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solidarity - conflict

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Edited by
Edyta Lorek-Jezińska, Nelly Strehlau, Joanna Antoniak, Bernadetta
Jankowska & Natalia Jaworańska

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Vol. 9: **Solidarity—Conflict**/2023

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Editors-in-Chief: Edyta Lorek-Jezińska & Nelly Strehlau

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Editors-in-chief

Edyta Lorek-Jezińska and Nelly Strehlau

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	6
INTRODUCTION	
Bernadetta Jankowska & Edyta Lorek-Jezińska with Julia Siepak & Edgar J. A. Jephcote	8
Solidarity—conflict: an introduction	
ARTICLES	
SOLIDARITY—CONFLICT IN LINGUISTICS	
Miriam Kobierski	13
AI the creator? Analysing prose and poetry created by Artificial Intelligence	
Zamfira-Maria Petrescu	34
Linguistic expressions of solidarity in the television series <i>Murdoch Mysteries</i>	
SOLIDARITY—CONFLICT IN LITERARY & CULTURAL STUDIES	
Noemi Neconesnic	50
Representations of trauma and solidarity in Regency romance	
Rafał Łyczkowski	65
Conflict of cultures: a marginalised orphan of the colonial discourse ‘disinterred’ in <i>Jack Maggs</i> by Peter Carey	
Akshita Bhardwaj	80
Oral parables of regional ecological wisdom: rituals of co-belonging and multispecies care in <i>The Hungry Tide</i> by Amitav Ghosh	

Samu/elle Striewski	97
The <i>poiesis</i> of susceptibility: Langston Hughes on queer Black friendship	
Zainab Faiz	106
The Symbiocene in “Ode to the West Wind”: reading Romantic poetry through an ecocritical lens	
Natalia Jaworańska	119
Departing from the archetype of “manly” man: a portrait of a man in <i>Scenes from a Marriage</i> (2021)	
CONFERENCE REPORTS	
Natalia Jaworańska	137
Politics and poetics of difference: approaches in Anglophone literature, culture and linguistics	
ABSTRAKTY	140
ABOUT THE AUTHORS	146

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CURRENTS

The ninth issue editors

CURRENTS EDITORIAL
SOLIDARITY—CONFLICT: AN INTRODUCTION

Bernadetta Jankowska & Edyta Lorek-Jezińska
with Julia Siepak & Edgar J. A. Jephcote
Nicolaus Copernicus University

SOLIDARITY—CONFLICT:
AN INTRODUCTION

Keywords: solidarity, conflict, non-violence, exclusion, inclusion

It is our great pleasure to deliver the ninth issue of *CURRENTS. A Journal of Young English Philology Thought and Review*, edited by members of the Academic Association for Doctoral Studies of English at Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń. The central concern of this year's issue of *Currents* is the theme of solidarity and conflict and its representations and manifestations in Anglophone literature, culture, and linguistics.

Solidarity has played a crucial role in the history of humankind, forging social and political alliances, but also provoking disagreements and conflicts. As Rochelle DuFord states in *Solidarity in Conflict* (2022), "solidarity is both an agonistic and associational space. On the one hand, it is exclusionary and competitive with its outside. On the other hand, it is a space where people come to act together and participate in a common life, and where social freedom can appear." Judith Butler sees solidarity as an important factor in building alliances in non-violent action, suggesting that "[w]e do not have to love one another to engage in meaningful solidarity": the very fact that "[we] can always fall apart" encourages us to "struggle to stay together" (*The Force of Non-violence*, 2020). With these different ways of approaching solidarity and conflict, we hope to offer in this volume articles exploring how these concepts

have been discussed within English studies and how they have been addressed, represented and imagined in Anglophone literatures, cultures and languages.

The articles published in this volume examine complex interactions and negotiations between solidarity and conflict in the areas of linguistics and literary and cultural studies.

Solidarity—conflict in linguistics

The section exploring solidarity and/or conflict in linguistics starts with **Miriam Kobierski's** article "AI the Creator? Analysing Prose and Poetry Created by Artificial Intelligence." The author employs the method of qualitative research in order to examine short fragments of prose and poetry created by Artificial Intelligence and presents the results of her experiment conducted among three groups of students and native speakers of English, whose task was to indicate texts created by AI and human authors.

In "Linguistic Expressions of Solidarity in the Television Series *Murdoch Mysteries*" **Zamfira-Maria Petrescu** conducts a linguistic analysis of selected episodes of the Canadian TV series. The main point of the study is to explore how different phrases suggesting control as well as intolerance against others are used to express the superiority of one gender and specific ethnic groups.

Solidarity—conflict in literary and cultural studies

The literature/culture section of the ninth issue of *CURRENTS* opens with **Noemi Neconesnic's** article "Representations of Trauma and Solidarity in Regency Romance," which discusses the complexity of war veterans figures on the basis of Mary Balogh's *Survivor's Club* (2012-2016). The author argues that the popular romantic fiction genre is not limited to the representation of romantic relationships, but often refers to other issues, such as solidarity and trauma.

"Conflict of Cultures: A Marginalised Orphan of the Colonial Discourse 'Disinterred' in *Jack Maggs* by Peter Carey" by **Rafał Łyczkowski** examines the

problem of oppressed colonial voices as well as the critique of British imperial policy. The figure of the protagonist—serving as a metaphor of Australia under the colonial regime—is analysed through Homi Bhabha’s postcolonial motives of mimicry and hybridity.

In “Oral Parables of Regional Ecological Wisdom: Rituals of Co-Belonging and Multispecies Care in *The Hungry Tide* by Amitav Ghosh” **Akshita Bhardwaj** explores the multidimensionality of human contact with other species. The article emphasises the mediatorial function of “mythic and ritualistic oral traditions” in the possible conflicts emerging within the aforementioned groups as well as in their co-existence.

Samu/elle Striewski in “The Poiesis of Susceptibility: Langston Hughes and Queer Black Friendship” highlights the multidimensionality of queer friendship, support and otherness through the interpretation of “Poem” by Langston Hughes. The author incorporates the theories by Sara Ahmed, José Esteban and Judith Butler to show how the prevalent social rules can be questioned by the discriminated groups in order to create other forms of expression.

Zainab Faiz in “The Symbiocene in ‘Ode to the West Wind’: Reading Romantic Poetry through an Ecocritical Lens” analyses the poem by Percy Bysshe Shelley using the ecocritical perspective as well as the concept of a “Symbiocene,” introduced by Glenn A. Albrecht. The motives present in the poem serve as a point for further discussion on the destruction of the Earth made by humankind within the last decades.

“Departing from the Archetype of ‘Manly’ Man: A Portrait of a Man in Scenes from a Marriage (2021)” by **Natalia Jaworańska** examines how the perception of masculinity has been changing in contemporary culture. The concepts of hegemonic masculinity, traditional manhood and inclusive masculinity are used in the analysis of the TV series *Scenes from a Marriage* (2021).

Conference reports

This section features a report from the conference “Politics and poetics of difference: approaches in Anglophone literature, culture and linguistics” organized by the Academic Association for Doctoral Students of English, Student Feminist Society and Department of Anglophone Literature, Culture and Comparative Studies at Nicolaus Copernicus University (June 2 & 3, 2023; online). Featuring lectures by two keynote speakers: Dr Anna Bernard from King’s College, London and Prof. Dominika Ferens from the University of Wrocław and many papers presented by young researchers from Poland and abroad, the conference, as **Natalia Jaworańska**, states, “proved to be remarkably fruitful and filled with many inspiring and thought-provoking discussions.”

**SOLIDARITY—DIFFERENCE
IN LINGUISTICS**

Miriam Kobierski

University of Łódź

AI THE CREATOR?

ANALYSING PROSE AND POETRY CREATED BY ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Keywords: artificial intelligence, text, poem, poetry, authentic

Introduction

In the times of the increasing use of technology it should come as no surprise that, eventually, people would try to create a machine that could surpass human abilities. Although initially this super-computer was mainly designed for machine-learning capabilities, data processing, and problem-solving algorithms, over time scientists and programmers have developed more and more uses for the super-computer, resulting in the creation of Artificial Intelligence (AI). As stated by Margaret Boden, “artificial intelligence (AI) seeks to make computers do the sorts of things that minds can do” (1). Therefore, the main objective of artificial intelligence is to resemble the human mind as accurately as possible. Although AI is already sophisticated enough to complete mechanical and computerised tasks, their abilities to convey emotions and feelings and replicate the inner workings of human consciousness are still being developed. Humans have the ability to express their emotions and thoughts through art, such as paintings, sculptures, music and literature, including both prose and poetry. The intelligent systems are only starting to create poetry; however, they have made considerable breakthroughs in language processing and communication.

The aim of this article is to examine short literary texts, predominantly poems, produced by Artificial Intelligence. A linguistic analysis of the individual texts will be conducted, as well as a comparison between the texts themselves. I also describe an experiment in which I asked a group of participants to determine whether the presented text has been written by a human writer or artificial intelligence in order to examine if the intelligent systems are able to pass as human writers. Native speakers of the English language were asked to partake in this experiment so as to determine whether this would be a determining factor when distinguishing whether a text has been written by AI or a human. Furthermore, the positions in the discussion whether AI poetry can be considered authentic shall be examined.

AI technology

Text generators have become the basis for AI writing. According to Mike Sharples and Rafael Pérez, “computers can now write original short stories, stories that can entertain and persuade others” (xi). When provided the input in the form of a sentence, a couple of phrases or even a photo, the intelligent system can produce whole paragraphs of text. With the amount of input text growing every day, these systems are becoming more and more competent in producing meaningful sequences of speech. The user generated content tool can produce texts covering a variety of topics. Such topics include scientific and academic content as well as poetry, short stories, and other texts focused on triggering emotional response in the reader.

Google has released a new AI tool—ChatGPT. Created by OpenAI, ChatGPT allows users to have human-like conversations with the chatbot, ask for assistance with writing essays, play games like tic-tac-toe, and even write song lyrics. The user simply inserts the input on the basis of which the chatbot is able to produce meaningful content. The program was released in late November 2022 and garnered a lot of attention online. People can use this technology for “composing essays, emails and poems, writing and debugging

code, and even passing exams” (Ortiz). Because of the development of research in this area, the model is closer to correctly and accurately replicating human speech. As stated in an article published by The Washington Post, ChatGPT is a project which attempts to “make ‘talking’ with an AI feel smooth and natural, almost like a conversation between humans would” (Lerman & Verma).

Another example of an AI text generator is called Free AI Writer and Text Generator developed by Smodin LLC. The abilities of this text generator are similar to those of ChatGPT, as once again all that is needed is a prompt from the user for the system to write an essay or an article. AI Writer can also be used for copywriting and marketing, as it allows the users to generate marketing content for ads and posts on social media. Another user generated tool is called Text Generation API, created by DeepAI. According to its creators, this system is “backed by a large-scale unsupervised language model” (DeepAI) and is based on the model GPT-2, meaning that it has a larger database as well as similar programming to the previously mentioned model.

Linguistic analysis

For the purpose of the study discussed in this article, the same prompt was input in two generators: Free AI Writer and Text Generation API. Next, the texts were analysed and compared, both from linguistic and literary standpoint. Particular attention was paid to the naturalness of the text (i.e. whether it resembles texts produced by humans) and its emotional value and impact on the reader. The prompt for examining their ability to replicate expressing emotions was the same for all of the generators—*and on her cheek lay a kiss from him, the sincerest look of deep love she had ever seen. At this the thought crossed her mind.* The Smodin AI writer generated the following text:

And on her cheek lay a kiss from him, the sincerest look of deep love she had ever seen. At this the thought crossed her mind. Could he mean it? Could he be serious about marrying her? She looked at his face and knew that in time to come she would always see there the same tender smile which seemed the answer to her question when they stood together on

their first evening by the sea, and which now was the seal of love's faithfulness for her from which she dared not shrink in fear or doubt of its constancy; but with it came also a feeling of wonder as though something new had dawned upon her, as if, after all, he loved her after only such a short acquaintance. (Smodin)

The text comprises 130 words, with the average number of words in a sentence being 26—this is mainly due to the extremely long phrasing of the second half of the fragment. This particular sentence consists of 93 words and the limited use of punctuation marks makes it quite difficult to follow. The text includes 21 nouns, 23 verbs, and 8 adverbs. The most frequently occurring words are “could,” “after,” and “cheek.”

