppression yet persist in seeking agency and self-fulfillment; this is the futurism that her character evokes.

Critical Review of Afrofuturism: Race, Place, and Womanhood

Afrofuturism is one of the concepts that underpin this study, and it is deployed to examine the futuristic tendencies that Hurston's works embody and how those inclinations connect with race, place, and womanhood. Despite these convergences, Hurston, in some cases, questions these issues, which denote the ambivalence in her works. Mark Dery introduced the term Afrofuturism. Afrofuturism has thrived because it has become a flourishing space for Black people confined to the periphery due to their race, gender, and place. Dery's inquiry on why few African Americans write Science Fiction (SF) evinces the centrality of race in Afrofuturism. He compares the world of speculative fiction to the real world where African Americans are perceived as the other by the American white. He conceptualizes Afrofuturism as speculative fiction that explores "African American

themes and concerns in twentieth-century technoculture—and…African American signification that appropriates the images of technology" (180) within an imagined future. Afrofuturism, according to Adriano Elia, similarly draws parallels between slaves, aliens, and robots. However, Afrofuturism is broader and more heterogeneous than Dery's technocultural paradigm would suggest. Beyond Afrofuturism's 1994 formal incarnation, its aesthetics began many decades ago until it emerged as a philosophical study (Womack; Lavender). Afrofuturism presents a space for Blacks to envision a future devoid of structural racism "to contest white supremacist narratives of exclusion and technological illiteracy" (Taylor 2) and to wield diverse aesthetics to speculate and loop the past with the present and claim the Black future that is free from white supremacy. This Black future aligns with Hurston's intra-racial politics in that her works embody and centralize Black joy as an anti-abolitionist paradigm (Stewart). Her depiction of Janie's quest for the horizon envisions a Black future, especially for Black womanhood, which does not contend only with racism but seeks a better horizon. Afrofuturism is a gamut of artistic expressions, in terms of visual arts, films, music, and literature. Taylor avers that Afrofuturism is now in its plural form as Afrofuturisms to amplify the heterogeneity.

Afrofuturism has attracted remonstration too. Nnedi Okorafor, for example, has debated the purview of Afrofuturism as a concept. Okorafor, for example, proposes Africanfuturism because she opines that the term Afrofuturism captures the African American rather than African experiences at large. This belief is traceable to "etymological history", according to Sofia Samatar (175), because Afrofuturism as a term was coined by Mark Dery, an American, and it is delineated as African American speculative fiction. Samatar, however, proposes "a history of Afrofuturism unrestricted by a North American origin story…to do justice to its Pan-African influences, practices and claims" (188) and encourages a planetary approach to Afrofuturism within a broader perspective in time and space. In the same vein, Jade Taryne Taylor proposes the term CoFuturisms and conceptualizes it as the convergence among "the various forms of futurisms by people of color and Global South" (1). Rather than confining Afrofuturism to its science fiction-related implications, I also apply this term in its broader sense when exploring Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (*Their Eyes*) and *Moses, Man of the Mountain* (*Moses*) as Afrofuturist texts from the perspective of Black joy, also interpreted as a form of Black utopia.

Afrofuturism started to emerge centuries ago from the futuristic works of early Black writers. Isiah Lavender III and Lisa Yaszek trace Afrofuturism to "literary experiments…of eighteenth-century poet Phyllis Wheatley and nineteenth-century abolitionist, soldier, and journalist Martin Delany" (3), and the Afrofuturistic

trends continue in the works of W. E. B. Du Bois, George Schuyler, Pauline Hopkins, Zora Neale Hurston, Octavia E. Butler, and, more recently, Nnedi Okorafor. Afrofuturism extends the recovery of Black works and promotes Black artistic expressions as formidable and futuristic. Afrofuturism later transitioned from a predominantly aesthetic mode to a critical paradigm that Alondra Nelson instituted in 1998 by creating the "first Afrofuturist online community…and the first publication of the first scholarly collection on the subject in a 2002 issue of the journal *Social Text*" (Lavender III and Yaszek 4). Equally, Afrofuturism has birthed different concepts such as steampunk and Astro-Blackness and has been elevated to Afrofuturism 2.0, which is conceived as "twenty-first-century technogenesis of Black identity" (Anderson and. Jones x). Afrofuturism 2.0 transcends the 1.0 counterpart because of the sophistication of contemporary technology and life. Isiah Lavender III in *Afrofuturism Rising* contends that Afrofuturism is a moment and movement because of its different connotations. It is also a reading practice that explores the "race-inflected…optimisms and anxieties framing the future imaginings of black people" (Lavender III 2) and denotes the primacy of race in Afrofuturism. The corollary is that Afrofuturism can be a narrative/aesthetic practice or an interpretive engagement that investigates Afrofuturistic aesthetic modes.

Afrofuturism as a hermeneutic practice has varying tenets. Lavender III theorizes Afrofuturism tenets as black networked consciousness, the hope impulse, and the trans-historical feedback loop. In this attempt, I employ this hope impulse to explore the utopian tendencies that the selected texts represent and how they invoke joy. This hope impulse and its accompanying joy in *Their Eyes*, for example, subvert the sorrow and sadness that is connected to the black race, but transcend race in *Moses* by emphasizing hope as pervasive among the oppressed. He conceives black network consciousness as the "interactive connections…a sustainable communal web of love…while also allowing for betrayals, rivalries, and miscommunications" (6). It is shared consciousness which signifies the communality of black consciousness from the past to the present and then to the future. This consciousness occludes the white gaze and entrenches the black communal space as an alternative space of comfort. This communal space "generates hope", according to Lavender III, and this hope breeds Black joy that Stewart philosophizes as an anti-racial trope in Hurston's works. The black networked consciousness and the hope impulse generate a trans-historical feedback loop in readers/critics to transcend the dominant racial narratives for alternative ones that embody Blacks as subjects with agencies. These three tenets are intertwined with Afrotechnocultural metaphors imbricated in vernacular tradition and afro-root religion, but Afrofuturism from a broad perspective does not rely only on Afrotechnocultural metaphors. From

a broad perspective, Afrofuturism unearths the futuristic tendencies or symbols that permeate black works. These are circulated afro-symbols like the Sankofa bird, which prioritizes retrieval for an optimal future, and the linguistic coding in black vernacular. YTasha Womack identifies parallel Afrofuturistic tenets that comprise reclamation of the "missing history of people of African descent and their roles in science, technology, and science technology" (17), revision of the past, aiding "equal access to progressive technologies" (17), appropriating "African diasporic mysticism" (110), centralizing feminine narratives and depicting the "transformative power of love" (110). Lavender III also advocates the reading of *Their Eyes* as an afrofuturist romance that utilizes science fiction theory to delve into "an exploration of a utopian horizon that takes the reader…into something new—an afrofuturist condition wherein folklore and futurity are at the center of black imaginings" (108). This Afrofuturist condition is connected to the transformative power of love as a central trope in Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*.

Black womanhood is another space that Afrofuturism reclaims. The reclamation evolves in Pauline Hopkins' works and persists in Hurston's works. Womack delineates afrofuturism as a "free space for women…a literal and figurative space for black women to be themselves" (100-101). Afrofuturism undercuts the gender barrier by giving black female writers the imaginative and mythical latitude to create females as protagonists/heroines that retrieve the past and create their future in diverse Afrocentric alternative spaces of different imaginings. Black women writers can examine the prejudices associated with blackness (race) and womanhood "to define blackness, womanhood, or any other identifier" (Womack 101). Black women authors, like Zora Neale Hurston, not only identify the patriarchal problems associated with black womanhood, but also redefine black womanhood as a space of self-assertion and mutual love for futuristic exploration. Womack argues that Afrofuturistic works by women authors are designated "uncategorizable" (101) because the works modify and transcend the stereotypical male-approved frames. This argument valorizes the harsh criticism that Hurston's works received from her contemporary male authors and critics, and Stewart also exposes this politics. Hurston's male counterparts did not discern the proto-Afrofuturistic patterns and representations in her works. Sheree Thomas adds that Afrofuturism also helps form "black women's agency and aesthetics in a world that denies the existence of both" (37). These women writers created the foundation for Afrofuturism through their unceasing aesthetical experimentation.

Hurston is a formidable figure, who has been linked to the emergence of Afrofuturism because she proposes changes that "bring hopes for African Americans' future" (Kaplan 30). Kaplan observes that Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* is a proto-Afrofuturistic work that deviates from utilizing the technological

tropes, but adopts decolonized alternative spaces, body, and language to project the Black future. Similarly, Lavender III reads retroactively Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* as an Afrofuturist text. He explores comprehensively the latent Afrofuturist arc in *Their Eyes* under the rubric of a utopian horizon of possibility, networked consciousness, vernacular technology, and a black future. He unearths the Afrofuturist possibilities that Hurston contrives in *Their Eyes*, which critics like Richard Wright did not discern. First, Hurston makes Janie search for "an alternative world other than the one that African Americans were living in at the time" (Lavender III 113) and this quest for an alternative world aligns with the tenets of Afrofuturism. The alternative world also reifies the networked interconnectedness that Eatonville represents, "a parallel black world coexisting with the larger universe that is the United States" (Lavender III 115) which is "free of the white oppressive gaze" (Lavender III 116). The shift from inter-racial discourse to intra-racial discourse that Lavender III observes in Hurston's *Their Eyes* coincides with Stewart's argument about Hurston's aesthetic politics that focuses on black joy.

Lavender III also examines the vernacular technology that Hurston inscribes in *Their Eyes*; he contends that Hurston appropriates folk elements to depict Black southern society, by capturing oral knowledge "in print, thereby standardizing past cultural practices and preserving them for the future" (117). The porch dialogues are interspersed with "vernacular technology" (Lavender III 117) that has been harnessed by Black writers such as Alice Walker and Toni Morrison. Lavender III also reads *Their Eyes* within the technogenesis metaphor of being alien and couples it with the transformative love that Tea Cake and Janie share. He views Janie as a "creator of Southern black historical consciousness" (125) who resists oppression by activating a trans-historical loop and surpasses the "tragic mulatta convention" (126). However, despite Lavender III's argument, he overlooks the black feminist refusals that presage contemporary Black feminism that underpin Hurston's depiction of Janie as resisting patriarchal oppression and simultaneously searching for transformative love. I will expand these feminist refusals and her womanist quest for transformative love as Afrofuturist tenets in Hurston's works implying a search for an alternative world that promotes gender parity. This depiction alludes to the utopian horizon of the hope impulse that Lavender III conceptualizes as an essential Afrofuturist tenet.

Thomas expands on the Afrofuturistic discourse in Hurston's works by crystalizing "the future she did 'wrassle up' and the incredible treasures of the past she uncovered" (41). Some of Hurston's literary works comprise Lavender III's trans-historical feedback loop that preserves the past, critiques the present, and foresees an egalitarian future. Hoodoo, for example, favors a nonhierarchical

world, which is a trope in Hurston's works such as *The Sanctified Church* and *Moses, Man of the Mountain*. This African and African diasporic spirituality continuously colors contemporary speculative fiction by intertwining fantasy, folklore, and spirituality. It features in the practice of healing the sick, rootwork, conjuring, and prophesying the future.

Hurston's work, like *Barracoon,* also connects Afrofuturism with feminism and race. Piper Kendrix Williams notes the concatenation between Afrofuturism and feminism in her reading of *Barracoon* and *Their Eyes*. She contends that Hurston presents the porch as "sites of alternative realities separated from a world of oppression and white supremacy" (628) and that Nanny and Janie are futuristic characters. The argument about Nanny and Janie as characters of the future requires further exegesis, especially as their futurity intersects with feminist geography and womanism. Williams observes that Hurston loops time and space and projects Afrofuturistic feminist prose through Nanny's sermon and Janie's porch. However, Janie's resistance to Logan and Joe Starks signifies feminism, while her paradoxical attachment to Tea Cake, despite his excesses, represents an accommodating drive that is womanist.

Significantly, the concept of Black utopia that corresponds to Lavender III's hope impulse is inevitable in Afrofuturism. Alex Zamalin connects utopia to hope, a "future to come, a society yet unrealized but transformative in its vision" (5). I contend *Their Eyes* and *Moses* embody black utopia and the transformation it prefigures. Black utopian texts or Afrofuturist texts, according to Zamalin, "both revise history and imagine impossible trajectories of black freedom" (10). However, these roles may be latent in texts and may require critical attention to unearth them. Hurston's works aptly represent this latent, Afrofuturist topography and demand new interpretation. This new approach connects Afrofuturism to visions of gender equality in diverse spaces that are commonly dominated by men and links women to places formerly appropriated by men. Afrofuturist texts project women as resisting and refusing patriarchal oppression from both Blacks and Whites in different spaces. These refusals are connected to Stewart's Black Joy, which theorizes refusals of abolitionists' appropriation of Black tragedy as Hurston's rejection of the masculinist representation of blackness during her time.

Black Utopia and Transformative Love in Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God and Moses, Man of the Mountain*

Black utopia emerges as a distinct Afrofuturist dimension in Hurston's texts that requires deeper exploration to grasp its futurist significance in her oeuvre. In *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, for instance, the ship and the horizon symbolize Black

utopia. Hurston employs the horizon to suggest Janie Crawford's quest for a future free from oppression. This parallels Lavender III's argument of Janie's alternative imagining of Black life which makes her quest for the bloom she discovers under the pear tree. Hurston critiques the institution of marriage to highlight the gender oppression and inequality that women endure, even in intra-racial relations. While race is a prominent theme in African American literature, including the Harlem Renaissance, with its specific racial politics shaped by male intellectuals, such as W.E.B. DuBois and his circle, Hurston turns her back on "racializing." Instead, she envisions a black utopia by revising the image of womanhood in *Their Eyes* as an agency of imagining alternatives and seeking transformative love conducive to liberating women. This Afrofuturist vision seeks Black joy that liberates Black American women from gender oppression, even in intra-racial marriages.

Janie's first marriage to Logan Killicks is contingent on Nanny's dream, a dream that perceives "de nigger woman is de mule uh de world" (*Their Eyes* 47). Janie's marriage to Logan is an old dream of marriage that objectifies a woman as a mule and desecrates the pear tree – Janie's symbol of Black Joy and utopia in wedlock. Janie's first marriage inhabits the old vision of marriage that "she would love Logan after they were married" (*Their Eyes* 53), Hurston's portrayal of Janie's wedlock to Logan signifies a relationship devoid of the utopian love that makes womanhood joyful. Hurston does two things in this depiction: she prefigures the Black feminist movement and Alice Walker's womanism and creates Janie as a character of the future that transcends her local place. These layers are premised on Janie's quest for the bloom, a symbol of Black utopia, in love and marriage. The Black feminist temper in Janie makes her resist Logan's bid to objectify her and turn her into a mule: "Ah'm just as stiff as you are stout. If you can stand not to chop and tote wood Ah reckon you can stand not to git no dinner. 'Scuse mah frivolity, Mist' Killicks, but Ah don't mean to chop de first chip." (*Their Eyes* 57).

Janie's second marriage to Joe Starks is not different from the first one. Hurston uses Joe to allegorize rich Black men who silence women; Joe declares "Ah never married her for nothin' lak dat. She's uh woman and her place are in de home" (*Their Eyes* 78). The silencing of Janie undercuts the Black joy and utopia that amplifies gender parity for a transformative love. Hurston's *radical* projection of black utopian aesthetics embraces "radical equality and resisting of gender and sexual domination" (Zamalin 140). This portrayal is manifested in Janie's marriage to Tea Cake to prefigure the possibility of a marriage devoid of patriarchal oppression and domination. Although Hurston is realistic in portraying the few skirmishes between Janie and Tea Cake, she portrays their marriage as that of Black joy, which is Afrofuturistic. Tracy Bealer contends that Tea Cake "sporadically performs the same dominative masculinity" (312) and that, despite the ambivalence of Tea

Cake's character, Janie's glorification of Tea Cake, even after his demise, celebrates "liberatory possibilities of egalitarian love" (312) and how racism and sexism can undermine any heterosexual relationship. Equally, Lavender III recasts *Their Eyes* as an "Afrofuturist romance" (108) and contends that Hurston appropriates *Their Eyes* to directly tap "into black people's desire for a better life and a better future and thus provides an essential urge to challenge oppression" (109).

Hurston employs the institution of marriage to portray black women's quest for Black utopia and to indicate that gender oppression transcends race. Hurston's Black utopia cannot be disconnected from the hope impulse that troubles Janie in her first and second marriages. Janie, during her troubled years with Joe, keeps hope alive: "Sometimes she stuck into the future, imagining her life different from what it was" (*Their Eyes* 116); the envisioning allegorizes the hope impulse that characterizes African American lives during a troubled present. Hurston deploys free indirect speech to valorize a communal hope that is usually Afrofuturistic: Janie's thoughts are communal and signify Black women's desire for utopia in their marriages. That is, utopia has a nexus with Afrofuturist love, that disconnects from the patriarchal-favored love, which Nanny embodies and forces Janie into. Janie is the connection between the past and the future and Tea Cake represents the Afrofuturist male figure that makes a Black woman "listen and laugh and even talk some herself if she wanted to" (*Their Eyes* 117). Despite the racial and marriage tension. Hurston in her trickster mode does not present Tea Cake and Janie's marriage as total perfection; she depicts the excesses of Tea Cake like stealing from Janie's money. This paradox is undercut by Tea Cake's ability to recognize Janie as a woman who has a voice and should be listened to. The recognition of Janie's agency is absent in her marriage to Logan and Joe Starks. The Afrofuturist male figure is not without some excesses like Tea Cake's slapping of Janie to feel like a man, but he recognizes the woman as possessing an agency.

A similar transformative love envisioning utopian hopes permeates Hurston's other novel, *Moses, Man of the Mountain,* but this time with a male character in focus that ambivalently undermines the agency of womanhood represented by Miriam. Hurston adapts the story of Moses, the most prominent prophet of the Bible's Old Testament (who is also the most frequently mentioned name in the Quran). Moses' love for the Hebrews' freedom is both transformative and futuristic, despite his ambivalent relationship with them. Although this novel is usually interpreted as an allegorical representation of how Hurston imagined the Africans' experiences in American slavery and afterward, the text itself undermines this reading: it subverts the canonized interpretation of the Bible regarding Moses' Hebrew origin at a crucial point when she "calculated a maximum of narrative ambiguity" (Johnson 128). While Miriam, the baby's sister, was supposed to look

after the newborn when he was set afloat in a basket on the Nile, she neglected her duty. Later, she informs her mother, Jochebed, and others that the baby was taken by the Egyptian princess, the Pharaoh's daughter. This fact is not corroborated by Hurston's text, as Miriam did not actually see the princess pick up Moses. Miriam was most probably lying to her mother to save herself, "Goshen never gave up their belief in the Hebrew in the palace" (*Moses* 35). The Hebrew in the palace is an example of utopian proclivities that saturate Hurston's works, a tendency that liberty is possible within any oppressive situation, and the Promised Land is entangled with this hope impulse. The Promised Land throughout *Moses* remains a symbol of hope that Moses wants to lead the Israelites despite their ambivalence, which Johnson describes as the small-mindedness of Hebrews like Blacks "unwilling to face the responsibilities of freedom" (131). Conversely, Johnson contends that "Hurston's Egyptian Moses stands for the cultural dead father or mother: Africa, the source of the repressed traditions carried to the Americas by the slaves" (130). The corollary is that Hurston depicts Moses ambiguously as Egyptian and African, an African that frees slaves. Moses' undying wish for and commitment to the Israelites to enable them to reach the Promised Land made him lead them from Egypt through the Red Sea and in the wilderness until he died.

Moses' love for the Israelites is transformative and analogous to the love between Janie and Tea Cake, although with ambivalence. I characterize Moses' love as transformative because it seeks to free the Israelites from Egyptian slavery and take them to the Promised Land. Like the fits of jealousy between Janie and Tea Cake, Moses also experiences diverse rebellious acts on the part of the Israelites, but these acts did not weaken his dedication to lead them to the Promised Land. When he kills an Egyptian overseer, to protect a Hebrew, he is hurt when an Israelite accuses him of trying to be their boss: "For a moment Moses stood hurt at the lack of appreciation of his behavior and of the motives that prompted him" (*Moses* 62). Despite abdicating his position in Egypt, he returns to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. Moses' transformative love for the Hebrews demonstrates significant utopian characteristics when he is represented as a beacon of hope for enslaved people. Ruthe T. Sheffey, who interprets Hurston's novel as a manifesto on the imperatives of Black leadership, observes that Hurston in *Moses, Man of the Mountain* interrogates the Biblical tradition that represents Moses as a Hebrew and adds that Hurston's novel itself is proof of "the frequent recourses to the Moses story in the Afro-American tradition" (210). The portrayal of Moses as an ambiguous Egyptian challenges racism and leadership and demonstrates that collaboration to free a people from oppression may be spearheaded by anybody. Hurston intentionally represents Moses' origin as multiracial to transcend the limiting politics of racism that permeates the leadership choice. Moses' transformative love

cannot be divorced from his love for folklore and the folkways that underpin his relationship with Mentu, "who tended the horses" (*Moses* 37), and how he makes Mentu enjoy royal life by smuggling food out of the kitchen for him. Equally, Moses transcends racial categorization as Johnson, in "Moses and Textuality" avers, suggesting that Hurston puts "into play and crisis the very notions of race and ethnicity" (Johnson 131). This indirectly invokes the question of whether it is compulsory for the rescuer (Moses, for example) of an oppressed people to be an insider in the oppressed people's ethnic or racial circle. Although Hurston's introduction tries to limit the readers' perspective to the terror of Moses' rod which she describes as "the terror he showed before all Israel and to Pharaoh, and THAT MIGHTY HAND" (xxii), there are many nuances that Moses' character presents that need to be deconstructed beyond Hurston's magisterial direction. One of such complexities is Moses' epitome of leadership within the folkway that evokes power, terror, and love. Still, that terror is mobilized for the people's liberation rather than oppression. Hurston accentuates Moses' power and the terror of his rod because of her ardent belief in Hoodoo and root work, which is a tenet of Hurston's Black Joy. However, Moses wields this power and terror to free the Israelites from slavery and oppression, and this cannot be divorced from his love for them, which started to be reified with the killing of an Egyptian that was punishing an Israelite. This type of love is transformative because it is deracialized and denationalized and aids the liberation of oppressed people. The transformative love epitomized by Moses as a utopian figure, is a utopian impulse that transcends racial boundaries. However, Hurston's revising of Moses occludes womanhood, she aligns with the Judeo-Christian tradition of describing "the women characters in blatant misogynistic terms" (Johnson 137). Johnson observes this subversion of womanhood in *Moses* which is a reversal of the Janie—Tea Cake relationship in *Their Eyes*. This reversal valorizes Hurston as a paradoxical writer who employs trickery to confound her readers and to achieve her literary goals.

Moses signifies the powerful force of a leader in guiding the oppressed to the Promised Land, which symbolizes utopia. Utopia signifies freedom from racial enslavement, systemic racism, and racial oppression. This unifying force is isomorphic with Hurston's depiction of Tea Cake as a motivation for freeing Janie from the shackles of gender oppression and domination. Moses and Tea Cake symbolize freeing the oppressed from oppressive geographies. The Israelites offer to make Moses their king "but he went on to say that he wasn't sure that people ought to have Kings at all. It's pretty hard to find a man who wouldn't weaken under the strain of power and get big and overbearing. He might not be any better than nobody else if he had the chance" (*Moses* 214). Moses believes that power raises oppressors and wants the Israelites to be "free and be a fine nation of folks"

(*Moses* 214). Hurston mobilizes Moses to set the agenda of a non-hierarchical society, a kingless nation, that prioritizes people's happiness, unlike Joe Starks in *Their Eyes* whose demeanor in Eatonville parallels former White slave masters. Such a society is a utopian society that subverts racial inequalities and gender disparity but amplifies a new humanism of equal co-existence. Hurston pursues a similar thematic thrust in *Their Eyes* by deploying Tea Cake as a futurist figure that promotes (preaches) equal gender co-existence in marriages. Tea Cake considers Janie as his equal.

Moving from one place to another is a trope in Afrofuturism that Hurston explores in *Their Eyes* and *Moses* and coalesces with questing utopia. The Israelites' movement engenders the Black imagining of an alternative place that purveys joy rather than remaining abstract. Afrofuturism captures movement from one space to the other to attain utopia. It amplifies questing for a better place whether within the same planet or in an inter-planetary context. Hurston deploys the trope of questing for utopia to illuminate how that quest coalesces with moving from one unhappy place to a place where joy is experienced. In *Their Eyes*, Janie moves from West Florida to Eatonville and then to Everglades/the Muck where she experiences Black Joy that characterizes the "ships at a distance", the horizon that she quests, (*Their Eyes* 32) and recounts the experience to her friend Pheoby. Janie's movement is twofold: the first is psychological, while the second is spatial. Janie's first marriage to Logan Killicks disenchants her; the quest for a better place – a place of joy – starts psychologically. Logan's place "was a lonesome place like a stump in the middle of the woods where nobody had ever been" (*Their Eyes* 53) and Janie's heart expects "a bloom time, and a green time and an orange time" (*Their Eyes* 57) but does not get any. Hurston makes Janie desert a space psychologically (which is the imagining) before moving to another space (place); this connects Janie's womanhood with place and joy. Unsurprisingly, the Afrofuturist space for Janie is usually the gate. The gate is an Afrofuturist space of expectation of utopia: "when the pollen again gilded the sun and sifted down on the world she began to stand around the gate and expect things" (*Their Eyes* 57). She becomes a woman when she realizes that "marriage did not make love. Janie's first dream was dead, so she became a woman" (*Their Eyes* 57). Hurston connects womanhood to space and to love (joy). Moving from one place to another is essential when a space lacks love for the fulfillment of womanhood. Janie moves to Eatonville with her second husband (Joe Starks) in search of joy and Black utopia, but she is disappointed. Joe has only acquired her as an ornament that he will display as a symbol of status. Joe's agenda for Janie is for "her place to be in de home" (*Their Eyes* 78) and not to make any speech. Whenever Janie is discontent with her present state, Hurston places her in the future. Janie's experience of gender oppression and domination

in her second marriage makes her travel to the future: "Sometimes she stuck out into the future…now and again she thought of a country road at sun-up and considered flight?" (*Their Eyes* 116). Lavender III's drawing on Delany's concepts about science fiction accentuates "reading Janie's travels as a version of planetary romance" (110). Joe Starks' demise allows Janie to make another escape to another space with Tea Cake. In this odyssey to utopia - Everglades, Janie eventually catches up with the bloom and relishes the joy she covets. Everglades is Janie's utopia: she discovers her subjectivity and becomes an epitome of futurist womanhood that subverts patriarchal domination to get her desires. In Everglades, she joyfully works in the field beside Tea Cake, which contrasts her unwillingness to work with Logan. Everglades transforms her from a silent woman, gives her agency, and makes her savor Black joy. Hurston depicts Janie as an alien or outsider in West Florida and Eatonville; the Everglades is the only place where she feels fulfilled. Janie's journey parallels the fabula of traveling to alternative spaces in science fiction as such migration is always aimed at obtaining a precious object or achieve a desired passion. Janie's migratory escapades are "Afrofuturism in action" (Lavender III 125) and present her as the embodiment of afrofuturist womanhood that transcends the limitation of a place.

Hurston deploys a similar migratory trope in *Moses* to denote the quest for utopia. Egypt represents a space of slavery and oppression, like a ship or spacecraft, that the Israelites abandon. The quest for utopia underlines the Israelites' migration from Egypt to a futuristic Promised Land that flows with milk and honey. The fabula of migration in *Moses* signifies futurism and the quest for utopia. Joshua Pederson notes that African Americans have appropriated the Exodus stories in various cultural expressions and that "African Americans cast themselves in the role of the Israelites, enslaved but chosen by God for a glorious freedom, oppressed but selected for a divine destiny" (439). Pederson argues unconvincingly that Hurston disowns Moses and the Hebrews in *Moses* because the homology of the Israelite and African American history "can no longer serve as a positive model for blacks" (443) and avers that Hurston is ambivalent about Moses. Although Hurston is ambivalent about Moses, the narrative also suggests the futuristic tendencies that Hurston emphasizes with the symbol of the Promised Land. While Hurston depicts Moses' patriarchal power that undermines womanhood (Miriam especially), Moses' musing about Miriam that she contributed to the story is Hurston's subliminal remonstration of misogynist tendencies that underpin both the Hebrew and Black cultures. Hurston deploys the journey as a crucial trope of discovering utopia both in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and *Moses, Man of the Mountain*. Reading the two works as afrofuturistic reifies the journey as an essential part of achieving utopia. The Israelites' movement from Egypt to the Promised Land is analogous

to Janie's trans-spatial migration, the disjuncture is in the Israelites' ambivalence that contrasts Janie's readiness to catch the next flight to utopia. Another level is to connect Janie's utopian quest with Moses' hopeful search of the Promised Land for Israel. Moses' mountain is a futuristic space or height as well as a bridge to utopia where he goes to imagine the future. The mountain as a symbol of utopia parallels Janie's gate and porch for expecting and catching a flight to the future. The mountain and the gate are symbols of places for imagining the future and in the case of Janie as a space of escape to a place of joy. Hurston subliminally represents the concatenation between place and joy and how it affects womanhood, especially in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*; she preaches utopia as a necessary human dream and questing for it – whether psychologically or geographically through trans-spatial migration – is an indispensable precept to achieve a desired Afrofuturism.

Symbols, Place, Joy of Black Womanhood in Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and *Moses, Man of the Mountain*

Hurston's commitment to Black joy possibly makes her unrelentingly portray her characters as searching for better spaces (places). She appropriates certain symbols in her narratives as spaces of the future, they are spaces of joy or dreams for the future. In *Their Eyes,* Hurston sets the gate as a crossroads for revelation and escape to utopia. Janie's epiphany is under the pear tree, the transformation of the pear tree from "barren brown stems to glistening leaf-buds…stirred her tremendously" (*Their Eyes* 42). The pear tree is a symbol of epiphany, of the discovery of Black joy, that should characterize Black womanhood, especially in marriage. The rhetorical question "Where were the singing bees for her?" (*Their Eyes* 43) echoes a desire for joyful womanhood that Hurston sets as an agenda that Janie should pursue. The gate is her space of first blooming – her first kiss – and becomes a peering glass into the future of Black womanhood, that is free from gender oppression and domination. The gate reveals and serves as a place of flight to achieve her dream of joyful womanhood, an existence of transformative love and ontological fulfillment. Hurston integrates the various spaces of Afrofuturism in *Their Eyes* in nuanced and dynamic ways that they interact and embody the contradictions of these spaces. The pear tree, Janie's first space of epiphany, leads her to Nanny's gate where her entanglement with Johnny Taylor produces the first kiss of her life. The contradiction of Nanny's gate is her forced marriage to Logan, which culminates in nothing but discontentment. The contradiction that Afrofuturist space offers permeates *Moses*. Moses' mountains represent a futurist height, a hybrid and symbolic place, they are comparable to the numerous symbolic Afrofuturist spaces in *Their Eyes*. Moses' epiphany occurs on Mount Horeb when he encounters "the

bush…burning brightly but its leaves did not twist and crumple and they did not fall as ashes beneath the charred limbs as they should have done" (*Moses* 104). Moses realizes the possibilities of power and the syncretism of hoodoo with the Judeo-Christian supernatural power. While Janie's epiphany is linked with joy and the possibilities of Black womanhood, Moses' manifestation is that of a messianic call to lead the Israelites to a future space/planet. Moses' previous liberatory efforts that exile him connect the past to the messianic request to lead the Israelites to the Promised Land. Janie's pear tree discovery symbolizes the onset of the joy of womanhood, while Moses' contact with the God of the mountain commences the demands of black leadership for emancipation and a journey to utopia. Janie's pear tree leads her to Nanny's gate and then to Logan's gate and her porch at Eatonville.

Janie's porch at Eatonville is also an Afrofuturist space where she loops the past with the present and the future. Janie narrates her joyful odyssey into womanhood to Pheoby, her friend. Williams dissects Janie's porch as subverting time and "her thinking back and telling forward becomes a kind of Afrofuturistic loop" (635) that entrenches the bonding between the two friends. Two narrative objectives are achieved here. The bond between Janie and Pheoby reflects Afrofuturist and womanist ideals. Their friendship represents strong connections between Black women. This also symbolizes the real-life connection between Zora Neale Hurston and Alice Walker. The sisterhood they share on the porch in Eatonville foreshadows a future where Black womanhood thrives. It suggests a vision of growth, joy, and empowerment for Black women, much like planting trees that blossom in the future. *Moses*, however, is deficient in this Black womanhood perspective; nevertheless, Hurston recruits Jethro to plant the seed of black leadership that motivates oppressed people to envision a utopia on a distant planet, the Promised Land. The Promised Land allegorizes a different planet, as in science fiction metaphors, where utopia exists. As the porches and the gates serve simultaneously as the bridge and peering axis to Afrofuturist womanhood in *Their Eyes*, the mountains perform parallel functions in *Moses* and proffer a height to Afrofuturist leadership that routes a major colonial power. This Afrofuturist leadership is evident in *Black Panther,* but it is limited to the patriarchal domain in *Moses*.

Everglades/the Muck and the Promised Land also symbolize futurist spaces of joy. Hurston projects the Everglades as an Afrofuturist space where an alienated Janie savors the joy of womanhood. Lavender III avers that Janie lives "an alien life because Joe forces his own whitewashed vision on her" (122) and harnesses the alien metaphor to explore Janie's life in disparate spaces until she reaches the Everglades. Everglades is a space of inter-racial connection, artistic displays, and equal work terms between Janie and Tea Cake. Janie discovers her agency in Everglades, the joy of her being as a woman and experiences fits of jealousy – an experience that

she does not have outside the Muck. Everglades contrasts Eatonville in terms of Black women's agencies, Everglades signifies the utopian Black place where gender parity is entrenched. Conversely, the Promised Land in *Moses* remains remote, but Hurston maintains its futurist evocation as a utopian space free from oppression and slavery. The Promised Land is a metaphor for African Americans, an Afrofuturist place that is devoid of colonial hegemony and slavery, a place of milk and honey for the generality of the people. Albeit *Their Eyes* reifies the concatenation of place, joy, and womanhood, *Moses* is limited to the futuristic imagining of a utopia that transcends race but may not necessarily encompass gender equality.

CONCLUSION

Although Afrofuturism as a metatheory was not formally articulated until long after Hurston's time, it is particularly telling of how Hurston and her politics of joy and refusal were distinctly futuristic. Reading *Moses* and *Their Eyes* through the lens of this metatheory centralizes the peculiarities of Black womanhood, celebrating the associated joy and heroism as Black people navigate their own paths toward freedom, social life, belonging, and the pursuit of hope.

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"The Truth of a True Lie": Reading Against the Grain in Thomas Pynchon's "Low-Lands"

Péter Csató

Introduction

Thomas Pynchon's early short story, "Low-Lands"—originally published in *New World Writing* in 1960—has garnered substantial critical attention over the decades, second only perhaps to the more widely-anthologized, and hence more well-known, "Entropy." While "Low-Lands" does not explicitly revolve around a central metaphor—like entropy in its sibling-story story—it nonetheless resembles it in that its seemingly teleological structure and densely intertextual narrative fabric activate interpretive patterns that have given rise to a profusion of critical readings. These readings, however, often concentrate on features in the text that appear deliberately placed—almost too readily available—raising the question of whether the story solicits interpretation or sets a trap for it.

For this reason, the present study does not seek to offer yet another interpretation of "Low-Lands," and it focuses instead on the story's dynamic relationship with its critical reception—a relationship marked by resistance as well as a paradoxical and subversive absorption of interpretive frameworks. I argue that the critical discourse surrounding "Low-Lands," despite its diverse theoretical frameworks, is largely governed by interpretive reflexes that the story itself appears to anticipate and parody. Through a meta-critical analysis of the story's putative intertextual allusions, interpretive traps, and authorial performances, the article explores how "Low-Lands" functions as a narrative that not only invites but also performs—and ultimately resists—its own hermeneutic enterprise.

The discussion begins with an analysis of the story's symbolic architecture, focusing on the motif of descent and its readiness to accommodate interpretive projection. It then turns to a critical genealogy of scholarly responses to "Low-Lands," showing how readings grounded in intertextuality often reproduce rhetorical patterns that bear little (if any) causal relation to the story itself, but adequately serve the purpose of grounding and maintaining the critics' interpretive authority. This leads to a consideration of the figure of the author—not as origin but as function—through close engagement with Pynchon's own ironic self-positioning in the introduction to his early stories collected in *Slow Learner* (1984). The final section explores the paradoxes of interpretive agency encoded in the

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text itself, arguing that "Low-Lands" operates as a (self-)reflexive system in which every critical move seems to be already implicated—moreover, pre-empted and undermined. In this light, interpretation becomes less a method of revealing the "truth" ("meaning") of the text than a performance in which truthfulness becomes bracketed and ultimately rendered impossible to attain.