The phrase “seal of love’s faithfulness” is an interesting choice as it employs alliteration, repeating the same /s/ sound as in sea. Often associated with poetic texts, this device introduces a sense of rhythm into the text. Overall, the intelligent system is able to effectively present a love story and convey the doubts of a new love, especially when the two people do not know each other very well. However, some phrasings do not seem to be used in the correct way, such as “which seemed the answer to her question when they stood together,” which, in turn, disturbs the understanding of the text. By not including any names of the characters, the reader might not form a strong connection with them; on the other hand, by including so many pronouns (20 in total), the reader may have the feeling that they already know these people and do not actually need an introduction. Although the logical sense of the text is incoherent at times, the system was able to present the multitude of feelings that one feels when in love: wonder, doubt, being at peace and the sense of security upon seeing the tender smile of a loved one.

The same prompt was given to the second generator, Text Generation API, which produced the following text:

And on her cheek lay a kiss from him, the sincerest look of deep love she had ever seen. At this the thought crossed her mind. She had no hope of a night like this and the more he talked of it, the deeper and the more he thought of being unable to resist. And she knew she must die, and a night

like this would end with no luck—a nightmare of misery and pain, an agony of sorrow, in which there would be no relief. It was over. He pulled her to herself, and her eyes opened wide with a burning lust. He gave her a hard kiss, and as he did so she thought she had more than enough. She felt a touch of her own blood running down her chin against his arms. She leaned forward with such a weight that the hand he had rested over her neck didn't even bother to hold her. He lay his hand on her hand, and she grasped it without thinking for a moment. Her heart sped up with a new idea—that this man had no friends at all—and she realized he would never be there for her again. The last thought she had left her, she began to remember. But when she did, suddenly at the touch of her hand as she stared out to the stars, a storm of grief rose to the surface of her thoughts. She lost all control of her body, and began to cry, the pain building on her. But no-one had ever loved her like this. (Text Generation API)

The text consists of 266 words including 45 nouns, 49 verbs, and 13 conjunctions (the most frequently used conjunction being “and”). The most frequently occurring words were “thought,” “hand,” “more,” and “kiss.” On average the AI used 18 words per sentence. A study conducted in 1986 showed that more experienced users of language (graduate students) had a tendency of using 10 to 12 words per sentence in writing in contrast with less experienced language users (undergraduates) who used five to six words in a sentence (Kaufer et al.). Taking into account both children and adult speakers, the Plain Language Association InterNational has stated that people usually use between 15 and 20 words per sentence on average (Plain Language Association InterNational).

What can be noticed about this extract are the strong word expressions, such as “agony of sorrow”, “a hard kiss,” “a storm of grief,” and “a nightmare of misery and pain.” These expressions contribute to the negative tone of the text as these lexical items are associated with pain, darkness, fear, and suffering. The motif of suffering can be further seen when one of the characters begins to cry with the “pain building on her” and blood appears on her face caused by the kiss of her lover. Some of the expressions found in the text are either incorrect or unusual. For example, in “he pulled her to herself” the pronouns are used incorrectly. Another peculiar expression is “she felt a touch of her own blood.”

A human writer would probably say that she felt her own blood running down her face.

The generator indicates feelings of passion between two people with expressions such as “burning lust,” “hard kiss,” “unable to resist,” and the notion of a heart speeding up. But although these burning feelings of passion are present, the couple is not able to overcome their difficulties. She knew that the night would end and that after this last time she would not see her beloved again. She was aware that after this night she would be flooded with grief and feelings of despair and hopelessness.

Text Generation API took a different approach to Free AI Writer by portraying the harsh reality of losing a loved one. The tone of this extract is darker than the previous one which is achieved by evoking images of blood and pain. Furthermore, even the story is much more depressing in tone as it depicts two lovers who are not able to create a healthy relationship and must part ways. The first extract leaves the readers with a feeling of hope, while the second one floods them with despair caused by the loss of a loved one.

In order to showcase the difference between human writing and AI-generated text, I will also analyse a paragraph written by Mandy Kloppers titled “My world feels dark when you’re not here.” The text is as follows:

My world feels dark when you’re not here. Even when I’m out under a cloudless sky, it feels like there’s a haze over everything. Before you, the world was filled with so many lights, street lights, stars, the moon, and the sun. Now it feels like you are the brightest light in my life. It would explain why I feel so warm around you, how you provide me with energy and the strength to persevere through my darkest hours. You also shine brilliantly enough that I know I’ll always be able to find my way back to you. (Kloppers)

The total number of words is 98, with the average number of words in a sentence being 17—similarly to the amount of words on average produced by Text Generation API. The text comprises 14 nouns, 15 verbs and verb phrases, as well as 10 adverbs. The text generated by AI had more verbs and nouns than this paragraph. This writing portrays a strong connection between the speaker

and the person they are addressing, using phrases such as “shine brilliantly” and “brightest light in my life” to personify the addressee as a source of warmth and light. The author uses light as a metaphor to illustrate the inspiring and empowering influence as well as the emotional brightness of their loved one. The use of various sources of light, such as street lights, stars, and the sun symbolise how the mentioned elements used to illuminate the speaker’s world; the addressee being described as the “brightest light” implies that they play a central role in the speaker’s life. Similarly, to the text generated by the Smodin AI writer, this text portrays a positive description of a loved one and evokes feelings of hope and peace.

Experiment

Although researchers have made a considerable breakthrough in the field of AI communication, there is still the question whether such content may be considered authentic and if texts created by artificial intelligence could pass as texts written by humans. In order to test this hypothesis, a small scale experiment was conducted in 2022. The chosen study method was qualitative research because an in-depth analysis would provide more insights to understand why the participants made their choices. The participants of this study each received the same set of extracts. The sets contained fragments produced by artificial intelligence and human writers. After gathering all of the data, the results were calculated and I created tables in which I presented the collected data. I then analysed the stated reasons for the justifications of the participants of this study. During the experiment, 30 participants were asked to determine whether the two presented texts—titled “And on her cheek lay a kiss from him...” written by the Text Generation API writer and a paragraph discussing the theme of love entitled “My world feels dark when you’re not here” authored by Mandy Kloppers—were written by an intelligent system or a human writer. Furthermore, the respondents were asked to provide justifications for their answers as well as indicate which grammatical or lexical

items influenced their decision. The participants were divided into three groups. The first group consisted of 5 English native speakers, 2 women and 3 men. This group was specifically chosen to determine whether they would be more proficient in distinguishing which set of texts has been produced by artificial intelligence than speakers of English as a foreign language. It can be assumed that native speakers are more sensitive to the style of language, more accustomed to naturally occurring language, and more familiar with its nuances. The second group consisted of ten university students, 5 men and 5 women, for whom English is a second language. These participants have a very good command and understanding of this language due to having actively used it on a daily basis as English students. The third and final group consisted of 15 people with language knowledge on intermediate or upper-intermediate level (B1 or B1+). These people can speak English, have contact with this language on a regular or semi-regular basis, but would not be considered fluent speakers. The members of this group were aged between 17 and 25 and were either high schoolers or university students. This group has the weakest connection to English, as the participants of this particular group do not use the language on a daily basis.

The majority of English speakers did not have any difficulty with correctly identifying the first text as having been written by artificial intelligence.

	Text 1—And on her cheek lay a kiss from him...	Text 2—My world feels dark when you're not here
Participant 1	The fact that “no-one” was hyphenated gives me the impression this is a text generated from a source text, like a 19th century romance novel. But from the sentence to sentence, the casual relationships are skewed.	This feels like a coin toss to me. The paragraph traffics in sentiment and the causal links build in a way that is logical—the sort of thing I can easily imagine somebody writing to their beloved. But it's also full of enough stock images and feelings, that I'm skeptical of its humanness.

	Text 1—And on her cheek lay a kiss from him...	Text 2—My world feels dark when you're not here
Participant 2	There were some pronoun errors which is common in AI and phrases common from old literature as if the program was trained on old books.	The linking between sentiment and first-person feeling makes me think it's a human.
Participant 3	Odd phrasing, it's also using wrong grammar tenses, for example: "He lay his hand on her hand" and it mostly feels like a teenager is writing it, it just looks weird.	An AI machine could try to recreate love poems, but they'll never feel as lively or romantic as one a human could've written.
Participant 4	Some sentences did not make any sense—the subject does not always agree with the object. The content of this extract is clear but the language aspects are not.	I think the writer is human because in the phrase like "there is a haze over everything"—how would a computer know about a haze.
Participant 5	When I am reading it really feel like a human wrote it because there are so many romantic moments and the text is full of emotions. And I think that AI can't write about emotions and a human being wrote it.	I think it is written by a human being because it is very emotional, just like the previous text.

Table 1. Group 1 (Native speakers) answers

As seen in Table 1, Participant 1 noticed issues with punctuation in the text, drawing attention to the unusual decision in the spelling in the word "no-one." Participant 2's response is focused on the incorrect use of pronouns in the phrase "he pulled her to herself", stated that it seemed as if the program was trained on old books in the phrase "agony of sorrow," and finished by saying that it is only slightly better than *Twilight*. Participant 4 found issues with the logical sense of the text, stating that the subject-object relationship was skewed. However, one respondent did not choose the correct answer as she believed that a human wrote it by saying that the text is full of emotions and

that she does not think that AI is capable of writing about emotions in such a way.

The second text had a 100% success rate as all of the participants correctly guessed that it was written by a human. The first respondent stated that they can easily imagine somebody writing a text like this to their beloved, due to the fact that the paragraph traffics in sentiment. The second participant was fully convinced that a human wrote it because of the linking between sentiment and first-person feeling. Participant 3 stated that AI is capable of recreating love poems, but that these poems would never feel as romantic as a poem written by a human. Participant 4 said that humans have experienced depression so the phrase “you provide me the strength to persevere through my darkest hours” makes sense for a human to say and questioned how a computer would know about a haze. The last participant justified her answer simply by stating that the text is very emotional.

In the second group, i.e. university students, only 3 people (30%) managed to determine that the extract provided to them was not written by a human. Their reasoning behind this is that in some fragments the writing seemed chaotic and incoherent.

	Text 1—And on her cheek lay a kiss from him...	Text 2—My world feels dark when you're not here
Participant 1	This text is pretty emotional. I am not sure if AI can write like this.	This text is smooth and romantic. I can't imagine AI writing in such a powerful manner.
Participant 2	The text is expressive and almost poetic, uses non-standard syntax.	AI wouldn't use ornate language like this, too poetic and romantic.
Participant 3	Complex syntax and the addition of a dash make me think that it was written by a human writer.	An AI machine could try to recreate love poems, but they'll never feel as lively or romantic as one a human could've written.

	Text 1—And on her cheek lay a kiss from him...	Text 2—My world feels dark when you're not here
Participant 4	This looks like a literary piece of text. It has some constructions characteristic for literature. Correctly used collocations. However, the excessive usage of pronouns looks rather odd.	Metaphors, similes, beautiful writing, I can feel emotion in this.
Participant 5	I think this kind of Twilight-ish stories is rather a human domain.	The language is relatively complex and the text is grammatically and, more importantly, logically correct.
Participant 6	The text is hard to follow and has many unnatural sounding sentence structures.	Cliche writing, feels borrowed, so I say it's AI; but then again, less skilled writers may also write like this.
Participant 7	Satisfying metaphors, more likely by a human writer.	The wording in phrases such as "shine brilliantly enough", "the world was filled with... streetlights" seems off
Participant 8	AI wouldn't have connected pain and losing control with pleasure what can be seen in this text.	The text is intended to present the other person in a poetic way of affection. However, the computer uses too many words related to physics, such as force, energy, which sounds strange and not very poetic.
Participant 9	It sounds off, unusual wording and sentence structure, lots of commas. No consistency in using dashes and commas for sentence interjections.	Perhaps my intuition is very basic but I think it's human because it's poetic and talks about closeness with another person. I do not think that even if a robot was writing that, it would pay attention to such things as warmth and light.
Participant 10	I think that this text was written by AI machine because I have the impression that in some places the text is written a little chaotically and incomprehensibly.	I think that this text wrote a human, because I have a feeling that it was written by a very sensitive person who knew how to put his feelings on paper, and by reading this text we can feel these emotions.

Table 2. Group 2 (university students) answers

However, seven participants were believed that a human wrote this extract. The topic itself confused many participants as they did not believe that AI systems are advanced enough to be writing about feelings in such a sophisticated way. Participant 3 stated that in the sentence “she knew she must die, and a night like this would end with no luck—a nightmare of misery and pain, an agony of sorrow, in which there would be no relief” the complex syntax and the inserted dash led them to think that an AI machine would not be able to produce this sort of writing. As seen in Table 2, the majority of participants thought that the text was filled with emotions and expressive language, such as metaphors, thus making them believe that it was written by a human.

Concerning the second text, seven participants correctly guessed that it was written by a human writer, whereas three people thought that the text was written by AI. As shown in Table 2, Participant 7’s answer was based on the fact that the wording of phrases such as “persevere,” “the world was filled with streetlights,” and “shine brilliantly enough” did not seem like a human would write something like this; furthermore, Participant 6 noted that such clichéd writing can only be produced by AI. Participant 8 stated that the comparisons connected with physics such as force, energy, and light made the tone seem mechanical and took away its poetic value. However, the majority of respondents claimed that the emotive expressions and poetic metaphors pointed to the fact that it must have been written by a human. The justifications include ornate language, similes, the text being logically correct, and that the text seemed to be dedicated to someone in particular. What is more, the participants said that an intelligent system would not pay attention to aspects such as warmth and light when describing another human being and that the reader can feel the author’s emotions.

In the last group, consisting of the less proficient English speakers, only 5 participants (33%) correctly identified the text as written by the AI, while 10 people (67%) thought that the text had a human author.

	Text 1—And on her cheek lay a kiss from him...	Text 2—My world feels dark when you're not here
Participant 1	The text is very emotional and accurately describes the sensual and emotional experience.	The text is too emotional to be written by artificial intelligence.
Participant 2	The emotions seem too raw and genuine to have been written by a machine.	The author didn't lose his train of thought.
Participant 3	Total gibberish, I think it's even worse than Harlequins.	The sentences are well written and easy to read.
Participant 4	Seems to have human emotion.	Looks like a love letter.
Participant 5	I think it's a part of a book.	The descriptions are too detailed for a machine to write this.
Participant 6	This text is emotional.	I think it's from some book I've read.
Participant 7	The very meticulous way the author writes about emotions while using the exact description of events.	Nothing seems to be out of order.
Participant 8	Emotions showed here are too typical, almost like from a harlequin.	Feels like simplified language, not so emotional dense.
Participant 9	This is a very detailed description of an emotional scene.	AI wrote this because it's too cliché to say to any person, there's no personalisation here.
Participant 10	I believe that there are some misgendered pronouns. Some of the sentences feel odd.	A human wrote this because a robot isn't aware of their own feelings.
Participant 11	It is doubtful for me whether a computer that does not feel emotions would be able to describe and express them so well	Human writer, because the robot does not feel its emotions "I will go back to you," robots do not feel emotions like humans

	Text 1—And on her cheek lay a kiss from him...	Text 2—My world feels dark when you're not here
Participant 12	The rhymes have disappeared along the way and the sentences are a bit weird, don't know what's going on in this story, but I wouldn't be surprised if it was written by some amateur with that style of writing.	AI produced this, I think so because a human wouldn't write such underwhelming statements about their loved one.
Participant 13	Software can't discuss feelings effectively.	Human emotions
Participant 14	This looks like a love letter to a person you are in love with	I think AI wrote this because it seems to lack specific references
Participant 15	The phrases "she was crying blood" seems odd, as well as "he gave her a hard kiss"—don't seem natural.	An intelligent system can't replicate these raw and pure feelings.

Table 3. Group 3 (less proficient English speakers) answers

The people who accurately provided the answer stated that what convinced them that it was written by an intelligent system is the fact that some pronouns were misgendered and as seen in Table 3, Participant 3 said that the text was total gibberish. Furthermore, the respondents pointed to two phrases as atypical and unnatural: "she was crying blood" and "he gave her a hard kiss." The respondents who failed to identify which text was written by the AI claimed that "software cannot discuss feelings effectively" and that the text provided an accurate description of a sensual experience.

Regarding the second text, 11 participants correctly identified it as penned by a human, while 4 people thought it was written by an intelligent system. In general, the respondents claimed that the text was too emotional for a robot to be able to write it. Other participants claimed that the writing looked like a love letter, with Participant 10 claiming that a robot is not capable of being aware of their own feelings. As far as the language is concerned, respondents stated that the sentences were written in a clear and coherent way and that it was easy to

read. Furthermore, the comparisons “feels like there’s a haze over everything” and “feels like you are the brightest light in my life” were the determining factor for the participant’s choice.

As expected, the group with the native speakers had the highest accuracy rate when it came to identifying the true author of the presented texts, while less proficient speakers of English had difficulties with this task. This suggests that knowing English could be a determining factor and that native speakers are more likely to recognise when a text has been written by artificial intelligence. The two remaining groups did not have a high success rate of correctly guessing the author of the text, which means that in this experiment, the text created by the AI generator could pass off as one written by a human. They believed that the extract conveyed an accurate and actual emotional experience, that the author provided many specific details related to emotions, and would most likely agree that artificial intelligence is, in fact a creator, meaning that it is able to create texts that could pass as texts written by people.

Poetry

Poetry may prove to be much more difficult to replicate by AI as this type of writing is not only associated with emotions, but also is often based on past experiences of the author and their desire to present them to their audience. Many poems are addressed to a certain person rather than simply produced for the mass audience. Because of these features of poetry, some researchers claim that “journalism, novel-spinning, and poetry all live within the one creative bastion that [...] AI [cannot] possibly disrupt or infiltrate” (Berger).

After analysing half a million lines which were written by human writers, AI was able to create the poem titled “A Box of Light.” The process behind the creation of this piece of writing took over five months, with experts from the Poetry Society, Poetry Archive, and Scottish Poetry Library selecting inputs to be used. This included removing offensive or violent content and eliminating arcane language. After processing over 40,000 couplets, the poem finally came

into being, a result of machine learning and the collaboration between programmers and poets. The said poem is presented below:

and soon I am staring out again,
begin to practise my words, expecting my word
will come. it will not. the wind is calling.
my friend is near, I hear his breath. his breath
is not the air. he touches me again with his hands
and tells me I am growing old, he says, far old.
we travel across an empty field in my heart.
there is nothing in the dark, I think, but he.
I close my eyes and try to remember what I was.
he says it was an important and interesting day,
because I put in his hands one night
the box of light that had been a tree.

The most striking feature of the poem is the comparison of the tree to a box of light. In the past, poets have written numerous poems about trees, one of the most famous being "Trees" by Joyce Kilmer. The main theme of this poem is the magnitude of trees with the poet claiming that no poem could ever be as lovely as a tree. Another poem, "Loveliest of trees, the cherry now" written by A. E. Housman, is a man's reflection of his own life, and the knowledge that although the speaker is young at the present time, time is short and scarce. Because of the fleeting nature of time, the author will appreciate and admire the cherry tree while he still can. The theme of transience present in those two poems can also be found in "A Box of Light."

In the AI poem, the topic is also concerned with the fleeting nature of human life and time. This can be seen when the author's friend says that the author is "growing old, [...] far old" as they have trouble remembering their past. Notes of sadness can also be detected in the phrase "we travel across an empty field in my heart" which implies that there is nothing in the dark. The speaker's friend reminisces about having received a box of light that primarily had been a tree, which was beforehand stated that it had been an important and interesting event.

What is unique about this poem is that many experts spent countless hours reviewing the process, eliminating errors, and ensuring that the final “product” is comprehensible. At this stage of research, human editors are still a vital component in the process of producing content by artificial intelligence as they ensure that the final product is coherent and comprehensive. The prompt “write a poem titled ‘a box of light’” was inserted into ChatGPT so as to see how well AI could perform without the help of a human editor. The intelligent system produced the following text:

Within this box, a world of wonder,
A universe of colors, bright and thunder,
A glimmering glow, so warm and tender,
A box of light, a magical sender.
Its beams of gold, like liquid honey,
Soothe the soul, chase away the gloomy,
It shines so bright, so full of glory,
A box of light, a timeless story.
It holds the power to light the darkest night,
To show the path, to give us sight,
It brings the hope, the pure delight,
A box of light, an eternal right.
But in this box, a warning too,
To never use it to harm or slew,
For light can blind, and shadows ensue,
A box of light, a force we rue.
So cherish this box, this precious gift,
And use its power with a gentle lift,
For in its glow, our hearts can lift,
A box of light, our souls to sift.

The poem “A Box of Light” is a celebration of the power and beauty of light. The speaker describes a box that contains a universe of colours and a warm, tender glow that soothes the soul and brings delight. The light in the box is seen as a force that has the power to brighten the darkest night, show the path, and bring hope. The poem also carries a warning, reminding the readers that light can also be blinding and that, as a result, should be used with caution. The speaker encourages the people to cherish the gift of light and use its power with a gentle touch. There are some half- and slanted-rhymes in the poem; furthermore,

instead of the rhyming couplets, the poem employs rhyming quatrains—the poem has the following rhyming scheme: AAAA/BCDD/EEEE/FFFF/GGGG, which gives it a musical quality and a sense of flow. The use of imagery, such as the liquid honey, the glimmering glow, and the shining gold, creates a vivid picture of the box of light in the reader's mind. The poem's overall message is one of positivity, urging the readers to appreciate the beauty of light and use its power for good.

The last paragraph was written by ChatGPT as well, meaning that these intelligent systems not only are able to produce content, but can analyse this content as well, making these systems more self-aware. Even though AI has the capacity to analyse its own text, basic mistakes still occur. For example, the system provided the wrong rhyming scheme—it should be AABB/CC'DD instead of AAAA/BCDD as stated in the previous paragraph. Although this technology is already making steady headway in the field of art and will play an enormous role in the art community in the future, as of now it does not notice and/or criticise mistakes in its texts. There are many controversies in the art community concerning AI generated art. One of the main issues is that AI systems need to be “fed” content in order to grow and learn, however, this practice often occurs without authors’ consent. This in turn breaks intellectual property laws, copyright laws, and is simply unfair to the artists who spent countless hours on their work. The creators of Stable Diffusion, a deep learning, text-to-image model, released their source code revealing that thousands of artists’ work had been included in their database—without the knowledge or consent of the artists. Many critics claim that this technology will be the demise of creative art and will eliminate jobs.

Can AI poetry be considered authentic?

Current AI development uses a method known as deep learning, which is a subset of machine learning. The aim of machine learning is to “develop algorithms that learn interpretation principles from training samples, and apply them to new data from the same domain to make informed decisions”

(Chassagnon et al.). However, deep learning is a step further as it “imitates the way humans gain knowledge” (Petersson). Thanks to this technique, computer programs have the ability to learn from enormous sets of data in a shorter amount of time. In the case of poetry, an intelligent system can analyse a myriad of poems and then generate its own content. But would it still be considered poetry? According to cognitive psychologist and poet Keith Holyoak, a successful poem has several components: “compelling content with aesthetically pleasing wordplay (metaphor and other varieties of symbolism), coupled with the various types of sound similarities and constraints of form” (176). As shown in the examples above, artificial intelligence is able to produce words within a set structure and employ the use of poetic devices such as alliteration, rhyming schemes, and metaphors. However, as Holyoak points out, there is the question of consciousness. Edmund Clarence Stedman once said that “natural emotion is the soul of poetry” (11) and that poetry is used to convey emotions. As of now, artificial intelligence is not developed enough to possess natural emotions, does not have inner experience nor does it have a consciousness. This means that according to these researchers and poets, artificially produced poetry is not authentic. The actual answer to this question depends on whether or not a poet needs to have a conscious mind in order for its poetry to be considered authentic.