"Low-Lands": An Intertextual Labyrinth

The protagonist of "Low-Lands" is Dennis Flange, a successful lawyer, living in a classy house perched on a cliff over the Long Island Sound, with his estranged wife, Cindy. Possibly plagued by afflictions of midlife crisis, Flange no longer finds satisfaction in his work, so one day he calls in sick to his office and, much to Cindy's indignation, spends the day drinking muscatel and listening to Vivaldi with Rocco Squarcione, the garbage man. The last straw for Cindy is the unexpected arrival of Pig Bodine, a shady character who has gone AWOL from the navy so that he can pay a visit to Flange, his former ranking officer. Since Pig was responsible for dragging Flange off to a two-week drinking-spree on his wedding night, Cindy is outraged by the arrival of Pig, and finds the reunion reason enough to expel Flange from home as well as from her life for good. Driven out by Cindy, the three men mount Rocco's garbage truck and descend from Flange's place to the local dump, presided over by a man named Bolingbroke. At the dump-site, they spiral further down in the truck and find shelter in Bolingbroke's shack, which they reach after walking through tortuous mazes and "ravines" of garbage piles. The men continue drinking and entertain each other with sea-stories. Later, Bolingbroke reluctantly informs them that a group of "gypsies" have also made the dump their home, and during the night, Flange is indeed woken up by a young girl, called Nerissa, who leads him even further down through maze-like ducts to her own subterranean shelter, which she shares with her pet-rat, Hyacinth. The story's conclusion is ambiguous as it is never revealed whether Flange is awake or just dreaming this last episode, but in any case there is at least a vague hint that Flange will find love with Nerissa at the lowermost point of the dump.

Besides the manifestly displayed motif of downward procession, the story is teeming with neatly-placed dichotomies upon which interpreters may readily pounce. Some of the most salient examples: the house vs. the dump, where the former symbolizes the rule of rationality (representing Cindy's dominance) with its internal design characterized by angular shapes and transparent spaces as opposed to the latter's irrational dream-world of sinuous and oblique labyrinths; the privileged vs. the underprivileged – the former represented by the Flanges' lifestyle perched high on the cliff, the latter by Rocco and Bolingbroke living in the

subterranean microcosm of the dump; submission vs. control – Nerissa's childlike stature and behavior hints at a desire to be dominated by the white Anglo-Saxon Flange (whom she wants to marry and actually calls "Anglo") as opposed to the unimpressionable and disenchanted Cindy, who clearly presides over Flange's life in the world above.

The fact that most of these dichotomies are organized within a pattern of spatial symbols lends a semblance of structural coherence to the story. The most patent spatial symbol is that of descent—a prominent motif in Western mythology. Accordingly, Flange's character may be interpreted as taking up the role of mythical figures such as Orpheus, Heracles, Aeneas, Odysseus, or Theseus. Most of these characters descend to the underworld to rescue a loved one, and likewise, in Pynchon's alleged version of the myth, Flange's descent may be seen as an attempt to rescue a young girl (Nerissa) and, thereby, redeem himself. Yet instead of salvation, he finds himself trapped in a patriarchal fantasy, imagining himself as a "young and randy" Jolly Jack Tar, "thews and chin taut against a sixty-knot gale with a well-broken in briar clenched in the bright defiant teeth" ("Low-Lands" 60). In this vision, redemption can only be conceived through the domination of an infantile and submissive Nerissa, who is portrayed as young and fragile enough to be his child.

The motif of descent can also be explicated as the germ of a recurring trope in Pynchon's textual universe, since in the triad of his seminal early novels, *V.* (1963), *The Crying of Lot* 49 (1966), and *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973), the protagonists Benny Profane, Oedipa Maas, and Tyrone Slothrop all have to descend either to a literal or symbolic underworld to find their own versions of the truth that stays hidden under the surface. Benny Profane's underworld is the sewer system of New York City, Oedipa's the mysterious world of the underground movement called Trystero, and Slothrop's is "the Zone," that is, post-World War II Germany.[1]

Joseph W. Slade (in 1974) and Tony Tanner (in 1982) were among the first critics to devote specific attention to the story.[2] Both of these were included in their comprehensive monographs on Pynchon's fiction (incidentally, both titled *Thomas Pynchon*), so they do not advance a specific hypothesis, concept, or argument,

1 Evans Lansing Smith has devoted a book-length study to this motif in Pynchon's work, titled *Thomas Pynchon and the Postmodern Mythology of the Underworld* (2012). Smith analyzes Pynchon's novels published between 1963 (*V.*) and 2006 (*Against the Day*)—with the exception of *Vineland* (1990)—but not the short stories.

2 Slade and Tanner were not the only ones who reflected on the story in the 1970s and early 1980s. Lois Parkinson Zamora, in 1980, devoted a study to the science and eschatology in Pynchon's works, in which he "identified Nerissa as the acronym for the robot that can find its way out of a maze [in this case, the dump]" (Seed "Fantasy" 64).

but seek to offer instead a "generic" reading of the story. More specifically, their interpretations are less concerned with conceptual coherence than with literary affinity, and the authority of their readings often stems from the authority of the texts they reference. Slade and Tanner both touch upon the most salient aspects delineated above such as the symbolism of Flange's descent, social inequalities, the symbolism of the dump, etc., but what lends real substance to their interpretations is their minute attention to what they read as intertextual references. They both spot motifs taken from T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* and "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" (Slade 27-29; Tanner 30), but it is Slade who makes it the central theme of his interpretation: she identifies Nerissa (based on her rat's name) with the hyacinth girl from "The Burial of the Dead" section (Slade 30), Violetta, and the old woman with an eye-patch who predicted that she will marry a "tall Anglo" ("Low-Lands 76) with Madame Sosostris "who tells the fortune of Eliot's protagonist" (Slade 31). Tanner, on the other hand, compiles an impressive list of intertextual affinities: Shakespeare's *The Tempest, Henry IV* (the latter being the possible source of Bolingbroke's name)[3], *The Merchant of Venice* (Nerissa's name is the same as that of Portia's maid in the play); *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (Flange entering the mazes of the dump's netherworld)*;* Keats's *Endymion* (the "brain-sick" dreamer Endymion falling in love with an Indian maiden), and Washington Irving's "Rip Van Winkle" (sleep vs. wakefulness) (Tanner 31).

These early commentaries on "Low-Lands" have become integral to the hermeneutic history of the text, constituting ineluctable points of reference that subsequent readings of the story are compelled to acknowledge.[4] In this respect, the identification of the intertextual elements carries a special authoritative weight mainly for two reasons: first, because associating the story with time-honored works of the Western literary canon (somewhat flatteringly) lends a semblance of respectability and authority to Pynchon's text; second, the ability to spot these literary affinities testifies to the critics' professional expertise and interpretive finesse to be admired and surpassed by future generations of commentators and literary

3 The first one to have spotted this reference was actually Joseph Slade in his "'Entropy' and Other Calamities," published in *Pynchon: A Collection of Critical Essays* (1979), edited by Edward Mendelson. The more elaborate discussion of the waste-land imagery comes from his earlier book, *Thomas Pynchon* (1974).

4 Slade is credited for his discovery of Eliot- and Shakespeare-references in the following articles and books: David Seed: "Fantasy and Dream in Thomas Pynchon's 'Low-Lands'" (65) and *The Fictional Labyrinths of Thomas Pynchon* (31-35); David Cowart: *Thomas Pynchon: the Art of Allusion* (10; 98); Carole Holdsworth: "Cervantine Echoes in Early Pynchon" (47-51); Deborah L. Madsen: *The Postmodernist Allegories of Thomas Pynchon* (21); Luc Herman and Bart Vervaeck: "Race and Unreliable Narration in 'Low-Lands" (237-38).

students. The early critics' diligent efforts to dig up[5] possible literary influences on Pynchon can easily breed an "anxiety of influence" felt by their successors, some of whom still seem to be alert to intertextual connections. David Seed's reading of the story serves as a case in point, which, having duly acknowledged the elders, claims to recognize "Esmeralda's room in [Victor] Hugo's *Notre Dame de Paris*" as a prefiguration of Nerissa's room, where "Gringoire is brought to the Court of Miracles, the enclave of beggars in the heart of medieval Paris" ("Fantasy" 64). A similar example is provided by Carole Holdsworth, who devotes a whole study to what she deems "Cervantine echoes" in "Low-lands." Much in the same vein, Mark D. Hawthorne finds analogies between Flange's meandering through the dump and "Theseus's being guided by Ariadne through the maze" ("Labyrinths" 80-81).

Despite the apparently similar approach, however, these interpretations differ considerably in terms of critical outlook and rhetoric. Slade and Tanner do not seem to feel obliged to substantiate their interpretive claims either by providing philological evidence or by subsuming their intertextual findings into a conceptually unified interpretation. Consider the following passage by Slade as an example:

The girl's name is Nerissa, which may also derive from Shakespeare (*The Merchant of Venice*), or Pynchon may be playing on "Nereids," the nymphs of the sea. Who she *really is* becomes apparent when she introduces Flange to her pet rat . . . The rat's name is Hyacinth and Nerissa is *clearly* the hyacinth girl of "The Burial of the Dead" section of *The Waste Land.* Nerissa wants Flange to be her husband; she had been told by a fortune teller named Violetta—*Eliot's Madame Sosostris*—that she would wed an Anglo like him. (30; emphasis added)

The initial conjectures (Nerissa's name "*may* derive from Shakespeare"; "Pynchon *may be* playing on 'Nereids'") quickly give way to apodictic statements (Nerissa is *clearly* the hyacinth girl, and Violetta, Madame Sosostris), as though Slade had indeed stumbled upon a hidden truth that only needed to be revealed. Tanner dispenses even with the arrangement of his findings into a causal sequence; instead, he provides a lading list of possible interrelations, then he adds:

In all this mixing of writings and rewritings, Pynchon is not simply amusing himself or winking at learned readers. We should see this activity more as a sifting (or "burrowing" back) through not exactly the "rubbish" and "waste" of our literary past but through its accumulations to see what can be re-used (recycled, perhaps) to depict his particular fictional world. (31)

5 The metaphor of "digging" is not entirely arbitrary. The phrasing of David Cowart's acknowledgement of Slade's significant findings in the subject of "Pynchon's literary debts" is telling in this respect: "Joseph Slade has turned more earth in this critical garden than anyone else" (98).

Tanner's statements sound less apodictic than those in Slade's commentary, yet the act of listing possible references still hints at a revelatory intent. In both cases, the rhetoric suggests a strong sense of conviction on the critics' part, which helps consolidate their position as reliable interpreters of the text. The validity of the interpretation, however, is not necessarily grounded in the expertise or interpretive skills of the individual critics, but rather in the authority of the canon they reference.

By contrast, Carole Holdsworth moves beyond simply citing possible literary influences, and anchors her analysis in both biographical context and philological inquiry. She hypothesizes that Pynchon was significantly influenced by Cervantes's *Don Quixote* when writing "Low-Lands," which he might have studied in some detail in Vladimir Nabokov's classes at Cornell University. Holdsworth herself admits, however, that although Nabokov had delivered a series of lectures on *Don Quixote* at Harvard in 1951-52, there is no evidence of him giving the same lectures at Cornell (47). The question of evidence aside, Holdsworth does indeed find some compelling affinities, which include those between Flange and Don Quixote: both live in a fantasy world, both are fascinated by fictions (chivalric novels and sea-stories respectively); both run away from the controlling rationality of a woman (Don Quixote from his housekeeper, Flange from Cindy); both cut a tall and noble figure; in the end both come to realize the deceptive nature of fictions. Holdsworth also draws a comparison between Sancho Panza and Pig Bodine: both are lower-class companions, serving men of higher social standing (a nobleman and a naval officer respectively); Sancho is dismissed by Don Quixote's housekeeper just as Pig is scorned by Cindy; and while Don Quixote and Sancho first encounter the sea in Barcelona, Pig Bodine's sea-story is likewise set in the same city (Holdsworth 47). She sees in Nerissa both an incarnation of Dulcinea (whose "emerald-green eyes" become the "submarine green of her [Nerissa's] heart" in the closing sentence of "Low-Lands" [52]), and the female protagonist of another story by Cervantes from his *Exemplary Novels*, "La Gitanella" ("The Little Gypsy Girl") (52). However, finding Nerissa's "amorality" (begging a married man to stay with her) incompatible with "Cervantes's chaste, golden-haired heroine," Holdsworth declares her the "antitype" of the fair maiden (52-53).

The analogies Holdsworth identifies are clever and, at times, even persuasive, yet a comparative reading like this often lacks a clear articulation of its underlying concepts and objectives. What, after all, is proven or demonstrated by drawing parallelisms between two texts so distantly separated in time? That Nabokov may or may not have lectured the young Pynchon on *Don Quixote*? (It is not clear why this information is relevant to the story.) That Pynchon has read Cervantes's masterpiece? (Very likely, but so have many other people.) That the work influenced Pynchon when writing "Low-Lands?" (Possible, but this remains a speculative

assumption, which contributes little to our understanding of the story.) That Pynchon came up with a *Don Quixote*-like story all by himself *à la* Borges's author-character, Pierre Menard? (It would be an even more far-fetched speculation.) Holdsworth's motives may become clearer, if we examine the concluding sentences of her essay: "For Nabokov, Shakespeare and Cervantes are equals in 'the matter of influence, of spiritual irrigation.' The eternal waters of Cervantes's writings may well have irrigated Thomas Pynchon's early story 'Low-lands'" (53). The metaphor of "spiritual irrigation" suggests that *Don Quixote* (or Cervantes himself) is a life-giving force both in a physical and intellectual sense, without which/whom Pynchon's story could not have come into existence (at least not in this particular form). Thus, the purpose and function of Holdsworth's study may become more clear: it is not meant so much to be an elucidation of "Low-Lands" through *Don Quixote* as a laudation of *Don Quixote* through "Low-Lands," a reverential nod to the great master, Cervantes—putatively the father of all novels—and through Cervantes, to the authority of the Western literary canon.

While David Seed ostensibly challenges earlier approaches to "Low-Lands," he nevertheless remains committed to the same underlying drive to identify intertextual connections. After dutifully cataloguing Slade's references to Eliot and Shakespeare, he proceeds to critique his predecessor's approach and conclusions. "One drawback of Slade's approach," he reflects, "is that he tends to moralize the story and to look for signs of affirmation that simply do not exist" ("Fantasy" 65). He particularly finds Slade's interpretation of Flange as a "miserable messiah" all too flat: "Of course he is [a miserable messiah]; in fact, he is not a messiah at all. Pynchon dismisses that possibility when discussing Flange's attitude to the sea (Diaz [his unreliable psychotherapist] dismisses his fantasy of walking on its surface as a 'messiah complex')" (65). After essentially reiterating Slade's interpretation of Nerissa as an incarnation of Shakespeare's "Nereis" and Eliot's hyacinth girl, Seed goes on to question the exclusive relevance of these canonical literary references: "While Pynchon borrows details from *The Waste Land* this does not mean that he is trying to follow up all the motifs in that poem. The seascape is not 'waste' in Eliot's sense; Bolingbroke [from *Henry IV*] is king of the dump but has no quasimythical role; the fortune-teller [Violetta/Madame Sosostris] is an incidental detail; and Flange does not trace out the footsteps of Eliot's protagonist" (66).

There is a common pattern that seems to emerge across these readings: besides privileging intertextual identification, they often adopt a rhetoric of revelation, moving from speculation to certainty, and thereby reinforcing the critic's own authority. This tendency is evident in the apodictic tones used by Slade or the associative logic deployed by Tanner. Yet such interpretive strategies, far from breaking new ground, seem to follow paths laid down by the text itself. The story's

abundant symbolic architecture almost prescribes the terms of its exegesis. This raises the question: what is the critic doing when interpreting a story like "Low-Lands"? Is interpretation an act of discovery, or merely of execution? Tony Tanner himself gestures toward this issue when discussing Pynchon's "Entropy," suggesting that Pynchon leaves his "philosophic tracks" exposed, almost daring critics to follow them (*City* 153). In such a context, the critic becomes less a meaning-maker than a "meaning-follower," less a theorist than an annotator.

What Is An (Erudite) Author?

This tension becomes especially acute when placed in the context of theoretical debates about authorship and interpretation. In his famous essay, "What Is an Author" (1969), Michel Foucault describes (and debunks) the traditional image of the author as that of "the genial creator of a work in which he deposits, with infinite wealth and generosity, an inexhaustible world of significations," adding that "[w]e are used to thinking that the author is so different from all other men, and so transcendent with regard to all languages that, as soon as he speaks, meaning begins to proliferate, proliferate indefinitely" (221). According to Foucault, the "author-function" serves a diametrically opposed purpose: to limit the proliferation of meaning, impeding "the free circulation, the free manipulation, the free composition, decomposition, and recomposition of fiction" (221). The argument is plausible inasmuch as the postulation of an all-powerful, all-knowing author, who is in full control of all significations in his/her text, requires a total submission to the authority of this God-like creator on the part of the reader or critic. Even though the notion that omniscient authority emanates from the biographical author's charisma has been deconstructed—most powerfully by Foucault and Roland Barthes[6]—it still feels counterintuitive to dissociate the "knowledge" that a text conveys from some form of authorial agency. It is especially true of literary works in which the effect of omniscience comes off as a function of the text's "erudition," which often immediately gets imputed to the biographical or the implied author.

In this regard, few works in the American literary canon display such a wealth of manifold knowledge as those of Pynchon. The famously reclusive author has

6 In his equally famous essay, "The Death of the Author," Barthes writes in a similar vein about the dissolution of the metaphysically privileged status of the author: "We know now that a text is not a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning (the 'message' of the Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash" (146). The "Author-God" is an effect generated by those writings "bending and clashing."

indeed earned himself the reputation of being the paradigm case of the "erudite author." Even in his early days as an up-and-coming young writer, as well as in his more mature years, commentators marveled at his apparent knowledgeability in fields as diverse as the natural sciences, history, philosophy, music, and the fine arts. Since knowledge of any kind is not a free-floating entity, the most convenient way of accounting for it is to attribute it to the superior mind of the author. As one might expect, this commonly occurs in Pynchon-criticism. For example, experiencing the high-powered intellectual virtuosity of Pynchon's texts leads John O. Stark to make the following remark:

One needs to mention the tremendous erudition with which Pynchon develops his themes. One's arms may tire of holding *Gravity's Rainbow* long enough to read it, but the malady is nothing compared to the aching legs a tracker of his allusions will get or to the vertigo caused by trying to fit those allusions together into a pattern . . . Pynchon apparently has read everything. This vast knowledge distances in emotional terms a reader from Pynchon's fiction because it increases one's intellectual response to his work and decreases their emotional response. (24)

The intellectualism Stark describes arguably makes Pynchon more of a "critics' author" rather than a "readers' author." Commentators may indeed revel in exploring his scientific metaphors, artistic allusions, philosophical meditations at least in part because it affords them excellent opportunities to flex their interpretive muscles, perhaps even to showcase that their erudition is on a par with the author's own. Lay readers, however, may justly feel awed and overwhelmed by Pynchon's cerebral fictions and his characteristically verbose style, which at times might read as though they were academic treatises themselves.

Stark takes on Pynchon's intellectual challenges head-on and seems to fully embrace the vertiginous textual intricacies. He sets out to explore what he refers to as "Pynchon's fictions," by which he means elaborate discursive constructions that he (Stark) organizes into meaningful patterns pertaining to various disciplines and discourses represented in Pynchon's novels and stories, namely, science and technology, psychology, history, film, and literature. Stark's analyses are founded on the premise that Pynchon's texts deliberately frustrate the ordinary causal patterns of our thinking, so instead of causal/linear explications, he elects to arrange recurrent themes in clusters relegated to the disciplines and discourses listed above. The assumption behind this approach is that despite the loosely-knit causality and occasional surrealism of Pynchon's plots, his works offer coherent narratives at a higher level of interpretive comprehension. In order to reach this level of understanding one needs to recognize how "discrete bits of information" (39) can be seen to converge into meaningful and coherent patterns within the text. A case in point for the kind of interpretation Stark envisages is his explanation of the

significance of the motif of circularity in *Gravity's Rainbow*: "The Herero villages are circular, the benzene ring is circular, the mandala is circular," he contends, then goes on to identify three disciplines pertaining to these three dissident pieces of information: history (which can account for the shape of the villages), chemistry (vis-à-vis August Kekulé's discovery of the circularity of the benzene ring), and psychology (via Jung's explanation of the circularity of the mandala as the symbol of a fully developed personality). Then, he continues as follows:

"Thus, three nonliterary disciplines make meaningful something that had before been merely intelligible. Next, one can try to subsume all three facts within one discipline by arguing that the yearning for fullness represented by the mandala caused the Hereros to build circular villages and caused Kekulé to envision the benzene ring's shape". (40)

Although he does concede that "these cause-and-effect relations probably cannot be proved," he proceeds to argue that Pynchon, by taking "another step,"

clarifies the operation of the three disciplines, showing how they explain things. The villages, the benzene ring, and the mandalas become part of his circle imagery, which helps to unify the novel, and enriches its meaning by relating previously separate phenomena to each other . . . At the same time, by tying together these circle images, Pynchon reveals himself, the presiding force in the book, at work. (40)

Although Stark on the previous page criticizes an unnamed reviewer of *V.* for falling victim to the intentional fallacy (39), he seems to unequivocally espouse the traditional view of intentionalism that Foucault and Barthes have sought to demystify. Elevating the author to the position of "the presiding force" over his/her work hints at a firm belief in a metaphysically-conceived order of ultimate meaning. Moreover, he does not make it clear what (or who) exactly he means by "Pynchon": the biographical or the implied author. Due to Pynchon's renowned reclusiveness, hence assuming a lack of reliable biographical information on the critic's part, it seems plausible to argue that the figure of "Pynchon" as the omniscient, erudite, hyper-conscious mastermind behind a carefully designed universe of coherent meanings is entirely Stark's construction, that is, *his* inferred version of the implied author.

The biographical Pynchon's revelation of "himself at work," however, falls very far from Stark's image of him. Four years after the publication of Stark's book, the famously reclusive Pynchon surprised his readers by offering a low-key, casually-toned, and devastatingly self-deprecating account of his early work in his introduction to the collection of his early stories, *Slow Learner*. He starts by reflecting that his first reaction, "rereading these stories, was *oh my God*, accompanied by physical symptoms we shouldn't dwell upon" (3), and goes on to reflect on each of

the four stories in the collection with utter self-contempt. He rebukes his younger self for "operating under the motto 'Make it literary'" (by alluding to T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* and Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* in "The Small Rain"), which he deems "a piece of bad advice I made up all by myself and then took" (4). He also chastises himself for "the case of Bad Ear to be found marring much of the dialogue" (4) in the same story. He downplays his scientific knowledge, ever so often celebrated by commentators, by stating that "my grasp [of his signature-motif of entropy] becomes less sure the more I read" (14). Moreover, he reflects that due to his heavy-handed tackling of the central metaphor in "Entropy" made the characters "come off as synthetic, insufficiently alive" (12). The "lesson is sad," he reflects, "get too conceptual, too cute and remote, and your characters die on the page" (13). Before he concludes the introduction, he does not fail briefly to lash out at his highly-acclaimed early masterpiece, *The Crying of Lot 49*, which he refers to as a "story" marketed as a "novel," in which "I seem to have forgotten most of what I thought I'd learned up till then" (22).

These self-effacing prefatory remarks arguably undermine Stark's conception of Pynchon: the voice speaking here hardly seems to belong to an almost God-like author who controls every minute nuance of his text to subsume them into a "pan-semiotic" metanarrative. How can we ascertain, however, that the Pynchon of *Slow Learner*'s introduction carries more authority over his work (i.e., that he is the "real" Pynchon, speaking in his own voice, being truthful, etc.) than the implied author envisaged by Stark? Luc Herman and Bart Vervaeck have devoted an insightful study to the investigation of the introduction to *Slow Learner*, in which they patently question the reliability of Pynchon's autobiographical narrative: "With an I-narrator looking back on his old self," they contend, "Pynchon's introduction has all the trappings of autobiographical fiction. Considered as such it is prone to all the hazards of homodiegetic narration, including its manifold possibilities for unreliability as mapped by [James] Phelan and [Mary] Martin" (231). Herman and Vervaeck focus specifically on Pynchon's retrospective disclaimer of his own (in his words) "racist, sexist and proto-Fascist talk" (11) in "Low-Lands," and reflect that "[o]ne way to look at this self-accusation is to see it as part of a moral high-road strategy developed by Pynchon to endear himself with the audience of his remarkable introduction" (229). Although Pynchon could resort to a cop-out by imputing the questionable views to the character of Pig Bodine, who voices them in the story, he confesses: "Sad to say, [the voice] was also my own at the time" (11). Herman and Vervaeck argue that if the narrator of "Low-Lands" was a recognizable product of his own time, that is, the 1950s, then he can be seen as more reliable within the diegetic framework of the story than the "liberal-minded" explicator of the story, *post hoc*, in the 1980s (233-34).

Wayne C. Booth deems it necessary to introduce the notion of the implied author in his seminal *The Rhetoric of Fiction* because of "the intricate relationship of the so-called real author with his various official versions of himself" (71). He goes on to add: "We must say various versions, for regardless of how sincere an author may try to be, his different works will imply different versions, different ideal combinations of norms" (71). In his introduction to Slow Learner, Pynchon simultaneously constructs three versions of himself: (1) the "racist, sexist and proto-Fascist" narrator of "Low-lands;" (2) the enlightened, mature writer of 1984; (3) the "slow-learning" implied author he envisages as he rereads his own stories twenty-odd years after they were written. The multiplicity of authorial personae that Pynchon assumes—whether as erudite polymath, fallible young writer, or retrospective debunker—ultimately complicates any stable notion of authorial control or intention. What emerges is not a single, authoritative Pynchon but an elusive author-function: one that both generates interpretive authority and satirizes it by cultivating the image of intellectual prestige and then debunking it. As Herman and Vervaeck suggest, even Pynchon's self-critique may function rhetorically, staging a performance of humility that subtly reinforces his mystique. In this light, Stark's vision of the author as a presiding force organizing allusions into meaningful coherence becomes not merely reductive, but symptomatic of a critical desire for mastery that Pynchon's own discourse repeatedly undermines. The erudite author, then, cannot be posited as a stable figure but rather as a shifting effect—a projection of the very interpretive frameworks it appears to authorize.

The Truth of a True Lie: Observation, Interpretation, and Quantum Fictions

As the previous two sections have demonstrated, most commentators on "Low-Lands" appeal to some form of authority (canonical or authorial) to anchor their interpretations in a firm foundation of "evidence." At the same time, the story not only accommodates, but appears to anticipate a wide range of critical responses—intertextual, mythological, psychoanalytical—offering them up as though they were already embedded in its structure. What emerges is a narrative that seems to program its own interpretation, simultaneously enabling and neutralizing critical agency. In this light, the critics' apparent yearning for firm foundations may be seen as an attempt to neutralize the very instabilities the text puts into play. Their interpretations tend to obscure the fact that "Low-Lands" is not simply a literary object awaiting explication, but a self-reflexive system that stages—and subtly subverts—the assumptions of interpretation itself.

The most salient example is the way the story implicates, and "neutralizes," as it were, psychoanalytic interpretations, to which the texts most readily lends itself.

In this reading, the house on Long Island represents the superego, with Cindy as its policing figure: a woman so committed to social order that she even repurposes an abandoned police booth as a garden shed. Her world is one of rationality, discipline, and domestic propriety—conditions fundamentally incompatible with the presence of a garbage man or the instinct-driven intrusions of Pig Bodine. Within this framework, Flange's descent into the dump signifies a plunge into the unconscious, where Nerissa embodies his repressed desires and fantasies of male dominance. The reading is further reinforced—or even ironically undercut—by the story's explicit references to psychoanalysis at the diegetic level. We learn that Flange has been undergoing therapy, attempting to construe his recurring fantasies, including a fascination with the sea. This is interpreted by his analyst, Geronimo Diaz, in stereotypically Freudian terms: as a yearning for maternal love, grounded in the primordial association between seawater and the origins of life. According to Geronimo,

since all life had started from protozoa who lived in the sea, and since, as life forms had grown more complicated, sea water had begun to serve the function of blood until eventually corpuscles and a lot of other junk were added to produce the red stuff we know today; since this was true, the sea was quite literally in our blood, and more important, the sea—rather than, as is popularly held, the earth— is the true mother image for us all. (59)

A passage like this demonstrates that while the narrative may invite a classically psychoanalytic reading, the story simultaneously undermines such interpretations by parodying psychoanalysis itself. The framework is not only referenced but also rendered ineffectual through caricature. Flange is described as "a legitimate child of his generation," for whom "Freud [was] mother's milk" (57), and thus gains nothing new from the sessions with his analyst. The analyst, Geronimo, is depicted as a "crazed and boozy wetback" (57) who is "clearly insane" (58), believing himself to be Paganini, claiming to have sold his soul to the devil, and often ignoring his patient entirely while reading aloud from random-number tables or the Ebbinghaus nonsense-syllable lists. The absurdity of these details, paired with Diaz's pseudo-Freudian monologue—"the sea was quite literally in our blood, and more important, the sea . . . is the true mother image for us all"—suggests not just a critique of the method's explanatory power but a deliberate exposure of its rhetorical excesses. Psychoanalysis, here, is not disqualified by logical refutation but absorbed into the text's repertoire of satirical targets. Yet even the insight that "Low-Lands" resists psychoanalytic interpretation remains contingent upon the text's willingness to accommodate that resistance. The very idea that such a reading can be "undone" by the text suggests that interpretive strategies—whether affirmed or negated—are already inscribed within the narrative. This observation points

toward a broader tendency in the story: its apparent readiness to offer up symbolic material for interpretation while simultaneously ironizing or disrupting that same process.

This uneasy boundary between interpretation and meta-interpretation—between being inside the story's hermeneutic design and stepping outside it—collapses most forcefully in a key narrative moment. When Pig Bodine expects Flange to follow his sea story with one of his own, Flange declines: "I would have, only I couldn't think of any offhand." The narrator immediately intervenes to offer the "real reason":

If you are Dennis Flange and if the sea's tides are the same that not only wash along your veins but also billow through your fantasies then it is all right to listen to but not to tell stories about that sea, because you and the truth of a true lie were thrown sometime way back into a curious contiguity and as long as you are passive you can remain aware of the truth's extent but the minute you become active you are somehow, if not violating a convention outright, at least screwing up the perspective of things, much as anyone observing subatomic particles changes the works, data and odds, by the act of observing. (69)

This remarkable passage, which clearly draws upon Werner Heisenberg's principle of uncertainty, foregrounds "truth" as inherently paradoxical: simultaneously apodictic, yet inaccessible; epistemologically firm, yet fluid and elusive. The sea, both symbolic and material, circulates within Flange's body and imagination; it becomes the metonymic ground for a kind of truth that is both inside and outside, but in either case it resists articulation. The oxymoronic phrase "the truth of a true lie" suggests that truth of this sort ceases to be metaphysical essence, and rather becomes contingent proximity—what pragmatists like William James or Richard Rorty would call a *truth for us*, rather than a truth *in itself*. In this framework, truth is not something to be *possessed* but rather something made temporarily useful by context, community, or convention. Nietzsche's notion of truth as "a movable host of metaphors, metonymies, anthropomorphisms" (117) also resonates here, along with his claim in the same essay that all language falsifies by equating what is inherently unequal. If the truth of sea stories rests on a "curious contiguity" rather than correspondence, then any attempt to "tell" or interpret such truths inevitably distorts them. Interpretation becomes fabrication, and every reading—no matter how self-aware—risks becoming just another well-formed lie.

This applies not only to literal storytelling but to critical reading itself. To interpret is to "tell a story" about the story—to move from passive awareness to active intervention. But as the passage analogizes through quantum theory, observation alters the system. The interpreter cannot remain neutral: like the physicist in Heisenberg's uncertainty principle, the critic can measure one

dimension (e.g. narrative coherence) only at the cost of obscuring another (e.g., textual multiplicity). Interpretation thus functions not as disclosure but as interference. The more conscious and self-reflexive the interpretive act, the more it reveals its own entanglement in the system it aims to analyze. Even meta-interpretation, which claims an epistemological "outside," is drawn back in. The narrator who explains Flange's silence occupies a meta-level within the text—but is still part of the story's architecture. Likewise, the critic who seeks critical distance from both the narrative and the tradition of its interpretation may find that such distance is already anticipated and encoded. What appears to be transcendence becomes metastability—a shifting threshold that reveals the impossibility of fully stepping outside the system. The truth of interpretation, then, is not a matter of alignment with textual essence, but of rhetorical legitimacy within the interpretive community that sanctions "true lies."

CONCLUSION

What "Low-Lands" seems to demand of its critics is not only interpretation but also self-interpretation. The story appears to mirror the critic's own assumptions, desires, and interpretive reflexes—not to validate them, but to expose their constructed nature. It is not simply that the text resists definitive meaning; it performs that resistance by showcasing the critic's role as both necessary and always already riddled with a sense of charlatanry (i.e., casting the critic in the role of the maker of "true lies"). What looks like a hermeneutic treasure trove may easily turn out to be an interpretive trap; what may seem like insightful commentary could be merely compliance with the story's own pre-scripted cues. The critic becomes part of the apparatus, woven into a system that simulates revelation while withholding revelation. Pynchon's text certainly does not abolish interpretation but renders it contingent, ironic, and unstable. In this regard, "Low-Lands" becomes less a story to be decoded than a site where literature and criticism meet, each interpreting, and misinterpreting, the other in turn.

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How Do Adult English Language Learners Use their First Language as a Cognitive Tool to Understand Text in the Target Language? A Case Study

Rita DiFiore

Abstract

This four-subject qualitative case study investigated the reasons English language learners use their primary language while they construct meaning from written text. I used four research tools: formal survey, interview, observation, and research journal. The participants were adult English language learners, whose primary language was Hungarian. They shared their insights about their reading practices in their second language.

Results of the study showed that adult language learners preferred to use their primary language as a tool to read in English for several reasons. Knowledge of various content areas in their first language helped them connect new information to the existing one. Understanding the structure of their first language gave them the framework to contrast and analyze their second language. Code switching and mixing enabled them to clarify cultural details when their second language was not sufficiently developed to do so. Translating was used as a reading strategy, and its target varied according to the level of proficiency of the participants. Overall, the students' beliefs and their motivations about language learning clearly reflected the need for the incorporation of the linguistic resources their mother tongue offered.

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CHAPTER I
Introduction

Topic

The topic of this research is second language acquisition of adult language learners, with a particular focus on reading comprehension. In the United States, immigrants enrolled in literacy courses had been the fastest growing segment of adult education programs until four years ago. Since 2005, there has been a slow decrease in numbers (2007 National Center for Education Statistics). Teaching them adequate English language skills is crucial to increase their employability and their integration into society. While educators tend to agree on the importance of community-based adult education courses, there is no consensus regarding the instructional theories and models (Gallegos, 1994).

English teachers often advocate contrasting educational theories regarding the use of the students' first language (L1) during language learning. The English-only classroom seems to be the norm for adult learners, yet bilingual education is widely accepted and practiced on the elementary and high school levels. The use of L1 is also deemed useful in language classes where English is taught as a foreign language.

Problem Statement

Unfortunately, the achievement of immigrant adult students is rather inconsistent. Adult learners must face several external obstacles in learning a second language, including time constraint, and lack of primary language support (Johnson, 2003). The diversity of adult learners in non-academic literacy programs presents several internal problems. The student community is not homogenous in their level of education. Some students hold college degrees from their countries of origin, while others are pre-literate in their own language. There is a variety of students' learning styles represented in each classroom. Educational goals of certain students may not coincide with program goals. The length of time students had spent in the target culture also varies, and so does their level of immersion.

The multi-level proficiency of the learners often results in the frequent use of their L1. This occurs particularly in community-based programs, where the majority of the learners share the same first language. Students revert to their first language for a variety of reasons, and this is often viewed as unwillingness to practice L2, or the second language. Unfortunately, there is no cohesive literature to address the

issues, which stem from the unique characteristics of such student populations. (Mathews-Aydinli, 2008).

In this study, I investigated the reasons for the use of L1 during reading comprehension, and explored whether the use of the primary language could work as an effective problem solving learning strategy. The intent of the research was to provide intervention in literacy classrooms. Based on the results of the study, my objective is to incorporate useful reading strategies, which utilize L1 into the explicit instruction of comprehension strategies. On the long term, the study can become part of a larger body of literature, which addresses the needs of adult immigrant learners in non-academic settings.

Purpose of Research

For beginning students, the emphasis of the teaching-learning process is on reading and listening comprehension. Krashen (2008), states that acquiring the new language in the natural order requires comprehensible input. However, in a diverse and multi-level classroom "comprehensible" is not uniform. When students who have a low level of proficiency request full-text translation of written material from their peers, the use of L1 is indeed an obstacle to language acquisition. On the other hand, the primary language may be used for problem solving purposes. I feel that it is important to separate convenience translation from using the primary language as a resource for effective reading comprehension.