Conclusions

To conclude, AI has become advanced enough to generate meaningful and intelligible pieces of writing, which will continue to improve. The conducted experiment showed that texts created by AI could pass as texts written by humans. What is more, thanks to machine learning techniques, these intelligent systems are able to produce poetry; what remains to be determined is whether or not this sort of writing may be considered authentic and how to regulate copyright laws for AI-generated art.

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Abstract

Artificial intelligence is already developed enough to perform mechanical and computerised tasks, but the ability to convey emotions and recreate human consciousness is currently being studied. This article will primarily deal with AI-generated literature, focusing mainly on short text extracts and poetry. The selected research method in this article is qualitative research. A linguistic analysis of individual texts was carried out, as well as a comparison of the texts themselves. An experiment was conducted in which a group of participants decided whether the presented text was written by a human or artificial intelligence. In addition, I examined the positions in the discussion whether AI poetry can be considered authentic.

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LINGUISTIC EXPRESSIONS OF SOLIDARITY IN THE TELEVISION SERIES *MURDOCH MYSTERIES*

Keywords: expressions of solidarity, linguistics, *Murdoch Mysteries*.

Introduction

As a moral concept, solidarity encompasses aspects such as shared identity, mutual support and inclusion for the members of a group or minority, common values or beliefs and non-violent forms of resistance that might transform into violent ones. Solidarity is often associated with protests about social inequalities, displeased citizens marching on the streets in organized groups, signing petitions and even planning strikes. According to vocabulary.com, the notion of *solidarity* is connected to people united behind a common goal or purpose express support for a group or “a sense of unity with a political group, a group of striking workers, or people who have been deprived of their rights in some way.” According to the online Cambridge Dictionary, an “expression of solidarity” is a collocation disclosing the manner of action connected with the support and agreement between the members of a group.

According to Peter West-Oram (2021), expressions of solidarity can take many forms—some argue that simply flashing a “thumbs up” would suffice in a social movement, others concur that signing a petition and joining a protest produce greater social differences. Solidarity, or the notion of people standing together as a community and supporting each other as they reach a common objective, is often related to social justice movements and collective actions,

since it is based on the premise that a person's or a group's welfare is interrelated with the well-being of a larger community. Solidarity can be manifested in numerous and diverse ways, from supporting marginalized groups through activism and advocacy, to providing assistance and volunteering for the benefit of the unprivileged. In some cases, solidarity was required in labour movements, when workers or members of some unions requested higher wages and safe working conditions. Fundamentally, solidarity concerns the dignity of all individuals, accepting that we can engage ourselves in building each other's happiness (West-Oram 65-68).

In addition to this, solidarity consists of more than some minor displays of civic duties, since it adapts to the mentality of an era or to the preferences of some pertaining to an assembly. An example of solidarity in the Canadian suffrage movement can be noticed during the early 20th century, when women were struggling for their right to vote and to become socially active in a patriarchal society. As Craig Baird points out in his article "Women's Suffrage in Canada" (2021), other issues women were fighting for were the right to property, the right to equal education, equal job opportunities and the right to get a divorce, but they were not supposed to persist any further for the reason that they were unqualified to perform any political duties. In return, suffragists engaged in public speaking, in organizing tours and writing manifestos, acknowledging the importance of the labour movement at the time that requested proper working conditions, as well as women did for themselves (Baird).

The suffrage movement in Canada faced a less radical opposition than in other countries, many women blazing the trail for rights that were regarded as privileges by men. These social issues and many others might be observed in a Canadian Television Series entitled *Murdoch Mysteries*, a period piece which tackles crimes in the late 19th century Canada. For instance, in an episode depicting a lawsuit between the Toronto's Women's Society and the municipality of Toronto, the public learns that after years of striving and

suffering for the right to vote, for equal education and for equal job opportunities, a woman has finally managed to legally represent other women as a sign of solidarity. The character in question is Clara Brett Martin, the first female lawyer in the British Empire and she defends Toronto's Women's Society for discontinuing the regional elections due to the fact that the women's representative was omitted from the ballots, hence other women disrupted the fraudulent event by protesting and blocking the access to the ballots (Blackwell).

In the 1890s and in the 1900s, many cultural conflicts occurred: between the French Canadians and the English Canadians, between Protestants and Catholics, between First Nations and settlers, between the British and the Canadian colonials, between white citizens and black citizens, between conservative men and visionary women. Even though there were fewer Afro-Canadians than African Americans, there were still instances of discrimination that impacted the community (Williams and Walker).

In this article, I would like to outline linguistic expressions of solidarity, as they appear in the Canadian Television series, *Murdoch Mysteries*, in which the plot, the language and characters were adapted to the late Victorian era principles such as respectability and domesticity, implying different viewpoints, different expectations from the citizens and different language. The methodological approach comprises a brief description of the historical context of the episodes analysed, a sample of lines extracted from the script, followed by a short analysis of verbal structures that imply solidarity.

My aim is to demonstrate that individuals belonging to different cultural, religious and social backgrounds resort to verbal expressions of solidarity in unexpected situations, showing sympathy to those who have been wronged, even to an outsider. A secondary aim is to display an open attitude to controversial issues connected with private life and human rights. In the selected episodes, one can recognise solidarity when an assembly of people, sharing the same ideologies, wave signs in protest and afterwards resort to

brutal actions (like the Temperance League), or when a group of women, serving a common goal, hope to change the world peacefully (the Suffragettes).

Characteristics of Linguistic Solidarity within Conflicts

Solidarity emerges from a sense of shared identity and determination within a group, based on aspects such as race, ethnicity, religion, nationality, gender, or political beliefs. The mutual support provided by members of a certain group and their commitment to helping one another contribute to connecting the parties emotionally or even economically. Solidarity often materialises in collective actions, including boycotts, strikes, protests beneficial to achieving objectives; or in non-violent forms of resistance based on shared values and beliefs, as means of advocating for social change and challenging systems of abuse and bias. As Neculau (192) investigates in his book, solidarity involves commitment to equality and social justice based on the empathy and compassion established within the group which willingly listens and understands the members' experience or perspectives. The sense of reciprocity allows the members of a group to recognize the contributions and sacrifices of others, cooperating to serve common aims, as far as rights are concerned.

Șerbănescu (247) considered that conflicts, or the catalyst of solidarity, commence when disagreements between groups (generally) or individuals (particularly) contradict beliefs, regarding social roles, social status, or duties. Conflicts ordinarily derive from the quest for resources and power or from the status that might be threatened by the demands of some minor groups.

Taking into account a pragma-stylistic approach, the use of language that demonstrates a sense of support and connection with others is called a linguistic expression of solidarity and it can unfold many verbal expressions (words or phrases) and paraverbal expressions (intonation or accent) that build or strengthen relationships and even establish trust between members of a community while facing challenging situations. The Romanian author Andra Șerbănescu (63) noted that speakers may resort to a variety of stylistic devices

such as play on words, metaphors and so on, in order to deliver a more sophisticated verbalisation of their thoughts.

Among methods of communicating linguistic expression of solidarity, we can mention: the use of inclusive language that incorporate all individuals, regardless of their ethnicity, gender or preferences; active listening (that reveals compassion and interest when somebody confides in the listener); manifesting empathy (by using a language that shows understanding of experiences and emotions of others); offering emotional aid through statements such as “If I can help you in any way, please let me know”; and positive reinforcement that boosts morale and the listener’s self-esteem. Șerbănescu (227) mentioned some additional ways of communicating linguistic expression of solidarity: using humour to break the ice with the help of personal anecdotes or self-deprecating humour that enables others to laugh together with the joker is a socially acceptable manner. All these methods of expressing solidarity through language increase the sense of unity within communities and approach issues that are relatable to all members of a group.

Contextualised Linguistic Expressions of Solidarity in *Murdoch Mysteries* Television Series

The Complete Murdoch Mysteries Collection is a compilation of seven novels and a novella written by the contemporary author Maureen Jennings (2013), based on a real detective known for solving crimes in the late 19th century Canada using modern methods, such as finger-marks and blood types. These novels describe crimes that occur in different social strata, especially in Toronto’s most destitute areas, making use of sarcasm to lift the spirits or even highlight the character’s misery in the novel. The novels in question were adapted into a television series under the same title, but their adaptation was adjusted with the purpose of appealing to the younger public.

As the author stated herself in Myke Jaycock’s interview (2022), the producers have altered the characters and the plot for aesthetic reasons,

improving the props and the scenery (characters come from wealthier backgrounds than those in the novel, they wear fashionable clothes, luxurious accessories, indulge in fancy habits). These confer the characters a distinct personality, while various forms of humour are employed in order to catch the eye of both the younger and the older audience, this television series bringing to light social, political, cultural and, at times, technological matters. Throughout the sixteen seasons, the animosities between police officers belonging to two different Station Houses, on the one hand, and between constables and overbearing industrialists, on the other hand, erupt in conflicts solved verbally through spontaneous arguments (Sheley).

Puns, or humorous employments of words or phrases that sound alike or possess multiple meanings (as defined by the online version of the Cambridge Dictionary), can positively reinforce the listener's self-esteem, the example provided in the episode entitled *Marked Twain* being eloquent from this perspective.

Another definition proposed by the Cambridge Dictionary approaches the notion of *sarcasm* as "the use of remarks that clearly mean the opposite of what they say, made in order to hurt someone's feelings or to criticize something in a humorous way."

A sample of figurative language identified in the fragments extracted from the television series is the metaphor, employed with the scope of rehabilitating a decadent civilization. According to the online version of the Collins Dictionary, a metaphor is a figure of speech which describes "something by referring to something else which is the same in a particular way"; the issues at hand will be approached in the paragraphs that follow.

The following examples are excerpts from the scripts of some of the most emblematic episodes in the television series. In an episode dedicated to prohibition, a neighbourhood famous for its drunken inhabitants is supposed to "get dry" as politicians are about to vote for the *Local Option*. Inspector Brackenreid's wife is lodging the leader of the temperance movement, Mrs.

Carry A. Nation, for the duration of some speeches that intend to persuade the citizens to give up drinking forever. Detective Murdoch and Inspector Brackenreid investigate the murder of a pro-liquor councilman who got poisoned in a bar:

Brackenreid: All this local option business is ridiculous, if you ask me.

Murdoch: Sir, if it's what the people of the Junction want, I see no reason to prevent it.

Brackenreid: Liquor is a good thing for a good man. A few drunks having too much is hardly cause to get rid of it.

Murdoch: I've never understood the appeal of alcohol, sir. It impedes the brain's ability to function, making it impossible to think clearly.

Brackenreid: Well that's just it, Murdoch. Don't you ever want to relax and stop thinking for a couple of hours?

Murdoch: No.

(MM: *The Local Option*, S09E06 08:54-09:17)

This excerpt illustrates the exchange of lines between a person solidarizing with those who enjoy a drink (Inspector Brackenreid, who exasperates the Constabulary with his addiction to scotch) and an abstinent person (Detective Murdoch, who is a devout Catholic and avoids the seven deadly sins). Brackenreid is not convinced that a few drunks are a reason for prohibiting alcohol, so he uses a weak frequency adverb: *hardly* and repeats the adjective *good*: *good (thing for a) good (man)* in order to reinforce his ideas. Detective Murdoch holds his ground as he uses words with a negative meaning (*never*—adv., *impedes*—verb, *impossible*—adj.). Inspector Brackenreid uses the same tactics as the Detective to prove that Murdoch should disrupt his monotonous habits and enjoy himself once in a while (the negative auxiliary *Don't*, the verb *stop* that shows disapproval).