The exploration of the participants' opinions and experiences regarding reading in English informs literacy-based instruction. I wish to identify preferred strategies for reading comprehension in the participants' second language, and use them to accommodate learners' needs. Improving the explicit instruction and teaching transparency of reading strategies is another purpose of the study. In addition, the research helps demonstrate the possible negative effects of the use of L1 on second language acquisition.

The purpose of this case study is to describe reading strategies, which include the use of the adult English language learners' (ELLs) first language. Reading strategy is defined as a cognitive tool an individual uses to construct meaning from written text.

Research Question

The research question addresses the usefulness of L1 during second language acquisition, particularly during reading comprehension in L2:

How Do Adult English Language Learners Use their First Language as a Cognitive Tool to Understand Text in the Target Language?

The study uses four research tools: a formal survey, an interview, an observation and the researcher's journal. The researcher investigates how frequently the participants use reading strategies, which include their first language, and for what reason these strategies are the preferred methods of constructing meaning.

The study explores the relation between the learners' previous education, and the use of L1. I also wish to understand how the learners' level of proficiency in the English language influences the frequency of using the primary language for problem solving. Exploration of whether translation is a problem solving tool and a valid reading strategy which aids reading comprehension in a second language or a hindrance of second language acquisition is the final goal of this qualitative research.

Definition of Terms

Language is defined as a mental tool that people use to organize and control processes concerning memory, attention, problem solving, planning, evaluation, and voluntary learning (Williams, pg. 1).

Translating is defined by Oxford (1990) as "converting the target language expression into the native language (at various levels, from words and phrases all the way up to whole texts); or converting the native language into the target language" (p.46).

Learning strategies are operations or steps used by a learner to facilitate the acquisition, storage, or retrieval of information (Rigney 1978, Dansereau in press).

Reading comprehension is defined as using background knowledge and cues from three language systems to construct meaning from written text (Freeman & Freeman, 2004).

CHAPTER II
Literature Review

This section includes review of literature from three areas: Adult Immigrant Students Enrolled in ESL Education, Second Language Acquisition (SLA) Theories, and Learning or Reading Strategies.

The primary area of literature I reviewed pertains to immigrant adult learners enrolled in non-academic literacy programs. The authors focused on the conditions of community-based continuing education programs. They described the socioeconomic conditions of the students, and summarized the goals and motivations of the learners. Part of the reviewed literature investigated learners' beliefs about instructional methods and learning styles, and highlighted the importance of student empowerment through participation in curriculum and instructional design.

The most comprehensive study I reviewed was a survey of current trends in research on adult English language learners (ELLs). It was published in 2008, in Adult Education Quarterly, a journal of research and theory. The author, Mathews-Aydinli, PhD, reviewed and summarized the findings of 41 studies, which had been written between 2000 and 2006. These studies focused exclusively on the adult immigrant population of ESL learners in non-academic environments. Thus the learners' circumstances, needs, and goals were fundamentally different from other ELLs', who were enrolled in EFL university courses, or workplace literacy programs. The author organized the review of research in three categories. The common thread through the description of learning communities and educational approaches was the diversity of the learners. She stressed the significance of caring communities, and encouraged programs, which provide the necessary support for these learners. Teacher-related studies comprised the second largest group of articles. They either investigated the role of the teacher or described action research. These articles mainly discussed instructional practices in a particular setting with the focus on balance between traditional and progressive methods. Second-Language Acquisition Studies (SLA) described research where ELLs were the participants of the study. The number of these studies was noticeably smaller than others. The use of interactive multimedia and the use of recast and translation for corrective feedback were the focus of the quasi-experimental research. The author contended that these studies were barely projectable for the implementation of better classroom practices, since they were not concerned with the particular variables, which characterize the adult second language learners in non-academic settings.

The following studies addressed specific issues related to immigrant adult education. In her case study of four Latina women, Johnson (2003) described the non-academic learning environment of Latina students in California. Her research focused on the effectiveness of a project-based bilingual curriculum. She contended that the literacy development of adult language learners must be accelerated by applying appropriate curriculum and learning experiences, since the older students are under significant time constraint. As opposed to children and teens, the adult learners must obtain survival skills in a short period of time in order to be able to provide housing and income for themselves and/ or their families. Their learning is focused on those skills therefore the input of adult English language learners (ELLs) significantly promotes learner success. She also advocated the use of varied instructional strategies in order to accommodate the needs of the secondary language learners with diverse academic experiences and learning styles.

Her research concluded that second language acquisition was most successful when students were able to make real world connections due to language use, which mirrored their community and cultural background. A study conducted in a similar setting described several components of adult immigrant education, which contributed to student success or failure.

Buttaro (2002, 2004) focused on the factors, which supported or hindered learner promotion. The studies described the educational experiences of Hispanic English as Second Language (ESL) students in the United States. The author noted that the key element of learner success in the case of Latinas, who were enrolled in community-based literacy education, was the support of their extended family and community. Their challenges matched the broader adult student population from various cultural backgrounds, and ranged from securing reliable quality-child care, and issues regarding transportation, to academic and work counseling, and medical problems.

Gault's (2004) study analyzed the extrinsic and intrinsic motivation of adult ELLs. He contended that the students' beliefs about "good teaching" should be given more prominence in educational design. Goals of language programs and teachers' practices often do not match the students' expectations. Students frequently prefer traditional grammar-based form of instruction as opposed to the teacher's communicative approach. Another problem, which frequently emerges in ESL settings is the issue of error correction. Due to the mismatch in assumptions, the learning environment is limited and less effective.

The second area of focus for the literature I reviewed was the contrasting theories in second language teaching: the English-only classroom versus bilingual education. The three identified reasons for the opposing views were underlying political principles, findings and implications of studies in foreign and second

language acquisition, and teacher and student beliefs and attitudes regarding L1 use in ESL settings.

Polio (1994) advocated the monolingual English classroom for a variety of reasons. She stated that the primary reason for the extensive use of L1 in ESL classrooms had been the inadequate training of teachers in making L2 comprehensible. Instructors of adult ESL programs are often paraprofessionals, volunteer tutors, or peer students. With proper training of ESL professionals, this shortcoming of ESL instruction can be eliminated. She also referred to a political framework, where the use of L1 perpetuated the existing power relationships. She believed that the advocacy of the bilingual classroom is the product of a politically motivated agenda, whereas the English only approach is based on research in Second Language Acquisition (SLA).

Stephen Krashen's (1997) findings regarding comprehensible input influenced a large segment of ESL professionals, and created an unfriendly climate for the bilingual classroom. The Comprehension Hypothesis found evidence from the areas of literacy development, which supports that second-language learning and foreign-language learning operate in much the same way. In his Report (2008) he also stated that

> "the present is marked by the emergence of the Comprehension Hypothesis, the view that we acquire language when we understand messages, and is also characterized by the beginning stages of its applications: comprehensible-input based teaching methods, sheltered subject matter teaching, and the use of extensive reading for intermediate language students. My hope is that the future will see a clearer understanding of the Comprehension Hypothesis, and the profession taking more advantage of it."

As an advocate of the opposing theory, Auerbach (1993) suggested that ESL professionals who believe in the exclusive use of the target language in the ESL classroom should reexamine their views. She contended that the students' primary linguistic resources must be viewed as an asset in an ESL classroom, and must be utilized at all levels of proficiency in English. She has found that the use of L1 "reduces anxiety and enhances the effective environment for learning, takes into account socio-cultural factors, facilitates incorporation of learners' life experiences, and allows for learner-centered curriculum development" (p. 20). Although her suggestions and findings specifically pertained to the English as Second Language programs, which exist in the United States and other English speaking countries, this view is widely supported by linguists and educators involved in foreign language teaching (EFL).

Hungarian linguist and educator, Medgyes (2004) stated that successful language learning occurs when the language teacher is not only proficient in both the primary and the foreign languages, but due to his dual linguistic background, he is able to anticipate the problems the target language presents. Thus the students' first language is an essential element of predicting, consciousness raising and problem solving. He contended that the key to effective language instruction is the ability to contrast and analyze the primary and the target languages. His language teaching approach was particularly successful in the case of instruction of languages, which were not related to one another. His findings were based on the results of comparative and applied linguistic studies, rather than student-centered action research.

Posen (2006), on the other hand investigated the human element of language instruction, the EFL learners' beliefs about strategic use of translation in English learning. His research sought the answer to questions regarding students' background variables in relation to their beliefs about using translation as a learning tool. His research listed the various historical methods of language education. The Grammar-Translation Method, which was mostly used for the instruction of the Latin language, was denounced when the Direct and the Audio-Lingual Methods emerged. The most current trend in education embraces the Communicative Language Teaching Approach, where the target language is used during functional real life-like activities in the classroom.

As the preferred methods of language instruction have evolved, the students' willingness to incorporate their primary language into classroom discussion has not seemed to diminish. Learners use translation to understand text, to remember vocabulary, and to formulate output in a foreign language. Adult students with a well-developed proficiency in their primary language, use their first language resources through translation as a learning strategy. Posen (2006) noted that researchers had devoted relatively little attention to the learners' beliefs and opinions in consideration of the use of translation in language learning.

Swaffar and Bacon (1993) raised the issue of social context as a factor, which often renders a bilingual discussion necessary. The ESL or EFL reader, especially in the beginning phase of education, frequently encounters information, which is culturally unfamiliar, therefore the most effective method of comprehension is instructional conversation. Since the limited proficiency language learner is unable to process and discuss cultural information in the target language, code switching or code mixing may be the most effective tool of successful comprehension. Johnson (2003) supported this view in her description of Latina students in a community-based bilingual program. She emphasized that adult learners already possess a certain level of proficiency in their primary language, and it is linked to

a pool of cultural knowledge, which is transferable to the target language if the appropriate tools are used. She further stressed the significance of the maintenance of the students' primary language. Her research suggested that "educational and language programs that provide instruction and support in the primary language, while building competence and fluency in the second language, are valued" (p. 35).

Upon the review of the contrasting teaching theories, I focused on learning strategies and particularly reading comprehension strategies of adult second language learners. "Research and theory in second language learning strongly suggest that good language learners use a variety of strategies to assist them in gaining command over new language skills" (O'Malley et al, 1985, p. 557). The authors described learning strategies as they are related to second language acquisition, as well as through their implications to cognitive psychology. Previous research had shown that the use of strategies in second language learning had been limited to the application of cognitive strategies to vocabulary learning and retention tasks.

According to second language acquisition theory, tasks vary from cognitively demanding to relatively simple ones, characterized by rich contextual clues. The cognitively demanding, or language learning view acknowledges the need for learning strategies, which include inferencing, monitoring, formal and functional practicing. The language acquisition view promotes the mastery of conversational fluency through spontaneous contexts and unconscious adaptation of rules. In Krashen's (1982) opinion, learning a language does not result in acquisition. One of the research questions O'Malley (1985) investigated was whether cognitive learning strategies can be useful in a natural teaching environment. The applied strategies varied according to the skill developing activity. The researchers found that most strategies were utilized during vocabulary learning. Since vocabulary building is an essential component of reading and listening comprehension, the application of learning strategies in developing comprehension skills does not impede on the natural language acquisition approach.

Narrowing the focus from general learning strategies to reading comprehension strategies in a second language, I reviewed several studies that concentrated on the adult students' reading strategies in their primary and their target languages. The following studies investigated the relevance of the students' level of proficiency in the target language, the transferability of the reading skills from L1 to L2, the correlation between the students' level of literacy in L1 and their ability to recode written text in L2. The reviewed studies explored the effectiveness of explicit training in reading strategies as they pertain to specific text elements. Various methods of research procedures included think-aloud protocols of individual students, and collaborative work of a group of learners. While the studies focused on the

significance of the instruction of reading strategies in L2, they also revealed that the use of L1 was an acceptable tool for monitoring comprehension or clarifying culturally unfamiliar content.

A comparative study of processing strategies by Pritchard and O'Hara (2008) provided insight into the tools students utilized as they read in their native and their target languages. The authors interviewed 100 bilingual students who were proficient readers in both languages. As the participants read a passage, they stopped and reflected on their thoughts. The responses were categorized into four strategies, which pertained to the four components of text. Monitoring Comprehension (A) represented word recognition. Establishing Intrasentential Ties (B) referred to the students' ability to make meaning of the particular sentence. Establishing Intersentential Ties (C) related to the topic sentence and the other sentences in the paragraph. Finally, Establishing Intercontextual Ties (D) constructed meaning of the entire text. The results of the study showed that when students read in their native language, they relied on intercontextual ties, whereas during reading in the target language, they used strategies for the more basic categories of the text. They were also more likely to use translation as a comprehension strategy for narrative texts, while they used visual support and other tools for expository texts. The instructional implications of this study emerge from the frequent use of strategies in category A, which related to word recognition in the target language. The study demonstrated that ELLs are not necessarily able to transfer reading strategies from one language onto the other. Therefore the authors suggested that the design of instructional activities should incorporate the use of L1 for additional student support.

Another study by Prince (1996) analyzed the role of context versus translation as a function of proficiency in second language vocabulary learning. The findings resonate with the research of Pritchard and O'Hara (2008) regarding the students' reliance on translation for vocabulary comprehension. Prince (1996) stated that "The size of vocabulary needed to achieve general communication skills in English has been estimated at 5,000 words." (p. 478). The research results he reviewed showed that paired associate learning of words seemed to be the preferred method of the majority ELLs, yet most teachers discouraged this effective translation learning. The ESL professionals contended that linking words exclusively to their equivalent in the students' L1, and ignoring the contextual change in their meaning would undermine and limit second language acquisition.

The students listed a number of reasons for their preferred method of pair-translation. They stated that the frequent incorrect guesses they had made about the meaning of the new vocabulary they encountered in the text rendered their comprehension faulty. The learners also reported that translation learning resulted

in better recall of the vocabulary. Studying the words in pairs was a result of conscious and intentional learning. On the other hand, an unknown word, which appeared in an L2 text impeded on comprehension, and the students generally ignored its specific meaning in an effort to construct meaning from the entire text. The time the learners spent analyzing the semantic cues was significantly more than applying the translation approach. Therefore, when the students were faced with choosing a high-effort strategy as opposed to a familiar one, they chose the latter, since they were unwilling to relinquish strategies they adopted in the early stages of second language learning. Lower level of proficiency in L2 was also a key component in the learners' choice of approach.

Context-based vocabulary acquisition is preferred by professionals for a variety of reasons. The research has shown that a continued resistance to use the semantic cuing system resulted in the inability to transfer meaning into different contexts. Participants from the weaker group performed better on word recall. Yet their overall comprehension was significantly behind the participants from the higher proficiency group. These weaker learners were not beginner students. It was their overdependence on translation that stopped them from applying and developing other strategies. ESL instructors' appropriate guidance can aid students to gradually apply metacognitive approaches to construction of meaning. Since context-based inferential strategies and translation pairs both have their advantages, the author recommended a mixture of approaches for instructional application in the early stages of language acquisition. The research of Cohen and Aphek (1980) supported the findings of Prince (1996) regarding the voluntary applications of various approaches at different levels of proficiency. Cohen and Aphek (1980) concluded that context provides the necessary cues once the ELLs advanced to a level of proficiency where they do not feel "overstimulated" by the unfamiliar text in their target language. Hulstijn (1992) added another perspective where he suggested that there should be a clear distinction between reading comprehension and reading in order to increase students' vocabulary.

Second language reading strategy instruction and its effects on comprehension and word inference ability was also the topic of Kern's (1989) study. Kern (1989) agrees with Prince (1996) that the lack of L2 word recognition is an obstacle of comprehension, and he further explains that "the demands of L2 words can impede comprehension by reducing the availability of attentional resources" (p. 135). ELLs who have a low level of proficiency in L2, are unable to use chunking strategies as they do automatically in their L1. Therefore sometimes even students, who are proficient readers in their own language, are unable to transfer their reading skills into their second language. One of the reasons Kern (1989) believed in the importance of strategy training for students was because ELLs were more

"linguistically bound" to the text in L2 than in L1. As a result of their increased focus on the structure of the text, their comprehension suffered. The reading strategies the researcher suggested include making inferences regarding the meaning of unknown vocabulary, and word-combining or synthesizing meaning in text segments. These were the reading strategies adult proficient readers automatically applied during reading in L2. Bringing these tools of comprehension to the surface will develop their reading skills in L2. The instructional implications of this study included the suggestion that read-aloud practices in class should be reserved for pronunciation practice only, and the teachers should not put expectations of comprehension on the students without the appropriate application of a specific reading strategy. Another conclusion was the recommendation of procedures, which teach morphological aspects and word derivation in order to improve word recognition. Finally, the use of read-aloud techniques can point to the students' particular difficulties and needs. Kern (1989) also warned that instruction in reading strategies is not necessarily universally effective for all adult ELLs. Learner characteristics may vary, and the abovementioned instructional approaches may not correspond with certain learning styles of adult learners.

Davis and Bistodeau (1993) also used think-aloud protocols to investigate how L1 and L2 reading differ. The findings of the study provided two answers to the original research question. The researchers found strong evidence that the vocabulary of the target language has a great impact on the psychological processing of the adult learner. The foreign context, and the lack of the necessary background information decreases the readers' performance in L2. In addition, the qualitative analyses of the study revealed that the culturally ingrained literacy practices of adult learners also influenced their strategy use and overall reading behaviors. The recommendation of the authors was that ESL practitioners should not adopt and develop one set of comprehension strategies over the other. A complete understanding of reading in a foreign or second language requires cognitive as well as social perspectives.

Similarly to the research of Kern (1989) and Davis and Bistodeau (1993), the research of Seng and Hashim (2006) used think-aloud protocols as they investigated reading comprehension strategies of adult ELLs. All the previously cited researchers who used the think-aloud protocols to compare the reading process in L1 and L2 dismissed the transferability of strategies from the primary onto the target language, and agreed that a variety of reading strategies must be incorporated into L2 instruction in order to meet all students' cultural and individual learning styles. However, none of them specifically addressed the issue of L1 use during L2 reading activities. Seng and Hasim's (2006) study supported a bilingual approach to reading comprehension versus the English-only, or otherwise known as contextual

approach. As they investigated the use of L1 in reading comprehension among tertiary ESL learners, the researchers examined the extent and frequency of those reading strategies, which utilized the students' first language. They contended that reading is a problem solving activity. When the students did not possess the necessary proficiency in the target language, they returned to their primary language. The research targeted a collaborating group of students, as opposed to the individual learner. It investigated the cognitive process of reading in a foreign language, which was expressed during the discourse among the students.

This study provided insight into the thinking process of students while they recoded written text. When students' competency in a target language was not sufficient for problem solving, the primary language was a valuable tool. This study advocated the multilingual classroom, and encouraged activities, which utilize the students' linguistic backgrounds.

The researchers asserted that second language learners willingly and effectively utilized the linguistic information their first language provided. Translation was not deemed as an obstacle, but rather a beneficial cognitive strategy of second language learning. From the transcribed problem solving discussion of the four participants, the authors obtained a unique insight into collaborative reading. The recorded verbal interactions between the subjects revealed the use of several comprehension strategies. During the observation of the individual reader's interaction with the text, the researchers did not receive the same amount of information about the thought process. Reflections on the reading process did not provide as much information as the observation of group work did. Therefore the group setting was key to obtaining accurate information. The authors also intended to measure the extent of the use of L1. The frequency of translating, code-mixing and code-switching was indicative of the students' level of proficiency. The authors indicated the use of eighteen reading comprehension strategies. Fifteen strategies included the use of the students' first language. The study showed that the students used their primary language in 32.20 %. This supported the hypothesis that reading in a foreign language did not take place only in the target language. The code-switching and code-mixing strategies the students used to clarify the meaning of the text indicated that L1 was used constructively during reading comprehension in L2. The data showed that L1 was an essential element of constructing meaning in L2.

The case study is not highly projectable due to the limited number of participants, but the theoretical framework provided insight into second language acquisition and constructing meaning from written text. The study showed that the extent of L1 use varied according to the subjects' level of proficiency, academic background, individual goal of education, the method and setting of instruction,

as well as the focus skill of the activity. Since the students considered reading in a foreign language a problem solving activity, they used their well-developed primary language as a resource.

Another study of collaborative dialogues between adult ESL learners investigated the effects of proficiency differences and patterns of pair interacting on second language learning. Watanabe and Swain (2007) found that the "proficiency differences do not necessarily affect the nature of peer assistance and L2 learning" (p. 121). The researchers recorded and analyzed as the partners talked about their language output. The data showed that there was a value for the more proficient students to be paired with and interacting with the less proficient students. Overall the research proved that students of various proficiency levels were able to interact with each other. This finding supported the researchers' original hypothesis that collaborative peer to peer dialogue acted as a mediator of L2 learning.

Students use reading strategies while they are engaged in reading. Miscue analysis is an instructional strategy that raises the reader's awareness of the reading process. The reader is recorded, and the observed mistakes are later analyzed. These miscues reveal the readers' interactions with the text. Retrospective miscue analysis with proficient adult ESL readers was the topic of research of Wurr, Theurer and Kim (2009). Their review of literature indicated that similar studies on this particular student population had not been published to date. They investigated how miscue analysis made L2 learners more aware of the reading process. They concluded that proficient L2 readers gained confidence in their reading ability through the conscious analysis of the four cuing systems: syntactic, semantic, graphophonic and pragmatic. They further concluded that the students' metacognitive skills in L1 aided their ability to process information in L2. The students, who were interviewed by the researchers reported that their perception of reading became less skill-oriented, and more focused on meaning as they continued discussing and analyzing their miscues. The students of low level proficiency were not able to converse about their miscues in the target language, but they still applied the strategy of miscue analysis to improve their awareness of the reading process. The study of Wurr, Theurer and Kim (2009) supported the theory that the adult language learners' primary language can in fact become a useful resource in problem solving, with appropriate guidance and proper instructional scaffolding.

The literature I reviewed ranged from 1978 to the present. The cited authors conducted their research with adult language learners in academic and non-academic settings, in bilingual or monolingual classrooms. The studies investigated the characteristics of adult language learners, particularly in regards to their reading comprehension, and overall concluded that the students' learning is maximized in a friendly, non-threatening classroom, where a trained professional willingly

incorporated their first language resources, life experiences, and educational goals into the curriculum design.

The studies suggested the integration of problem solving learning strategies. The authors contended that increasing the students' awareness will benefit the universal learning and reading process. Seeking the students' input through think-aloud protocols, interviews and surveys will contribute to their successful involvement in their education.

CHAPTER III
Methodology

Procedures

Strategies of inquiry

This qualitative research describes the students' beliefs about using their first language during constructing meaning from written text in their target language. The study encourages participants to reflect on their best practices of language learning through the use of a survey, an observation and an interview, since learners' preconceived beliefs affect the way they learn a foreign language (Posen, 2006). The study describes the views of adult ELLs on their own language learning. The assumption is that at various levels the participants prefer to use their primary language to understand written text. The three forms of inquiry explore the participants' educational background, learning goals, beliefs about successful instruction, and particular learning strategies they use automatically and willingly. The fourth form of inquiry records the researcher's reflections and insights on the process of data gathering.

Role of the researcher

I am a non-native speaker of English with native-like fluency. My first language is Hungarian. I studied EFL for sixteen years in Hungary. I received my BA in teaching English and Russian as foreign languages in 1987. During my professional experience as an EFL student and teacher, the use of L1 had been encouraged as a tool for monitoring comprehension and organizing linguistic information.

In the US, I have taught ESL for immigrants in a non-academic setting for six years. I worked with high school students in a bilingual program for one year. I also have sixteen years experience as a professional interpreter/translator serving language minorities in superior courts, and diplomatic visitors of the US Department of State. As a translator, I have worked for an international research corporation. This experience enhanced my knowledge of survey design and translation.

Creswell (2002) stated that research is most appropriate when the educator's goal is the improvement of instructional practices through specific emphasis on individual empowerment of students. I believe that adult ELLs who participate in the curriculum design and the selection of language objectives will receive individual empowerment (Johnson, 2003). As a teacher, I seek to refine and

improve my teaching practices. Observations of beginner level students revealed that they engage in conversations in their first language for various reasons. The preference of adult students to use their mother tongue while they construct meaning from written text is worthy of investigation.

Non-academic settings

Non-academic language learning facilities are generally non-profit, community-based agencies. The student population is a mixture of immigrants from various countries. Their educational backgrounds may vary from illiterate to college degree from the country of origin. Their ages range from teen to senior years. They have diverse learning goals including US citizenship, drivers' education, computer skills in order to improve employability, English language acquisition, or improving family literacy. Some students aspire to higher education, while others participate in classes in order to increase their level of social involvement in the community.

The students' attendance often suffers due to lack of transportation or family support, financial difficulties, or medical problems. They often experience difficulties obtaining or retaining employment due to limited language proficiency or poor work skills. Their lack of a support system, and their relatively recent relocation to the USA renders them financially insecure. They often choose to participate in community-based language education, because they do not have the necessary funds to be able to afford ESL courses provided by community colleges.

ESL education in non-academic settings is generally funded by the state or various charities. The donors may require the program to focus on certain elements of content including civics education, workforce training, or family literacy. ESL instructors teach integrated skills: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Learning is frequently project-based. Students' placement and advancement are usually determined by standardized competency based assessments. The classrooms are generally large; it is not impossible to have twenty or even thirty students at a beginner level. The students' first language may be various, but if the facility is located within the boundaries of a particular immigrant community, or is sponsored by an ethnic organization, a large percent of the students may come from the same linguistic background. Teachers are generally low-paid, and many are of immigrant background as well. In my six years of teaching in non-academic settings, I have encountered few instructors who were native speakers of English and held the appropriate teaching degree. Volunteers often participate in language education as tutors or serve as interpreters.

The facilities themselves may be well-equipped centers, or humble local churches, which offer their basements for the purpose of education. The same inequities exist

in instructional materials and teaching supplies. Textbooks are scarce, and teachers often need to use copies or generate their own reading materials for the classes. The students' level of proficiency in the target language as well as their education in their primary language is diverse. Many older adults suffer from fossilization of the second language. Their reading skills are also all over the scale. Pre-literate students may be in the same class with other adults who have studied and are able to apply several reading strategies. Many students focus on reading fluency, and struggle with comprehension. Instructors prefer authentic reading materials in order to incorporate the competency goals of the program. Students learn to interpret charts and graphs, and there is a lesser emphasis on narrative text.

Selection of participants

Since working with my actual students at the place of my employment created ethical problems, I have opted to work with adult language learners whom I met earlier in my career in a different community-based language education program. I have known these students as a former administrator. I also communicate with them in a social context. Therefore, they were glad to participate in my research. Their characteristics are similar to those of my current students, thus their answers are transferable to other adult second language learners in non-academic settings. I selected four adult ELLs, two males and two females between the ages of 30 and 45 whose level of education, employment status in the US, and general life standards are similar to the adult learners in my ESL class. The four selected participants, Szabó Ádám, Farkas Emma, Kovács Anna, and Kollár József – all pseudonyms – are all native speakers of Hungarian. I opted for this sample, for I strongly believe that my research benefits from the fact that I am a native speaker of the participants' primary language. Having a common language between researcher and participants eliminated the need for a professional translator, and excluded the possibility of miscommunication.

Data collection

Data for this case study was collected through observation, informal interviews, which included narrative stories, and a conventional survey. The triangulation ensures the strength of the qualitative research. The observation, the survey, and the interview provided information regarding the strategies the subjects used for reading comprehension, as well as their personal beliefs about the role of translation during reading in L2. A research journal complemented the three

data collection tools. This journal contains the researcher's reflections on how the reviewed literature, the design of the research tools, data collection procedures, the data interpretation and the possible results of the study connect and provide answers to the research question.

Data recording

The primary data gathering tool was a conventional survey. This survey was given to the participants in English, but upon request, Hungarian sight translation was provided by the researcher. I administered the survey, and the students recorded their own answers. The survey consisted of three sections. The first section identified the participants' educational background. The second section sought answers to the participants' reading practices, and the third section referred to the participants' vocabulary. The survey consisted of seventeen multiple choice questions. At the bottom of the last survey page extra space was provided in case participants wished to record additional information. The survey was marked as Appendix A.

The second data gathering tool was an informal interview. I audio-taped and transcribed the participants' answers. At the end of the interview, I provided the opportunity for participants to add informal, anecdotal information pertaining to the questions. Upon transcription, the participants read and verified the transcript in order to ensure accuracy of the information. The seven questions of the interview were marked as Appendix B.

The third data gathering tool was an observation of the participants during reading in their target language. I provided a short text in English, which was appropriate for the participants' reading level. The authentic text was an article from a local newspaper. It included cultural references and idioms. Minimal visual support was provided with the text. Thus, participants had to mainly rely on text elements for comprehension; they were required to use graphophonic, semantic and syntactic cues to construct meaning. I supplied the participants with an up-to-date English-Hungarian dictionary. They were also encouraged to ask me questions in either language, for this increases their level of comfort during the observed activity (Pritchard & O'Hara, 2008). My field notes included the problem solving discussion, which took place during the activity, as well as the participants' comments upon completion of the reading. The participants were asked to read silently in order to shift their focus from reading fluency and pronunciation solely to comprehension. The text participants read was marked as Appendix C.

The final tool for data gathering was the journal of the researcher. In this journal I reflected on the links between the research question, the raw data, the analysis and interpretations of these data, and the conclusions.

Validity

I worked with languages in many capacities. I studied two foreign languages as a child, and two additional languages as an adult.

The participants were familiar with my background, and they were aware of the fact that I myself used to be an ELL. They were comfortable sharing their thoughts with me, since I do not have strong convictions about an English-only classroom policy, and I did not conduct my research in a teacher or administrator capacity. Sharing a mother tongue with the participants added to the trust between researcher and participant, and increased accuracy of communication.

Immigrant student populations in non-academic settings share many similarities regarding their goals and challenges (A Human Capital Concern, 2004). These similarities increase the transferability of the research. The overlapping methods of data collection enhance the dependability of the study.

CHAPTER IV
Data Interpretation

This research investigated the strategies adult language learners of varied levels of proficiency used during reading in English. The data were gathered from four participants through a survey, an interview, and an observation. Throughout the study, I kept a research journal to record my experiences and feelings. The data was collected between October 7, 2009 and October 26, 2009.

The data collection began with a survey, which evaluated the proficiency level and educational experiences of the participants. The survey also explored reading strategies of the individual subjects, and highlighted their methods of acquiring new vocabulary. The individually conducted interviews focused on the participants' preferences in reading strategies including those that use the primary language, and those that do not. A ten-minute observation of the participants' reading comprehension also took place individually. During the observation, I gave the subjects an opportunity to ask clarifying questions in any language in which they felt comfortable. Their questions and comments were recorded, transcribed, and translated, and the think-aloud provided me with valuable information regarding the participants' actual reading practices.

Learners' Beliefs and Empowerment

The primary theme, which emerged from the data is the significance of student input regarding the beliefs of the learners. It empowers learners, and contributes to their success. The opinions of my research participants supported the theory of Auerbach (1993), who contended that the students' primary linguistic resources must be viewed as assets in ESL education. Posen (2006), who investigated the human element of language instruction, and the EFL learners' beliefs about strategic use of translation in English learning, noted that researchers had devoted relatively little attention to these key factors. My findings resonated with his research, which showed that adult language learners used translation to understand text, to remember vocabulary, and to formulate output in a foreign language. Adult students with a well-developed proficiency in their primary language, used their first language resources through translation as a learning strategy. In another research about learners' beliefs regarding "good teaching", Gault (2004) indicated that students frequently preferred traditional grammar-based instruction, as opposed to the communicative approach. The participants in my research expressed similar

opinions to Gault's subjects. An entry from my Research Journal also demonstrated the preference of my beginner level students to use their first language.

"I have a class full of adult English learners. They are mostly Spanish speakers. They often engage in code switching and mixing. The administration does not look kindly on it. They wish to enforce the "English only" policy, but in my beginner classroom they cannot. If the students were not allowed to speak in their mother tongue, they could not communicate at all. Their vocabulary is not large enough, and their fluency is not great. How can we require that they use English at all times, when they are here to learn English? They want to talk about their opinion, their insight and their experiences, but they are limited in proficiency. They are not children acquiring a first language. They are adults with real wisdom and real valuable insight. And we do not give them a chance to express what they know." (Research Journal, 4/19/09)

The following vignette demonstrates the opinions of adult language learners on contemporary ESL education in a community-based setting. The conversation is a recollection of a past event.

Learners' Beliefs

Two men and two women are chattering in the library of the Hungarian Cultural Center. They are all immigrants from Hungary. They study English as a second language, some on their own, some in a community-based program, and they are eager to help me with my research project.

"Maybe you can help reform English teaching in this country," says Adam to me in a mocking tone of voice.

"Or you can offer better English classes in the center. The ones we have been taking are not very successful." chimes in Jozsef, offering what seems like a more realistic solution to him.

I am anxious to find out what works and what does not work for them in their current educational programs. They describe different aspects of teaching. They all seem to be upset with the classes that refuse to teach grammar, or focus on the content they are interested in.

"These teachers just want us to repeat sentences from books. All they use is dialogues from what they call everyday life. They are not interested in what and how we want to learn. They also don't care about what we already know. Our interests or our expertise do not matter. They have a curriculum, and they force it down our throat, "complains Anna, who has studied in several community-based ESL programs.

"And how about this English-only classroom? How am I supposed to speak "English only", when I am here to learn it? I am fresh off the boat.... If I were able to speak English, I would not be in class..."Jozsef adds.

"Well, I am not even likely to learn anything if they explain fast, and use expressions I do not understand. Even if they allow me to use the dictionary, I cannot always get things right. I need someone to explain to me in Hungarian sometimes...."says Emma slowly and hesitantly. She is a beautiful tall blonde, whose stunning looks and soft spoken extreme shyness would render her a mystery in any class.

"Oh, yes. The idioms drive me crazy. They are related to sports or otherwise embedded in their culture. I understand nothing about them," laughs Adam who has been in the US for many years, but who still considers himself "culturally Hungarian, and proud of it".

"Uhum. And some of the words that have a million meanings! I finally remember one, and two dozen new ones pop up," says Anna with a frustrated sigh.

"Sure. Top that with the grammar nobody explains any more, and it is a mess. It would be so much easier if someone could just relate it to what we already know in Hungarian!"Jozsef concludes the conversation.

Language education is not different from teaching any other subject. It should be carefully scaffolded, and built on already existing knowledge. The above vignette illustrated the learners' preference for the use of their resources in the primary language, which include content knowledge and cultural as well as linguistic background information.

In addition to their preference for a bilingual classroom, where their primary language resources are used as linguistic assets, the participants expressed their beliefs that second language learning must rely on the first language in order to clarify linguistic information. This resonated with the results of Peter Medgyes (2004) who contended that the students' first language is an essential element of problem solving. In his opinion the key to effective language instruction is the ability to contrast and analyze the primary and the target languages.

Contrast and Analyze the Primary and Secondary Languages

The most basic strategy in reading comprehension is to look for the words which are already familiar. In the survey Szabo Adam said: "I look for cognates" (Survey, 10/07/2009)

Kovacs Anna, Kollar Jozsef and Farkas Emma all said: "When I do not understand something, I try to translate the information into my first language." (Survey, 10/09/2009) Anna elaborated on this idea during her interview. She added: "Some words cannot be translated verbatim. I misunderstand sentences because of idioms. I need someone to translate the whole sentence." (Interview, 10/16/2009)

In my research journal I also recorded instances when Hungarian speakers in a non-educational setting expressed their need for clarification in their primary language. As the example below illustrates, a false cognate and an idiom rendered the learners' comprehension unsuccessful.

"I have been off from work for two weeks. I spend most of my days interpreting in court or on the telephone. I made an interesting observation. Sometimes I interpret for people who are new immigrants from Hungary. They have studied English, and they understand some spoken as well as written English. However, they do not understand idioms, or cultural references. One of my clients was puzzled by the expression "power school". Another did not know what "an individual" meant. The first one was able to translate and understand the words, but when she put them together, it did not make sense. The second one was confused by the false cognate. Individual in Hungarian refers to "uniqueness". (Research Journal, 8/10/09)

The observation of Kollar Jozsef revealed that the use of the primary language is needed not only to translate individual words or expressions, but to clarify a grammatical concept:

J: And a determined 10-year-old-boy.... What is determined?

R: To determine is "meghatároz". When you add the "-ED"....

J: It is past tense.....

R: Yes, that too. But here it is the past participle. It means he is "határozott".

J: I would have never guessed. We have the same structure in Hungarian, though. (Observation, 10/09/2009)

Another example of the same type of clarification occurred in connection with a different part of the text:

J: Safer means what part of the road?

R: You are right it is an adjective. It means "biztonságosabb".