In the same episode, a reverend invites Carry A. Nation to speak about the dangers of alcohol to the Temperance Movement in Toronto. Inspector Brackenreid's wife, Margaret, is also a member of the Temperance League:

Reverend: The scourge of liquor is a terrible thing. It turns homes into hovels. We must stand up to this scourge, for temperance is the will of the Lord himself.

All: Amen! Amen! Hallelujah!

Reverend: It pleases me very much to introduce to you a special guest. A woman of great standing who has dedicated her life to our cause. Mrs. Carrie A. Nation.

Brackenreid (noticing his wife in the crowd): Bloody Margaret.

Carry Nation: Liquor is not merely a scourge. Liquor is a pestilential highway leading to ruin and wretchedness. (applause) Liquor is ruining the lives of our children, both born and unborn. It is the embodiment of pure evil! (cheering and clapping)

Brackenreid: Bollocks. I think that's the woman who's staying at my house.

Carry Nation: Those who stand in our way must be destroyed!

All: Hear, hear! [...]

Carry Nation: In the name of the Lord, we shall destroy these dens of immorality! (shouting) We shall deliver them to the same defilement and devastation to which they have delivered so many souls! ... LOCAL OPTION! LOCAL OPTION! LOCAL OPTION! LOCAL OPTION! LOCAL OPTION! LOCAL OPTION!, Clear the way! Vice! Sin! Despicable iniquity! [...]

Margaret: Long live temperance!

Brackenreid: Margaret! Dammit, woman!

(MM: *The Local Option*, S09E06 10:42-12:01; 20:56- 22:16)

In this fragment, the religious interjections demonstrate the holiness of the quest to redeem the public: *Amen, Hallelujah*, just as the next sinister, religious nouns: *scourge, wretchedness, evil, devastation, sin, iniquity* stir fear and awe in the public. As the protesters prepare to burst into a bar, the leader utters verbs that are associated with annihilation: *ruining, destroyed*, whereas the rest of the crowd agrees with her statements by shouting the expression *hear, hear* and chanting the slogan *Local* (the allegedly chosen-by-the-locals-option, and not by the Government) *Option*. The Inspector's wife shows loyalty to her cause (forcing the Inspector to quit drinking) by adapting the expression *Long live* to her interest *Long live temperance*. The Inspector shows his disapproval towards his wife's actions by shouting an impolite expression using an irritated tone (*Dammit!*) and brings her into her senses by calling her *woman* and grabbing her by the arm.

In this episode, depicting the Prohibition movement in Canada, one of the religious metaphors for alcohol that the prohibitionists adopt is "Despicable iniquity." This is a compilation of an adjective and a noun, emphasizing the

battle for social justice and prohibitionists' engagement in a crusade against vice and sin.

The protestors, including the Inspector's wife, are arrested by the Inspector after devastating a bar, but all the protestors are set free, except for Carry A. Nation. Once again, Brackenreid's wife disagrees with him:

Brackenreid: I'm the police inspector. I get to choose what crimes we arrest people for.

Margaret: You can't just leave her here.

Brackenreid: Are you defending her?

Margaret: Things may have gotten out of hand, but we meant well.

Brackenreid: She took an axe to a man's bar.

Margaret: She is our houseguest, Thomas.

Brackenreid: Oh, Lord, give me strength.

(MM: *The Local Option*, S09E06 23:09-23:55)

As far as power imbalance is concerned, the Inspector asserted his power associated with his social status (expressed by the nouns: *Inspector*, as in *chief* or *superior* and *police*, an institution that served the monarch and holds the power to arrest every threat to society), disadvantaging his opponents through the use of personal deixis: *I'm the police inspector*, *I get to choose* and verbs that show conflict: *arrest* or the idiom *to take an axe to somebody*. He disagreed with his wife as he used the verb *defend* with a negative meaning.

The Inspector's wife protects Carry Nation against her husband's charges and mentions mitigating circumstances as an excuse (the expression *to mean well*) for the rampage she has caused unwillingly (the idiomatic expression *get out of hand*); afterwards she reminded him about his duties as a respectable host (she used the possessive adjective *our* and the compound noun *houseguest*). In reply, the Inspector, who is a protestant, implores Jesus (since he uses the noun *Lord* instead of *God*) for patience to go through all the unpleasant experiences through the expression: *Oh Lord, give me strength*.

In another episode, Dr Ogden, Detective Murdoch's wife, hired Mark Twain to give some speeches in order to boost the suffragette movement. Mark Twain presented a change in his discourse caused by his wife's influence, who he claims to be even smarter than him:

Woman 1: I'm just not sure it is necessary to have a man advocating for our cause. [...] I just believe we women are more than capable of stating our own case.

Woman 2: We can state it all we want, but it makes no matter if no one is listening.

Woman 1: I suppose so...

Woman 2: Did you just agree with me? We are making progress.

Dr Ogden: Please welcome Mr. Mark Twain. (Applause)

Mark Twain: Thank you, ladies. And gentlemen [...]. You know, when you have lived as long as I have, you have the right to change your mind. And that's what I'm going to do here tonight. I'm gonna change the minds of those of you who believe that women should not have the right to vote. Let me read you something. "I never want to see the women voting, and gabbling about politics, and electioneering. There is something revolting in the thought. Let your natural bosses do the voting." (murmurs) Those were my words. That's what I believed, until I met my wife, Olivia Langdon. After that meeting, I came to believe that a woman is always right. (laughter and applause) And I became a woman's rights man! You know, if women held the right to vote, the world would not be in the state it's in.

(MM: Marked Twain, S09E02 29:35-32:23)

In this excerpt, two women debate the necessity of having men in the suffragette movement, one of them stating that women should represent themselves by comparing themselves to men (the idiom *more than*) by using the adjective *capable*. The other woman claimed that it did not matter who they talked to as long as the public was indifferent (the indefinite pronoun *no one*). This contradictory conversation comes to a resolution when the first woman concurs with the second woman, as the verbs *agree* and *are making progress* suggest. In accordance with the definition of sarcasm, an example can be noted in the conversation carried by the two women who were attending Mark Twain's speech. What follows is an aftereffect of active listening that proves how one of the women disapproved of the other's usual dissensions: "Did you just agree with me? We are making progress."

Mark Twain started his speech by thanking ladies for the attendance, and afterwards thanking the gentleman for having modern viewpoints. As he delivered his anecdote, he justified why he solidarized with women by using the second type conditional sentence: *if women held the right to vote, the world*

would not be in the state it's in. His mentality changed from one that despised the female ability of thinking (the pejorative verb *gabbling*, the adjective *revolting* and the premodifier *natural* of the plural noun *bosses*) into one that embraced modernity and equality starting from the moment he met a special woman. In his deliverance of the speech, Mark Twain appeals to humour, to a play on words in particular, in order to boost the morale of the ladies in public. "I came to believe that a woman is always right. And I became a woman's rights man!". One can notice the double meaning of the word *right*—an adjective meaning *always correct* and a noun correlated with the social movement of *emancipation*.

In an episode that presents the hardships the African Canadian community has gone through ever since they migrated to Canada and became part of the Canadian society, a respectable citizen (who was responsible for transporting former slaves from the United States to Canada) is found dead in a church belonging to the Black community, after having preached at the morning service:

Reverend: Who among us has not been hurt? Who has not been mistreated? But in our darkest hours, we discover strength in Jesus. Amen! Amen! Our guest today reminds us of a past in which we were mistreated. And though we may wish to forget that past, we're reminded to boast. Boast that in our hardships, we found strength in our Lord! Boast that in times of need, we found friends! Like our friend, Mr. Frank Parker. (applause)

The victim: A wonderful sermon. Indeed, few things could make a man feel weak and small like the fight for abolition. And when speaking was no longer enough, I took action. That's right. Amen. I smuggled fugitive slaves. Amen! Yes, I broke the law! A law that went against my feelings and my sympathies. A law without humanity. Now, some of you may wish to call me a hero. No. I am simply a man. I'm simply a man that did what he knew was the right thing. Amen. It is no more than should be expected by anyone. Amen.

(MM: *Colour Blind*, S09E13 01:22-3:13)

Before being killed, the victim of the murder enunciated the reasons why he had helped slaves escape the United States and faced the law, by exploiting the

postmodifiers of the noun *law* (*against my feelings, without humanity*). His modesty is highlighted by the use of the adverb *simply* and the noun *man*.

Miss James, Dr Ogden's assistant, who is also a member of the Afro-Canadian community, after listening to the victim's speech, tries to find reconciliation in Detective Murdoch's office. Detective Murdoch is a Catholic, so this is as far as he can go professionally in a Protestant city. Protestants would never promote a Catholic to a high-ranking position.

Miss James: Dr Ogden has told me that you are a Catholic. Catholics face some measure of prejudice and ill will. Quite unfairly, I imagine.

Murdoch: One difference, I suppose, is that people can't tell that I'm a Catholic just by looking at me.

Miss James: What do you do when you encounter such treatment, Detective?

Murdoch: I know the truth about myself, Miss James. And I know that no matter what someone might say or think about me, I must be the strongest and the best version of myself that I can possibly be.

Miss James: So go along to get along?

Murdoch: No. No. Simply be better than anyone who might hate you.

(MM: *Colour Blinded*, S09E13 41:22-42:22)

Miss James thought that Detective Murdoch recommended her (the expression *go along to get along*) to accept the majority's opinion and simply accept being assimilated at the expense of her requests, but in fact, Detective Murdoch believes that she should overcome the discrepancies between herself and the society (using the superlative adjectives *best* and *strongest*) and prove that she is a better person than those who judge her (the pronoun *anyone*, the verb *hate*, the personal pronoun *you*).

Conclusions

The most common forms of linguistic expressions of solidarity in the series occur in desperate situations when a distressed person needs a peer willing to listen or sometimes reinforce and share a common viewpoint. The situations in which linguistic expressions of solidarity occurred in three different phases: firstly, when the wife of a police inspector, who is fond of drinking, sides with the leader of the Temperance Movement, secondly, when a famous writer

unexpectedly supports women's rights; and thirdly, when a biased Catholic Detective shares his views on life with an Afro-Canadian woman.

In two out of three episodes, the linguistic expressions of solidarity exclude gendered issues, as they focus on tensions caused by ethnicity or vices. In the first episode, Detective Murdoch's partially neutral positions, with reference to instating prohibition, opposes Inspector Brackenreid's opinion on the matter (the blunt negative adverb *no*). In the third episode, Detective Murdoch enhances his speech with comparative structures (the adjectives *better* and *strongest*), which inspires young Miss James, as well as the audience, to face bias remarkably. This switch of verbal tactics emphasizes that there is no recipe for diplomacy or solidarity, but rather a permanent adjustment of opinions and conduct.

Solidarity entails feelings such as compassion, empathy, and an inner disposition to initiate some activities that create a more impartial or fair society, just like Miss James expresses in her assertion (the nouns *Catholics*, *prejudice* and the adverb *unfairly*). Banners used in picketing display diversified forms of linguistic expressions of solidarity, while chants articulated during marches provide other examples of messages bearing significance for both the protesters and the opposers (the adjective *Local* and the noun *Option*).

Solidarity provided by displays of affection or mercy requires more than uttering some comforting expressions or some magic words that suit every occasion. One resorts to constructive distractions, such as humour or other sorts of entertainment, another just spends precious time with a friend in need, some bear tokens of appreciations and others voluntarily sacrifice some forms of enjoyment (they fast or shave their heads) as signs of solidarizing with them (Mason 1998). When humans understand the suffering of others and experience their sorrow, they become united and improve the flaws of this prejudiced world.

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TV series

Murdoch Mysteries. 2008. Created by Harvey Crossland.

-06.09: The Local Option; 02.09: Marked Twain; 13.09: Colour Blinded.