J: Isn't "biztonságos" just safe?

R: Yes, but this is the comparative form: like more safe.

J: So -ER is the same as "-BB" in Hungarian? (Observation, 10/09/2009)

Thus I observed that the subjects' primary language played an important role when they blended new information with existing knowledge in order to accommodate individual goals. It helped identify the correct meaning of words, and the translation supported the learners' understanding of grammatical structures. Another area where the participants expressed their preference for the use of their first language was during discussions about culturally unfamiliar content.

Culturally Unfamiliar Content

Swaffar and Bacon (1993) pointed out the significance of the social context factor, where the information in the target language was simply unfamiliar, therefore a bilingual discussion was necessary to clarify content. During the observation of Jozsef's reading I observed the following two examples of code switching and code mixing for the purpose of content clarification:

J: Mayor Tim McDonough is a name?

R: Mayor means "polgarmester". The rest is his name.

J: I put the title in front of the name. Like President Obama." (Observation, 10/09/2009)

"J: This Hope Township.... This means "reménység"?

R: No. Hope is just the name of the town. (Observation, 10/09/2009)

During the observation of Anna, the following question for clarification arose:

A: And Locust Lake Road is the name of the street?

R: Yes. Exactly.

A: That's why it is in capital letters, Duh. (Observation, 10/09/2009)

As the above examples demonstrated, my research participants identified word recognition, contrast and analyses of grammatical structure, and explanation of cultural references in the text, where the use of their primary language was required for successful comprehension in the target language. The previous examples demonstrated how English language learners used their first language to improve comprehension in their target language. The importance of student input regarding the content of learning was the next theme, which has emerged from the data.

Motivation

My four adult participants regarded background knowledge and personal interest as key factors of effective learning. Johnson's (2003) study also found that a project-based curriculum for adult language learners, which mirrored their community and cultural background increased student productivity and contributed to the learners' advancement. Her Latina participants needed to acquire survival skills in order to begin a new life in new setting. Their background, their goals and interests were appropriately matched in the language program, and it promoted their learning. Szabo Adam described the motivation factor, and how it improved his listening comprehension:

"It is important to listen to the thing you are interested in. If your hobby is cooking, listen to that. If you like politics, like I do, listen to that. Otherwise you

will lose your motivation to listen to the radio. I cannot listen to sports. It irritates me. I am not interested, and I cannot listen to that. I will tune onto something else. Do not listen to it as background noise. Concentrate on the content. Make sure you listen to the thing you are interested in. Otherwise it is not worth it. Do not listen to it only because you want to learn English. Listen only if you would listen to the same program in your own language. Learning the language will be simply the by-product of listening to the very thing you enjoy knowing." (Interview, 10/10/2009)

He also commented on his reading comprehension. The key to successful reading in his opinion was personal interest. He already had knowledge about the topic in his language, and he needed to find more details in English. He had to tie the information in the two languages together, in order to complete a project:

"I was working on my annual project of publishing a calendar in Hungarian. I needed information about how to make excel sheets work with my stuff. I read instructions about Excel. I did not read for pleasure. I read to get ahead. I read because it helped me learn something I wanted to know. I needed the information for my work. I did not read for entertainment or fun, but to use the information." (Interview, 10/10/2009)

Kovacs Anna talked about the importance of existing vocabulary, and how it aids reading comprehension. Her comment highlighted the importance of vocabulary learning in translation pairs:

"I enjoyed reading a home decorating magazine. It was interesting to read, because I understood a lot of words, and I like the topic. I wanted to find out information. I like decorating. I am interested in learning more. I wanted to learn about the concept. I knew that I would use these words elsewhere. It was also nice to recognize the words I met in other places. I recognized them here. My previous knowledge helped me. I came full circle. If I were not tired, I would have found all words in the dictionary. It would be so much easier if I could ask someone for the unknown words. The dictionary is ok, but I would remember better if a person explained." (Interview, 10/16/2009)

The participants expressed their beliefs about "good teaching" and they highlighted the significance of their motivation regarding content in order to progress in second language learning. They considered those two factors as the foundations of effective language learning at any level of proficiency.

In the following they described how the use of strategies served them in reading comprehension. The following vignette is intended to illustrate the various techniques adult language learners of diverse levels of proficiency use to understand written material. The conversation took place when I administered the formal survey.

Four adults are leaning over a survey. They are answering questions about their English proficiency, and their learning experiences.

"Adam, you've been here forever. You speak English. Translate it," says Emma, who has lived in the US for over five years, but who is used to family members interpreting for her on all occasions.

"I can translate the whole thing for you for fifty bucks an hour, or you can just ask me to tell you the words you do not understand for free. I am here to help," – says Adam with a coy smile. "But if I can't sound it out, you are stuck, baby. I can't spell in English... My momma never taught me no spelling rules...."

They all laugh.

"Can I use a dictionary?" interrupts Jozsef, who is the most practical of all of them, and prefers to work individually, although he has recently arrived from Hungary.

"Sure, honey," says Anna, and pushes her dictionary closer to Jozsef. "Be my guest. It is hard to find the proper meaning in there. It is not a new dictionary, and it is small too. For me it is easier to answer these questions without dictionary, because the possible answers are here, and I can find the most important words I need. "

"So what does this word mean? I have never seen it before?"- asks Adam showing his paper to Anna.

" I can only guess...." – she answers while Emma and Jozsef also get up to investigate the unfamiliar word .

"Read it again" –suggests Emma hesitantly.

"Wait, it is not even an important one" – says Adam quickly. "Just skip it, and let's move on."

Jozsef, the participant in the study with the lowest level of proficiency who only read for a few hours a month in English, claimed:" I concentrate on the individual words. I use a dictionary to find the words I do not recognize or I look for somebody to translate the words. I try to sound them out. I look for words that I recognize.", but also "I read slowly and get stuck when I do not understand a word." (Survey, 10/26/2009) All these statements resonated with the findings of Kern (1989) who contended that word recognition was the obstacle of beginner level ELLs.

In addition, Jozsef stated in the survey: "I cannot guess the meaning of the words."During his observation the following question revealed that he was in fact unable to infer meaning from the text:"what does bump mean? Is that a road sign? Similar error in inferences were recorded by Prince (1996). Jozsef also expressed his confusion regarding sentences during the interview:

"I misunderstand the sentences because I do not understand the structure. Who is this about? Is it active or passive? I understand the individual words, but I do

not understand the meaning of the sentences. How do the words connect? What meaning do they convey? For example: "I am Legend." What does this mean? Is this my legend, or am I the legend? Is this about my story, or the story I read? I understand this only if I use my language." (Interview, 10/17/2009)

ELLs of Jozsef's proficiency have a high reliance on translation from their first language, due to the lack of vocabulary, which is needed for basic communication skills in English.

Anna, whose level of proficiency was slightly higher than Jozsef's, and liked reading fiction and magazines for a few hours a week, was able to concentrate on the words and on the individual sentences as well, although she admitted to be "stuck" on individual words. However, she was able to infer the meaning of words from the context when no interpreter or dictionary was available. (Survey, 10/09/2009) She summarized her way of reading in the following: "It does not make sense to take the words out of the context. They always mean something else. But I can figure them out if I read the whole sentence again, and if you tell me exactly what they mean in a given sentence."(Observation, 10/09/2009) During her interview, she talked about re-reading, using key words, and finding the main idea as reading strategies:

"I re-read everything many times. I may have not paid enough attention. I always found that the key words helped me. If I did not know the meaning of the key words, the teacher clarified. Even now I have times when I do not understand what I read in Hungarian. I still look for the main idea. Even if I lose the details, I will look for the most important information." (Interview, 10/16/2009)

Anna's ability to separate important parts of the sentence from the unimportant ones became obvious during her observation: "Careen. I know this one!..... hm. Maybe not.... But it does not seem important. The cars came fast." (Observation, 10/09/2009) Her focus on the intrasentential connections tricked her with the use of a past participle, though. She was unable to understand the unfamiliar structure, and needed clarifying translation to avoid misunderstanding of the sentence:

A: What is determined?
R: What is "determinal" in Hungarian?
A: Aha. "meghatároz". Is it the same in the past?
R: Past participle.
A: What is that?
R: The adjective form.
A: Aha. So he was determined. (Observation, 10/09/2009)

Similarly to Anna, Emma claimed to read a few hours a week in English, but her range of materials was more extensive than Anna's. They included subtitles, letters, and information on the Internet. She classified her reading as "slow, but sure". Emma's reading concentrated only on the individual sentences. She used re-reading, inference and visualization of information as strategies. (Survey, 10/09/2009) During her interview, she commented that the most frequent mistake she made was when she read and interpreted the words individually, and did not put them together into a sentence.

"I understand the words, but when I put them together, I may not understand the meaning they convey. That is because I usually grab the primary meaning of the word. I do not concentrate on the expressions. Therefore, I lose the meaning. I need my husband to translate the sentences. And sometimes I think I got them, but they do not fit into the text. Then I need to make sure I know what they mean in Hungarian." (Interview, 10/26/2009)

The examples of Anna and Emma resonated with the findings of Pritchard and O'Hara (2008) whose study demonstrated that ELLs are not necessarily able to transfer reading strategies from their primary language to the target language. As their proficiency grew, they were able to move from the simplest word translation-based strategies to the more complex ones in order to establish intrasentential ties. During this process, the participants in my study stated that they still had relied on translation, as a method of verifying their inferences.

The following three entries from my research journal also supported the relation between improved proficiency and ability to apply monolingual strategies:

"I was teaching reading strategies – explicitly, during the past few weeks. Re-reading, predictions, visualization, key word finding, summary, main idea and clarifying questions. My students understood the concept, yet they still relied on translation quite a lot. I want to find out whether they consider translating a reading strategy. I believe that if translation is still their preferred tool for reading comprehension, I should investigate why, instead of shutting their efforts down. The only student I seem to run into trouble with is Mechita, a 74 year old woman from El Salvador. She speaks English at a fossilized level, barely enough for survival. She has no schooling. She uses her pocket translator constantly. And she interprets all instructions for everyone. Often, she makes mistakes." (Research Journal, 4/23/09)

"I divided my class in two groups: those who wanted to translate for reading comprehension, and those who wanted me to introduce the text through appropriate reading strategies. We will be doing this activity for a few weeks, maybe the whole summer session." (Research Journal, 5/1/09)

"All my students who were initially in the group that translated for better comprehension, decided to join the other group of explicit reading strategy instruction, over a period of roughly two months. What happened during this time? Why did they one-by-one gradually change their minds? I asked what the reason was. They said they have learned enough English now that they understand better, and they do not necessarily need Spanish. They are interested in trying to speak English only. The same students who were crying and fighting in the beginning of the summer session, the ladies who were ready to leave the program for "discrimination", were now volunteering to learn and adopt the appropriate reading strategies."(Research Journal, 8/15/09)

The study of O'Malley et al (1985) also supports that successful language learners incorporate more than one strategy as they progress. The use of a range of reading strategies was illustrated well in the case of Adam, who read a few hours a day, and classified himself as: "I understand most of what I read in English". He placed his focus on the text as a whole. He looked for cognates and the most important words to "open the text". He still needed to use the dictionary when he did not recognize the key words. He was able to establish, which words were significant and which ones did not aid him in the comprehension of the sentence:

A: What is TUG?

R: TUG is RÁNCIGALNI...

A: Ah, so the kid was pulling on his pocket. (Observation 10/11/2009)

In order to establish intersentential cues in the text Adam used re-reading: "Luke was called... Let me re-read I don't get it. What happened to the kid?" (Observation, 10/11/2009) and visualization: "I visualize the information I read." (Survey, 10/07/2009).

The above examples of the participants' preferred reading strategies illustrated how they apply more and more complex strategies as their level of proficiency progressed. This resonated with the results of Cohen and Aphek (1980) who concluded that context provided the necessary cues once learners advanced to a level of proficiency where they did not feel "overstimulated" by the quantity of unfamiliar text. Kern (1989) agreed with these findings and contended that the lack of L2 word recognition was the primary obstacle of comprehension. Since these studies considered vocabulary development the key to improving reading comprehension, the next theme of my research became the participants' methods of vocabulary acquisition.

Vocabulary Acquisition

Jozsef, the participant with the lowest level of proficiency in the study, stated that his vocabulary was "very limited" (Survey, 10/26/2009). He always translated words into Hungarian, and learned the words in translation pairs. (Survey, 10/26/2009). This helped him retain vocabulary, but impeded on his use of inference as a higher level reading strategy. The following example from my observation field notes illustrates how Jozsef recognized the word "past", but he was unable to infer its meaning in the given context, which lead to a misinterpretation of the text.

J: Aha. The cars were flying past the houses....The cars passed the houses.... How? Is this figurative? The houses do not move...."

R: Pass has more than one meaning. They did not pass a moving object. It is not "lehagyták". They passed the houses by. "elsuhantak mellettük". They flew past them as the houses stood there. (Observation, 10/09/2009)

Jozsef's example supported the results of Prince (1996) suggesting that paired associate learning of words facilitated excellent recall, but occasionally rendered comprehension faulty.

Anna and Emma, the two intermediate level learners stated: "I translate the words into my language and learn them as a pair, but I can also remember the context where I found it." And "I look words up in the dictionary, I find them in text, and I hear them in social contexts." (Survey, 10/09/2009). Anna demonstrated the example of problem solving and applying a new meaning to familiar vocabulary during her observation:

A: Picked up. What is it. I use it all the time. I pick up Milly from school. But I have no clue what it means here....

R: What is it in Hungarian?

A: "felvenni" or "felkapni".

R: Exactly. What can you also pick up. Not only a person....

A: An object from somewhere....

R: Or?

A: Information?

R: Yes. That's it.

A: So he picked up the information at the dinner table. (Observation, 10/09/2009)

This was a perfect example, of how a student of intermediate level proficiency was able to connect paired associate learning and the application of contextual cues in order to construct meaning. At this level, the support of the first language and the English context were combined to facilitate correct comprehension. At the advanced level of language proficiency, Adam marked social context and text as the

primary sources of new vocabulary, and expressed little need for translation and the use of a bilingual dictionary. (Survey, 10/07/2009) He claimed to be able to identify key words, and he used his primary language only when the monolingual methods or re-reading and inferencing failed: "I can also use the context. I can guess the meaning of the words. I can find the important words that unlock the text. If they are not familiar, I can look them up in the dictionary. If they are not important from the point of view of comprehension, I ignore them." (Interview, 10/11/2009).

The above examples demonstrated the learners' use of diverse reading strategies, and their need for the resources of the primary language at various stages of L2 proficiency. The mother tongue served as a vehicle for conscious miscue analyses of the syntactic, semantic, graphophonic and pragmatic cuing systems, which according to Wurr, Theurer and Kim (2009) made L2 learners more aware of the reading process.

The final theme of my study reaches back to the most significant component of language learning: learners' beliefs about the successful teaching-learning process. As my participants described their reading strategies and vocabulary learning practices, they all commented on the significance of the integration of language skills. Although this element does not relate to the use of the learners' primary language, it was still noteworthy for future instructional purposes.

Integrated Skills Instruction

" I like reading lyrics. I have heard the songs before. But I never understood the words. I knew the music. I did not connect the two. After I read the lyrics, I understand the meaning. I do not necessarily like the meaning. But I can connect the music with the words and the meaning now." (Interview, 10/17/2009)

Jozsef's comment about connecting listening and reading illustrated the need for integrated skills instruction. Anna cited a different example to support the same belief: "I like subtitled movies and other TV shows." (Interview, 10/16/2009). Adam stressed the significance of connecting reading, writing and listening:

"Read the paper and copy the words. It does not matter that you don't understand. Just copy the words. And try to write down a few paragraphs each day. This way you will learn what the words sound like from the radio, and what they look like and how to write them. The copying should be a daily paper with actual news. First you will not understand anything. And slowly you will be able to connect the news with your everyday life." (Interview, 10/10/2009).

He commented that lack of the knowledge of the graphophonic cuing system was the main cause of his failure to construct meaning from text.

R: If you were asked to answer some important questions in a test in English, would you like to read it yourself, or would you rather someone reads it to you?

A: If someone reads it to me, I may forget the first part by the time I hear the second part of the question. If I read it myself, I can read the question again and again. I think that is better. But if I cannot read the letters, because I do not know how they sound, I may not know the meaning. So I guess I need both. (Interview, 10/10/2009)

Conclusion

Based upon the result of my study, the use of the first language was preferred by adult language learners at any stage of language proficiency. The learners used the resources their mother tongue provided in several ways. Their beliefs about "good teaching" constituted appropriate scaffolding, which incorporated using prior knowledge of language content and structure as a foundation for language learning, as opposed to the language acquisition theory, which advocates the monolingual approach. The participants expressed the significance of contrasting their first and second languages in order to accommodate word recognition and explain grammatical structure. The importance of code switching and code mixing also arose as the participants wished to clarify culturally unfamiliar content. While the participants were able to apply diverse reading strategies which evolved with the gradual improvement of their second language proficiency, they claimed to rely on their primary language for clarification on the inter- and intrasentential levels of comprehension.

CHAPTER V
Discussion and Implications

Overview

This qualitative study investigated why adult English language learners use their first language as they construct meaning from written text in English. The purpose of the study was to gain better understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the students, to explore their beliefs about the teaching-learning process, and to observe the results of reading strategies they apply willingly.

I conducted a review of related literature to provide a framework for the research. I examined multiple studies, which pertained to the characteristics of the adult ELL community and their second language learning practices with a particular focus on the reading strategies students use at various levels of proficiency.

The four-subject case study used qualitative research components. I collected data through a formal survey, an informal interview, and an observation. In addition, I recorded my personal observations and opinions in a research journal.

The participants of my study were anxious to share their experiences and feelings about ESL education with me. Their descriptions were comprehensive, and the insights they shared with me were honest. Through careful triangulation of the data, I established that the use of the ELLs' first language is essential at all levels of language proficiency.

The Data Collection Tools

The survey provided me with information regarding the participants' level of proficiency in English. It specified the length of time the individual learners spent studying the English language, as well as the educational settings. It also classified the subjects according to their educational background and learning goals. The interview investigated the various techniques the learners used while they read in English, and the observation demonstrated the successful and unsuccessful applications of the mentioned comprehension strategies. The final data analysis revealed that adult language learners relied on the resources their primary language provided in several ways, depending on their beliefs about "good teaching", their motivation, and their proficiency level.

Implications of the Study

Based on my research findings, I intend to accommodate my adult ELLs' need for a multi-lingual classroom, where the use of their primary language is not only tolerated, but it is encouraged.

The primary goal for my low beginner students is vocabulary expansion. Learning words in a written context via translation eliminates the students' discomfort, which they experience as they become overwhelmed with the unfamiliar language. Learning words in a translation pair facilitates better recall, and reduces the possibilities of misunderstanding. The focus on vocabulary learning through reading aids the integration of skills, which is a key element of successful language learning. Students at this level also wish to use their first language in order to clarify cultural content.

Adult ELLs of intermediate proficiency benefit from the use of their first language on the intersentential level. They often wish to contrast and analyze the two languages in order to improve the comprehension of individual sentences. In addition to comparing syntactical features, they need to confirm the meaning of idioms, or lexical units with multiple meanings.

Advanced learners do not necessarily need to use their primary language for translation purposes. Their English has developed enough to enable them to identify key words and to infer the meanings of these words. They are able to recognize grammatical structures, ask clarifying questions in the target language, and will attempt to facilitate better comprehension through re-reading or visualization. At this level, students are able to transfer reading strategies from their first language into their second language, thus they concentrate on the intersentential cues. Nevertheless, ELLs at the advanced level still take advantage of their mother tongue. They use it to activate their large pool of background knowledge and to integrate new information into the existing content. This is a highly effective motivational factor at all levels of proficiency.

Recommendations

Explicit teaching of level-appropriate reading strategies and the integration of language skills at all levels of proficiency is highly recommended. Continued work is necessary to explore how the extended use of the primary language for solely word recognition purposes may hinder second language learning.

Researcher Reflections

During the research process, the participants' insights confirmed my beliefs that language at the beginner level cannot be acquired by adult language learners. It must be learned. Attempts to "enforce" language acquisition at this level may reduce the learner's self-esteem, deprive them of their motivation, and lead to the fossilization of the new language at a conveniently functional level.

Applying the language acquisition model becomes beneficial at a higher level of proficiency. But without the appropriate linguistic scaffolding and integration of skills, this approach would not yield the results which adult language learners strive to achieve.

My role as a researcher was new and interesting. From the technical point of view, I gathered a very positive experience. I have designed and translated formal employee surveys and interviews for over a decade. In my earlier years of teaching, I made numerous observations of student teachers and colleagues. But I have never designed a research methodology. Fitting those pieces together as a puzzle in order to receive the most information from the participants was a difficult, yet very rewarding activity. It showed me that I can learn a new trick. It also demonstrated how years of loosely-related experience can be tied together.

The ethical aspects of this study also shaped my beliefs about educational research. Even though my research did not qualify as "Action Research", for I did not conduct it in my own classroom, the purpose, as well as the implications make this study part of my every day teaching routine and my professional development plan. As I wondered about the various power issues, which may have risen, had I conducted action research, I am grateful to my director whose guidance helped me avoid such conflicts.

Most importantly, my beliefs about the learning process had been drastically altered by conducting this research. When I studied English as a foreign language, the motivational factor was tourism and curiosity: "What's beyond the Iron Curtain?" Proficiency in the English language was alluring, and Hungarian was simply a functional, gray tool, I took for granted. This is similar to the way English speakers learn other languages. As I talked to my students and research participants, I understood how the role of the Mother Tongue changes as one becomes an immigrant. The new language becomes a goal to survive and function. But immigration in most cases strengthens the ties with the first language. Living in a foreign language speaking environment highlights the beauty, the uniqueness and the warm familiarity of the mother tongue. Therefore, the use of the first language is not simply functional, as it was in my case of EFL learning, but also motivational. Knowledge of the first language provides the foundation of the

learners' healthy self-esteem. As a researcher, I learned that my participants may not possess the education I was fortunate to receive in three countries, yet they know and taught me about adequate teaching of a second language.

Summary

We do not teach language. We teach people. For every adult, their mother tongue is of sacred significance. They value and utilize it as a refined and respected resource. Thus, language educators must learn to accommodate their students' convictions, academic foundation, learning goals and level of comfort as they guide them towards communicative competence in a foreign language.

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Improving Language Teacher Education through Project-based Training

Rita DiFiore & Barna Szamosi

Abstract

Currently our institute offers literature and film-focused research methodology courses; simultaneously, statistics show that students seldom select a topic for their final thesis that is related to teaching methodology or culture. To address this restriction of choices, the introduction of a new course in qualitative research methods is expedient. However, before designing a new course, a needs analysis was conducted. This study primarily aims to investigate the students' attitudes and preparedness to collect data through primary research, thus, attempts to explore the reasons for the low level of engagement in research in the field of education and culture. The method of inquiry was a questionnaire that was distributed to 114 students. The 73 responses received indicate that the students' experience with research methods and tools is limited. The conclusion of the study was that although the students express their interest to explore culture and teaching methodology, due to the lack of training in qualitative methods, their choices are restricted and they seem reluctant to use primary data collection tools for their research. However, understanding and transforming their professional environment would require specific research skills, and without such training, students are insufficiently prepared to enter the workforce. Therefore, the secondary aim of the study is to offer a suggestion for bridging the gap between the students' professional commitment and their current research competencies. According to the findings, it is necessary to design a new framework for a research methodology course that focuses on the creation and use of research tools as a learning outcome and includes the assessment regimen and teaching-learning activities according to constructive alignment. Applying a project-based approach can support autonomous, confident, and open-minded graduates with a solid background in research methodology.

Key words: *qualitative methods in research, project-based learning, questionnaire, students' research skills*

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Introduction

Problem Statement

The Eszterházy Károly Catholic University (Henceforth: University) offers an education in applied sciences including majors in BA in English and American studies and MEd (Master's in Education) in (TEFL) Teaching English as a Foreign Language for mainly domestic students whose first language is Hungarian and a growing population of Erasmus students who usually spend one semester in a program. The BA students are offered language development and content courses in linguistics, culture, and literature, and the MEd programs require the simultaneous taking of two majors. The language of the courses is English. In spite of their motivation and dedication to their future profession, a surprisingly low number of MEd in TEFL students decide to choose education for the topic of their final theses. In 2018, 6 out of 16; in 2019, 4 out of 26; in 2020, 1 out of 22; in 2021, 3 out of 25; in 2022, 1 out of 44; and in 2023, 11 out of 45 MEd students selected English teaching methodology for their thesis. In other words, MEd students tend to opt for their other major when they select the topic for their thesis, while BA students who have no other major, generally select topics in British, Irish, or American literature instead of social science-related topics.

Research Aim

The primary aim of this research was to develop an understanding about the level of familiarity that the students have regarding social science research methods in the BA in English and American Studies and MEd in TEFL programs and to find out whether they consider it useful to master methodological skills that would contribute to their professional independence in conducting research in culture or education related topics. Based on the results of the survey, the aim for these researchers is to design a research methodology course based on the students' needs. Such course can equip the students with research skills through project work where students would learn how to plan a survey and a protocol for observations and interviews, how to record data, and how to code the collected empirical material. Students equipped with the knowledge and the skill set to conduct field work and thus to collect empirical data would be able to identify and solve problems and transform their professional environment.

Suggestion for the Content of the New Research Methodology Course

In adult education, the course content is usually set before the students even enroll in the courses. Therefore, students' academic interests and needs are rarely included in the curriculum (Maróti). Changing the paradigm and tailoring the course material to the needs of the student population is the target of the proposed course and the aim of this research. Creating a new project-based course in research methodology would provide the students with a wider variety of topics they would feel prepared to choose from; thus, this research methodology course would enhance their experience of academic freedom and student autonomy. Training pre-service teachers to conduct research on their own would help them become better teachers (Van Katwijk et al.). Moreover, adding research tools to the existing set provided for the BA students would expand their opportunities to explore the field of culture and civilization. Therefore, the content of this proposed new course will focus on the creation of research tools, while it will use project-based instruction for its methodological approach.

Based on the survey results, to meet the needs of the students, the new course in research methodology should prepare students to design a research plan, to select and create the appropriate research tools, and to analyze and interpret their data. A pilot course will be designed and offered for MEd students who wish to conduct research in teaching methodology, and based on the success and the student feedback, it will be expanded and adjusted to the needs of BA students who wish to engage in culture-related research pertaining either to the United States or Great Britain.

The primary research tools to be introduced as course content are interviews, observations, and surveys. To explain the purpose of such tools and to design a guide for interviews and observations, constructivist Grounded Theory will be employed. Levitt argues that GT supports novice researchers, and the process of developing structure allows researchers to clearly articulate their theory and GT can be used to analyze a variety of forms of data. GT as a methodology is widespread in educational research, mainly because by the end of the 20th century, the constructivist approach became dominant in the social sciences, including education and educational research. The advantages of the method include the possibility to explore the experiences and perspectives of teachers and students in educational settings, from which conclusions and further generalizations can be made. In the following, the paper will briefly describe the different areas in which this method is used and why educational researchers believe it is beneficial. Some of the research conducted since the 1970s have emphasized that one of the major shortcomings of works focusing on education is that they do not collect

inductive empirical data from the respective area. In contrast, the GT method enables the improvement of teaching and learning processes by interpreting the experiences and perspectives of teachers, students, and different actors in the world of education (Hutchinson) and has since then played an important role in making education research more relevant and transformative (Du Plessis and Van der Westhuizen). In addition, the method has been used for many other reasons and in many other fields, for example, in workplace education settings, where it can be used to understand learners' perspectives in a context with many variables that make the learning process very complex (Bytheway). It can also be used to investigate teachers' attitude development and its impact on students' learning (Lee). Another research highlights that the data collection method allows the use of video; and because of this use, GT can be used to better understand how teachers solve educational problems in the classroom setting (Riordan et al.). In addition, this interpretive method can also be deployed to gain a deeper understanding of gamification in the educational environment. According to Szabó and Szemere, well-chosen games and game elements can promote student motivation and thus better learning outcomes in higher education environments. Others discuss gaming and gamification as a tool that can encourage social and motivational inclusion of at-risk students (Hanghøj et al.). In this new field, GT can help researchers to map students' learning experiences more thoroughly, thus providing feedback and opportunities for improvement in the gamification process.

The course introduces students to two main empirical research methods that they can use to conduct classroom research, these are participant observation and interviewing. The advantage of participant observation in terms of data collection is primarily related to the context of the research: the student researcher can develop a better understanding of the background. In addition, this method enables the student researcher to develop a closer relationship with the research subjects, which also contributes to a better understanding of the research problem. The observer can collect more accurate data. For example, it is possible to record verbal and non-verbal communication, to capture the network of relationships between students, and to characterize teacher-student communication dynamics. In principle, the method is advantageous because it raises the quality of the research, allows other data to be checked, and gives access to the cultural context of the teachers and students. The definition of participant observation itself can be illustrated by two quotations: "The systemic description of events, behaviors, and artifacts in the social setting chosen for the study" (Marshall and Rossman 79, cited in Kawulich). Also, a shorter but more expressive definition: "written photograph" can be applicable (Erlandson et al. cited in Kawulich). The student researcher's task is thus to capture the research setting in a manner as detailed and

vivid as possible by means of a dense description. This technique of data collection allows researchers to articulate interconnections that are specific to their cases. During observation, there is the possibility to refine the focus — in some cases, if there is no precise research question, to develop one, although the disadvantage is that if everything is observed and described, one can get lost in the details — which makes the method very flexible and necessary as students arrive at the field after their theoretical studies. In addition, during the preparation the researchers must plan the observation work and for this it is necessary to design an observation guide (or observation protocol). In this observation guide, researchers can list all those things that they want to place emphasis on during the fieldwork: the physical environment, the members, interactions, the length and the frequency of interactions, formal or informal conversations, and/or other elements in the setting.

It is useful to supplement this method with interviews because interviews enable the researcher to deepen the insights gained from participant observation (Fontana and Frey). Different types of interviewing may be useful to the researcher depending on the size of the community they wish to work with. For a larger community, structured interviewing (face-to-face or online) may be the most useful. The disadvantages of this type of interview are pre-written questions and limited response options (often along categories or numbers for ease and speed of analysis), and it is important for the interviewer to ask the questions in the same way so as not to introduce variables into the research, as this may lead to different results. Moreover, this type of interview is primarily used in quantitative research. The other two types of interviewing methods are semi-structured and open-ended interviewing. These are preferred by qualitative researchers. Semi-structured interviews can be face-to-face (with a single subject) or group interviews. This is determined by the focus of the research, the situation, and the time available for the interview. The type of interview to be used for research in the educational context should also be chosen based on the specific case. However, whatever our choice is, interviewing allows — especially qualitative interviewing — to incorporate the research subjects' perspectives and interpretations into the research, thus deepening and clarifying the analysis. To ensure that students arrive at the research site prepared and able to conduct a high-quality interview, it is important to teach them the tools they can use to prepare. It is important to consider that when the researcher wants to enter a school for research, they need to position themselves and be able to briefly present the purpose of their research. Therefore, it is advisable to conduct a pilot interview with a person who they assume will understand the context of the research and can help them fine-tune the research questions. Of course, it is worth preparing from the interviewees' work — if they are also planning to interview teachers — and it is worth preparing from

the students' cultural habits and possible interests to get the most accurate picture possible by using this method.

Proposed Methodology of Teaching

Action research

The term "action research" was first used by Kurt Lewin in 1947 (Adelman). Based on Lewin's conception, action research is a process where the practitioner identifies a problem and collects information to be tested, rather than formulating the hypothesis first (Noffke). This process is different from literature review-based research that is currently in the focus of research methodology courses at the University. Learning to design, implement, and interpret the results of the research tools that are necessary for action research is equally important for teacher trainees and BA students with English language and culture majors.

When MEd students enter the workforce in the twenty-first century, it is mandatory that they are equipped with the knowledge that helps them improve their teaching environment. This knowledge is only possible if their training promotes lifelong learning and produces practitioner researchers who can address the respective concerns; i.e. identify the problems that arise during their teaching (Cochran-Smith et al.). Thus, teacher-practitioners will be able to improve their practices and transform their teaching environment to accommodate the needs of their students. The same applies for BA students. Without the proper research skills, their learning stops at graduation, and they become passive observers of the social phenomena, utilizing only their linguistic skills.

Constructive alignment

Creating tools to conduct action research has been identified as the intended learning outcome for our proposed course; therefore, we applied Bigg's constructive alignment theory for course design. The phrase was coined by John Biggs in 1996. The theory describes curriculum design that aligns teaching and assessment to intended learning outcomes:

Constructive alignment is a design for teaching in which what it is intended students should learn and how they should express their learning is clearly stated before teaching takes place. Teaching is then designed to engage students in learning activities that optimize their chances of achieving those outcomes, and assessment tasks are designed to enable clear judgments as to how well those outcomes have been attained (Biggs 5-6).

Biggs' model utilizes an insight from the psychology of constructivism: learners construct their own knowledge through actively engaging in teaching-learning activities. Students learn what they believe they will be assessed on, and constructive alignment provides a clear path for the students about what they need to accomplish and how their achievement will be measured. When constructive alignment is used in course design, the focus is on the active learning of the student since this design recognizes that "knowledge is constructed by the activities of the learner" (Biggs).

Project-based learning

To explain why project-based learning (PjBL) is selected as the instructional approach for our proposed course, the definition, characteristics, and benefits of PjBL must be considered. The term "project," has evolved from its initial meaning. It originated in the 16th century, in the architectural schools of Europe. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it was adapted in America as a regular teaching method, and it was rediscovered by European educators in the 1960s (Knoll). The reform movement was spearheaded by John Dewey, a leading advocate of pragmatism and constructivism in American education who believed that "Education is not preparation for life; education is life itself" (Dewey). The term "project" was initially defined in education as a 'hearty purposeful act" by Kilpatrick in 1918 where the students used their motivation and experience to independently create a product to satisfy their own curiosity (Kilpatrick). Dewey, however, believed that projects are products of the collaboration between teacher and student where the teacher's task is to lead the student through the "complete act of thinking". Therefore, finding the problem, creating a plan to solve the problem, and performing the tasks to achieve the result becomes a collaborative and exploratory process student and teacher engage in together (Knoll).

According to Adderley and his colleagues projects provide the solution to a problem that was encountered by the students themselves. Projects are initiated by students, and the solution is reached through a variety of educational activities. The product may be a thesis, a report, or design plans that the student works on for a period with the help of an advisor who does not act as an authority figure (Adderley et al., as cited in Helle et al.). Krajcik and Shin offer six key features to describe PjBL: (1) students find a driving question, (2) students identify learning goals, (3) students engage in scientific practices, (4) students practice collaboration, (5) students use technological tools, and (6) students create an artefact. This approach improves student engagement over traditional methods where knowledge is simply passed down from teacher to student (Alorda et al.).

Providing students with a skill set that is different from teaching is also necessary for them to be able to understand and solve problems while applying multidisciplinary approaches (Vasquez-Martinez et al.). Skill related goals, however, cannot be achieved by traditional learning. However, PjBL simultaneously improves students' knowledge and skills (Guo et al.). In addition to gaining knowledge and developing skills, PjBL improves student engagement because it focuses on real-life issues and helps solve other stakeholders' problems (Lee et al.). The PjBL approach added to research methodology content is especially beneficial since it supports learning based on curiosity and critical thinking, thus developing twenty-first century metacognitive, cognitive, and social skills such as research planning and reflecting on the process of inquiry. Examples of cognitive skills project-based learning supports are data-collection, analysis, and interpretation. Social skills are also developed through collaboration with instructors and research participants (Blumenfeld et al. as cited in Žerovnik and Šerbec). In addition, project-based learning improves students' higher order thinking skills, such as analysis, evaluation, and creation (Marifah).

Research Design

Participants

The authors managed to involve three classes of full-time and part-time students and sent out the questionnaires to 114 students. From this population, 73 responses were received. Regarding the background of the students, the goal was to identify their majors, their research interest, and their familiarity with empirical data collection and analytical methods. The sample of respondents is representative of the University's student population since 23,6% freshmen, 22,2% sophomore, 16,7% junior, 20,8% senior, and 16,7% MEd students responded.

Both BA and MEd students were involved in the needs analysis. Even though the students in the two different programs have very different skill sets, for their thesis writing preparation, the training in the use of qualitative research tools would open new opportunities for both majors. Also, during their first three years of study, their required courses are generally the same both in language development and content-related studies, therefore, it is supposed that their experience in the use of research tools is similar. Thus, the BA and MEd student responses were not separated by major.

All but one respondent, were Hungarian speakers, one student was from the USA who is currently living in Hungary. The students generally completed their secondary education in Hungary where the curriculum for secondary level traditionally does not incorporate studies for student conducted research. Two

students indicated that they have transferred from a different university where they have already gained some understanding of qualitative research methods. The students willingly participated in the survey, and some of them even attached personal notes expressing their gratitude for the research being a step towards investigating what is important and necessary for them.

Instrument and data collection

A survey was designed to yield both quantitative and qualitative results. The language of the survey was English, and it was distributed via the email list that was obtained from the registry of the University. Google Forms was used to create the survey, the Google link was sent out to the participants in June 2023, and responses were collected until early August of 2023. The survey was divided into three main sections: in the first part, four questions were asked to identify the respondents' demographic background; in the second part, 10 questions were asked concerning their experience in using social science research methods; and in the third part of the survey, students were asked to elaborate on their experiences in 150-word responses.

The first section's questions identified the students' major, current year in the degree program, probable field for theses, and research interest. In the second section, the questions focused on students' general experience conducting research by relying on social science methods and their experience regarding interviews and surveys. The questions also investigated whether the students had any experience conducting participant observations or self-reflective journals and whether they knew how to construct an observation guide. Finally, the questions targeted the students' analytical experience, such as skills regarding the analysis of images and other visual items, analyzing written sources and empirically collected materials. The survey used a four-point Likert scale in order to avoid a neutral response. In the third part of the survey, the students were asked to choose three methods that they are most familiar with and discuss their experience with these methods in 150 words per method. This question aimed to investigate the students' understanding and level of familiarity with the methods, and the intention was to get limited, albeit qualitatively meaningful data as well. The second question of the third section investigated whether there was any point that the students did not answer, and an elaboration on their reasons for not providing a response was requested.

Results

According to the responses, students are interested in four major fields when it comes to thesis writing: literature (28,2%), linguistics (8,5%), teaching methodology (28,2%), and cultural studies (35,2%). This data does not seem to support the actual number of theses in cultural studies and educational methodology. The percentage of students who indicate their interest in social sciences is much higher than the number of theses written in these fields. Since a large majority of students are interested in teaching methodology (28,2%) and cultural studies (35,2%), there is a need to address questions related to social science methods. Their answers regarding familiarity with social science methods show that they do not know how to use these research tools to gather data. Also, 74% (54/73) of the respondents claimed to have no or hardly any experience conducting research by relying on social science methods. Only half of the students had experience in designing surveys (49%), the results are a little worse concerning their experience in informal interviews (63% has no, or only minimal experience). Even worse were their answers regarding formal interviews (74% has no, or minimal experience). When it comes to participant observation most of the students do not know how to design observation guides (63%) and similarly most of them do not have experience conducting observations (60%). Consequently, it would be useful to follow up this discrepancy with another research specifically targeting much more explicit understandings on their side.

The responses are a little better when it comes to reflective journals: 56% of the students learned what these methods are used for and how to employ them as a form of data collection. Regarding the use of visual materials, most students (56%) have some familiarity in interpreting their relevance for academic work. Not surprisingly, most of the students have experience in analyzing written sources (59%). More striking is their response to the last question, that inquires about their experience in analyzing empirically collected data. A little less than half of the students responded positively (48%), yet this is contradictory, given their lack of experience collecting empirical materials. However, this result can be attributed to their interpretation of empirical data. Students may understand written sources, visual images, and self-reflective journals as empirically collected materials. However, the survey anticipated some degree of misinterpretation; therefore, in the final two questions, the students were asked to elaborate on their experience with these methods. The responses that they gave imply that a certain level of discrepancy exists between the language used to identify the methods in the survey and the students' own understanding of the methods.

This discrepancy requires a closer reflection. Out of the 73 participants, only 53 answered these questions, and from the 53 responses two claimed to have no

experience with any of the methods. Five participants clearly misunderstood the task and provided answers that were incomprehensible in the context given. Three participants confused research methodology and teaching methodology. One participant felt confident to find on-line tools. One participant had experience with sociograms and another one with observations. While eight participants claimed to have some experience with surveys, most of them have referred to surveys that they did not create, but rather they completed as participants. Similar situation was observed concerning the participants' experience with interviews: eight of them claimed to have experience, yet they also referred to being interviewed rather than creating the tools. Seven participants had experience with interpreting images and thirteen participants with interpreting data or statistics. The largest number of participants, fifteen, were familiar with analyzing and interpreting textual materials. Finally, ten students claimed to have gathered some experience writing reflective journals during their university freshman year in courses for language development. The survey did not inquire about the students' experience with recording and coding data. At this point in the research, their basic research competencies were addressed regarding the creation of primary research tools. Had their answers revealed an in-depth understanding of creating such tools, a second needs analysis survey would have focused on the next steps of research that include recording and coding.

Conclusions

Adebisi recommends adding research methods and processes to second year curriculum believing that such courses can bolster university education. Teacher trainee students need to be trained to monitor their practices and use tools to make their teaching more effective (Buzás et al.). Based on the results, the authors of this study also strongly believe that teacher trainee students in the MEd program would benefit from gaining a deeper understanding of research methods. While the students' responses revealed some familiarity with the research tools, learning how to create them, use them, and interpret their results will greatly enhance their ability to understand and transform the educational environment in which they will work. According to Žerovnik and Šerbec: "The responsibility of education is always to cultivate the human being." If students become active participants and become creators of knowledge rather than the passive consumers of information, education has fulfilled this responsibility. The authors intend to conduct further studies to investigate whether the introduction of the new research methodology course impacts the students' thesis topic selection. In addition, surveys and interviews will be triangulated with numerical data indicating the students' mastery of the

material to measure the success of the course and the effectiveness of the content and methods of instruction.

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"The child has returned": Malcolm X, Pan-Africanism, and Interculturation

Péter Gaál Szabó

While Malcolm X's cultural understanding stems primarily from his family background with a mother of Caribbean roots and his demeaning experiences in America, his acquired intercultural subjectivity is mainly due to his conversion to Sunni Islam following his *hajj* in 1964. His ill-famed negation of contemporary American culture and society drives him to look for cultural roots elsewhere, first in Elijah Muhammad's Islam, then in Sunni Islam, and, finally, in black Africa. His Pan-African strivings can thus be seen as both an ontological and cosmological undertaking, but from the point of intercultural communication, as a series of acts in the process of interculturation. Learning and re-learning his self in relation to a newly discovered Africa change his view of the American homeland, but, importantly, they also signify a shift from an essentially monocultural self-concept sustained by a mythicized Africa to one that allows for cultural exchange and appropriation. It is this aspect of cultural change that the study explores based on his speeches following his *hajj* and his journey across Africa, the main focus being his intercultural immersion which also has an impact on his view of America.

Beyond religious conversion, *hajj* for Malcolm X facilitates also a cultural conversion that inherently transforms his cultural identity. His touring of Africa, including visits to Egypt, Nigeria, and Ghana, leads him to unite Africa culturally into one cosmos and incorporate African Americans into it. The move may not be surprising for a person with a Garveyite father as is true of Malcolm X. Yet, that is too easy a conclusion to draw, considering his view of his father and his turn away from the Black Church and Christianity altogether. His *hajj* experience allows him to reinterpret the racial element in his view of America: "I no longer subscribe to sweeping indictments of anyone race [sic]. My religious pilgrimage (hajj) to Mecca has given me a new insight into the true brotherhood of Islam, which encompasses all the races of mankind" ("Letter to the Egyptian Gazette" par. 3). His visit to various African nations, however, where he is hailed predominantly by anti-American Marxist politicians as not just a leader, but a representative member of the African American community and even called "Omowale," meaning "the child has returned" ("We Are All Blood Brothers" 5), by Muslim students in Nigeria, helps him identify an African personality into which he willingly sutures African Americans.

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As an attempt against any transcendence of race (Tibebu 109), Edward Wilmot Blyden's concept of the "African personality" (200-01), incorporating for him components such as the "spirit of cooperation, collectivity, equality, and spiritual expression" (Conyers 155), proves a significant initial trigger of the Pan-African discourse. The respective concept was strongly promoted by other 19th century thinkers such as Alexander Crummell, the Episcopalian minister, whose exhortation that "You should claim with regard to this continent that "'THIS IS OUR AFRICA,' in all her gifts, and in her budding grace and glory" (52) and the abolitionist Martin Robison Delany, whose request for "Africa for the African race and black men to rule them" (61) was later picked up as slogans by Pan-Africanists. These predecessors grant a background for Malcolm X's thinking in that they delineate a cultural universe that withstands theories and practices of cultural erasure. Especially Blyden's case shows that, beyond identifying roots and a cultural core, he significantly maps a political/cultural/educational roadmap to work toward a Pan-African unity (Conyers 153), later to be utilized by Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana's president in Malcolm X's time, for whom the liberation process of African nations represents that "above the world's horizon loomed the African Personality" (425). The possible recognition of an African personality in the diaspora is, however, overshadowed in DuBois's theorizing by his concept of "double consciousness," which represents a shift toward a "socio-historical notion" of race ("The Uncompleted Argument" 23), instead of a spiritual bond among people of African descent. In his *Dusk of Dawn* DuBois asserts that "But the physical bond is least and the badge of color is relatively unimportant save as a badge; the real essence of this kinship is its social heritage of slavery; the discrimination and insult; and this heritage binds together" (117). DuBois's anti-colonial nationalism represents from another point of view "romantic racialism" (*Father's House* 101)—insisting on an ancient black civilization—notions that are debunked, acknowledged, and further developed by Malcom X.

Interculturation may be perceived more directly between Africans and African Americans than any reciprocity in the case of religious interculturation between Muslims and African Americans. The Pan-African preoccupation of President Nkrumah shows that African self-conception reaches well beyond national borders and even beyond Africa to incorporate, from his perspective, the African American diaspora: "It must be understood that liberation movements in Africa, the struggle of Black Power in America or in any other part of the world, can only find consummation in the political unification of Africa, the home of the black man and people of African descent throughout the world" (Nkrumah 427). As Katharina Schramm also points out, "the Ghanaian nation-state and its renewed rhetorical self-location within a Pan-African setting [. . .] categorically embraced

the classical African diaspora as a frame of reference" (20). For Nkrumah to extend kinship ties to African Americans means building alliances politically, but, culturally, rebuilding a community locally by contextualizing Africans globally—an important move in the wake of African nation states to strengthen self-worth and ascribe valence to themselves.

From Malcolm X's perspective, interculturation evolves along similar lines. The kinship ties he identifies or allows to be identified by establish political loyalties, the prime example being his initiative to jointly submit a plea with African heads of state to the United Nations to condemn American policies against African Americans as a crime against humanity. From the point of view of identity politics, he importantly rids himself of a minority position by claiming membership in a Pan-African community: "We think of things worldly, or as the world is; we think of our part in the world, and we look upon ourselves not as a dark minority on the white American stage, but rather we look upon ourselves as a part of the dark majority who now prevail on the world stage" ("Afro-American History" par. 5). As member of a significant cultural group, he finds external support to practice intragroup communication, which nurtures self-rewarding identity negotiation.

Leaving behind America in this way and placing himself elsewhere in a different cultural space helps him reinterpret the concept of color—the primary token of African American suppression. As he claims,

> You see the nations of the earth that are black, brown, red, and yellow, who used to be down, now getting up. And when you see them, you find that you look more like them than you look like Sam. And then you find yourself relating to them, whereas you formerly tried to relate to Sam. When you relate to them, you're related to the majority. But when you relate to Uncle Sam, you automatically become a minority relative. ("Afro-American History" par. 6)

Reflecting on his *hajj* makes him see that color can be magnified, but also nullified by a religious discourse, and his African experience renders it a socio-political and cultural category. Up to his Muslim and African experiences, color signifies a barrier of many kinds and a detachment as well: "You can't lay claim to any culture as long as you use the word Negro to identify yourself. It attaches you to nothing. It doesn't even identify your color" ("Afro-American History" par. 23). As a difference, color facilitates and embalms cultural disruption, discontinuation, and displacement in America. However, color loses its negative connotations in black Africa; quite to the contrary, it turns into an identity-strengthening element and becomes value-laden. When he claims that "Just as a tree without roots is dead, a people without history or cultural roots also becomes a dead people"

("Afro-American History" par. 25), he does not, therefore, argue for the abolition of the color concept, but for its reinterpretation. Especially as he explains, "[. . .] when you look at us, those of us who are called Negro, we're called that because we are like a dead people. We have nothing to identify ourselves as part of the human family" ("Afro-American History" par. 25); the obstacle of blackness as a stigma of displacement also presents the possibility of overcoming it. Reconfiguring blackness and embracing the black continent grants him a means of identification by establishing positive difference within a historical and spatial context.

Homecoming has then two important aspects: spatial and temporal. Rediscovering Africa anew represents a shift in self-identification—significantly, however, not by distancing from America, in the first place, as was the case previously in his Nation of Islam phase. The mythical Africa in Muhammad's ideology-informed theologizing signifies primarily oppositionality to white America, which is why it remains confabulation in a minority position despite the heroic black past it insists on. Brandon Kendhammer mentions a similar, typical notion of anti-colonial nationalism: "while it 'rejects' foreign domination and asserts the cultural worth of its own 'nation,' it also implicitly accepts its own inferiority and need to modernize its society" (56). Malcolm X's trans-spatial maneuver overcomes the minority constraint, attempting to place African Americans in a context devoid of any inferiority complex induced by race. This remains valid despite the fact that he searches for validation of self elsewhere, thus identification with the place, that is, America, may not appear intact. Stuart Hall's conceptualization of cultural identity entails not just difference recognized, but the acceptance of origins elsewhere (228-9), "fundamentally puncturing the notion that territorial association or land and cultural affiliation are natural sources of identification" (Kalra et al 32). Further than that, for Malcolm X, homecoming signifies the negation of social categorization and the essence of the quest for self—two notions Hall also identifies with difference: "[. . .] difference challenges the fixed binaries which stabilize meaning and representation and show how meaning is never finished or completed, but keeps on moving to encompass other, additional or supplementary meanings [. . .]" (229). Malcolm Little/X/Shabazz, the hustler/NOI minister/Sunni convert/Pan-Africanist leader, has always withstood fixity, proving the ability of constant transformation and granting himself temporal continuation despite geographical and social displacement. Malcolm X's Pan-African diasporic identity bears relevance in this regard: Spatial disruption does not cause temporal disruption and identification with a place elsewhere can aid identity salience in the here and now. The two-directional notion of homecoming entails thus identification with an imagined/real land while it also emerges as "the central, unavoidable, unifying cultural force against the notion of the nation" (Kalra et al 30)—in Malcolm X's case white America.

Therefore, repatriation is not an issue with Malcolm X. Being part of the black majority suffices to grant spatial integration in the diaspora, while fostering repatriation would mean yielding to the minoritization of African Americans—that, in a parallel fashion, amounts to sheer escapism or otherworldliness that Malcolm X accuses black churches of as an NOI minister. Instead, he advocates spiritual reunion to establish the Black Atlantic continuum:

> And I believe this, that if we migrated back to Africa culturally, philosophically and psychologically, while remaining here physically, the spiritual bond that would develop between us and Africa through this cultural, philosophical and psychological migration, so-called migration would enhance our position here, because we would have our contacts with them acting as roots or foundations behind us. ("On Going Back to Africa" 210)

Trans-spatiality does not simply refer to the adoption of African ways or the adherence to a distant, mythicized continent, but to an active symbiosis with group members that allows inhabiting a place elsewhere, that is, Africa, and the American landscape.

Much as Malcolm X's stand may be taken as still very ideological and can be understood in terms of what Paul Gilroy identifies as "cultural insiderism" (3) and "absolute ethnicity" (84),[1] he is aware of the heterogeneity of Africans and the possible non-acceptance of African Americans by African blacks: "After lengthy discussions with many Africans at all levels, I would say some would be welcome and some wouldn't be welcome. Those that have a contribution to make would be welcome, but those that have no contribution to make would not be welcome" ("On Going Back to Africa" 210). Schramm also mentions resignation on the Africans' part over the "homecoming" of foreigners: "Especially those who professed radical views [. . .] were perceived as strangers, and, worse, as Americans" (69-70). Malcolm X perceives this ambivalence and, addressing university students in Ghana, he professes to be an insider: "I'm from America but I'm not an American" ("University of Ghana" 11). Taking Ghanaians for "blood brothers" represents an interculturating move, which emphasizes commonalities and seeks to unite, importantly, not just on a rhetorical level. Gilroy's notion of the Black Atlantic representing the hybrid and heterogeneous diasporic self withstanding identity closure bears relevance to the critique of academic mystification of belongingness

1 Building on Werner Sollors's notion of "ethnic insiderism" (13), Gilroy understands the terms as representing an "ontological essentialist" approach (32) to Blackness which places "incontestable priority over all other dimensions of their social and historical experience, cultures, and identities" (3).

to Africa, but, for a person like Malcolm X who migrates between battlefields, taking roots in the African continent signifies, beyond a rhetorical, ideological, and political tactical weapon, a phenomenological treatise, or, even, following his *hajj*, a teleological necessity. He does not embrace a "proto-national group with its own hermetically enclosed culture" (Gilroy 33), but rather retains plurality in unity by insisting on mutuality, which presupposes cultural difference and diversity. In a sense, Malcolm X dusts off Blyden's concept of an abstract African personality but in a DuBoisian fashion of doubleness.

The reconceptualized blood ties to Africa establish a temporal continuum that enables stabilization of self through revitalization, and salience. Identifying origins is thus not just a spatial matter as it can undo historical disruption. As Malcolm X states, "When you deal with the past, you're dealing with history; you're dealing actually with the origin of a thing. When you know the origin, you know the cause" ("Afro-American History" par. 3). Understanding the origin of African Americans does not simply pertain to creating a useful past, but, much rather, establishing a temporal link between a formal, rewarding self-conception—how ever well imagined it may be—and the contemporary displaced self. Beyond the possibility of recovering identity, that self envisions an identity that has the potential to construct a cultural self salient in the pool of identities in contemporary America but also internationally. Accordingly, he reaches back to a mythicized but also historically validated past: "When we were first brought here, we had different names. When we were first brought here, we had a different language. And these names and this language identified the culture that we were brought from, the land that we were brought from" ("Afro-American History" par. 25).

Malcolm X refers to one culture and one land (even if not one nation-state) as if not acknowledging the cultural/ethnic diversity and heterogeneity of the African landscape. Elsewhere he is clear about differences in Africa that, in his perception, can and have accounted for disagreement: regarding the Organization of African Unity he mentions that initially "many independent countries [. . .] were so divided against each other that they couldn't come together in a united effort and resolve any of their problems" ("Civil Rights Workers from Mississippi" 66). Yet he also emphasizes "common interests" and a "common objective" that also presupposes a common background other than geographical location or a similar historical experience of oppression. Beyond shared political interests, he identifies some shared Africanness that connects all black people. Blyden's but also DuBois's sentiment of some cultural core appears to recur as, in his straightforward manner, Malcolm X insists on "African blood, African origin, African culture, African ties [and] that deep within the subconscious of the Black man in this country, he's still more African than he is American" ("After the Bombing" 154). This aspect of his

Afrocentric worldview is well embedded in the African American cultural discourse and echoed by numerous predecessors and contemporary intellectuals such as Zora Neale Hurston and Richard Wright. The core of the shared African culture can be accessed for him "through the study of philosophies and psychologies, cultures and languages that did not come from our racist oppressors" (Program of OAAU). Studying Africanness becomes a matter both of a quest for self and examining the African American self prior to racialization.

Apart from individual and collective levels, interculturation also evolves on an institutional level. By seeking Pan-African alliances on an institutional level, Malcolm X tries to evade simple "imagined victories for the oppressed" (Dannin 10)—often suggested in the case of Black Muslim converts, which would equate Africa with an imagined homeland. The latter may echo Benedict Anderson's concept of imagined community, but regarding Africa, it connotes ideas of sacred Africa, the Black Atlantic, or "Mama Africa" (see, for example, Patricia de Santana Pinho). However, Malcolm X attempts to avoid treating the African homeland as imagined community. As James Tyner points out, Malcolm X maintains a "strategic view of Africa" for both its resources and its geographical location between East and West (122). With the establishment of his organization, he hopes in fact to join a geopolitical alliance with the potential to counter Western hegemony and thus to advance the plight of American blacks.

With this sentiment, Malcolm X establishes the Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU) following his visit to Africa in 1964, which is "patterned after the letter and spirit of the Organization of African Unity" ("Founding Rally of the OAAU" 249), a non-religious organization "to unite everyone in the Western Hemisphere of African descent into one united force" (248). Presenting a body of African collectivity in the United States entails not just an opportunity to unite African Americans, but also a chance to represent unity before the African counterpart, with which formal alliance-building becomes possible. This method is to enter the pool of African national entities and emphasize overt reconnection on a collective level. This organizational framework fosters, as he claims, "Our mutual understanding and our mutual effort toward a mutual objective [that] will bring mutual benefit to the African as well as to the Afro-American" ("On Going Back to Africa" 211). Submerging in a broader cultural framework through direct communication on an organizational level, Malcolm X, on the one hand, offers a partnership to Africans to join forces, as when he claims that "Your problems will never be fully solved until and unless ours are solved. You will never be fully respected until and unless we are also respected. You will never be recognized as free human beings until unless we are also recognized and treated as human beings. Our problem is your problem" ("Appeal" 582). On the other hand, he communicates

his emergence as a member of the African cultural group, along with a rhetorical acceptance of the authority of African heads of state, and, consequently, reliance on their guidance. The respective attitude is demonstrated when he addresses them as "the shepherd of all African peoples everywhere, whether they are still at home on the mother continent or have been scattered abroad" ("Appeal" 580).

Malcolm X returns from Africa a different person. His conversion to Sunni Islam and conversion to the African continent reveal a regenerated person devoid of previously racist preoccupations. Through trans-spatial maneuvers, he interculturates the self in that he professes to Africanness while remaining in the American diaspora. Endowed now with "a new sense of identity," "a new sense of dignity," and "a new sense of urgency" ("London School of Economics" 46), Malcolm X shows himself ready to enter a "communication dialogue" with whites ("The Pierre Berton Interview")—a possible new vista of interculturation never to be tested by him.

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(Re)imagining the American Dream and Hollywood Glamour: Decoding Lana Del Rey's Videographies

Sunyat Swezin

Abstract

In this paper, the visual narratives of Lana Del Rey's "National Anthem" and "Candy Necklace" are selected to illuminate how she represents the interplay between the themes of self-exploration, female desire, identity struggle, and sociocultural norms within the context of chasing love, fame, and power. The incorporation of haptic visuality and the deliberate use of old-styled cinematography in her videos allow the audience to engage with the viewing experience sentimentally. Her engagement with tragic and glamorous female figures allows her to explore the vulnerability behind the Hollywood facade and American society, questioning the cost of conforming to societal ideals.

Keywords: *American Dream, Hollywood Glamour, Lana Del Rey*

Introduction

The rise of capitalism and consumer culture helped propel the United States to the forefront of global power due to its postwar prosperity around the 1960s, and along with this event, Hollywood played a pivotal role in advertising and promoting ideologies of hard work and self-reliance. However, the harsh realities like civil rights movements, the second wave of feminism, and the Vietnam War occurring during that period are negated by Hollywood escapism, which idealized the standard American lifestyle accompanied by haute culture, glamorous fashion, freedom, and happiness. Often interpreting the American Dream as an escape and as a quest, Lana Del Rey is deeply preoccupied with the concept of America in a nostalgic manner, depicting the symbolized material objects, locales, and famous figures that are thought of as belonging to historical and classical Hollywood or the aristocratic class. In fact, some of her frequently repeated references, like Pepsi, diamonds, limousines, cigarettes, LA, New York City, Rockefeller, Marilyn Monroe, and Priscilla Presley, serve as evidentiary support for her endeavor to construct an artistic persona that is tied to old Americana yet partially distorted due to the contemporary themes in her videos. In addition, she excessively romanticizes the female experience to the extent

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where agony and sadness are nearly presented as desirable qualities. Her endeavors to reconstruct the American Dream, which is stereotypically perceived in utopian terms, are reflected in her lament for the loss of the nostalgic visuals, introspective narratives, and the aesthetics of old Hollywood. Consequently, her reconceptualization of the American Dream delving into its underbellies: despair, hollowness, and the ethereal and deceitful nature of happiness, appears as an admonition, particularly for women. On the other hand, she still maintains the idea of American dreaming and glamorous Hollywood life, as she claims that she is "just a small-town girl dreaming Hollywood dreams" in her song "Sweetheart," and she usually presents these conflicting dual mindsets with a double in her music videos like "Ride" and "National Anthem." As Catherine Vigier mentions, "the paradoxical features of Del Rey's works manifest in the restless pursuit of achievement, an integral facet of the American Dream, avowing a steadfast allegiance to bygone American ideals, and underscoring that it remains inevitable to encounter disillusionment" (Vigier, 2015, 8). As a next point, by personifying the idea of the American dream and the old Americana as an unrequited or lost lover, which embodies the entity of unattainability, she evokes the sentiments of despair, yearning, and angst while attempting to disrupt the typical utopian sense of the American dream through the representation of disoriented aspects of fears and obsession. One prominent instance of prosopopeia occurs when she portrays living the glamorous American lifestyle featuring the persona of John F. Kennedy as a symbol in her "National Anthem," reinforcing the lyrics "I am your national anthem…," and she simultaneously employs subjective interpretation to ascribe narratives and identities to landscapes, American experience, and the United States itself.

However, since the release of the "Lust for Life" album in 2017, significantly, Del Rey's musical performances do not feature conspicuous displays of the American flag anymore; meanwhile, her songs, particularly in the haunting "When the World Was at War, We Kept Dancing," offer a contemplative musing on the present perilous global milieu, questioning: "Is it the end of an era? Is it the end of America?" The worries and hope she holds about today's chaotic political situation are clear in her lyrical compositions, like in the above lines, wherein the notions of ignorance and innocence are also strongly stressed in a satirical manner.

According to David Travers Garland, luck plays a crucial factor in achieving the Hollywood American Dream (Garland 1990, 8), which promotes hope, daydreaming, and offers the justification for failure, adding a nuanced layer to the success ideology. Del Rey commonly engages with the notion of chance or luck, the most prominent aspect in Hollywood, in her songs. One such example is the "Lucky Ones," in which a couple is leaving town to find a better possibility, or "Lust for Life," in which she sings "We are the masters of our own fates" and includes the

skyline scenes of the famous Hollywood sign. She tends to keep a distance from mainstream America and its current society and strives to habituate the in-between states, which are represented in her visuals by utilizing dash-cam perspectives, double exposures, and making connections with various historical figures as a mainstream artist. Most obviously, her obsession with "the open road" additionally uncovers the drive to self-exploration, transgression, non-conformity, and chasing infinite and elusive possibilities. She also criticizes and romanticizes traditional glamorous Americana and the façade of the American Dream ethos, encapsulating the ideal values of Hollywood seduction, such as fame, fortune, and beauty, through indulgence and a nihilistic approach. Henceforth, the present inquiry attempts to analyse Del Rey's music videos of "National Anthem" and "Candy Necklace" while examining how she underlines the fantasy of the American Dream associated with Hollywood glamour from the viewpoint of female experience and the realities of the present-day geopolitical landscape as well.

The Myth of the American Dream

The roots of the cultural lexicon "American Dream" were congruously buttressed by the historical backdrop of European immigration and westward territorial expansion in America, culminating in the attainment of land. Though this original idea of the American Dream is less complicated and encompasses the achievement of wealth, happiness, and equal opportunities for everyone, the limitations still apply to marginalized groups. However, due to postwar economic propagation and accelerated mass consumerism during the 20th century, the notion of the American Dream becomes distorted, relying heavily on the idea of individualism, which is characterized by self-independence and upward social mobility. In *The Epic of America*, which elucidates the historical trajectory of the American Dream since the early arrival of the English in America, John Truslow Adams expresses that the American Dream envisages an utopian social order and pertains to a land where humanity transcends its present state, embracing abundance, fulfilment, equality, and individual potential (Adams 1931, 404). Adams additionally explains that the ordinary men and the leaders led the process of migration to seek greater liberation and joy not only for themselves but also for their generations (Adams 1931, 31). However, the narrative and conception of migration in his book fail to take into account the various functions and pursuits of women throughout migration, and he emphasizes the equality and potential for the development of only men without any recognition of women (Lotun 2021, 4).

In contemporary times, the interpretation of the American Dream has been subject to rigorous interrogation in light of the predicament of income inequality,

societal precariousness, and the multifarious challenges precipitated by the economic downturn and the global phenomena that foster a milieu of unpredictability and anxiety. In respect to this, Madeline High argues that the current concept of the American Dream heavily focuses on monetary achievement, and this myopic view ignores the obstacles caused by wealth disparity and other variables beyond pure perseverance (High 2015, 5). In *Bootstrapped* (2023), Alissa Quart also effectively dispels the widely held fallacy of self-sufficiency and individualism in the American Dream. She argues that this fallacy not only engenders a culture of imprudent materialism and inescapable despondency, but also perpetuates the scourge of social inequality and curtails the prospect of optimal collective decision-making (Quart 2023, 268). This notion effectively highlights the precarious consumerist culture, and the belief that "one can pull oneself up by one's own bootstraps" ignores the systemic barriers and inequalities that exist in society, hindering the ability of individuals to achieve true self-sufficiency and refusing to recognize the importance of solidarity. Likewise, Zillah Eisenstein expounds on how consumer culture coalesces with a conception of individualism to beguile both the privileged and underprivileged, neglecting poverty and unemployment (qtd. in Hooks 2020, 72).

Additionally, Bell Hooks claims that through the hedonistic lifestyle of the rich, television and other media proffer depictions of the American Dream, wherein everyone is endowed with the potential to attain wealth and success, while simultaneously intimating that possession of a specific commodity functions as an intermediary of class distinctions (Hooks 2020, 71). Consequently, this rags-to-riches illusion tends to disregard the realities of class divisions and hierarchies in society, which create structural inequalities and injustices that are often insurmountable. According to Quart, individuals who are purportedly self-made are not limited to males but also encompass the most socioeconomically privileged females (Quart 2023, 85). By evaluating the concept of girlboss, which reinforces existing power structures and fails to recognize that success is often determined by factors such as wealth, race, and access, she asserted that such a feminist ideal is often fiction and marginalizes others (Quart 2023, 87). If success is largely a matter of privilege rather than individual merit, then what does it mean to strive for success?

As Hollywood films exert an influential impact on the socio-cultural milieu, Hooks expounds on the thematic predilections of Hollywood cinema, particularly the portrayal of race, gender, and socio-economic sectors. She also highlights that the American Dream embodies an almost dogmatic faith in the efficacy of competitive pursuits to engender triumph and perpetual engagement in the cutthroat competition that constitutes the very essence of the game within a hegemonic cultural paradigm (Hooks 2012, 102–103). The Hollywood industry

perpetuates a culture of domination in which individuals are constantly pitted against one another in the pursuit of success. This culture is underpinned by chasing the American Dream, which prioritizes the pursuit of power and monetary gains above the promotion of communal wellness and egalitarianism.

The Hollywood Glamour

The American Dream undergoes a transformation entwined with the 20th-century consumerist ethos as the burgeoning influence of Hollywood in the early 1900s shapes and filters its essence through a distinctive allure. During the cinematic period of the 1930s, Hollywood garnered epithets such as the "Dream Factory," which proffers consumerist cultural artefacts imbued with glamour not only to engender transcendental escapism but also to instigate the desire for a materially enriched image or lifestyle (Gundle and Castelli 2006, 62). In *The Glamour System*, Stephen Gundle elucidates the historical foundations of glamour as an "enticing structure" (Gundle 2006, 16). The Hollywood industry, colloquially referred to as the glamour hub, effectuated a profound metamorphosis of mundane individuals into painstakingly designed visual symbols, representing an alluring enigma of personal desires and fantasies. These captivating representations were subsequently idolized by the general populace through the acquisition of commodified merchandise (Gundle 2006, 68). In doing so, the Hollywood film stars who captivate the popular imagination have become inextricably entwined with the culture of consumption, and their very essence, with all of its attendant extravagance, represents a manifestation of the American Dream that is deeply steeped in the allure of glamour.

The notion of the "glamour phenomenon" transpired in the early 1900s as a catalyst for metamorphosis into an upgraded self and was subsequently hijacked by Hollywood. Before the 1930s, the term "glamour" was used by fan magazines to describe a wide range of subjects associated with the allure of distant and different lives that existed outside of the norms (Keating 2012, 106). During the "silent era" of Hollywood, the actresses in their glamorous fashions and looks in the films were just to be visually appreciated, being kept at some distance from the audience, while they were expected to accordingly assume submissive roles; this fact rendered the paradoxical nature of the idea of glamour through its otherworldliness and familiarity visible.

In *Glamour: Women, History, Feminism*, Carol Dyhouse posits the compelling argument that the concept of glamour is intricately connected to the phenomenon of modernity and the emergence of technologies, most notably the influential medium of Hollywood cinema (Dyhouse 2010, 5). The proliferation of cinema

during the inception of the 20th century facilitated the extensive diffusion of glamorous imagery, which had the effect of captivating the collective imagination of the masses. According to Dyhouse, the concept of glamour is fluid despite its evolutionary nature; nevertheless, its tenacity as an exquisite and erotic appeal distinguished by theatricality and artificiality emerged during the 1920s, peaked in classic Hollywood, declined in the '60s with second-wave feminism, and resurged in the '80s (Williams 2013, 44). Dyhouse claims that glamour has commonly been construed as transgressive, signifying women's rebellion against rather than adherence to cultural norms throughout the twentieth century, and simultaneously, glamour can be a precarious domain as it reduces women to mere objects (Dyhouse 2010, 203–211). Additionally, the notion of glamour associated with femininity has been a manipulative tool in the commodification of the female body, and its infamous reputation has been further exacerbated during the waves of feminist movements in the 1960s and 1970s, owing to the resultant discourse surrounding gender and power imbalances. The notion of glamour, therefore, crucially serves as a versatile lens that refracts the nuances of mass-mediated sociocultural expressions, Hollywood's cinematic representations, power, and gender dynamics while simultaneously illustrating the tension between the opulent aesthetics of glamour and its socio-cultural implications.

"The National Anthem": *From Patriotism to Pop Culture*

Del Rey's music video titled "National Anthem (2012)" constitutes an illustration of cultural critique, whereby her utilization of the enigmatic national narrative and historical motifs yields a reconstruction of the stereotypical features of the American dream. In "National Anthem," Del Rey assumes the roles of the glamorous Marilyn Monroe and Jackie Kennedy, coupled with the representation of the iconic President John F. Kennedy by A$AP Rocky, thereby evoking an allusion to the Camelot era of American politics and romance. The promised and idealized society of the past era is unveiled through this allusion, yet this elusive façade suddenly vanishes in the end as the couple encounters a tragic fate, ultimately embodying the collapse of Americans' utopian dreams. The video crystallizes the cultural imaginary of the American dream, epitomized by the repeated lyrics, "Money is the anthem of success." Del Rey's satirical conceptualization of success is inextricably linked with the glorification of material wealth and the exertion of power over subordinates, and this perceptual resonance is also recurrent in her other songs like "Money, Power, Glory."

Furthermore, the signifiers in her visual narrative, such as vignettes, irregular frames, soft and warm lighting, a dreamlike atmosphere, and haptic imagery,

illustrate the nuanced dynamics between the trauma and healing process. According to Laura U. Marks, haptic visuality obfuscates inter-subjective demarcations and is akin to the relationship between a baby and its mother, where the baby forms its identity through a dynamic interplay of unity and separation (Marks 2002, 1-22). She also explores how film's material properties evoke cultural displacement trauma, emphasizing sensory communication and facilitating healing (Marks 2002, 1-22). In "National Anthem," the portrayal of the golden era of America associated with sensory-provoking images, such as hands in close-up shots, the rays of sunlight, the hand-held camera effect, and the swirl of champagne in the glasses, conveys a sense of pleasure and nostalgia. Simultaneously, the employment of haptic visuality allows the audience to intimately experience Del Rey's emotional narrative, establishing the video as a tool of hope and healing.

Kennedy, the 35th President of America, was an emblem of the American Dream and the embodiment of hope for American people at the dawn of consumerism because of his unwavering advocacy of human rights, skillful management of the Cuban Missile Crisis, space exploration, and his devotion to emancipating the historically oppressed. Del Rey's "National Anthem" underlines these values of liberty and aspirations, with the African American family demonstrating the triumph of the American dream. Released in 2012, under President Barack Obama's leadership, the video offers an unique perspective on the evolving socio-political landscape. Kathryn Hume, in her *American Dream, American Night-mare* (2000), expresses that the 1960s heralded a paradigm shift in American history, characterized by a pervasive disquietude with the American way of life, and that this unstable situation primarily emanated from a liberal moral ambivalence, catalyzed by the distrust of governmental, racial, and personal ethics in the preceding decades (Macarthur 2004, 15). The assassination of Kennedy in Dallas in 1963 served as a turning point for Americans, inciting a sense of disillusionment and scepticism regarding the viability of the American dream (Macarthur 2004, 15). John F. Kennedy and Monroe embodied Hollywood glamour, projecting mystic personas onto the television screen as symbols of American power and beauty, respectively, but their demises revealed the darker side of Hollywood's scandals and tragedies.