Abstract

The article explores linguistic expressions of solidarity in a Canadian television series entitled *Murdoch Mysteries*. The episodes chosen—"The Local Option," "Marked Twain" and "Colour Blinded"—are contextualised historically and analysed linguistically with the purpose of identifying the preferences for religious lexemes or blunt words. The analysis focuses on the elements that prove the dominance of one gender or ethnicity over another by means of linguistic expressions of power and discrimination. The applicative part attempts to investigate two directions: to demonstrate that individuals belonging to different cultural, religious and social backgrounds resort to verbal expressions of solidarity in unexpected situations and show sympathy to those who have been wronged; and to display an open attitude to controversial issues connected with private life and human rights.

**SOLIDARITY—CONFLICT
IN LITERARY & CULTURAL STUDIES**

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REPRESENTATIONS OF TRAUMA AND SOLIDARITY IN REGENCY ROMANCE

Keywords: Regency romance, military hero, masculinity, solidarity, trauma

Popular romance fiction is a highly successful and lucrative genre written for and by women; while it has faced much criticism for multiple reasons, the genre continues to attract both casual and dedicated readers, as well as scholars having various agendas, be they to provide critical models and methodologies to be deployed in analyses of romance fiction, or to focus on the many aspects of the genre which warrant further exploration. Often misunderstood and mislabelled, popular romance fiction operates within a very specific narrative framework and form: the courtship (and marriage) between two protagonists, traditionally a man and a woman, with a guaranteed happy ending. Despite these limits in form, the genre is highly diverse and adaptive, as it is produced by authors who are aware of and receptive to the readership preferences and demands.

In this article, we focus on historical romance fiction, specifically the subgenre known as Regency romance. A focal figure of our examination is the military hero with his role of a war veteran and a representation of this character type in Mary Balogh's collection of novels, *Survivor's Club* (2012-2016). Military heroes in Regency fiction allow romance authors to revisit the Napoleonic wars and to address the question of patriotic heroism on one hand, and the effects war had on soldiers and officers on the other. The theme of

trauma is recurrent in Balogh's fiction, more so in the *Survivor's Club* series, where each novel is a representation of war trauma and, through the stereotypical happy ending, an evocation of the process of healing and moving beyond it. The purpose of this analysis is to prove that popular romantic fiction offers space for the depiction of meaningful relationships among characters other than the development of the romantic relationship between the two protagonists and that these relationships are based on solidarity. We argue that the courtship plot typical of romance fiction is not prohibitive, and non-romantic relationships may be portrayed with depth and purpose, being complementary to the courtship narrative. In Balogh's novels, solidarity manifested in kin-like relationships is shown to be fundamental in the process of overcoming the trauma of war.

We begin our analysis of Mary Balogh's series with a review of the key terms *trauma* and *solidarity*, and continue with a survey of the Regency romance fiction subgenre and of the military hero character. The online Cambridge Dictionary provides two meanings for the word "trauma," first as the severe and lasting emotional shock and pain caused by an extremely upsetting experience, and second as physical injury, usually caused by an accident or attack. Peter Brooker (289) points out that in the 18th and 19th centuries, the term's physical designation took precedence over the emotional and psychological meaning. The symptoms were initially diagnosed as part of a physical condition, and they were sometimes considered signs of cowardice. The psychological symptoms included manifestations such as memory loss, flashbacks, nightmares, anxiety and confusion, now commonly recognized features of trauma (289). One of the early treatment methods introduced by W.H.R. Rivers and associated with Sigmund Freud is the 'talking cure,' which involved verbalization and narrative coherence (Brooker 289).

This trauma treatment method is used proleptically throughout Balogh's series, as all novels include scenes in which the characters talk about their traumatic war experiences, the challenges they face in the healing process, and

the progress they make. The experience of war is the source of solidarity, which is then strengthened by the common goal of healing, as well as the characters' affiliation with certain social categories. Healing through the power of love is a central motif in romance fiction (Roach), yet in *Survivor's Club*, healing is well underway prior to, and a prerequisite for, characters finding romantic love, as we demonstrate further ahead.

Essential for our discussion, the concept of *solidarity* is defined by Jack Barbalet (602) as the basis of group formation and cohesiveness, the reason individuals experience a sense of belonging and interconnectedness characterizing social interaction. While solidarity involves collective norms compelling, but not forcing, members to participate in group activities, it also implies that the individual's obligation to the group is a result of their acceptance of the group's entitlement to demand their commitment (602). Kurt Bayertz (3) describes solidarity as a mutual attachment between individuals, comprised of a factual level, namely a common ground, and a normative level, indicating the mutual obligation to help each other, as and when necessary.

Expounding on solidary relationships, Bayertz states that solidarity is not random, and an individual is solidary "only with members of the particular community to which one believes oneself to belong" (4). He identifies four uses of the term, which he analyses with regard to their moral dimension. Focusing on the ties binding human beings, Bayertz discusses kinship in smaller communities, and ethnic, cultural and political common ground in larger communities, as well as the elements of cohesion holding together a society, such as common descent and history, a common culture and way of life, and common ideals and goals. Another use of the term identified by the author refers to solidarity and liberation, found when individuals form a group in order to stand up for their common interests, denoting the emotional cohesion between the members and "the mutual support they give each other in their battle for their common goals" (16).

Historical romance, a subset of the genre of popular romantic fiction, is defined by its historical setting: the courtship takes place in the British or American past. The specific period used as background allows further categorization of the novels into medieval, Georgian, Regency or Victorian romances, in the case of a British setting, and Antebellum and Postbellum romances, for an American setting, amongst others. Historical romance authors do not set out to provide historically accurate accounts of life and events in a given period in the past; they do, however, use references to specific objects, fashions and activities, as well as social structures typical of that time, to deploy popular romance plot devices which would otherwise be incompatible with, or awkward in, contemporary romance fiction. Furthermore, the historical setting also enhances the fantasy element, an important part of the appeal of the genre.

Within the sub-genre of Regency romance, there are several types of author solidarity manifested or represented, one of the most significant examples being the solidarity shown by the romance authors towards writers of fiction historically dismissed or ridiculed, by depicting heroines reading novels in general, and particularly those written by Jane Austen or gothic romances, and by depicting heroines defending their reading choices. This reflects the ongoing feelings that readers and authors alike still share, experiencing judgement based on reading choices and the type of fiction produced. In the late 20th century, romance authors united to produce a collection of essays defending the genre and its various defining features. In *Dangerous Men & Adventurous Women* (1992), edited by Jayne Ann Krentz, various romance authors write about the fantasy element(s) of romance, the necessity of a happy ending, and especially about the romantic protagonist and his dual role of both hero and villain (as a challenge for the heroine) in the romance novel. This came as a justification for then-fashionable, and at the same time much maligned by critics (Douglas 1980, Dubino 1993), the “alpha male” type, a sexually aggressive and emotionally distant hero to be tamed and gentled by the heroine.

The alpha male was a fixture in both contemporary and historical romance, the authors insisting that such a protagonist was essential to romance, as it was he who carried the weight of the plot. While this type of sexually aggressive hero has become rather obsolete in 21st-century romance, due to a shift in attitudes regarding social issues (such as gender roles, consent, and female empowerment) and the natural evolution of the romance novel, the necessity of a strong, competent, admirable hero is unquestionable. According to Krentz (7), readers may or may not identify with the heroine, but the hero must always be presented as strong and appealing, for both heroine and reader, for the romance to be successful. One kind of romantic hero that stands out is the warrior archetype, highly versatile and much loved in his multiple incarnations, especially in his role as a protector. His remarkable masculinity is often represented by traits such as physical strength, competence and honour.

The military hero is a beloved character featured in many novels, contemporary and historical, and in many variations, both within the heterosexual and gay paradigms. In historical romance, military heroes marry the heroines in acts of duty and honour, or to assert power and dominance. The military hero is occasionally represented as a war veteran who has been wounded in battle and is permanently scarred and/or impaired, who feels less-than-human due to the scarring/impairment and is feared and rejected by society. He eventually finds love and acceptance in the relationship with the heroine, but social reintegration is not always guaranteed. Furthermore, the military hero as a war veteran may be suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (independently, or in association with the physical scarring/impairment).

In 21st-century romance, depictions of socially isolated and rejected protagonists have diminished in frequency, and we may now see different representations of the military hero. Veronica Kitchen argues that such heroes are now presented as masculine by emphasizing their quest for control over body and mind, alongside typical traits associated with hegemonic masculinity.

The military hero is forced to accept that he cannot protect everyone, that he is not invincible, and that he is compelled to come to terms with the consequences of war, receive or practice forgiveness, and achieve social integration. Some romance authors have fallen into the trap of not providing much detail regarding the hero's process of dealing with his physical and/or emotional trauma, which has led to the conclusion that the hero is magically healed through the power of the heroine's love. This has often been the result of the limitations of the plot, which focuses on the personal relationship between the two lovers, and the type of publication, which may not allow the development of other characters, as is the case with serialized novels written according to specific guidelines.

There are examples of popular romance novels where a significant amount of attention has been given to the portrayal of the hero in the process of actively dealing with their physical injuries and emotional pain, such as Mary Jo Putney's *The Bargain*, Lisa Keyphas' *Love in the Afternoon*, Tessa Dare's *When a Scot Ties the Knot* and *The Duchess Deal*, and Mimi Matthews' *The Lost Letter*, to name a few. The hero is portrayed as open to receiving support from others, which has led to the development of secondary male characters that function outside the typical one-dimensional roles of rivals, wingmen, or employees. Some heroes have already overcome trauma, and are actively involved in helping others deal with their difficulties, portrayal meant to emphasize that the hero is competent, honourable and worthy of respect, admiration and love, as depicted in Carla Kelly's *The Admiral's Penniless Bride*. This type of character development in a romance novel results in a particularly compelling story, as it not only reinforces the strength and resilience of the protagonist, but it emphasizes his vulnerability and humanity, adding depth and complexity to a set of traits which have become the norm in the direct characterization of romantic heroes. Regarding the military hero as a war veteran in popular romance fiction, Kitchen has performed an analysis of contemporary category romances from a dual perspective, that of romance fiction scholarship and

security studies, concluding that “the narratives reflect and reinforce a new hegemonic masculinity in which heroic men are vulnerable, and maintain their hegemonic masculinity even in face of post-traumatic stress disorder” (17).

Unlike contemporary romance novels, in historical romance novels, the society is meticulously drawn and the authors typically explain its unfamiliar principles, as Pamela Regis argues (2003: 31). Authors such as Mary Jo Putney, Carla Kelly and Mary Balogh have used war-related historical events as background for love stories in which the protagonist is a war veteran (occasionally celebrated as a war hero) who is coping, or learning how to cope, with various traumas and disabilities. These protagonists are presented as desirable, masculine and appealing from the very beginning of the story (though they may not always be aware of their appeal), regardless of the physical, emotional or psychological difficulties they might be facing. Moreover, significant relationships, other than romantic ones, are represented in these stories.

As is typical for popular romantic fiction, war is not featured directly in the story, the events and battles taking place outside the pages of the novel; however, war is represented in flashbacks, it is referred to in dialogues (usually among male characters, as war is not considered a polite topic for conversation in female company, particularly in Regency romance), and it may be written about in correspondence. In Regency romance, the instances of violence most frequently referred to are the Battle of Waterloo (1815), the Siege of Badajoz (1812) and various other battles, skirmishes and ambushes pertaining to the Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815). The protagonists have served as officers in various regiments (cavalry, infantry) or the navy, and may have been involved in espionage. Most frequently, these protagonists are of noble birth, they are younger sons or cousins; they may become heirs to an aristocratic title as the story progresses, or they unexpectedly inherit the title at the beginning of the novel, which eventually results in their selling out of the army. This decision often coincides with the acceptance of their feelings of love or duty (which will

become love) for the heroine, as depicted in Anne Gracie's *Marry in Haste* and Mary Balogh's *Slightly Married* (2003).