In Lana Del Rey's "National Anthem," her use of a non-linear narrative structure and a shift from monochrome to color obfuscate the boundaries between the temporal dichotomy of past and present, between objective reality and subjective fantasy, as well as between individual and collective identity. In doing so, her artistic manifestation adumbrates the fluidity of the American Dream, which is incessantly influenced and shaped by socio-cultural and historical factors. Moreover, she is presented as an embodiment of domesticity and maternal essence, mirroring the notion of the nuclear family, which serves as the paragon of the American dream.

The carefully chosen spaces, which include both homey interiors like the kitchen and dreamy outdoor scenes with the mansion and rose gardens as backdrops, feeding the husband at the home party (2:57–3:00), and the familial bliss encapsulated in moments of playfulness (2:19–2:27, 3:40–3:53), denote a sense of affection, a happy marriage, and her role as a domestic caretaker or an ideal motherhood. Del Rey's character appears as a homely, nurturing matron, which conveys an unmistakable message of wholesome family values; however, she manifests a distinctive brand of personal autonomy imbued with an intricate comprehension of female agency and empowerment, in contrast to the conventional expectations of women during the halcyon era. Her control over the narrative and individuality are prominently reflected in the myriad close-up vignettes, which capture her introspective emotional states and align with her intentional establishment of eye contact with the audience. She also navigates the aspects of glamorous femininity and power through her featuring personas of iconic American cultural symbols like Jackie Kennedy and Marilyn Monroe, in line with how Gundle claims that glamour functions as a mechanism of empowerment (Gundle 2008, 4). The imagery Del Rey uses, replete with diamond jewellery, rose gardens, haute couture, a half-up beehive look, and classic automobiles and yachts, in addition to the hedonistic acts of smoking and drinking, all imbued with a warm chromatic tone, showcases the classic atmosphere of Hollywood glamour, which subsequently perpetuates the mystique of feminine power.

Similarly to the pioneering oeuvre of photographer Slim Aaron, Del Rey's lifestyle in the video captures the glitterati and high society of the 50s and 60s in all their glamour and refinement. In particular, Aaron's "The Beauty and Beast (1959)" serves as a reminiscence in which Del Rey is captured in a highly evocative pose atop a lion skin rug, eliciting a visceral response from the observer, and she exposes the alluring lifestyle of the privileged few while highlighting the inherent dangers of power and fame (see Figures 1 and 2). On the one hand, her glamorous appearance in a diamond necklace is portrayed as an object of desire shackled by patriarchal projections, juxtaposing the glitz and grandeur of the fur rug.

Figure 1: Del Rey posing on a lion skin rug in "National Anthem"

Figure 2: Slim Aaron's "The Beauty and Beast (1959)"

Paul A. Crutcher claims that Del Rey depicts the American Dream as nothing short of grotesque, and this grotesque phenomenon permeates and pervades the current social fabric, inhabiting a world that is strikingly similar to a frightful nightmare (Crutcher 2013, 238). Del Rey, in glamorous garments and a diamond necklace, is in stark contrast with the macabre appearance of the rug, revealing the grotesqueness and imperfections beneath the polished veneer of prosperity. In this sense, the rug serves not only as a glamorous piece of decoration but also as a powerful symbol of the paradoxes and contradictions that define the American experience. Furthermore, the cigarette and cigar become potent symbols of Del Rey's "National Anthem (2012)," signifying an unrelenting pursuit of pleasure and a disregard for the constraints of societal norms. Brown observes that the simple act of inhaling and exhaling the smoke creates a sense of style, transgression, and danger (Brown 2018, 2), and it marks the obsession with death or destruction (Brown 2018, 4). In the scene where the singer indulges in the act of smoking a cigarette and exhales amidst the dining setting, a deliberate departure from societal norms serves as a tangible reaffirmation of her commitment to the unhindered pursuit of personal desires, all within the framework of metaphorical disillusionment. This visual depiction (see Figure 3) can also be perceived as contentious, as it reinforces the idea that to chase the American Dream is a call of the void, characterized by an erosive and detrimental mindset, and embodies a state of equivocal allure towards what is antithetical to satisfaction. Taking that into account, Del Rey not only portrays a glamorous and idealized ethos of the American Dream but also hints at its dangerous underbelly and perpetual desire, allegorically presenting this dream as a process of self-annihilation, which is also tainted with masochistic tendencies.

Figure 3: Smoking scene of Del Rey in "National Anthem"

The profound collaboration between idealized representation and real historical phenomena catalyzes complexities and problematics since viewers navigate the chasm between the two realms and are confronted with the dissonance regarding the American identity. The introductory monochrome of the video, in which Del Rey features a contemporary rendition of Monroe crooning "Happy Birthday" to the president (0:01–1:17), is rapidly transformed into the subsequent scenes that depict a bleak and apocalyptic view of the United States. In addition, the imageries of Kennedy's assassination, alongside the chaotic diegetic sounds and the shaky camera effects, convey numerous controversies and conspiracies, political fraud, and moral disintegration. Del Rey presents a transformative journey from an initial state of guileless idealism and hope to a state of disheartenment and despair, which she deftly explores through her nuanced treatment of the American Dream's themes, showcasing the inconsistencies of the respective concept and the delusive facades of beauty, power, and societal prestige.

Furthermore, she confronts the shadowed facets of love and relationships, meditating on their fragility to anxiety, insecurity, and temporal and situational influences in the current uncertain world. The whole thematic underpinning of the music video revolves around the pursuit of an idealized existence, wherein love and relationships serve as requisite sacrifices; it also romanticizes the timeless reality of a persistent quest for love and happiness, situated within the contemporary

world characterized by the dual hues of aspirational dreams and mirages. This idea is manifested in Del Rey's purposeful choice of damaged retro cinematography, characterized by its scratches, grains, and instability, and in her visual narrative, wherein she strives to reach out and rescue her partner from her convertible, ultimately culminating in relinquishment. In these concluding scenes, utilizing slow-motion effects with her poetic monologue as a background adds a subtle layer to the overall thematic discourse of her video.

What is the Behind-the-camera Footage of Candy Necklace?

Del Rey's "Candy Necklace," characterized by the aesthetic nuances of monochromatic hues and the nostalgia of old Hollywood cinematography, was released in April 2023 and won the award for "Best Alternative Video." In "Candy Necklace," Del Rey explores the psychological dimensions of claustrophobia and the challenges of societal expectations behind the female persona and celebrityhood through various motifs. Contrary to "National Anthem," which adopts a predominantly rose-colored portrayal of American lifestyle and foregrounds a glamorous and idyllic atmosphere through warm light flares, the monochrome footage of "Candy Necklace" conveys an inclination towards introspection and a subdued exploration of the shadowy realm of the American ethos. The dichotomy in visual aesthetics across the two videos associated with color transitions serves as a deliberate device, illustrating the disparate narrative tones, and both narratives delve into Old Hollywood vignettes concerning American identity. In "Candy Necklace," the visual medium features the portrayal of doppelgängers of Hollywood figures in a manner akin to the characteristic behind-the-scenes footage of a film noir production. The video "Candy Necklace" is a mise en abyme, where the artist—Del Rey herself—embodies an actress, busily attending to the myriad minutiae that go into the making of an old-style film.

The video is composed of the multifarious fragments of film shooting in which Del Rey is found with Jon Batiste, a mysterious older man, a film crew, and high-end, luxurious accoutrements such as necklaces, enormous paintings, a classy automobile, and a fabulous mansion with a grand staircase and piano, and this atmosphere serves to heighten the sense of sophistication and glamour. In the video, Del Rey ingeniously takes on the guise of Priscilla Presley, Elizabeth Short (Black Dahlia), Marilyn Monroe, and Veronica Lake, flitting from one persona to another, alluding to the legacies of these iconic women, who represent the lamentable realities of tragic stardom and fame in Hollywood.

Like her prior works, Del Rey is found to have taken on the role of co-star alongside a black man, a casting choice that ostensibly contradicts the historical

norms of the classic film noir industry. The involvement of a black co-star within the context of film noir represents a departure from the established cinematic conventions of the genre, which have been characterized by a dearth of racial diversity, and also challenges the hegemonic power structures of the era. Del Rey's interpretation of classic Hollywood espouses the idea of a post-racial milieu and manifests a distorted perspective on the cultural identity of America during the noir period dominated by white protagonists. According to Paul A. Crutcher's assertion, Del Rey never fails to embrace an idealized construct of a bygone era, characterized by benevolent and pervasive values that have become obsolete or have never been actualized (Crutcher 2013, 245). Del Rey presents an oversimplified and idealized picture of the historical American ideals of freedom, patriotic pride, and the American way of life while ignoring their less appealing counterparts.

In the video, the presence of cameras and the oversized eyes in the painting serves as a symbolic manifestation of the surveillance of the industry and the prevailing celebrity culture, which greatly values the notion of visibility. As Del Rey, coupled with an Afro-American man, gracefully descends the flight of stairs, a skillful interplay of shadows and a focused illumination cast upon them emphasize the disconnection between the image of stardom and the real (see Figure 4). This stairway scene reminds the viewers of the iconic last scene of *Sunset Boulevard* (1950) directed by Billy Wilder, and the video finds its thematic resonance in exploring the flimsy veneer of stardom and experiencing disillusionment and angst regarding the commodification of the fame behind cameras.

Figure 4: Scene of shadows and light in "Candy Necklace"

It is often believed that women should be lavished with material assets, particularly those that are linked to a glamorous lifestyle, and Del Rey's diamond necklace serves as a representation of this stereotype. Marilyn Monroe's classic performance of "Diamonds Are a Girl's Best Friend" additionally enhances the

diamond's cultural connotation as a symbol of romance, opulence, and femininity. Patriarchal society's standards for women's desires devalue women by treating them as property that can be owned and controlled by luxurious items like diamonds. Moreover, Del Rey portrays a diverse array of women throughout the narrative, each bedecked with a necklace, which can be interpreted as the representation of the public persona of women or her artistic persona, serving as a biting commentary on the figurative "sweetness" that society deems "desirable" in women, which ultimately results in their subjugation. This metaphorical idea is buttressed by her colloquy with the crew at a certain juncture of the video, and she explains, "The whole thing about the video—why it was all supposed to be behind the scenes—was because all these women who changed their names and changed their hair, like me, it's like they all fell into these different snake holes..." (4:08–4:25). Del Rey's thoughts regarding the extensive transformation encountered by the female protagonists, including her own self, serve as a harbinger of a nuanced exploration of identity amidst the Hollywood glamour and its accompanying quagmires, whereby one may run the risk of losing one's sense of selfhood in the course of the artistic quest. Her statement echoes the dichotomous nature between the performative and private personas, alongside the process of introspection and the transcendence of personal constraints. Although Carol Dyhouse acknowledges that investment in one's physical appearance may yield greater returns for women as opposed to their male counterparts, the potential magnitude of loss for women who opt out of conforming to the prescribed standards of glamour is relatively greater than that of men (qtd. in Williams 2013, 47). Del Rey emphasizes this existential battle while shedding light on the complex, multi-dimensional nature of identity, conformity, and gender expectations that inexorably beset women in the realm of Hollywood as they strive to navigate success within highly competitive environments. This idea is also solidified by the scenes in which she takes off her Veronica Lake-style peek-a-boo wig and subsequently shows her middle finger in an aggressive way.

Janey Place contends that film noir often embodies a male-centric fantasy. In a scene reminiscent of this genre (Place 1992, 35), Del Rey's entrance into a mansion, adorned with huge paintings, intensifies the scopophilic male gaze, with the elderly man therein further solidifying the male subjective look (1:19–1:25), which is also repeated with the close-up shot in another scene (5:54–6:02). Employing symbolic implication, Del Rey underscores that the mansion becomes a metaphorical representation of the grandiosity of Hollywood stardom intertwined with the aspirational allure of the American dream and the pitfalls of fame, encapsulating a narrative of delusions. Ken Hillis expresses that "in film noir, a recurrent theme manifests in the advocacy for a reconfiguration of indi-

vidual identity and reveals an ambivalent side of Hollywood narratives" (Hillis 2005, 3–4). The video portrays the shooting scene encapsulated within the aesthetic realms reminiscent of classic film noir, proffering a nuanced homage to the earliest feminist zeitgeist, concurrent with Del Rey's pursuit of a legacy initiated by her predecessors with a melancholic resonance. According to Shaunanne Tangney, an age of anxiety spanning from the end of the Second World War to the advent of the late 1960s countercultural wave epitomizes the period of the genre of film noir (Tangney 2012, 188). Del Rey's "Candy Necklace (2023)" upholds a hallmark of the genre through the masterfully created shadows, the eerie atmosphere of the passageway, the controversial imageries, and the seemingly criminal site, all of which are accentuated by black and white hues, underscoring the existential anxiety and bitterness.

As elucidated by J. L. Hochschild, for the accomplished, the American Dream serves as a heuristic for validating their self-efficacy and motivating further endeavors, while it also engenders complex states such as anxiety, guilt, and disillusionment (Hochschild 1995, 38). Indeed, Del Rey's Monroe-esque persona, accompanied by the lyrical backdrop of "sitting on the sofa, feeling super suicidal," in conjunction with the self-proclaimed inability to transcend robotic tendencies (2:48–3:01), indicates the intricate relationship between societal expectations and individual contentment. In contrast to the public gaze-centric depiction of Monroe in "National Anthem," her portrayal of Monroe in "Candy Necklace" delves into the complexities of constriction, victimization, and the labyrinthine journey of self-discovery amid adversity. She also illustrates an entanglement between reality and delusion, along with the idea of the confinement of her performance-oriented existence. She exposes the disintegrated facade of an ambitious paradigm that promises immeasurable achievement and relish but ultimately succumbs to a distressing milieu of desolation and detachment.

Within the narrative of the video, a conspicuous archetypal male persona emerges, epitomized by the enigmatic elderly gentleman who, in some of the frames, can be observed gallantly clasping the arm of Del Rey and beholding her singing while elegantly clutching a cigar in his hand. All of his appearances embody a timeless and archaic form of masculine prowess in the Hollywood industry. Through this portrayal, gendered power dynamics take center stage, shedding light on their pivotal role in Del Rey's emotional distress and her prevailing angst. Furthermore, Del Rey emerges as an embodiment of the femme fatale archetype, straddling the delicate dichotomy of danger and victimhood, thereby representing the convergence of two antithetical yet intertwined forces: the allure of diamonds, symbolic of glamour and material success, and the imagery of blood, epitomizing both sacrifice and controversial disaster (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: Diamonds and blood in "Candy Necklace."

This scene is followed by the spectacle of a cloak cascading from the automobile and the mysterious blood-stained Pandora's box, which denotes an unleashed affliction (8:23–8:39). Laura Mulvey highlights the symbolism in "Pandora's Box," wherein a nuanced amalgamation of feminine ideations interweaves the dichotomy of femininity's internal-external polarity (Mulvey 1996, 56). Her perspective delves into the multifaceted nature of femininity as embodied by Pandora's box, emphasizing how femininity can be seen as both external beauty and hidden dangers. Through this symbolism of "Pandora's Box," which unveils the comprehensive picture, Del Rey engages in a form of chiasmus in which the public life in "National Anthem" juxtaposes the internal turmoil in "Candy Necklace." According to Maree Macmillan (2009, 239), "Pandora's box" connotes the enthralling and precarious nature of femininity, encapsulating the seductive allure of female sexuality while embodying a paradigm of unbridled chaos and irrationality, serving as the root cause of worldly troubles. In "Candy Necklace," Del Rey assumes personae of ambivalent femininity, embodying the intricacies of womanhood as a duality to articulate female agency while also igniting its inclination towards havoc. On the other hand, Del Rey unravels fame and success through Pandora's box, which can also be viewed as a more complicated reality, replete with auspicious aspirations, as asserted by Macmillan (2009, 239), wherein Pandora's box also engenders an optimistic perspective, serving as a tool for transformative potential. Jim Cullen states that the attainment of success in one's endeavors necessitates "time, energy, reputation, and a sense of hope" (Cullen 2003, 161). Del Rey perceives the dark side of the American dream through the lens of hedonistic paradigms, entailing a simultaneous fusion of tragic optimism. The dissonance, rooted in her portrayals, showcases her relentless obsession with

the idea of the American dream in spite of her recognition of its elusiveness.

The ending scene, in which Del Rey, bereft of the necklace, achieves the coveted Hollywood star sign bearing her name with exuberance, conveys an obvious shift in her narrative by transforming into color cinematography. Through the shift of color, the melancholic and dramatic footage culminates with a thread of satire, adopting an ironic tone to unrelentingly critique the constructs of fame, power, and identity in Hollywood through the lens of the female perspective. Additionally, regarding "Candy Necklace," in an Instagram post, Del Rey articulated the following message: "Don't take the necklace; if you already did, give it back" (Del Rey 2023). In this regard, the juxtaposition emerges, observed within her lyrical composition— "Candy necklace, I am obsessed with this"—and it underscores the absurd dynamics between the themes of indulgence and despair, hope and disillusionment in pursuing her idealised existence.

Conclusion

Del Rey's approach to the American dream manifests through her embodiment of the Hollywood glamour archetype of the past and her enthrallment with elite aesthetics and the identity of bygone America, all of which are haunting illusions that oppose the multifaceted socio-political realities of contemporary existence. Within her artistic realm, the American dream is perceived as a disoriented state filled with longing and anxiety, presenting a beguiling facade while deconstructing the very essence of this ideal. Her employment of ill-fated figures, historical allegories, boundless idealization, the use of precarious cinematic bodies, and the exaggerated glamour of stardom impart an uncanny impression and operate as both reverential homage and incisive critique, blurring the demarcations between mythology and reality. In other words, delineating a liminal realm suspended not only between the tangible confines of reality and the alluring fantasy but also between personal desire and societal expectations, Del Rey's conception of the American Dream functions as a form of escapism or "otherness."

Through the above analysis of "National Anthem" and "Candy Necklace," I explored how Del Rey captures the predicament of women ensnared within the confines of societal expectations and the oppressive weight of conformity, unveiling the disillusionment and precariousness that invariably accompany the relentless pursuit of a life steeped in idealization. Consequently, her videos call attention to the manifold tribulations faced by women attempting to attain flawlessness or a perfect persona, only to find themselves ensnared within an intricate web of unattainable standards, unfulfilled expectations, and the haunted ideological clashes between the past and present. Ultimately, exposing the absurdity and irony that

underpin traditional gender roles within the very fabric of success ideology and American society, Del Rey confronts the dichotomy between female agency and the constricting influence of normative patriarchal norms, resulting in a reminiscence of an innocent and simpler time rather than a place.

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Zora Neale Hurston's *Barracoon* as an Alternative Form of Memory Politics about the Jim Crow Era

Lívia Szélpál

1. Introduction

"I was sent to ask." Zora Neale Hurston

This paper[1] focuses on Zora Neale Hurston's (1891-1960) posthumously published 2018 non-fiction work *Barracoon: The Story of the Last "Black Cargo." Barracoon* tells the authentic story of Cudjo Lewis (Kossola)[2] (c. 1841 – 1935), a survivor of the Clotilda/Clotilde, the last known U.S. slave ship, as a combination of his first-person vernacular reminiscences and Hurston's anthropological oral history narrative. In 1927, Hurston travelled to Alabama and visited Kossola, a former slave and survivor of the Middle Passage of the transatlantic slave trade. Hurston's non-fiction story also breaks the taboo of the inconvenient truth of illegal slave importation to the United States after the 1807 "Act Prohibiting Importation of Slaves," which banned the importation of enslaved people into the United States, taking effect on January 1, 1808 ("The Slave Trade"). Kossola was illegally brought to the United States and became enslaved in 1860. Hurston also tells the story of this inconvenient truth about this "illegitimate trade" (Plant "Introduction," xvi).

Hurston's literary legacy includes this profound first-hand account of slavery in its historical and cultural context. In *Barracoon*, Hurston challenges the public view of the Middle Passage and the transatlantic slave trade. At the age of nineteen, Kossola was kidnapped by the neighbouring Dahomey kingdom as a prisoner of war and carried to the barracoons (barracks used to accommodate enslaved Africans) in Oidah. He was kept as a slave for five and a half years in Plateau-Magazine Point, Alabama, from 1860 until Union soldiers told him he was free. Kossola lived the rest of his life in Africatown (Plateau). (Plant "Introduction," xv-

1 The present paper is the written form of my conference presentation, "The Reception of Zora Neale Hurston's *Barracoon* in the Jim Crow Era," delivered at the 15th Biennial HUSSE Conference 27–29 January 2022, Budapest, Hungary (online). I am grateful to András Tarnóc for his endless patience, which made this study possible.

2 Hereafter, Cudjo Lewis is solely referred to as Kossola in the article. Kossola's name went through multiple spellings and variations. Within *Barracoon*, he is referred to as "Kossola" by editor Deborah G. Plant and "Kossula" by Hurston. In academic articles on the topic, either Kossola or Cudjo Lewis is used.

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xvi). His mother named him Kossola, meaning "I do not lose my fruits anymore" or "my children do not die any more." (Plant "Introduction," xv-xvi) Kossola's story, with Hurston's mediation, highlights freedmen's history in the Jim Crow Era[3]. Hurston is transgressing the traditional narrative about the Middle Passage by emphasizing that although Britain abolished the international trafficking of African people in 1807 and the United States had followed its example, European and American ships were still transporting enslaved people from the West African coast to the Americas. The inconvenient truth was that some groups of Africans contributed to the persistence of the "transatlantic slave trade" and opposed ending the traffic that persisted in the enterprise. As Deborah G. Plant, a literary historian who specialized in African-American literary history and the oeuvre of Zora Neale Hurston, argues, the Fon of Dahomey was foremost among those African peoples who resisted the ending of trafficking since the external sale of their prisoners afforded their kingdom wealth and political dominance. Therefore, to continue the "slave supply," the king of Dahomey instigated wars and led raids with the sole purpose of filling the royal stockade (Plant "Introduction," xvi-xvii). One of the most remarkable contributions of his account is that Hurston left Kossola's imperfect English dialect intact in the story. In *Barracoon*, Hurston scrutinizes and highlights Kossola's resilience without romanticizing it. This paper introduces Hurston's non-fiction narrative *Barracoon: The Story of the Last "Black Cargo"* by examining its publication history and narrative strategies, e.g. the recurring theme of silence. Moreover, the paper focuses on Hurston's methodology of cultural anthropology, the purpose and reception of her research in the Jim Crow Era, and the current interpretation of her work as an alternative form of memory politics.

2. "Poor Zora. An anthropologist, no less!": Hurston's Methodology of Cultural Anthropology

African American folklorist, anthropologist, filmmaker and writer Zora Neale Hurston's impact on revitalizing African-American Diaspora literature is still persistent today. She was a celebrated voice of the Harlem Renaissance who died in oblivion and was buried in an unmarked grave in 1960 (Seymur-Smith-Kimmens 24). In 1973, Alice Walker rediscovered Hurston's legacy and had a headstone placed at her grave site with this epitaph, a poem extract from Jean Toomer (Walker, 1974: 86): Zora Neale Hurston 'A Genius of the South' Novelist Folklorist Anthropologist 1901 – 1960 (Cobb-Moore 25). Alice Walker wrote a

3 See more about the Jim Crow Era at the Jim Crow Museum website: https://jimcrowmuseum.ferris.edu/what.htm.

Foreword[4] to the *Barracoon.* Walker's exclamation "Poor Zora. An anthropologist, no less!" (Walker x) reveals the significance of Hurston's oeuvre and the way "black Americans, enslaved themselves, ridiculed the Africans; making their lives so much harder. While the whites simply treated their "slaves" like pieces of machinery" (Walker x). Hurston influenced the Harlem Renaissance and left a legacy that inspired a renewed interest in African-American (trans)cultural identity, folklore, and the self-empowerment of Black women's voices. As a local colorist, Hurston offered an authentic portrayal of those affected by the experiences of the African diaspora (Cobb-Moore 33). Her legacy is not just literary but cultural and political, helping to shape a diasporic consciousness that is still persistent in the form of cultural memory. She was a controversial and much-misunderstood figure of the era.

The Great Migration[5] of rural blacks from the Mississippi Delta region took place for the sake of better working and living conditions, running away from the threat of lynching as the physical manifestation of the Jim Crow segregation. The Great Migration significantly impacted African American arts and culture of the post-World War I era. The Harlem district of New York City – had become a place of blossoming black culture. Harlem represented the symbol of freedom for the vibrant urban black community. The Harlem Renaissance manifested its artistic blossoming in music, dance, the visual arts, theatre and literature (Ciment 133-134). Hurston graduated from Howard University before moving to Harlem in 1925. Ironically, the desire to articulate an artistic voice to represent black Americans coincided with the fact that they remained culturally and socially separate from the needs of the larger black community that remained largely rural even during the Great Migration. Moreover, they depended financially on white patronage for living. During and after the economic recession following the

4 The complete title: "Foreword. Those Who Love Us Never Leave Us Alone with Our Grief Reading *Barracoon: The Story of the Last "Black Cargo*."

5 According to James Ciment, in 1910, around 90 per cent of all African Americans lived in the South and around 80 per cent of those working in agriculture. The roaring twenties, the next decade, showed a dramatic demographic and geographic transformation resulting in the Great Migration, blacks moving to the Northern cities due to economic recession, and Jim Crow segregation by the 1960s. This movement was fostered by push and pull factors. The dramatic increase in the urban black population intensified discrimination, violence and hostility towards blacks among the whites. One of the direct consequences of the Great Migration was the establishment of large, black urban communities, the emergence of the "New Negro" – a term coined by the African American writer Alain Locke -and the birth of a new racial consciousness that appreciated black business enterprise and artistic achievement on its terms. As a result, an unprecedented flourishing of black political and artistic expression occurred; one of its manifestations was the Harlem Renaissance. See more about the Great Migration in Ciment 129-131.

stock market crash of 1929, white patronage ceased. The civil rights movement of the post-World War II era revived interest in black cultural and historical studies (Ciment 136-137). Lindsay Stewart argues that Zora Neale Hurston's academic recovery occurred in the 1980s and 1990s since Alice Walker's 1975 essay "In Search of Zora Neale Hurston" was published in *Ms*. Magazine. Stewart quotes Hazel Carby's notes in "The Politics of Fiction, Anthropology, and the Folk: Zora Neale Hurston" by arguing that the celebration of Hurston and Black southern culture in the 1980s and 1990s coincided with the persistent impact of institutional racism in the United States. Consequently, Hurston was taught in school curricula to increase Black representation despite the persistence of institutionalized racism (Stewart 5).

Barracoon was researched and written alongside Hurston's 1928 essay "How It Feels to Be Colored Me." Following Stewart's argumentation, Hurston developed the politics of joy in her essays. Politically, the term involved a move towards self-determination and away from the pursuit of white political recognition, a firm refusal of ideas associated with Black southern tragedy and inferiority and an awareness of racial dynamics (Stewart 14). In her essay "How It Feels to Be Colored Me", Hurston writes, "I am not tragically coloured", meaning that she is not depicting herself as a victim of racism but an independent Black woman who embraces her cultural heritage with celebration rather than sorrow. She strengthens her identity: "I do not weep at the world—I am too busy sharpening my oyster knife" by referring to the metaphor for actively participating in life's challenges and preparing herself with empowerment rather than suffering from social injustices and constraints. Hurston rejected emphasizing sorrow in the representations of Black life in her writings. She criticized the Black male leadership, especially W. E. B. Du Bois's model of the "Talented Tenth" was dealt with irony in the issue of "double consciousness" and she argued that this phenomenon is related to the internalized racism of the elite class of Black educated men (Stewart 14). Salam Alali's 2024 "Embracing Resilience and Reclaiming Happiness," a book review of Lindsey Stewart's *The Politics of Black Joy: Zora Neale Hurston and Neo-Abolitionism,* highlights that Stewart articulated two forms of ethnographic refusals in *Barracoon.* One is a discursive refusal to alter Kossola's dialect in the narration and the silence about the trauma of slavery in the narrative. The other is Kossola's narrative refusal, which influenced Hurston's refusal of the neo-abolitionist depiction of Black tragedy by revealing to Hurston that Kossola's fellow African people sold him to white people. Consequently, Hurston may have learnt emotional resilience and empowerment from Kossola via his story-telling, which is the premise of Black joy (Alali 276-277) and became the foundation of Hurston's unique voice and "literary sovereignty" (Stewart 84).

Hurston was a cultural anthropologist by profession, a student of Franz Boas (1858-1942), the founder of the culture-centered school of American anthropology (Plant "Afterword," 121), teaching that race itself was a cultural construct and racism could be eliminated by education.[6] Hurston graduated from Barnard College in 1828 (Patterson, 2005: 17). Hurston was the first black student studying at Barnard. Boas helped her find funding for six months of fieldwork. It was Boas who had recommended that she visit and interview Kossola (Panovka). She conducted field research on black folklore in the Deep South. Research was vital for her, as she argued about her work in her 1942 autobiography *Dust Tracks on a Road: A Memoir*, "Research is formalized curiosity. It is poking and prying with a purpose. It is a seeking that he who wishes may know the cosmic secrets of the world and they that dwell therein" (101.). Conducting field research in the segregated South was challenging for a single African-American woman. Hurston occasionally slept in her car when she could not find a hotel that would rent her a room and travelled with a pistol for protection (Plant 16). However, her intellectual curiosity was always a driving force behind her research. She argues, "I was sent to ask" (Hurston 16). Authenticity was important for her narratives. Hurston rejected the objective-observer stance of Western scientific inquiry for a participant-observer stance. Hence, she was simultaneously working and learning (Plant xxiii).[7]

Her research trips were funded by a white patron, Charlotte Mason, at the beginning of her research. Their relationship was problematic. Mason negotiated with the Viking Press to publish Hurston's manuscript. The publisher asked for "extensive revision" (Panovka). However, Hurston refused to change the vernacular

6 As Boas argues in *Race, Language and Culture* (New York: The MacMillan Company): "Hereditary characteristics when socially significant have a cultural value as in all cases of race discrimination or in those cultural conditions in which a specially gifted line is given the opportunity to impress itself upon the general culture. Any attempt to explain cultural forms on a purely biological basis is doomed to failure" (265).

7 In this paper, I extended and further developed Hurston's methodology of cultural anthropology. I also outlined in my conference presentation at the DIASPORA 2025 REVITALIZATION Conference (3-4 April 2025, Pécs) and my article on the topic "Revitalizing the African-American Diaspora Literature: the Politics of Memory in Zora Neale Hurston's *The Life of Herod the Great"* which is under publication.

of her monograph *Barracoon,* which was dedicated to Mason[8]. Hence, she did not find a publisher for the work due to the vernacular dialect she used (Panovka); the clashes of interest with the emerging black middle class hindered the monograph's publication and coincided with Hurston's frustration. The Great Depression period of the 1930s was not the best year for publishing a new book (Plant, 2018: xx-xxii). The manuscript failed to find a publisher at the time of Hurston, partly because it was written in vernacular and partially because it revealed the inconvenient truth about the involvement of other African people in the business of the Atlantic slave trade. Black writers Richard Wright and Alain Locke criticized Hurston's presentation of African Americans "as incompatible with the social realist fiction of protest and anger" and "ultimately damaging to opportunities for change" (Seymur-Smith and Kimmens 22). Her research finding was published as "Cudjo's Own Story of the Last African Slaver" in the October 1927 issue of *The Journal of Negro History*. Then, she started to work on the *Barracoon* beginning in 1930. After the publisher rejections, Hurston mentioned the Kossola material in the 1940s in her autobiography and then in a short article for the *American Mercury*. Although she celebrated black dialect in multiple works, she never again tried to publish *Barracoon* (Panovka). *Barracoon: The Story of the Last 'Black Cargo* was posthumously published under the editorship of Deborah G. Plant in 2018. Plant is a literary critic and historian specializing in the life and works of Zora Neale Hurston. The publication of *Barracoon* signifies the latest stage in the project Alice Walker inaugurated, which revitalized Hurston's works (Panovka). *Barracoon* was published by the Amistad, an Imprint of Harper Collins Publishers, with the copyright of The Zora Neale Hurston Trust ("Zora Neale Hurston Trust"). Amistad Books has been dedicated to publishing Black voices for nearly forty years and is devoted to honoring the legacy of Black-centered (his)stories and literature of the diaspora ("Amistad"). The posthumous publication is part of Hurston's legacy and the aftermath politics of memory that I will outline later in the essay.

Zora Neale Hurston's methodology in cultural anthropology, particularly during the Jim Crow era, is a pioneering yet controversial fusion of ethnography, folklore, and literary narrative. In Harlem, Hurston became one of a core group of "the younger Negro artists," whom she and Wallace Thurman ironically called "the Niggerati." Hurston's New York flat was often a gathering place and sometimes

8 *Barracoon* begins with the following dedication on page 1: "To Charlotte Mason, My Godmother, and the one Mother of all the primitives, who with the Gods in Space is concerned about the hearts of the untaught." According to Rebecca Panovka, it is undeniable that *Barracoon* bears Charlotte Mason's mark. "It was written on her schedule, under pressure, and with her money" (Panovka). The complexity and the controversial issue of white patronage in the Harlem Renaissance will be a continued topic of my research.

a home for the changing members of the group including Langston Hughes, Dorothy West, Richard Bruce Nugent, Countee Cullen, Gwendolyn Bennett, Aaron Douglass, and Augusta Savage among others (Plant "Zora Neale Hurston," 36) Her approach and its legacy illustrate not only a resistance to dominant racial narratives but also a form of memory politics to preserve the cultural histories of the African-American Diaspora through storytelling and ethnographic presence. Hurston became interested in anthropology.[9] She attended Howard University from 1921 to 1924 and, in 1925, won a scholarship to Barnard College. She graduated from Barnard in 1928 and pursued graduate studies in anthropology at Columbia University for two years. Franz Boas was her mentor. Boas recognized Hurston's talent. He anticipated the contributions she could make in the field of anthropology and began to cultivate her skills. By the summer of 1926, Hurston was conducting fieldwork in Harlem (Plant "Zora Neale Hurston," 36).

Hurston adopted Boas's methodology and theory of cultural relativity but altered it to fit her research agenda. In 1927, after her second interview with Kossola, Hurston abandoned Boas's objective-observer method of collecting studies for the participant-observer approach to gradually remove social barriers (Plant "Zora Neale Hurston," 43). She conducted field research by blending literary narratives and anthropological observations. In her black vernacular culture-centred research, she studied communities as an observer and a participant. She interviewed Oluale Kossola (c. 1841 – 1935), also known as Cudjo Lewis, one of the last survivors of the Atlantic slave trade between Africa and the Americas. Hurston was accused of plagiarizing Emma Langdon Roche's 1914 previous work on the topic and Kossola's and other Clotilda survivors' story entitled *Historic Sketches of the South.*

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9 See more about Hurston's life in Martin Seymur-Smith and Andrew C. Kimmens. "Biography of Zora Neale Hurston". In: Sharon L. Jones (ed.). Critical Insights. Zora Neale Hurston. (Ipswich, Massachusetts: Salem Press, 2013), 18-25. While attending Barnard in 1927, Hurston got a fellowship to conduct anthropological field studies. In 1927 *The Journal of Negro History* published some of her research findings, including the story of Cudjo Lewis. Mrs Rufus Osgood Mason funded her research trips to the South up until 1931. Upon graduation from Barnard in 1928, she earned a fellowship from the Rosenwald Foundation for two years of graduate work in anthropology at Columbia University. In 1935, Hurston was considering studying for a doctorate in anthropology at Columbia, but the change of her interests and financial issues kept her from this commitment. In 1939, Hurston was awarded an honorary doctorate from Morgan State College. In 1947-48, Hurston travelled to British Honduras (now Belize) to research black communities that served as the foundations of her fictional and non-fiction works. She was critical of the civil rights movement and supported the Republican Party. Her ideas on the emancipation of black people were often criticized and misunderstood. After suffering a stroke in 1959, she entered St. Lucie County Welfare Home. She died there of heart disease and was buried in an unmarked grave. Her unpublished papers are treasured in the University of Florida Library and the Beinecke Library at Yale University.

Interestingly, Hurston does not credit Roche's Historic Sketches as a secondary source, and there is no direct reference to Roche's book within the body of the article itself (Plant "Introduction", 118-120). Hurston writes about her plagiarism in her autobiography by showing her respect towards Boas, whom she called Papa Franz and her happiness on getting a second chance with the financial funding from Mrs R. Osgood Mason: "I was extremely proud that Papa Franz felt like sending me on that folklore search" (Hurston, Dust 101). And about her plagiarism, she confesses:

> I stood before Papa Franz and cried salty tears. He gave me a good going over, but later I found that he was not as disappointed as he let me think. He knew I was green and feeling my oats, and that only bitter disappointment was going to purge me. It did. What I learned from him then and later, stood me in good stead when Godmother, Mrs. R. Osgood Mason, set aside two hundred dollars a month for a two-year period for me to work. (Hurston, *Dust* 114.)

According to Plant, in her use of Roche's work, Hurston made a good-faith effort in *Barracoon* to document her sources, and she never plagiarised again (Plant "Afterword," 127).

Barracoon is telling Kossola's story as a kind of oral history. Hurston was much ahead of her time. She even experimented with filmmaking about Kossola and rural black life. She used the camera as an anthropologist tool. In a series of trips to the South, Hurston shot a 16mm film of rural Black people and culture and 85 minutes of footage that she shot and directed ("Zora Neale Hurston, In Her Words"). As the website of the Oral History Association defines: "Oral history is a field of study and a method of gathering, preserving and interpreting the voices and memories of people, communities, and participants in past events" ("Oral History: Defined"). She conducted anthropological work for the sake of cultural preservation of African American oral traditions, folklore, and religious practices (hoodoo and voodoo) as a form of resistance to racism ("Zora Neale Hurston"), emphasizing the African diasporic culture.

The African American oral tradition was a consequence and a response to the powerlessness of enslaved people. Story-telling passed from generation to generation has healing power, channeling intergenerational memory and expressing subversion (Ciment 64). The following section presents Hurston's non-fiction narrative *Barracoon: The Story of the Last "Black Cargo"* by highlighting its publication history and narrative strategies, e.g. the recurring theme of silence.

3. "P[p]oetical old gentleman . . . who could tell a good story:" *Barracoon: The Story of the Last "Black Cargo"*

Barracoon tells the story of Kossola through the different stages and milestones of his life, from his childhood and young age in Africa through his kidnapping and selling as an enslaved person, via the in-between liminal space of the barracoons, his status as a slave, to his life after the abolishment of slavery in 1865. Then, the narration continues with his life of "freedom," working in a community and a church, building his own house, and loving his family. Kossola remembers his joy over emancipation: "After dey free us, you understand me, we so glad, we make de drum and beat it lak in de Affica soul" (Hurston Barracoon 65). The deaths of his family members, his loneliness and being uprooted in a still foreign land, and his longing for Africa all contributed to his peculiar "poetical" worldview (Walker "Foreword," xi). Deborah G. Plant, the editor of the volume, outlines Kossola's life, the publication history of *Barracoon*, Hurston's methodology for the research and the reception of work in a historical timeframe with an Introduction and an Afterword.

Hurston characterized Kossola as a "Poetical old gentleman…who could tell a good story." (Plant "Afterword,"117.) Kossola was born circa 1841 in Bantè in West Africa and was around 86 years old when Hurston interviewed him. His mother named him Kossola, meaning "I do not lose my fruits anymore" or "my children do not die any more." (Plant "Introduction" xv). Hurston consequently called Lewis by his African name, Kossola. When she addressed him that way, he told her with tears of joy in his eyes: "Nobody don't callee me my name from cross de water but you. You always callee me Kossula, jus' lak I in de Africa soil!" (Hurston "Barracoon," 17). Hurston calls him Kossola to symbolize remembering his heritage and spirit. Meanwhile, the American name "Cudjo" is a reminiscence of slavery.

By age fourteen, Kossola became a trained soldier and was initiated into the secret male society called oro, responsible for the town's justice and security. In 1860, his village was attacked by the warriors of the Dahomey kingdom as an annual raid for slaves (Hurston "Cudjo's Own Story," 649). He was taken with other captives to the slaving port of Ouidah and sold to the Captain of the Clotilda, an American ship (Plant "Introduction," xvi-xviii). As Plant argues, Kossola was kept for weeks in the barracoons at Ouidah. In the barracoon, as in Africatown later, Kossola was stuck between two worlds, fully belonging to neither (Plant "Introduction,"

xix). After his emancipation, he lived in Africatown[10] (Plateau) that the *Clotilda* survivors established after the abolishment of slavery (Plant "Introduction," xiii). In the bonds of barracoons and later with the establishment of Africatown, the African Dream was manifested, not the American Dream (Plant "Introduction," xiii).

The authenticity of the narrative is provided by Hurston by transcribing Kossola's story, using his vernacular diction, and spelling his words as they are pronounced. Sentences follow his syntactical rhythms and maintain his idiomatic expressions and repetitive phrases as it is "rooted 'in African soil'" (Plant "Introduction" xiii). For example, the repetitive expressions of "you unnerstand me," "Americky soil," or "Affica soil" are recurring elements of the narrative (Hurston "Barracoon," 20-21). His corporeal in-betweenness is plausibly represented by the photograph of Kossola[11] in front of his home in Africatown (Plateau), Alabama, circa 1928, inserted into the narration of the edited volume on page 115. For the sake of this photograph taken, Kossola dressed in his best suit and removed his shoes: "I want to look lak I in Affica, 'cause dat where I want to be" (Hurston 115). This barefoot image is a symbolic representation of Kossola's life story. The question arises whether it was his intention or arranged for the sake of the photograph. Kossola's body became the axis of two worlds, symbolizing his African roots in the United States, where he still felt like a stranger even after so many years. Constructing his personal history via his body can be interpreted as an act of agency and empowerment as he becomes the subject of his non-written history. Hurston, by representing Kossola's life narrative, following Patricia Coloma Penate's argumentation, represents the previously ignored subjectivity of marginalized people and acts as a way of political self-recovery (Coloma Penate 97). Using Fernando Ortiz's term, Kossola's life narrative can be interpreted via transculturation, which corresponds to the cohesion of elements, adopting already established forms and creating new formations (Malinowski xi). Following Coloma Penate's lines of thought on the formation of transcultural identity, Hurston's depiction of Kossola reflects the construction of a transcultural identity and memory by revitalizing the shift from national-cultural memory towards movements, connections and traces of memory (97). Through the representations of Kossola's African-based culture and origin, Hurston also

10 As Hurston writes in her Introduction to *Barracoon*: "The village that these Africans built after freedom came, they called "African Town." The town is now called Plateau, Alabama. The new name was bestowed upon it by the Mobile and Birmingham Railroad (now a part of the Southern Railroad System) built through [the town]. But still its dominant tone is African" (15).

11 Kossola's barefoot photograph is available in the McGill Studio Collection; The Doy Leale McCall Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of South Alabama and available at: https://ibw21.org/commentary/witnesses-for-the-future/attachment/cudjo-lewis/

expressed her political ideas regarding race and culture. According to Coloma Penate, Hurston resisted the dominant ideology and presented transculturation from within, that is, through her discourse and anthropological standpoint. She allowed Kossola define himself via his story-telling and the way he perceived and defined reality (47).

Hurston, as an anthropologist, integrated culture and cultural landscape into her works and established an aestheticized cultural universe "which can be directly linked to existing cultures outside it, to Caribbean, Floridian, Southern, American, and European traditions" (Gaál-Szabó "Cultural Geography", 113). In his excellent study "Interkulturális dinamika Zora Neale Hurston fekete kulturális tereiben" ("Intercultural dynamics in Zora Neale Hurston's Black Cultural Spaces") (26), Péter Gaál-Szabó calls Hurston's world "a repository of intercultural diversity," in which the writer's collage technique lends a special impetus to the cultural space (Gaál-Szabó "Interkulturális," 26). Following the line of Péter Gaál-Szabó's argument, I would further consider Kossola's constructed world in Hurston's writing and emphasize the prominence of the transcultural dimension in my analysis. The concepts of intercultural and transcultural are related but have distinct focuses. Intercultural refers to interactions between separate cultures, emphasizing their relationships and dialogue. On the other hand, the transcultural dimension explores cultural elements that transcend or go beyond specific cultures, highlighting the interconnectedness and fusion between cultures by creating a new one. In my opinion, this transcultural identity is manifested in Kossola's life narrative, which Hurston depicts and resonates with the symbolic interpretation of his barefoot photograph.

As the editor Plant argues, Hurston "would alternately title the work '"Barracoon: The Story of the Last 'Black Cargo'" and "The Life of Kossula"' (Plant "Introduction," xiv) by highlighting the personification of barracoon with the life narrative and in-between position of Kossula. The work's title, *Barracoon*, originates from the Spanish word "barraca," as defined by the editor Plant, which is translated as "barracks" and is and means "hut." This place was an in-between liminal space separating enslaved people from their homeland and the Atlantic Ocean. Enslaved Africans were held in these barracoons who had been captured in local wars and raids ("Barracoon"). Alice Walker comments on the intergenerational memory and trauma of African ancestors by highlighting the fact that African chiefs deliberately captured Africans from neighbouring tribes to provoke wars of conquest for the sake of the slave trade and considers Hurston's

work as a performative act by arguing that "We are being shown the wound"[12] (Walker x). As part of the slave trade, it belonged to the white slave traders' policy to instigate the tribes against each other (Hurston "Barracoon", 9). Many enslaved Africans died in the barracoons due to the harsh conditions, and it could take three to six months for a ship to fill, which phase was called the "coasting" period ("Barracoon"). As I view it, Hurston's book can be interpreted as Homi Bhabha's Third Space concept that presents a liminal, in-between space where cultures meet, fuse and create dialogues, resulting in hybrid identities and new forms of cultural expression. As Bhabha argues, "t(T)he non-synchronous temporality of global and national cultures opens up a cultural space - a third space - where the negotiation of incommensurable differences creates tension peculiar to borderline existences" (218). Temporality and the spatial dimension are crucial organizing principles of the narrative.

The next phase of the Middle Passage was the journey on the slave ship. In the context of the transatlantic trading system, the shipment of slaves from Africa to the American continent was named the Middle Passage, one phase of the triangular trade. Conditions aboard were horrendous; the death rates for slaves in the Middle Passage were high, 15-20 percent in the beginning (Ciment 28-30). As Kossola describes the deplorable conditions on the ship:

> De boat we on called de Clotilde. Cudjo suffer so in dat ship. Oh Lor'! I so skeered on de sea! De water, you unnerstand me, it makee so much noise! It growl lak de thousand beastes in de bush. De wind got so much voice on de water. Oh Lor'! Sometime de ship way up in de sky. (…) One day de color of de water change and we see some islands, but we doan come to de shore for seventy day. (Hurston "Barracoon," 55)

After the months-long voyage, the vessel arrived at the port. Enslaved people were put on sale by giving them water and meat so that they could appear healthier and become more valuable (Ciment 31). After the end of the Civil War and the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, ratified on December 6, 1865, that abolished slavery, the Clotilda survivors became free. Interestingly, Kossola tells how he and the other Clotilda survivors started to worship on Sunday in an

12 See more about the relations between trauma and literature and "giving voice to the wound" in Cathy Caruth. *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1996). Caruth explains the origins of the word trauma coming from the Greek trauma, or "wound," inherently referring to an injury inflicted on a body. Later on, particularly in the medical and psychiatric literature, and primarily in Freud's writings, the notion of trauma is interpreted as a wound inflicted not upon the body but upon the mind (3).

"African" style. When Kossola and the other Clotilda survivors later established their town (Africatown), they refused to worship with the African Americans who had ridiculed them before (Stewart 83).

According to András Tarnóc, the slave ship was a tangible manifestation of the slave trade (Tarnóc "The Slave Ship," 169) and functioned as a chronotope of time and space compression. Following Tarnóc's line of thought, "the chronotope as a literary tool assists in a more profound understanding of the slavery experience" (Tarnóc "The Slave Ship," 178). Moreover, the slave ship represents victimization, objectification, and displacement. At the same time, it connects different cultures and functions as a vehicle or means of cultural exchange. The term also strengthens the ability of "enslaved persons to maintain a temporal and spatial perspective and offers a strategy for coping with the trauma brought on by the forcible removal from one's home and culture" (Tarnóc "The Slave Ship," 178). Tarnóc relies on Toni Morrison's usage of Pierre Nora's *lieux de memoire* concept by arguing that the Atlantic Ocean and the slaveship, the site of the black community's original trauma, serve as a lieux de memoire ("The Slave Ship", 175-175). As Morrison argues, all water functions as an emotional memory or a site of memory (Morrison 99). The following section scrutinizes the genre of *Barracoon* and the politics of memory in the narrative.

4. "jus' lak I in de Affica soil!:" *Barracoon as an Alternative* Form of Memory Politics about the Jim Crow Era

According to Plant, "Barracoon is a counternarrative that invites us to break our collective silence about slaves and slavery, about slaveholders and the American Dream" ("Afterword," 137). One of the legacies of the book is the questions it raises about slavery and freedom, which are also crucial in the contemporary era (Plant ("Afterword," 137). Kossola, as the last surviving victim of the African slave trade and a direct oral historical source of the trauma, was considered to be a kind of "holy grail for anthropologists" (Panovka "A Different Back Story"). His memories had been recorded several times. Mrs Mason had also sent not only Hurston but him monthly financial support since February 1928, which made him more willing to open up about his most traumatic memories (Panovka "A Different Back Story").

The significance of the slave narrative is to provide an authentic description of enslavement and its social, cultural and psychological impacts with a self-emancipation intent (Tarnóc "I let down" 52). Its corpus consists of accounts of enslaved people, primarily of African descent, in the Western Hemisphere (Tarnóc "A rabszolga-narratíva," 240). It is considered one of the primary forms

of American autobiographical literature. Its significance lies in that it chronicles the slave's becoming a person, his exit from objectification via self-education as a tool for self-emancipation (Tarnóc "A rabszolga-narratíva," 241). The conventions of the genre included that the slave narrative served the goals of the abolitionist movement (Tarnóc "A rabszolga-narratíva" 250).

Barracoon does not fall into the genre of classic slave narratives in several ways. Kossola was born in Africa. And because he was not born in the United States, he had to obtain citizenship through naturalization. Barracoon does not articulate an explicit political agenda about the cause of abolition, racial equality and women's rights (Sexton 192). Unlike conventional slave narratives, e.g. those produced by Harriet Ann Jacobs or Frederick Douglass, Kossola's narrative does not contain Biblical allusions; rather, it expresses his homeland's spiritual traditions and customs. The centrality of ancestral reverence and intergenerational memory related to story-telling is crucial to the narration. His retrospective memory does not present the journey forward into the American Dream. As Plant emphasizes, it is a kind of slave narrative in reverse, retrospectively travelling backwards to sites of memory manifested in the location of barracoons, and the tangible freedom and a sense of belonging meant for Kossola was his homeland in Africa (Plant "Afterword," 129-130).

Genevieve Sexton raises the question of whether *Barracoon* can be interpreted as testimonial text. As she argues, despite *Barracoon* being written long before the emergence of the contemporary field of testimony, it shares many of the characteristic features of a testimonial narrative. Hurston wanted to provide an authentic recording of Kossola's testimony, shed light on the trauma of slavery, and give voice to "those who had been silenced because of the institution of slavery" (Sexton 191). In my interpretation, Hurston's manuscript is more like an oral history project, a combination of ethnography, oral history and literary biography.

Silence is a recurring theme of the narration. In my interpretation, Hurston, by verbalizing the intergenerational memory of slavery in its own distinctively discursive way via Kossola's life narrative - using the possibility of silence as a text-organizing element, interpretative and narrative strategy - combines a unique way of self-healing through trauma with the construction of agency. The photographs, e.g. the above-mentioned Kossola image inserted into the edited volume - based on Marianne Hirsch's concept of postmemory[13] - also function as markers of

13 See more about the socio-cultural impact of story-telling in contemporary life narratives, the connections of Hirsch's concepts of intergenerational memory and postmemory and ethnic subjectivity in Mónika Fodor's 2020 book *Ethnic Subjectivity in Intergenerational Memory Narratives. Politics of the Untold* (New York and London: Routledge).

empty spaces of remembrance and silence. Focusing on the remembrance of the Holocaust, Marianne Hirsch introduces the notion of postmemory and its reliance on photography as a primary medium of transgenerational transmission of trauma. Postmemory presents the relationship of the second generation (like Hurston and the contemporary generation) to the memory of traumatic experiences that preceded their births, which were nevertheless transmitted to them so deeply as to seem to constitute memories in their own right (Hirsch 103). In my interpretation, by incorporating photographs into the narration, the readers obtain a shared experience of witnessing the past, a "sense of living connection" (Hirsch 104) since the phenomenology of photography is a crucial element in the conception of postmemory that connects generations (Hirsch 107).

As Stewart highlights, gaps occur in the narration when the trauma of enslavement, which Plant refers to as the "mafia," causes the conversation between Hurston and Kossola to dissolve into silence (80). In the narration, different types of silences are repeated following the Freudian compulsion to repeat: the silences to answer further questions about slavery or a decision on the part of Kossola to end the conversation (Stewart 80) abruptly:

> Then he sat and smoked his pipe in silence. Finally he seemed to discover that I was still there. Then he said brusquely, "Go leave me 'lone. Cudjo tired. Come back tomorrow. Doan come in de mornin' 'cause den I be in de garden. Come when it hot, den Cudjo sit in de house. (Hurston "Barracoon," 24)

In my view, these representations of silence are part of the author's metanarrative procedures, through which the limits of the linguistic representation of the traumatic memory and the various mechanisms of repression become visible. Following the lines of thought of Edit Zsadányi, "any kind of silencing presupposes an active reading behaviour, forcing the reader to confront the emptiness of the silenced part" (Zsadányi 22). Therefore, in my view, by transcending the invisibility of marginalized black life paths, Hurston's work also gives voice to the manifestation of the trauma of slavery and articulates a kind of history from below.

The delayed appearance of the trauma as manifested in the silences of the narration, following Cathy Caruth[14]'s line of thought, is more than a pathology of a wounded psyche: "It is always the story of a wound that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available" (4). This idea resonates with the motto of Hurston 's historical novel/fiction, *The Life of Herod the Great* published posthumously in 2025, emphasizing: "There is no agony like bearing an untold story inside you" (Hurston "The Life of Herod," 4).

The trauma of slavery corresponds to the expression Maafa, which means the violent uprooting of African people and the commercial exploitation of the African continent from the fifteenth century to the era of Western globalization in the twenty-first century (Plant "Afterword," 129). Maafa is a Ki-Swahili term that means disaster and the human response. Conceptually, the phenomenon of the African Maafa is comprehensive in that it highlights the extensive and continuous devastation of the African continent and its inhabitants and the continuous exploitations that extend the trauma due to the transatlantic slave trade. (Afterword, 132-133).

An alternative form of "politics of memory" resonates in Hurston's *Barracoon*, which presents the collective trauma of slavery in the Jim Crow Era. Alice Walker's Foreword and Deborah G. Plant's Introduction, Editorial Notes and Afterword highlight how Maafa is still persistent in American Society and how these collective memories of the past shape contemporary society's political and social atmosphere. The chapter titled "Kossola Learns About Law" (Hurston 77-81) details the brutal prejudice of the legal system against black people, presenting both its physical and discursive violence. After the death of Kossola's son, the deputy sheriff who murdered him was never punished. As Kossola remembers this personal trauma:

> Dey doan do nothin' to de man whut killee my son. He a deputy sheriff. I doan do nothin'. I a Christian man den. I a sick man, too. I done git hurtee by de train, you unnerstand me (Hurston 77).

As this quote highlights, *Barracoon* shows deep political resonances with 21st-century racial inequalities. In my interpretation, Hurston's unpublished and neglected manuscript resembles the project of the Civil Rights Movement.

14 See more about the representation of trauma in Hungarian literature in Tamás Kisantal. *Az emlékezet és felejtés helyei. A vészkorszak ábrázolásmódjai a magyar irodalomban a háború utáni években* [Places of Memory and Forgetting. Representations of the Holocaust in Hungarian Literature in the Post-War Years] (Pécs: Kronosz Kiadó, 2020). Kisantal highlights and explains the differences in the historical trauma interpretations as defined by Cathy Caruth and Jeffrey C. Alexander on page 46. According to Kisantal, Caruth represents the psychoanalytic trauma theory; that is, he considers the approach related to individual trauma to apply to the study of collective historical phenomena. Jeffrey C. Alexander follows the sociological interpretation by interpreting common trauma as social construction.

Alexandra Alter refers to Lois Hurston Gaston, a grandniece of Hurston's and one of the trustees, in her *The New York Times* article "A Work by Zora Neale Hurston Will Finally Be Published" and quotes her as the following:

> *Racial issues have not gone away in our country, and we felt that this was an opportune time to publish 'Barracoon',"* Ms Gaston said. *"It's an important time in our cultural history, and here we have the story of Cudjo Lewis to remind us of what happens when we lose sight of our humanity.*

As Lindsey Stewart points out, the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, a global pandemic, and its economic and social consequences have brought new perspectives for self-reflection. For instance, we can also experience a dramatic revitalization of Hurston's ethnographic refusal of neo-abolitionism in her edited and posthumously published work *Barracoon* (Stewart 117).

5. Conclusion

This paper invites readers to a journey into Kossola's life narrative and rethinks Zora Neale Hurston's legacy and the memory politics of her posthumously published *Barracoon: the Story of The Last "Black Cargo*" by the Amistad in 2018. The volume was edited by Deborah G. Plant, an acknowledged scholar specializing in African American literature and, more precisely, in Hurston's oeuvre. Alice Walker's Foreword presents the final phase of her revitalizing project of Hurston's *Barracoon*. It frames the narration by giving voice to the traumatic wound of slavery that resonates with the contemporary issue of racism and racial prejudice that are still persistent. This paper introduced Hurston's non-fiction narrative *Barracoon: The Story of the Last "Black Cargo*" by scrutinizing its publication history and narrative strategies, e.g. the recurring theme of silence. Moreover, the paper focused on Hurston's methodology of cultural anthropology, the purpose and reception of her research in the Jim Crow Era, plus the current interpretation of her work as an alternative form of memory politics. The paper presented Hurston's dedication to her research, her inherent intellectual curiosity and drive for asking questions, telling untold stories, the afterlife of slavery in the Jim Crow era and its impact on the contemporary politics of memory through the revitalization of Hurston's oeuvre via her posthumously published works.

It is explicit in *Barracoon* that Hurston rejected the objective-observer stance of Western scientific inquiry that she learnt from a participant observer stance. Hence, she ate and shared food with Kossola during their conversations. While she was conducting research, she was also learning. The interviews with Kossola

significantly impacted the formation of her distinct discursive methodology in research and her fictional writing. Hurston was ahead of her time and experimented even with film-making. In my interpretation, her work *Barracoon* is more like an oral history project, and the posthumously published edited volume serves as a site of memory for the postmemory of slavery and resonates with the memory politics of the contemporary era.

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Misadventures of a "filthy flamingo:" *Slaughterhouse Five* as a mock -prisoner of war narrative

András Tarnóc

I

Kurt Vonnegut's novel, *Slaughterhouse Five (*1969) is mostly noted as one of the leading examples of black humor within postmodern literature. A frequently researched aspect of the novel is the author's use of science fiction motifs, primarily in the form of time travel. My essay focuses on a different feature of the given work, namely its potential interpretation as a prisoner of war narrative, in other words a postmodern parody of the genre. In line with Jean Francois Lyotard's recognition of the incredulity towards metanarratives, Vonnegut questions such absolute values as duty, loyalty, and patriotism while conveying an all-powerful anti-war message. Demonstrated by the description of Billy Pilgrim as a "filthy flamingo" and highlighting the depraved mentality of the military brass and that of the average fighting man, the author subverts the respective concepts both in the physical and metaphysical sense. The less than flattering portrayal of the appearance, activities, and personal mindset of the American soldier coupled with challenging the official reasoning behind the bombing attack on Dresden undermine the image of the military and question its principal function. Relying on a theoretical apparatus of Robert C. Doyle's cyclical content model, Jean-Francois Lyotard's criteria of the postmodern condition, Ihab Hassan's notion of self-unmaking and indetermanence, and Brian McHale's concept of ontological uncertainty, my primary objective is to retrace Vonnegut's steps in destabilizing the given POW narrative and reconstructing it as the parody of the original version.

II
Theoretical apparatus

In describing the postmodern perspective I utilize the views of three leading critics, Jean Francois Lyotard, Ihab Hassan, and Brian McHale. Lyotard emphasizes the incredulity to metanarratives implying a legitimation crisis related to social justice and scientific truth since "the old poles of attraction represented by nation-states, parties, professions, institutions, and historical traditions are losing their attraction" (14). Lyotard's other claim that "the narrative function […] is losing its great hero,

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its great dangers, its great voyages, its great goal" (xxiv) is also relevant to the topic at hand. In Hassan's view postmodernism is driven by the impulse of self-unmaking and can be best described by the self-coined phrase of indetermanence. The term fuses indeterminacy and immanence implying ambiguity or discontinuity and self-representation through abstractions via interplay and interdependence respectively. According to Brian McHale postmodernism is characterized by ontological uncertainty, or the denial of "ontological grounding" as the author raises the question: Which among the several possible worlds is this? Which of my several selves will best respond to it?

My analysis is indebted to Robert Doyle's cyclical model of the POW narrative's plot and his categorization of the respective narratorial selves as well. Generally seven stages can be discerned in the accounts of captive soldiers: Precapture, Capture, Removal, Landscape (either during the journey or that of the POW camp) Resistance, Release, Lament (297). The four versions of self-representation are the Beleaguered self expressing fear and intimidation at the beginning of the POW experience, the Fortunate self viewing captivity in a positive light due to being removed from direct danger presented by the frontline, the Detached self maintaining a metaphysical distance from the actual ordeal, and the Soldierly self emphasizing the heroic stance made in the face of physical and psychological abuse (10).

Consequently, I will use said theoretical models to demonstrate how a postmodern parody of the POW narrative genre appears in the novel. My leading principle is the unmaking of the self. I use the concept of the self in an extended sense. Thus the unmaking or subversion of the self applies to the genre implying content and form, and naturally to the protagonist, but also to the military in a broader context. As far as genre is concerned, I advance the notion of the indirect POW narrative as compared to the generic version. Following Doyle's model I explore whether Billy's story contains all the components of the given theoretical scheme. I also look at the description of other soldiers while I examine the manifestation of postmodern principles, primarily Lyotard's incredulity and Hassan's indetermanence.

Yet, Vonnegut's book also poses a modernist question: "Do other subjects perceive the world the same way as I do?" Naturally, this question becomes applicable in the concept of time in Tralfamador or in the author's description of the British in the prisoner of war camp. The work also has a specular metafictive edge. Vonnegut's description of his own writing process allows the reader to see the construction of a text, and at the same time it is performative as the author challenges the reader with excessive fabulation shown by the description of Valencia's death, or the overload of data about the bombing of Dresden.

Unmaking of the genre

The novel's main section, the account of the POW experience of Billy Pilgrim, follows, yet at the same time deconstructs or unmakes the POW narrative genre. The given account reflects or contains the components of Doyle's cyclical interpretation. The writer provides scant, yet essential information on the Pre-capture stage. We learn about Billy's childhood primarily filled with traumatic experiences including the sink or swim method of learning how to swim, the "ghastly crucifix" (21) hanging over his bed, not to mention the death of his father in a hunting accident during World War Two.

It is also unique, that unlike the traditional POW narrative suggesting a predestined or straight career to the military, Billy had no intention to join as he was drafted to serve in an actually unmilitary or unsoldierly capacity as a chaplain's assistant. The immediate events before Capture contain the details of the physical and metaphysical ordeal, among them, his exclusion from the "Three Musketeers" and the almost deadly conflict with Roland Weary. The Capture in its bizarre aspects, as Billy is saved by German soldiers, suggests the fortunate self motif espoused by Jacobus Capitein's slave narrative. The principle implying that on the whole slavery was beneficial for slaves because it paved the way toward salvation by extension can be applied to Billy as the POW experience saved him from being kicked to death by a fellow American.

The Removal stage details the horrible conditions on the POW campbound freight train and the grotesque arrival in the camp amid the "guards, who cooed like doves" (39). As a demoralized and totally disillusioned captive Billy has neither opportunity, nor inkling to submerge into the surrounding scenery. Thus, unlike as discernible in case of Indian captivity narratives, the protagonist does not turn his attention outward as illustrated by the lack of any landscape depiction during the Removal stage. An additionally unique aspect is the non-existing Resistance stage as the less than flattering description of the American soldiers indicates. Information is also provided concerning the Release as Billy is taken to a therapeutic site to recover after the war and the protagonist's efforts to cope with the at-that-time undiagnosed Post-traumatic Stress Disorder comprise the final Lament phase.

Both the structure and the plot of the novel reflect an attempt to meet the criteria of the prisoner of war narrative. The Precapture stage sees the author's persona Billy Pilgrim helplessly wandering with a motley group of defeated American soldiers. It is at this stage, where he is identified by Vonnegut as a "filthy flamingo" (18), an individual violating the standards of the military both in appearance and behavior with his preposterous look and almost ridiculous apparel. His defeatist attitude is represented by his resignation to death, and giving "another chance to the enemy

marksman" (19). The text not only commemorates Billy's fate, but that of his military counterpart reveling in sadism, the anti-tank gunner Ronal Weary as well. Although Weary is the arch opposite of Billy regarding discipline, appearance, and commitment, his careless quest for glory during which he singlehandedly tried to destroy a German tank led to the demise of his whole unit. The capture of Billy and Weary is equally bizarre as German soldiers save Billy from being kicked to death by Weary. The fact that Weary physically turns on Billy indicates the moral crisis of the army as well.

The account of Billy's misadventures can be considered as an indirect POW narrative. The other leading forms of confinement accounts, the Indian captivity narrative and the slave narrative both present examples for indirect narration. In case of an indirect narrative the story of captivity is not told by the actual victim, either the white female captive of Indians or the slave him or herself, but by the representative of the colonial elite or the dominant society. Cotton Mather in *Decennium Luctuosum* (1699) recounts the captivity and violent self-liberation of Hannah Dustan, while William Lloyd Garrison relates the ordeal of Henry Clay's slave in his book length letter attacking Lajos Kossuth[1] for his refusal to condemn slavery during his visit to the United States in 1851. The fact that in this instance the actual events are not told by the protagonist and Billy's story is embedded in a novel fulfils the criteria for an indirect narrative. Furthermore, while in case of generic or traditional POW narratives the narration takes place immediately upon release or after a relatively brief period following captivity, Vonnegut recalls the events considerably later, that is, 23 years after the given incident.

Manifestations of the postmodern

As for the postmodern characteristics of the novel, I would emphasize the following: the mistrust of the grand narratives, the fragmented structure, and the idea of the deconstruction of the self.

In line with Hassan's emphasis on the unmaking of the self it can be concluded that Billy's life has been a postmodern existence from the beginning. Explored from another angle, the incredulity to metanarratives proposed by Lyotard appears all the more applicable. The skeptical attitude to religion is suggested by the "ghastly crucifix" over the protagonist's bed, while the concept of education and training is subverted by his father's "sink or swim" approach demonstrated at the YMCA. Likewise, the institution of marriage is challenged by Billy's affair

1 Letter to Louis Kossuth concerning Slavery & Freedom in the United States in behalf of the American Anti-Slavery Society.

and such ideals as patriotism and sense of duty are undermined by the acerbically critical descriptions of the American soldier.[2] The British officer's admission of the ultimate senselessness of the war and his invocation of the concept of the Children's Crusade (50), provides another blow to the metanarrative of military duty.[3]

The postmodern impulse of the unmaking of the self is in full force in case of Billy. In fact his early childhood represents a lack of agency whose most potent indication is the near-death experience during the male parent-delivered "swimming lesson" in the YMCA pool. His resignation to his potential fate and annihilation in the aftermath of the Battle of the Bulge is another apt illustration of the alienated and unmade self.

As Hassan argues the postmodern can be described by such features as continuity and discontinuity. The main aspect, especially because of the erratic time travel and the fractured, fragmented temporal perspective is discontinuity. Accordingly, being thrown about in time and various life stages implies the lack of completion and conclusion to any life period. Another aspect of discontinuity is the concept of *la manqué*, implying incompleteness, expressed by Billy's lack of will to live: "Billy didn't really like life at all" (48), or him being deprived of agency, "among the things Billy Pilgrim could not change were the past, the present, and the future "(30).

Being "unstuck in time" (14) at the same time severs Billy from the option of achieving control over time. The erratic time travel at the same time liberates him from the confines of the POW camp. Being "spastic in time" (14) also means being exposed to time. The lack or inability of control over time is indicated by the following quote: "Billy is spastic in time, has no control over where he is going next and the trips aren't necessarily fun" (14)

Another symbol of Billy's removal from time is the movie seen in backwards. Although the episode takes place two decades after the actual bombing attack, in Billy's suburban home, the recapitulation of war images in reverse deconstructs time itself. Also, the imaginary return to Adam and Eve represents an effort to right the horrendous errors all humanity had made.

The author's management or treatment of time suggests the applicability of Heidegger's views holding that "to be human is to occupy not only a particular body in space, but also to occupy a certain amount of time in a certain way" (Gannon).

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2 "weak, smelly, self-pitying-a pack of sniveling, dirty thieving bastards" (60).

3 You know we've had to imagine the war here, and we have imagined that it was being fought by aging men like ourselves. We had forgotten that wars were fought by babies. When I saw those freshly shaved faces, it was a shock "My God, my God-" I said to myself. "It's the Children's Crusade"' (60).

Heidegger urges liberation from empty time (chronos) to Kairos (now time), that is, useful, sensible, worthy time spent in or focusing on the present, instead of the "mechanical passage of time" (Gannon). The fractured nature of postmodernism is reflected in the broken up concept of time. In fact Billy is hovering between chronos and Kairos. Ironically, he is never able to achieve the state of Kairos mentally. Physically he can be considered to be there, but in Heidegger's words he never occupies or uses that certain amount of time allocated to him. His attitude in the POW camp best described by the concept of the detached self also means a certain extent of separation from the events along with the fatalistic, resigned attitude to suffering.

Unmaking of the self/selves

Naturally the text contains the various forms of the self, with Billy as the obvious manifestation of the detached self, yet him being saved against his will represents the fortunate self. Roland Weary and the exaggerated description of British soldiers displaying mental and physical fitness, "the Englishmen had also been lifting weights and chinning themselves for years. Their bellies were like washboards. The muscles of their calves and upper arms were like cannonballs" (45) suggest the soldierly self. Thus while the novel displays primarily the formal conventions of the given POW narrative plot, just like the original text itself, the line of action is fragmented as the given components have to be assembled by the reader. Also, while a POW narrative is presented from first person singular angle, in this case the events are recalled from a rather impersonal and objective third person singular perspective.

The POW narrative's traditional version commemorates the heroism of the fellow soldiers as part of the compulsion of "duty memory" (11) identified by Pierre Nora. The same obligation is suggested by the subtitle of the novel, "A Duty-dance with Death." The novel, however, is virtually devoid of any heroes, as the only character possessing and displaying personal and soldierly values is Edgar Derby. The other captives Paul Lazarro or Ronald Weary are a petty yet extremely violent criminal and a sociopath respectively. The same goes for the official military establishment represented by the stubbornness and hypocrisy of Bertram Copeland Rumfoord, the army historian who refuses to acknowledge or authenticate Billy as a credible source despite him directly experiencing the bombing of Dresden, "He bores the *hell* out of *me*!' […] "all he does in his sleep is quit and surrender and apologize and ask to be left alone [:..] I could carve a better man out of a banana." (84). An equally troubling character is Howard W. Campbell, the Renegade, who turned on his home country and generated anti-American propaganda, which

undermined and subverted such iconic cultural markers as the American Dream and the Star-spangled Banner.[4]

Billy's physical appearance, his preposterous stature with the arm that can be held by the camp doctor's thumb and middle finger and the self-generated question, "what sort of an army would send a weakling like that to the front?" (40) further undermines the objectives outlined by the American military establishment.

The narrative focuses not only on one person as it introduces several members of the American POW community. As mentioned earlier Billy's resignation represents the detached self. Edgar Derby with his opposition to Campbell, displaying physical fitness and an overall rectitude represents the soldierly self. It is a cruel irony that the only person who would act according to the expectations of the military is executed after being court martialed. The beleaguered self reflecting fear, or intimidation usually appears at the beginning of the captivity experience. It is noteworthy, that such stage is not applicable to the present narrative. Thus while the traditional POW narrative retraces the progress from the beleaguered self to the soldierly self, it is the resigned, fatalistic perspective of Billy that neutralizes fear.