Working with this narrative framework, best-selling Welsh-Canadian romance author Mary Balogh has written *The Survivors' Club* (2012-2016), a series of seven novels which tell the story of six men and one woman, all physically or emotionally wounded during the Napoleonic Wars, who end up forming a tight bond while convalescing together at the Duke of Stanbrook's residence. While the seven stories are variations of the same two great themes, that of coping with trauma and that of finding love, all protagonists deal with unique circumstances which are resolved positively at the end of each book. Of interest to this paper are not the love stories central to each novel, but the overarching theme of the collection, that of solidarity among individuals facing a common struggle. As aforementioned, neither of the seven novels depicts war directly; however, war is constantly in the background, as five of the protagonists are former military officers, while beloved members of the families of the other two characters were direct casualties of war, having served as officers before their deaths. After the death of his son and heir, the Duke of Stanbrook has turned his Cornwall residence into a hospital of sorts for officers recovering from various battle-related wounds and emotional distress, leading to the seven protagonists being brought together.

As many other authors have also done, Mary Balogh infuses her historical setting with modern sensibilities, this being evident in the way the seven characters deal with injuries, war-related trauma and the stress of reintegration into a society unaware of the harrowing realities of war. Throughout the series of novels, the protagonists are depicted practising various techniques which are part of the ongoing process of coping with what is in effect post-traumatic stress disorder. Within the safety of this family-like community, they openly talk about their experiences, accepting each other's suffering unequivocally and openly declaring their mental state. Individually, they work on overcoming their feelings of survivor guilt, which they express

openly during their annual meetings, they make plans and they press ahead with them, they talk about fears and the process of overcoming them, and they try to let go of control, which is most evident when they allow themselves to open up to new people and fall in love.

In the opening paragraphs of the Prologue to the first novel, *A Proposal* (Balogh 2012), the reader learns about the bond formed among the characters during their long period of recovery, and its significance for their now-independent lives. For Hugo Emes, Lord Trentham, three years after having recovered and returned to his life and responsibilities, the operative word is “trust,” as he views his fellow survivors strong, yet scarred, and able to be open about it only when together. This emphasizes the fact that the protagonists feel that they belong to an “us” group, differentiated from the rest of the upper-class society in which they move. For Hugo Emes, this is doubly valid, due to his middle-class origins and current social status, a decorated war hero titled as a reward for service. Furthermore, the kin-like bond uniting the members of the group is evidenced not only by the fact that they have embraced the name “Survivor’s Club,” but also by their decision to reunite yearly to reaffirm their friendship, to talk about progress made, and to offer mutual support if needed. Although all protagonists are living independently and are active individuals in society as a whole, the members of that society are perceived as “others,” with whom the protagonists have no ties or personal relationships. The perception of otherness includes actual members of the protagonists’ families, who have not shared the traumatic experience of war. For this reason, the attachment holding together the members of the Survivor’s Club also has the function of establishing a family-like community. Within this community, the members experience cohesion as a result of their common interest in finding meaning in life, of becoming once more whole as individuals.

The Arrangement (Balogh 2013) focuses on the youngest member of the Survivor’s Club, Vincent Hunt, Viscount Darleigh, who was blinded and suffered from temporary loss of hearing after a cannon blast went wrong during his first

combat experience as a very young artillery officer. The Duke of Stanbrook is a father figure who was instrumental in his recovery, yet Balogh is particularly attentive to the representation of independence, as she does not allow for the Duke to become Vincent's emotional crutch. Several years after the recovery of his hearing, he remains completely blind and is frustrated that his mother and older sisters are overprotective and eager to see him married. He believes that in the minds of others, blindness equals being mentally feeble, and he is eager to prove the opposite and take charge of his life. More difficult for him is to assert himself when confronted with the excessive sympathetic care the female members of his family offer. While he has accepted his blindness, he is struggling with sudden panic attacks which he manages with deep breathing, a modern technique used to deal with PTSD symptoms. When necessary, Vincent receives support and assistance from other members of the Club, who approve of his decision to marry. The support he receives in his marriage allows Vincent to find his voice and to assert himself; additionally, his wife has the idea of training a dog to accompany Vincent, allowing him more independence of movement, a recurring motif in Balogh's collection.

Despite his disability, Vincent is never portrayed by Balogh as a lesser man, nor is Sir Benedict Harper in *The Escape* (Balogh 2014a). Ben had his legs crushed in battle and refused the treatment recommended in the field hospital—amputation. From the perspective of this protagonist, the Club members are brothers (and sisters), a bond forged through mutual aid and support during their long recovery. The novel begins with Ben's confession during one of the group's therapeutic sessions that, six years after having suffered his injuries, he is depressed due to the loss of his military career and his painful struggles to walk aided by canes. While he is still striving for independence, he is finally able to face the limitations of his body, to accept his disability, and he decides to use a wheelchair. He rejoices in other activities which facilitate mobility, such as riding and swimming. Having found new meaning in life beyond a military career, and having discovered new interests, Ben has an additional reason to be

happy because he has also found love. Another protagonist who struggled with severe injuries is Flavian Arnott, Viscount Ponsonby, and *Only Enchanting* (Balogh 2014b) focuses on his personal journey and romantic relationship. Having suffered from a head injury, he returned from the Peninsula with an inability to communicate, episodes of violence, and significant gaps in his memory; he is rescued by the Duke of Stanbrook from imminent confinement to an institution. As is the case with Benjamin, Flavian's family is not portrayed as particularly supportive, the role of providing familial support being fulfilled by the members of the Club, through their unwavering solidarity.

Within this family-like group, George Crabbe, Duke of Stanbrook is the father figure, as he is the one who got all protagonists together several years before the beginning of the first novel. At the beginning of the final novel in the series, *Only Beloved* (Balogh 2016), we learn that eight years have passed since he turned his country seat in Cornwall into a hospital and recovery centre for military officers severely wounded. Additional information for the overarching narrative is provided, such as the fact that he had involved himself directly in the selection process of the officers who would benefit from care under his supervision and that more than twenty-four had been treated in his hospital, most of whom had survived and returned to their families. Even though he had expected to only provide the space and funding for the hospital, leaving the care of the patients to the physician and nurses, he found himself actively involved in the process of healing, especially by listening and empathising with the convalescents. He is convinced that his involvement in the care of the patients had a beneficial effect on his sanity after the successive deaths of his son and wife.

At 48, the Duke is the oldest of the group, and due to his age, he is an unusual romantic hero. He had briefly served as a military officer in his youth, he has been a widower for 12 years, and he still mourns the death of his son. He has a good relationship with his heir presumptive, a happily-married younger cousin, and he is deeply attached to the other members of the Club; however, he is

aware of a dogged feeling of loneliness which leads to his decision to remarry. The Epilogue to *Only Beloved* shows the members of the Survivors' Club reunited three years after the conclusion of the final story, joined by their spouses and numerous young children. It is during this gathering that George points out to his wife the fact that the seven survivors have not recently had their customary sessions to discuss their progress, setbacks and triumphs, as they had no longer been necessary, implying that each member has found meaning and complete fulfilment in their marriages and lives.

In conclusion, throughout her collection, Mary Balogh reaffirms the fact that despite being independent individuals, each with different personal histories, their shared experience of war and current circumstances call for solidarity in the face of a common struggle. While the characters do not face direct opposition from other individuals or society as a whole, they are helpless and isolated from others due to the nature of their war-related experiences, which have resulted in physical and emotional traumas. They are all misunderstood by unwitting family members, who are unable to empathize, as the war fought in the Peninsula was a distant reality for British people on the homefront.

The bond which forms during the convalescence period endured by the characters is strong and it persists over the years, as each protagonist achieves their goals and finds romantic fulfilment. The solidary feelings do not interfere with their common quest for independence and overcoming trauma. The opposite is true, as belonging to the group entails mutual support in the pursuit of their individual goals. Throughout the seven novels, the protagonists make appearances in each other's stories, either as characters providing aid and support when necessary or as part of the protagonist's reminiscences. In addition, despite the fact that the seven characters are awarded their private time together as a distinct group during gatherings, all spouses are immediately accepted and absorbed in the group. In this respect, solidarity among all protagonists results in their integration into the upper-class society of Balogh's reimagined past. Noteworthy is the fact that, unlike many other romances, the

Survivor's Club collection portrays the fraternal relationship among the protagonists as instrumental in their successful reintegration, with the romantic relationship developing only after each protagonist has achieved some progress in their quest for regaining control over their minds and bodies. Ultimately, what each protagonist achieves is not only romantic fulfilment and independent existence as a productive member of society, but they find liberation, which is a direct outcome of the solidary support experienced within the Survivor's Club.

Unfortunately, there is a limitation on Balogh's great theme of finding liberation through solidarity binding a group of individuals who share a common struggle, and that limitation is imposed by a typical trait of Regency romance: it usually deals with the upper-class society. While Balogh positively represents such meaningful relationships, conducive to healing and finding fulfilment, taking precedence over romantic relationships, the group is by default highly exclusive. The Duke of Stanbrook carefully selects each officer based on recommendations, and while the care provided by his medical staff has helped over twenty-four officers, the implication is that a great number of other men were deemed unworthy of this superior care, considering that wars are fought by common soldiers. Be that as it may, the representation of military heroes as men who deal with all sorts of physical and emotional problems post-combat, resolved in a satisfying manner through personal effort and determination, and with solidary support from those who share the same struggles, is not without merits. It is particularly impressive in popular romantic fiction, seeing that during the protagonists' quests for control over mind and body, the solidary relationships take precedence over the romantic relationships, which can become a possibility only when the protagonists have already reached a certain point in the healing process.

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Abstract

The current status of popular romance fiction in academia is characterized by ambivalence; while dismissed and ridiculed by many, it has also been the object of scholarly study for the past four decades. Much has been written about it, although not always from an unbiased perspective, and some studies have generalized about the genre based on inadequate samples, as Regis (2011) argued. Scholars are showing an ever-growing interest in the genre and its diverse manifestations. This paper focuses on a specific subgenre of popular romantic fiction; I briefly describe the characteristics of historical romance fiction, with the subset known as Regency romance, and the romantic hero as focal points of my review. Within this particular type of narrative, the role and characteristics of the military hero as a war veteran in romantic fiction are touched upon, with a more detailed analysis of the military hero represented in Mary Balogh's collection of novels, *Survivor's Club* (2012-2016). Moreover, I argue that Balogh's military protagonists are portrayed as masculine, competent, and worthy of respect and love, while adjusting to life with physical disability and/or coping with emotional trauma.

The purpose of such an analysis is to prove that popular romantic fiction allows the depiction of meaningful relationships among characters other than the two romantic protagonists. I argue that the courtship plot typical for romance fiction is not prohibitive, and non-romantic relationships may be portrayed with depth and purpose, complementary to the development of the romantic relationship. Furthermore, in Balogh's novels, solidarity manifested in kin-like relationships is shown to be fundamental in the process of overcoming the trauma of war. This demonstrates that popular romantic fiction is not a limited genre in which all stories are alike: even when a courtship is a central plot, there is yet much to be explored within the pages of a romance novel.

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CONFLICT OF CULTURES: A MARGINALISED ORPHAN OF THE COLONIAL DISCOURSE 'DISINTERRED' IN *JACK MAGGS* BY PETER CAREY

Keywords: Jack Maggs, colonialism, orphan, *Great Expectations*, Charles Dickens

Jack Maggs (1997) by Peter Carey, the Australian version of Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations* (1861), challenges the Victorian propaganda about the primacy of a white race, openly opposing the Empire's misdeeds and hypocritical behaviour of its citizens. Carey undermines the colonial discourse in the shape of Dickensian imperialistic England as a motherland concerned with its colonial children, implicitly presented in *Great Expectations* when the British gentleman attends to the Australian convict, Abel Magwitch. The moral corruption of the Victorian society seems particularly reflected in the character of Mary Britten—a ruthless abortionist being an allusion to Victorian Mother Britain in its unstoppable colonial expansion. Mother Britain turns out to be the epitome of bestiality, lust for power and negligence of duties towards its offspring, both domestic and colonial.