Billy as a typical antihero is just pushed around in his life by larger forces than him. He purposely unmakes himself as it is demonstrated by his preposterous appearance[5] during the war and his oft-demonstrated reluctance to shape his fate suggested among others by his lack of resistance against Weary during their almost deadly fight. The description of the other American soldiers suggests the unmaking of the military self, in other words, the Code.[6] Ronald Weary reveling in sadistic fantasies, the most shocking one implies his ruminations over the cruelest punishment in the world, suggests the dehumanizing impact of the war and that of the military machinery. An equally appalling aspect is the absolute lack of camaraderie as he views Billy not as a fellow soldier, but an obstacle to realizing his ultimate goal, the attainment of the Bronze Star and considers him a bothersome nuisance to the unity of the haphazard unit, known as the Three Musketeers. It is

4 Blue is for the American sky, […] 'White is for the race that pioneered the continent, drained the swamps and cleared the forests and built the roads and bridges. Red is for the blood of American patriots which was shed so gladly in years gone by (74)

5 Last came Billy Pilgrim, empty-handed, bleakly ready for death. Billy was Preposterous-six feet and three inches tall, with a chest and shoulders like a box of kitchen matches. He had no helmet, no overcoat, no weapon and no boots. On his feet were cheap, low-cut civilian shoes which he had bought for his father's funeral. Billy had lost a heel, which made him bob up-and-down, up-and-down. The involuntary dancing up and down, up and down, made his hip joints sore (18).

6 The Code of Conduct for Members of the Armed Forces of the United States primarily confirming the identity and commitment of the American soldier during captivity came into effect after the Korean War (1950-53) in 1954.

also noteworthy that the identity of the other two soldiers of the respective unit and their attitude to Billy are not revealed.

Weary's brutal attempt to kick Willy to death thereby to vent his frustration on his comrade-in-arms and not the enemy reveals a further distortion of his personality. He turns on him after feeling let down partly by Billy's resigned attitude and also by the other "two Musketeers" abandoning him. The unmaking of the military self and by extension, the subversion of the goals of the military leadership or brass are reflected in the actual description of the enemy as well. The "angel faced" (27) private helping the prostrate Billy on his feet or the "cooing" guards (39) along with the senseless and strategically unjustified Allied bombing of Dresden all reinforce this contention.

Another equally discomforting figure is Paul Lazzaro a small-time thief displaying shockingly violent impulses. A non-existent comradeship is also obvious in his case. Not only that, Lazzaro even surpasses Billy's preposterous appearance with the worst body. His description is a counterexample to the seeming physical fitness of the American soldier. While Billy is ridiculed due to his weak body, he appears to be in relatively good health. His main affliction is primarily a depressive and fatalistic outlook. Lazzaro swearing to revenge Weary's death, however, "is tiny with rotten bones and teeth," not to mention a "disgusting skin" (40). He also steals cigarettes from fellow captives. His distorted values are reflected in his statement: "Anybody ever asks you what the sweetest thing in life is […] It's revenge" (65).

Edgar Derby "mournfully pregnant with patriotism and middle age" (69) is basically the only American soldier described in a positive manner as substantiated by his physical fitness and his volunteering to fight in the war despite advancing beyond drafting age. He was fully committed to democracy and the cause of the American government in the war as even his 22 year old son was fighting as a Marine in the Pacific. His fate, being executed for taking a teapot in an attempt to rescue it from the carnage of the bombing, represents the senselessness of the war. He is continuously being referred to as "poor old Edgar Derby" (68) and as a senior to others he is elected "head American" (68) to command the POWs going to Dresden. Furthermore, his commitment "to get home everyone safely" (68) along with looking out for Billy during his morphine-induced hallucination, or cradling the dying Weary's head, or defending the American democracy and way of life in response to Campbell's Nazi propaganda provide ample demonstration for the presence of the soldierly self.

III

It can be concluded that Vonnegut in an effort to convey an antiwar message fully unmakes or deconstructs the POW narrative genre. The deconstruction process takes place in content, function and form. While the text itself contains almost all components or phases of Doyle's cyclical model, the given stages reflect a subversive intent. Billy's life trajectory is not pointing toward an expected or anticipated glory, and his actions and attitude make the text a counter POW narrative. Another difference is that while most narratives are written from a first person singular angle, in the present case as an indication of the author's indifference, alienation and distancing from the very subject, the story is related from third person singular.

Unlike in traditional POW narratives, Vonnegut's goal is not to commemorate the heroism and sacrifice of fellow soldiers, or comrades, but to highlight the senselessness of all wars and demonstrate the dehumanizing effect of the military machine. Although in a true postmodern sense the novel providing a longer frame to the POW narrative portrays a virtually total unmaking of the self, the birdsong heard at the end offers a faint hope for humanity in the desolate "moonscape" of the bomb-scarred Dresden.

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"Anna Mazurkiewicz, *Voice of the Silenced Peoples in the Global Cold War – The Assembly of Captive European Nations, 1954-1972*. Berlin/Boston: Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2021."

Máté Gergely Balogh

Within the East Central European context, Polish scholarship is at the forefront of diaspora research, and Anna Mazurkiewicz from the University of Gdańsk is one of the most prominent scholars within this discipline. Due to linguistic difficulties and various other reasons, researchers who study the diaspora from the nations of East Central Europe tend to focus exclusively or at least primarily on one particular ethnicity. *Voice of the Silenced Peoples in the Global Cold War* by Mazurkiewicz transcends this barrier. It is an important contribution to diaspora studies as it presents the activity of the Assembly of Captive European Nations (ACEN), which was a multinational organization in the United States that represented the shared ambitions of political exiles belonging to ethnicities from the aforementioned region during the Cold War period.

In her book, Mazurkiewicz makes the conscious decision to consistently use the term "East Central Europe" to refer to the area that is located geographically between Germany and Russia, and which became part of the Soviet bloc after Yalta and the end of World War II. She acknowledges that at the time when the ACEN was active, Western politicians, journalists, and diplomats usually referred to the region as "Eastern Europe" – but she points out that this was "an artificial and temporary creation," the existence of which had always been questioned by the exiles from the region.[1] The political exiles who were involved in the work of the ACEN always identified themselves as representatives of countries from *Central* Europe.

The ACEN was an umbrella organization of ten exile committees from nine East Central European countries (Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Romania) that was financed and supported between 1954 and 1972 by the American government through the Free Europe Committee (FEC). The FEC divided people from East Central Europe living in the United States and the West (and their organizations) into three distinct categories. "Exiles" represented the democratic political elite of their original home countries; they retained their original citizenship and were deeply involved in the political struggle

1 Mazurkiewicz, 18.

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to liberate their homeland. "*Émigrés*" were socially well-integrated citizens of the host country, who became successful in their respective fields, but continued to be interested in the fate of their homelands. Finally, "ethnics" were ordinary citizens of the host country, first or second generation immigrants, who still retained their emotional and cultural links to their home countries.[2] ACEN was an organization of people belonging to the first group, of political leaders in exile, who used to be high status in their country of origin (politicians, diplomats, etc.). These people arrived in the United States in the second half of the 1940s, and wanted to continue their political activity, in the slowly diminishing hope that they would one day be able to return. After they realized that their stay in the United States was going to be longer, these exiles decided to prepare for the liberation of their homelands, as well as the period that would follow a potential liberation, and in addition, focused on current events, trying to keep the East Central European region on the agenda of international affairs.[3]

The first chapter presents the founding of the organization, its structure and its members, the structure and membership of the national delegations selected by national committees, the work conducted by them, and the ACEN's place in the institutional structure that was established in the United States during the Cold War. The ACEN was funded by, but formally not organized by the FEC. The FEC was an organization founded in 1949 by the CIA as a tool of political warfare, which did provide work for the émigrés and use them as symbols of resistance to communism,[4] but "did not represent Europe, it represented the U.S. policy."[5] In contrast, the ACEN "wished to be perceived as an alternative to the communist representation of East Central European nations in the free world,"[6] and provide information on the region by following the international situation, interpreting it from the perspective of the captive nations, and sharing this with the Western audiences. The members of the national delegations included former members of parliaments, cabinet members, even prime ministers, and religious leaders.

The relationship between the ACEN and the FEC was not always ideal, but when the ACEN tried to contact the administration without approval from the FEC, they were unsuccessful. ACEN served as a platform for the American government to keep in touch with the exiles, as well as provide them with financial support, but they were always "kept at an arm's length by the White House."[7] At the same

2 Ibid., 3-4.
3 Ibid., 22-23.
4 Ibid., 52.
5 Ibid., 26.
6 Ibid., 29.
7 Ibid., 44.

time, Mazurkiewicz argues that American money was "not the only unifying force" behind the organization, which kept on working even after they did not receive any more support from the FEC in 1972. In spite of the obvious tensions between the various nationalities, they shared a common goal: they were all interested in the restoration of the sovereignty of their home countries, and the withdrawal of the Soviet troops.[8] The ACEN did not get directly involved in American partisan politics, but maintained contact with friendly ethnic organizations, such as the Conference of Americans of Central and Eastern European Descent, and the American Friends of the Captive Nations, which did try to influence U.S policy towards their homelands.[9]

At the same time, the focus of the ACEN was not domestic, but international; they were hoping to call attention to the plight of East Central Europe, and to put pressure on the Soviets. This also coincided with the goals of the Americans, who wanted to use the organization as an instrument of "global political warfare.[10] The various areas where the ACEN was active within the global arena are discussed in the following chapters. The chapters are each organized around a central topic that was at the center of the activity of the ACEN, but because the focus of the organization was shifting over time, this closely corresponds to the chronological sequence of the events.

Chapter 2 is dedicated to the activity of the ACEN in Western Europe, mostly in relation to the work of the Council of Europe. The exile leaders in the ACEN were supporters of European integration, hoping that one day their homelands, under freely elected governments, could also become members of this community. In the late 1950s, ACEN organized special sessions in Strasbourg, concurrent with the meetings of the Council of Europe. But parallel to the changing nature of the Cold War, with less emphasis on Europe in the global conflict and with the coming of *détente*, by the 1960s, the FEC wanted to reorient the activity of the ACEN to the third world, and decided to cut funding for this type of activity. Due to a number of disagreements, ACEN ceased to be a "politically useful instrument" for the Americans, who had used it to build support for anticommunism and the American presence in Europe by reminding the Western Europeans of the fate of the other half of the continent.[11]

8 Ibid., 51.
9 Ibid., 88.
10 Ibid., 99.
11 Ibid., 120.

The third and fourth chapter present how the ACEN reacted to the events in Poland and Hungary in 1956, and attempted to use them to promote its goals. Chapter 3 is about the rebellion in Poznań in the summer of 1956, and how the exiles used everything within their means to call attention to it, including reaching out to the United Nations. While Poland did not become a focus of discussion at the UN to the extent they hoped it would be,[12] the ACEN did manage to garner the attention of the media, which was an experience that served them well later that very same year, during the revolution in Hungary, discussed in Chapter 4. In this chapter, parallel to the activities of the organization related to the Hungarian revolution, Mazurkiewicz explores the relationship between the United Nations and the ACEN, which was sometimes referred to as the "Little U.N."[13] Although the response of the UN to the events in Hungary was seen as "belated and inadequate,"[14] the Hungarian question remained on the agenda of the UN for another six years. During this time, the ACEN continued to provide UN delegates with information about the situation in Hungary, including the six-volume *Hungary Under Soviet Rule*, which was the most important publication of the ACEN, prepared in cooperation with a number of Hungarian *émigré* organizations.

Chapter 5 contains an analysis of the impact of the lobbying activity of the ACEN in the U.S. Congress. Mazurkiewicz presents a thorough examination of the congressional records from the period, and with special attention to the Captive Nations Week, which was organized every year to raise awareness to the plight of the nations under communism. As the focus of the Cold War shifted away from Europe, so did the center of the activity of the ACEN. In Chapter 6, the relationship between the ACEN and the Asian Peoples Anti-Communist League (APACL) is discussed. A major difference between the two organizations was that the APACL enjoyed the support of their respective national governments (the Republic of China, South Korea, and South Vietnam),[15] thus the APACL was not exclusively reliant on the American government for funding. The ACEN and the APACL often cooperated on various issues, events related to anti-communism. Latin America was another area where the ACEN was active, usually seeking the help of East Central European ethnic communities that lived in these countries. Here the most important goal of the FEC was to dissuade Latin American intellectuals from communism, where East Central Europeans could offer great help, by sharing stories of what communism meant in practice.[16] Mazurkiewicz

12 Ibid., 146.
13 Ibid., 147.
14 Ibid.,171.
15 Ibid., 217.
16 Ibid., 242.

concludes that while these programs did manage to raise awareness to the fate of the East Central European region in Latin America, most Latin Americans did not relate this to their domestic situation.[17]

Chapter 8 is about the relationship between the ACEN and the FEC. Whereas initially, in the 1950s, the activity of the ACEN was seen as useful by the FEC, the situation changed as the focus of the Cold War changed. In 1963, the CIA already considered the ACEN to be useful "primarily in the West for it represents the past as far as Eastern Europe is concerned"[18] – to which past there was, most likely, no return. Meanwhile, the members of the ACEN were aging, and American policy towards the region was undergoing significant changes. With the coming of *détente,* this constant reminder about the fate of the East Central European nations was becoming increasingly uncomfortable. Eventually, by the mid-1960s, the goals of the FEC and the exiles started to diverge.[19] The FEC cut the budget of the ACEN, which was met with resistance by the exiles, who believed that the ACEN "should not become a satellite of the FEC."[20] Meanwhile, the ACEN itself was also plagued by internal conflicts, and in addition, information about the CIA funding the FEC was leaked to the public. Eventually, FEC support to the ACEN ended in 1972.

In Chapter 9, Mazurkiewicz contemplates the nature and significance of the ACEN. The organization meant different things for different people: it was a forum for exiled politicians, a lobby group that worked to influence Congress to pass legislation that would benefit the captive nations, and it was an instrument of political warfare for the CIA. It contributed to the preservation of national political tradition, provided a safe haven for the elites, set a precedent for regional cooperation, served as center for research and information on the region, and weakened the communist regimes by maintaining the opposition abroad.[21] In Chapter 10, Mazurkiewicz presents how the connection between the CIA and the FEC was revealed to the public, how it affected the ACEN, and how this eventually resulted in the end of financial support for the organization. At the same time, ACEN continued its operation, albeit on a very low budget and much lower intensity. Eventually, some of the ACEN members (like Béla Varga, the first speaker of the Hungarian Parliament in 1990), could even return to their homelands after the fall of communism.[22]

17 Ibid., 289.
18 Ibid., 294
19 Ibid., 303.
20 Ibid., 311.
21 Ibid., 328-329.
22 Ibid., 339-340.

In addition to the chapters presented above, the book contains a number of appendices that could be beneficial for future researchers. It includes the "ACEN Charter and Rules of Procedure,"[23] as well as a list of the ACEN delegates from 1954 to 1971 (indicating their national committee, affiliate organization, years active, and ACEN committee membership), a list of ACEN representations abroad, and a list of ACEN publications. It also contains an index of names, terms and institutions. *Voice of the Silenced Peoples in a Global Cold War* is extremely well researched, it is based on material from more than 30 archives from a number of different countries.

Overall, in *Voice of the Silenced Peoples in the Global Cold War* Mazurkiewicz sheds light on an important, but often ignored aspect of the Cold War – the role and influence of the exiles and *émigrés*, and highlights their agency. These people saw themselves as active participants of the Cold War struggle, and made considerable efforts to call attention to the plight of their homeland, provide the Western audience and decision-makers with information, and work towards liberation from communism. The book can be an important resource for historians of the Cold War, as well as researchers interested in the East Central European community in the United States, as a good example of multinational cooperation between people coming from this region.

23 Ibid., 343-357.

"Diasporic Hallyu: the Korean Wave in Korean Canadian Youth Culture. By Kyong Yoon. Palgrave Macmillan, 2022. Pp. 161."

Rasha Deirani

In light of the recent surge in the popularity of the Hallyu wave, commonly known as the Korean Wave, there has been a notable increase in academic interest devoted to studying this cultural phenomenon. The Hallyu wave, which originated in the 1990s, refers to the global popularity and interest in South Korean culture and entertainment, spanning music, TV series, movies, and various other forms of media. In his book, Kyong Yoon meticulously explores the Korean wave as a diasporic cultural phenomenon, emphasizing the interactions between audiences and Korean media. His primary focus centres on the diasporic Korean Canadian youth, encompassing both 1.5 and 2nd generations[1], examining how their engagement with the Korean Wave influences their identities and sense of belonging.

Yoon's work amalgamates ethnographic research with a nuanced consideration of historical, cultural, and social contexts. This multifaceted approach offers a comprehensive perspective, one that Yoon believes has been under-researched and often overlooked in audience and Korean media studies. Notably, Yoon highlights that existing Hallyu literature tends to emphasize the global audience, neglecting specific groups such as Korean diasporic youth and fans.

Yoon initiates his study by establishing a robust foundation through extensive interviews conducted over several years, underscoring the imperative for a diasporic perspective on the Hallyu wave phenomenon. He delves into the concept of transnational Korean media as a hybrid cultural form, a thematic exploration further advanced by Dal Yong Jin in *New Korean Wave: Transnational Cultural Power in the Age of Social Media* (2016). In the second chapter, Yoon addresses the hyphenated identity of the youth, initiating a critical discourse on the lived experiences of Korean Canadian youth, their heightened awareness of cultural differences and ethnic identification under the gaze of their white peers. The third and fourth chapters deepen the exploration into the impact of the Hallyu wave on the identities of Korean Canadian youth. Yoon scrutinizes

1 As it is explained in the book, 1.5 generation (or 1.5-ers) refers to the youth who were born in Korea and migrated to Canada in their childhood. 2nd generation refers to those, who were born into Korean immigrant families and were raised in Canada. (p.11)

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their consumption patterns of Korean TV and the transformative influence of K-pop, particularly its global ascent. In the final chapter, Yoon proposes the potential counter-hegemonic role of the Hallyu wave, challenging Western-centric discourse. The metaphorical characterization of Hallyu as diasporic prompts critical reflection on the audience's sense of belonging within their nation-state and their figurative migration as fans. Yoon adeptly references Kalra et al.'s *Diaspora and Hybridity* (2005) to expound on the transnational cultural flow of Hallyu and its role in identity formation.

Yoon presents several compelling ideas. He posits that Korean diasporic youth often do not inherently identify with the Hallyu wave, primarily due to the mainstream culture in which they are raised, namely Canadian culture. Consequently, Yoon suggests that these youth must reconstruct their relationship with Hallyu media within their own socio-cultural context.

Through a series of interviews with young Korean Canadian youth, Yoon discerns that despite Canada's multiculturalism, many interviewees have experienced racialization and often concealed their cultural identity. Yoon proposes that the global popularity of Hallyu has helped Korean diasporic youth become more comfortable with and prouder of their ethnic background and ancestral homeland. These youth, growing up with an awareness of their cultural differences and internalising the Western gaze of them as the "other," find in Hallyu a counter perspective to the Euro-American mainstream media.

Yoon underscores the rapid ascent of K-pop as an unprecedented phenomenon, one that challenges the Western-centric mediascape. Hallyu, as a non-Western powerhouse, has sustained its influence for over two decades, making it a significant force to be reckoned with. This can be noticed in the growing interest of the mainstream media in the Hallyu wave and Korean media in general. The Western media is not only attempting to make profit of this surge of fame, but it is also trying to convert it into a Western sub-genre by trying to include themes and topics seen in mainstream media.

Yoon also introduces the notion that Hallyu can be metaphorically seen as diasporic. It prompts its audience to question their sense of belonging within the nation-state they reside in, effectively by turning fans into figurative migrants. In this process, diaspora forges new identities that are not necessarily tied to their nation-state and reaffirms a longing for a "homeland."

The author praises Hallyu for its positive impact on the diasporic Korean Canadian youth, particularly in easing the tension between their "home" culture and the "outside" culture. The Hallyu wave enables these youth to navigate the gaze between Canada (here) and South Korea (there) and reconcile their dual cultural identities more harmoniously.

Crucially, Yoon contends that the Hallyu wave challenges the notion of a white-centric discourse (white-is-the-norm), thus offering a more inclusive narrative. Korean media, encompassing TV, online platforms, and music, provides diasporic youth with a means to engage with non-Western storytelling and representation without feeling marginalized.

Yoon clarifies that the Hallyu wave and media themselves are not inherently counter-hegemonic, but rather, it is the engagement of the diasporic audience that possesses the potential to challenge the dominant Western-ethnic representation and mediascape. This engagement allows diasporic youth to negotiate diverse identity positions between 'here' Canada and 'there' South Korea through the Hallyu wave. Yoon sounds very optimistic about the effect of Hallyu on the young Korean Canadians and their identification with and embrace of their cultural-ethnic identities.

One aspect that could benefit from improvement is Yoon's choice of K-pop representation. While Yoon extensively mentions the BTS group and occasionally references other bands like BlackPink and EXO, it is important to acknowledge that the global success of these groups was built upon the foundation laid by K-pop idols, such as Super Junior (nicknamed Kings of Hallyu), Big Bang, Girls Generation, CnBLUE and 2NE1, spanning the 1st, 2nd and 3rd generations. Yoon acknowledges that Hallyu has a longer history than the last few years and that there is a renewed global interest in K-pop and K-drama. However, the way it was phrased makes it seem as if BTS single-handedly propelled K-pop and the Hallyu wave to a global stage, which diminishes the effort and impact of the other bands that were global before BTS and the newer generations of K-pop groups. Yoon categorizes the audience into three groups based on the time and level of their Hallyu consumption, but he does not analyse the dynamics behind their patterns, which leaves the reader with no explanation of why some lose interest in Hallyu while others rekindle their love and support for it. Yoon also appears to overlook the trend of K-pop and K-drama becoming more Western-themed causing them to lose their uniqueness and attraction factor to a certain degree.

Kyong Yoon's book represents a vital contribution to the understanding of the impact of the Hallyu wave on diasporic Korean Canadian youth and their sense of identity and belonging. Additionally, it sheds light on the broader effects of the Hallyu wave on the global audience. The book is written in a clear and concise manner, and is supported by substantial data, making it accessible and valuable to both academics and non-academics alike. It stands as a noteworthy addition to various disciplines, including audience-studies, transnational and youth cultural studies, and Korean Diaspora studies, among others.

"Creating a Black Vernacular Philosophy. Devonya N. Havis. 86-90 Paul Street, London EC2A 4NE. Lexington Books, 2023."

Yamina Hafian

Western philosophy has long been preoccupied with defining freedom, humanity, and subjectivity through strict frameworks that exclude all marginalized voices. Devonya N. Havis's *Creating a Black Vernacular Philosophy* challenges these limitations by offering a revolutionary rethinking of black Philosophy through the lens of the Black Vernacular Phenomena, a term used by the author to describe Black life's performative, cultural, and linguistic expression. The main argument of the work is that Black difference is not an issue to be assimilated into Western humanist traditions but rather an independent and disruptive force that cannot be totalized. Engaging with the works of Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, and Emmanuel Levinas, Devonya Havis critiques how Black philosophy is often constrained by redemptive narratives that attempt inclusion within a system built on exclusion. The book proposes an alternative way of conceptualizing Black philosophy that embraces identity fluidity, performance, and improvision as essential political and philosophical strategies.

Through a multidisciplinary approach that combines literary criticism, philosophy, and cultural studies, the book explores how Black performance, sound, and language function as an act of resistance and epistemological interventions. The book contains five chapters followed by an introduction and conclusion. Each chapter builds on a central argument that Black Vernacular Phenomena challenges Western traditions, in particular, its emphasis on totality, fixity, and universal reason. The text is particularly critical of Black philosophy's engagement with humanism, claiming that these projects often reinscribe the hierarchies they seek to dismantle. In the final chapter, the book arrives at an important conclusion that there can be no more redemption songs, instead, the Black difference must be understood as a liberated and autonomous site of meaning-making and world-building.

The book begins by the first chapter examining the performative utterance, the idea that language is not just descriptive but also creates reality and truth. By using J.L Austin's speech act theory, the author argues that Black speech, music, and performance are not just cultural expressions but performative acts that generate new ways of being. This chapter frames the Black Vernacular as a counter-discourse that resists dominant narratives about Black history and identity. One example

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that the author provides is the analysis of Richard Wright's *Native Son,* where Bigger Thomas' struggle with language becomes a site of identity formation. The novel illustrates how Bigger's inability to articulate his emotions and feelings in conventional terms forces him into performative modes of expression like violent action rather than speech. The work argues that Bigger's failure to perform within the expected linguistic frameworks is not a deficiency or inability, but an illustration of how traditional speech fails to express the Black experience. Thus, the author explains why Black vernacular forms such as music, coded language, and call and response serve as alternative communicative strategies. Moreover, the chapter examines the African American church tradition, where performative utterances in gospel music function as spiritual and political interventions. By analysing the ritualized call-and-response structure of Black worship, the book stresses how these utterances serve as a collective act of resistance, allowing the community to speak into existence reality that is denied by the dominant culture.

The second chapter introduces the concept of the Black (W)hole Ritual, a metaphor for how blackness exists within a disrupted power system. Using Foucault's critique of power, Havis challenges the common assumption that power is oppressive and prohibitive. Instead, power is seen as something that operates through normalization, control, and surveillance, shaping how people see themselves and the world around them. The key argument of this chapter is that Black identity cannot be fully captured by dominant conceptual frameworks since it is inherently unstable, performative, and fluid. The author uses Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* as an illustration, of the character Reinhart, a person who embodies radical indeterminacy. Reinhart is a gambler, a preacher, a hustler, and a lover all at once. His ability to shift between roles reflects the way a Black person resists categorization and containment. The book suggests that this character's multiplicity mirrors the improvisational nature of Black vernacular, where the meaning is never fixed but is in motion. Black (W)hole is a concept that is also tied to Derrida's deconstruction method, in particular his critique of binary logic and fixed meaning. Havis argues that Blackness, as constructed within Western thought, has always been positioned as the "Other", thus the absence against which whiteness defines itself. Besides seeking to reverse this binary, the book argues that Black difference should embrace its role as a disruptive force that challenges the inconsistencies of the system itself.

One of the most provocative arguments of the book is the critique of Black philosophy's engagement with humanism. Devonya Havis argues that several Black intellectual traditions have sought to reclaim the Black subjectivity within a humanist framework, but by doing so they often reproduce the same exclusionary logic of the Western system. For instance, the book critiques W.E.B Du Bois'

concept of double consciousness arguing that while Du Bois provides an important framework to understand the Black self-perception, his aim remains to promote assimilation into the Western ideal of humanity. The author suggests that instead of seeking inclusion within a system built on exclusion, Black thought must develop a new epistemological system that rejects the Eurocentric concepts of self, reason, and autonomy. This argument is further explained through a discussion of Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks.* While Fanon critiques the psychological effect of colonialism, the author highlights that his goal remains the attainment of a kind of universal humanism. The work argues that this project is ultimately flawed because it assumes the concept of humanity is neutral rather than a concept shaped by the histories of violence and exclusion.

The final chapter brings the most radical claim that there can be no more redemption songs because the notion of redemption is tied to oppressive structures. Redemption assumes an endpoint, a resolution, a restoration of what was lost, but what if Blackness was never meant to be part of the Western philosophical project? Instead, Devonya Havis argues that Black difference should be understood as an autonomous power that operates outside of and in opposition to the dominant thought. Drawing on Levinas' Philosophy of alterity, the book argues that rather than seeking reconfiguration from the system, Black thought should embrace alterity as a mode of being. Havis uses jazz and blues as a metaphor for the black difference, illustrating how these forms of art resist standardization, embrace improvisation and refuse to have a single meaning. The chapter ends with a significant meditation on Toni Morrison's *Beloved,* in particular the character of Sethe. Havis argues that Sethe's act of infanticide is not just a tragedy, but an act to refuse redemption, a refusal to allow slavery's logic to determine her future. In this novel, Beloved herself becomes a figure of Black (W)hole, a haunting presence that refuses resolution.

In conclusion, *Creating a Black Vernacular Philosophy* is an uncompromising work that challenges not only traditional Western philosophy but several assumptions within the Black thought itself. Through cantering the Black performance, sound, and vernacular traditions, the book offers an insightful way to think and understand philosophy as something that lives, embodies, and is in flux. While some may find its critique of Black humanism controversial, its argument is compelling since rather than seeking redemption, Black difference should be embraced as an autonomous force. For Black studies scholars, researchers of cultural theory, and philosophy, this work is an essential read. It not only brings rigorous critique of the existing philosophical frameworks but also opens a new way for thinking about Blackness beyond Western epistemological thought.

"Michael A. Verney, *A Great and Rising Nation: Naval Exploration and Global Empire in the Early US Republic*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2022."

Zoltán Peterecz

It is a well-known fact that right from the moment the United States of America declared and won its independence, it wished to achieve a prestige comparable to that of the traditional European powers, first and foremost the British. It was a manifold issue. In the foreign policy domain, toward the Europeans the young American state needed to prove that the young republic was treaty worthy and was an equal in the international arena, while on the domestic front the new state had to produce economic prosperity and cultural development. All these were supposed to show that the USA, if not by divine providence, was a positive addition to the family of nations and possessed an already large segment of the North American continent. With the passing years—and surviving the first turbulent years both in domestic and foreign policy—, the American appetite grew to be seen as a growing power. This naturally stemmed from the general point of view of most individuals in the United States: they believed they were exceptional and brought something new to the world, therefore they were to play an ever increasing role in the fate of the world.

Michael Verney's book examines the aforementioned topic. While it is true that on the continent Lewis and Clark's famous journey in 1804–06 mapped a lot of the territory west of the Mississippi, the realm of naval expeditions was still in store. And this is what the author uncovers: the American naval expeditions in the middle section of the 19th century, and he tries to prove how America through these episodes wished to become a member of the elite imperialist club of European powers. The various chapters are case studies from the almanac of American sea exploration, each one of which shines a light on how the United States tried and stepped on the imperial path from 1830 on. In the author's words, the more than a dozen expeditions contributed to the "process of imperialization." (5)

The first such story introduces Jeremiah Reynolds's efforts, who wished to organize an expedition to the southern parts of the Pacific Ocean. The ambitious Reynolds—partly thanks to the influence of the explorer Alexander von Humboldt—tried to connect the desire for knowledge together with glory for his home country, which was a sensitive issue for many of his compatriots during this

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era. This was the period when, for example, John Quincy Adams wanted to unfurl the banner of American knowledge and expansion as a way to prove how civilized the United States was. Reynolds was in many ways the walking embodiment of Adams's plans, and with time, he managed to secure many supporters all throughout the country. In the end, he also needed the financial support from Congress. Although the House of Representatives voted for it, the Senate refused such a plan, which was the outcome of politics, of course. Adams, who supported the plan, had lost the 1828 elections, while the incoming Andrew Jackson initially opposed it. But there were other forces as well: the question of what it meant to be a republic, the ongoing tension between North and South on account of the question of slavery, the larger support for trade than for science. Therefore, the first ambitious plan for naval expedition failed in early 1829.

The next case study in many ways is the outgrowth of the first one in the sense that although the Reynolds-Adams axis suffered defeat, later Jackson began to help the plan. The unquestionable leader of the Democratic Party believed in free market and capitalism in addition to his conviction of white supremacy. These sentiments paved the way for a long-distance naval expedition (finally coming to fruition under the presidency of Martin van Buren in 1838), and which roamed the seas for four long years. The small fleet of six ships (a larger assemblage than the usual European expeditions) had a complex task: to make a well-detailed map of the Pacific Ocean that would aid future American trips (first and foremost whale hunting enjoyed primacy in this field), to fight if necessary the local peoples and prove to them that it was unwise to anger Washington, and also to make scientific notes to be published at home in volumes so as to widen the knowledge of the republic. The appearance of the American ships often triggered opposition and violence. The Americans—similarly to their approach to the Natives living on the North American continent—looked down on these Natives as well and many times forced them into a subordinated role thereby proving their superiority and securing American trading goals.

One of the outcomes of this expedition was that the collected data—whether in museums or in publications—were introduced to the American public, which meant the middle and upper class of the white society. While the exhibited objects at the National Gallery were seen by relatively few visitors—and the collection from the Fiji Islands was the overwhelming favorite among them—the published works reached a much larger audience. Among these the most significant was Charles Wilkes's, the captain of the lead ship, five volumes that came out in 1844 as one of the most quality books of the decade, and found its way to the middle class that during the era devoured travel literature. The most important aspect of this phenomenon was to prove to Americans the success of the expedition thereby

strengthening the burgeoning feeling of nationalism and exceptionalism. On the other hand, this was a thinly veiled message to the major European powers that the United States was capable and wished to compete with them. At the same time, the various publications and exhibits solidified the prevalent belief in white supremacy, therefore they served a double purpose: ensured the readers and visitors of their craved hegemony over "lesser" peoples, and served the general thirst for knowledge. But the most outstanding angle was the positive effect that gave impetus for further American expeditions in the 1840s and 1850s to far corners of the world. The nationalist and imperialist faith propelled the desire for new possibilities to aid American trade and prove the excellence of the country.

One such expedition took place in 1848, when the participants travelled to the Dead Sea along the River Jordan. The goal of this tour was somewhat surprising: the ostensibly scientific exploration was at heart a religious undertaking that wanted to prove that the Dead Sea was indeed the result of God's wrath striking Sodom and Gomorrah as the story is known from the Bible. What is more, this happened with the financial support of the U.S. government. Verney well illustrates that behind such a decision there lurked both domestic and foreign policy explanations. The Protestant evangelist groups that played a key role in organizing the expedition felt that because of the ongoing denominational changes in America—mainly because of the mass migration of the Catholic Irish, but certain Unitarian tenets discarded the literal interpretation of the Bible—they needed to prove their superior place in society, and the hoped-for result of the trip might have served that purpose. As for the foreign policy domain aspect, the scientific element of the expedition was to display the exceptional nature of the United States that was to provide advantages regarding trade and hegemony. The Calvinist William Francis Lynch, an officer of the U.S. Navy, embodied the aforementioned aspects, therefore he was the perfect man for this job. The Navy supported the undertaking to counterbalance the limelight and glory that the Army had received in the wake of the Mexican-American War (1846–48). This hybrid expedition of scientific exploration and theology was not perplexing in those days since these two were not strange bedfellows. As Verney points out, the representatives of a supposedly exceptional Christian country would not have achieved anything had it not been for the local Muslims' help. Although the results of the expedition could not prove beyond doubt the truth of the biblical story, Lynch presented the findings in such a way in his book that became popular—especially among the Evangelists—, and if nothing else, it brought his fellow believers closer to the world of explorations.

The next chapter was another expedition that sailed toward South America in the 1850s. This undertaking was closely connected to the interests and aims of Southern slaveholders. The domestic and international pressure against the

institution of slavery had become stronger by that time, and many slaveholders and supporters of the "Peculiar Institution" wanted to have insurance for any exigencies. This led to an exploration on the Amazonas and La Plata rivers and their tributaries—with the support of the federal government, which hoped that in case of success, a scenario like this might defuse the tense domestic situation. The ostensibly scientific exploration that was also to help bring about bilateral trade agreements in reality had one real underlying goal: to set up a possible slave holding enclave in one of the states in the region. This would have served not only the expansion of slavery but could have diminished the threat of slave revolts. By transporting a great number of slaves to these South American countries, the number of home slaves would have decreased, which would have reduced the possibility of further slave rebellions. As for the elite of these South American countries, they saw an opportunity in the arrival of white American settlers to boost their economy. Despite all this planning, neither in Brazil nor in Bolivia did any of such endeavor come to pass.

The last chapter of the book tells the story of those American expeditions in the first half of the 1850s that were sent to find a British ship in the Arctic region—which all ended in frustration. But as a diplomatic tool, the American efforts worked very well. The positive American response to the British call for help did not only demonstrate that the United States was a civilized nation of good will, but it also helped to put the until then volatile relationship between the two countries on a much friendlier base. Verney details why the idea of a rescue mission was important for many Americans. On the one hand, there was the still palpable notion of chivalry among the members of the upper and middle class. On the other hand, many Americans shared the opinion that in the realm of arts and science their "chosen" nation still played the role of a second fiddle to Great Britain or other European countries. But there was also a geopolitical aspect. Although in 1846 the two countries decided the fate of the Oregon Territory by treaty, the two nations found themselves at loggerheads in Central America and the Caribbean, but neither side wanted a possible war.

Verney's book well presents how popular the various naval expeditions were in the three decades before the Civil War, and how significant this was for the white population of the United States. First and foremost, their role in shaping the American identity must be singled out since they embodied those values that Americans liked to think of themselves: a society stemming from European Anglo-Saxon roots and European culture, and acknowledged by it, flourishing capitalism, a middle class with a distinct self-consciousness in addition to conservative Christianity. In the 19th century with the heated race of imperialist powers for the overwhelming majority of Americans these aspects were attractive. The devastating

Civil War, however, put an end to such a path of explorations. They practically vanished, while the European powers looked at and spoke of the United States more appreciatively, and the American-British friendship—with minor episodes aside—started to become really close. In light of such processes, no wonder that naval expeditions were relegated to the sidelines at best.

Verney's volume is a great example of how to bring together the diplomatic background of history with episodes of cultural history. The colorful and at places exciting case studies are based on thorough research and a wide range of sources, and the author provides a well-balanced picture of the individual and societal aspects, expectations, and consequences. For those who wish to understand the ever-clearer contours of American identity in the 19th century, the book will be a pleasing companion.