In this paper I will demonstrate that Jack seems to epitomise the colonised and marginalised Australia that avenges itself. Maggs ceases to be spoken for as a study of the Eurocentric world, becoming a voice of those silenced and devoid of their land, whose supposedly "inferior" culture was meant to be uprooted by the colonial power dynamics. Despite being a white Englishman, Maggs is seen by Victorian society as the Other from peripheries. Read as a diasporic hybrid

of two antagonistic cultures, Maggs seems to be more identified with the supposedly “inferior” one since he is foreign to the notion of Britishness. Thus his revengeful actions against British citizens can be read in terms of Bhabha’s concepts of mimicry and hybridity, when the Other diminishes the authority of the Eurocentric world and articulates his story (Bhabha 88).

Peter Carey, an Australian laureate of many prestigious awards like the Commonwealth Writers Prize and the Booker Prize, has been acknowledged as the most prominent novelist in his country. In *Jack Maggs*, set in 1837, Carey focuses on the ex-convict Jack Maggs, who illegally returns to London from the Australian penal colony. He wants to find Henry Phipps, an orphaned boy he met twenty four years before in a forge and whom he makes a gentleman thanks to the fortune earned in New South Wales. Jack’s return to imperial London seems to symbolise a conflict of two cultures: the “superior” Eurocentric culture, represented by the British Empire, is unexpectedly confronted with and challenged by the allegedly “inferior” Australian one. At the same time, Carey draws the reader’s attention to some peculiarities and controversial episodes from Charles Dickens’s life elucidated in his fictionalised biography by Peter Ackroyd by introducing the enigmatic novelist and journalist, Tobias Oates.

Employed by Percy Buckle, the heir of a fortune from a long-lost relative, as a footman, Jack Maggs’s primary chore is to serve a festive dinner during which the guest of honour is an eminent writer, Tobias Oates. Unexpectedly, a bout of palsy along with “the pain [that] slapped his face like a clawed cat” (Carey 29), attacks the convict in front of the guests. The first person to help Jack overcome the seizure is Oates, who fervently puts him in a mesmeric state. After learning that, under hypnosis, he mentions some facts concerning his criminal past and deportation to a penal colony in South New Wales, the convict feels insecure, “burgled, plundered” (Carey 32). The reason for this conjuncture is Tobias, the man to whom Jack has a great deal of animosity. Tobias seems oblivious to the fact that his ability to enter Jack’s soul and extricate him from the pain or the

demon residing therein heralds the elicitation of the mysteries of his own blemished soul—"For the writer was stumbling through the dark of the convict's past, groping in the shadows, describing what was often a mirror held up to his own turbulent and fearful soul" (Carey 91). A glimpse into the soul of the criminal was "as if he entered the guts of a huge and haunted engine" (Carey 130), in which he seems to distinguish the mirror image of his ego. The above quotations resonate as the allusion to Tobias's latent apprehension of the exposure of his affair with his sister-in-law, Lizzie. It also emerges as a direct analogy to Dickens's secretive relationship with Ellen Ternan, dexterously camouflaged by the writer for thirteen years. The expression "turbulent and fearful soul" (Carey 91) can also serve as a metaphor of Dickens's recollection of the time spent in the blacking factory. For Dickens, this experience was so traumatic that he could not expunge it from his memory, where it remained a guarded taboo throughout his whole life (Ackroyd 76-83).

Through the course of the novel, Jack Maggs is often compared to an untamed beast with "eyes [...] wild and black [and] hair most queerly disarrayed" (Carey 57). This comparison becomes even more visible when Tobias hypnotises Jack, making the man appear "truly like a wild animal, and Toby his expert trainer" (Carey 84). The fact that Jack is a convict from New South Wales, who has received corporal punishment as his body reveals "the sea of pain etched upon [his] back, a brooding sea of scars, of ripped and tortured skin" (Carey 86), seems a metaphorical testimony of atrocities taking place in the times of British colonial imperialism. The punishment was "invented in New South Wales" (Carey 88) by a white man, "the double cat" (88), perhaps to breed out any vestiges of corruption inhabiting the convicts' souls. However, corporal punishment was also administered to the indigenous people, as evidenced in *The Dead Do Not Die: Exterminate All the Brutes and Terra Nullius* (2014) by Sven Lindqvist. Territorial expansion, political subordination and economic exploitation of the overseas colonies found its scientific justification especially in the Victorian era, which was the heyday of

British colonialism. Lindqvist refers to dissemination of racist philosophies by Herbert Spencer and Edmund von Hartman, the emergence of the pseudoscientific stance in the form of biological racism by Charles Darwin, Robert Knox and Josiah C. Knott as well as “survival of the fittest” that seemed to facilitate the colonial power dynamics and promote the belief in white supremacy and inscribed inferiority of the colonised indigenes. The consequence of this dehumanizing approach was the ideological division of the contemporary world in terms of binary oppositions: West—East, “Us”—“Them,” coloniser—colonised, civilised—uncivilised, white—non-white. A native representing the non-Western world—be it Eastern, Asian, African, native-American, or Australian, etc.—was seen as the “Other” in opposition to the Western socio-politics and culture. Thus Aborigines were seen as a hindrance in the way of the colonial pursuit, an obstacle to dispose of since they were bound to become extinct by the force of evolution anyway.

The process of taming Jack Maggs, commenced in the penal colony in New South Wales and then undertaken by Tobias Oates, seems to be a metaphorical reference to taming the so-called “inferior races” in the guise of bringing civilisation, or as Edward Said maintains in *Orientalism* (1978): “Lurking everywhere behind the pacification of the subject race is imperial might” (36). The quotation “taking a lion into [Mr Buckle’s] home” (Carey 89), as Tobias Oates puts it, can be interpreted as the conquest or reverse colonisation of the British world by the person permeated with the culture of the uncivilised “Other.” It has to be emphasised that the concept of “Otherness” also referred to criminals, prostitutes and homosexuals, that is to say, British social outcasts “portrayed by hegemonic discourses as just ‘threatening’ as people of different races and nationalities from the colonies” (Mousoutzanis 325). Jack’s “Otherness” seems to be more intimidating for the British society because it can be read in binary representations: he is both a domestic and colonial “savage” who returns to London “to establish the depravity of the domestic subject” (Malchow 72). Jack makes the colonial reality of New South Wales encroach

upon the world of hegemonic culture, wreaking havoc and corruption just like the nineteenth-century British Empire. This reversed mechanism of domination could be regarded as a violation of the national values of the British citizens while the barbarian practices of the Empire in the overseas territories became the entirely allowable norm. The convict's "Otherness" can also be represented in terms of the Freudian concept of *unheimlich*, "meaning unhomely or uncanny," the opposite to *heimlich* connected with familiarity and the sense of belonging to a family (Peters 19). The uncanny can be defined as "strange, foreign ... demonic and gruesome ... a repulsive fellow" (19). Elaborating on the uncanny, Laura Peters presents a compelling connection between this term and the representation of the orphan figure in Victorian society. The orphan, seen as foreign, unfamiliar, because he or she was "outside the dominant narrative of domesticity," seemed to deconstruct the model of the middle-class Victorian family, thus "occupying the same relationship of the uncanny or *unheimlich* to the *heimlich*" (Peters 19). In this respect, Maggs can be read as such an uncanny orphan, excluded from the society because he poses a threat to the integrity of British national identity. He metaphorically becomes the muted voice of the emerging Australian culture, detracting and destabilising the centre, which loses its paramount stance by being forcibly redefined by another version of the "Other" from the colonial peripheries. Suppressed in Dickens's novel, Carey seems to "disinter" the convict "to destabilize the very basis of fictional authority—and with it linear, filial lines of influence between metropolis and former colony" (Thieme 109).

It is noteworthy that Jack Maggs is not the only person to experience the exile from England in the novel. Having learnt about Jack's past, Percy Buckle recollects his sister's banishment to Botany Bay, wondering how "Mother England would do such a thing to one of her own" (Carey 89). Calling England "Mother" in this situation can be viewed as the country's negligence of parental duties towards its domestic children. The reference to Botany Bay in Australia can also allude to the Empire's offspring in the overseas territories if we read

colonial power dynamics as parent-child relations. Colonised communities were seen “as children, as men not fully grown, whose destiny had to be guided by the presumably more advanced states of Europe” (Cohen 427). In other words, the conquering European empires figuratively became parents responsible for the upbringing process of their colonial children whose maturity could only be attained thanks to the intervention of the Western civilisation. This European parenthood resulted in privation, commercial inequity, spread of diseases, loss of land, national identity and indigenous culture.

Not without reason does Peter Carey introduce the figure of Percy Buckle in the novel. Being an heir of a considerable fortune and not a born gentleman, Mr Buckle embodies the central theme of Dickens’s novel *Great Expectations* where an orphaned boy wants to become a gentleman. The issue of being a gentleman becomes a much more layered quandary for Dickens himself, which is thoroughly elaborated on by Peter Ackroyd. Both Dickens and the protagonist of *Great Expectations* are steadily transformed from common labouring boys into gentlemen. It has to be stressed that, throughout his life, Dickens’s past concerning Warren’s blacking factory remained a deeply rooted secret, which unambiguously resurfaces in Pip’s words: “the secret was such an old one now, had so grown into me and became a part of myself, that I could not tear it away” (Dickens 113). Abashed by his status and family, Pip yearns for leaving the forge or, as Ackroyd puts it, he is “the child always in peril of being permanently consigned to the ‘low’ world from which he wishes to escape” (101). This is another echo of Dickens’s being a common and humiliated boy forced to support his insolvent parents. The word “common” was the term towards which Dickens felt a great deal of animosity, the word which looms before the reader in *Great Expectations*, especially in the pathos of Pip’s statement: “I knew I was common, and that I wished I was not common, and that the lies had come of it somehow” (66-67). The ‘lies’ can be seen in the context of Dickens’s secrecy about his employment at Warren’s blacking factory. Even in the

company of his family, Dickens “also told [lies] in order to protect himself” (Ackroyd 104). The notion of being—or not being—a gentleman is also addressed by Carey when Tobias Oates, imitating a doctor, is accused by doctor Grieves of killing an old butler, Mr Spinks, due to his incompetence and lack of proper training. For Tobias, it “was only another way of saying that he was not a gentleman” (Carey 180). This quotation seems to reveal much about Dickens himself. He feared that when the truth about his juvenile occupation was revealed, it could result in his being slighted and discarded by the British society. However, Dickens unquestionably attempted to face his apprehensions connected with his traumatic past in *Great Expectations*, “a novel in which he is engaged in exorcising the influence of his past by rewriting it” (Ackroyd 930). He seemed to do the same while writing his autobiographical passages of *David Copperfield* (1850). Ackroyd presents a thorough description of Dickens’s exertion to complete the chapter in which David is compulsorily sent to work at Mr. Murdstone’s warehouse. Throughout his life, the writer had to confront his past by looking back again at the times when he was a common “labouring hind” at Warren’s blacking factory:

Dickens fell and somehow managed to injure his left side, the very ‘weak’ side which had disturbed him when he had been a real ‘labouring hind.’ He had inflamed his old injury, had to be cupped and blistered, writhing in agony once more in just the way he had writhed in agony on the floor of the rotting warehouse by the Thames. His childhood condition returned ... (Ackroyd 600)

Carey’s re-writing of *Great Expectations* is especially evident in presenting the stories of Jack, the epitome of Abel Magwitch, and Henry Phipps, being the counterpart of Pip. Sigrun Meinig states that by re-writing of *Great Expectations*, Carey “uses its intertextuality to question the notion of historical genealogy and origin in the story of an Australian convict” (110). Shacked in chains, Jack first met Henry, the orphaned, miserable, four-year old boy, in the forge on “a cold miserable sort of day, with bitter wind blowing low and hard across the marshes” (Carey 262) while being transported to the ship leaving for

South New Wales. The moment the boy offers Jack “a pig’s trotter” to eat, the convict makes a sombre promise:

I would come back from my exile and take him from his orphanage, that
I would spin him a cocoon of gold and jewels, that I would weave him a
nest so strong that no one would ever hurt his goodness. (Carey 264)

In the course of Dickens’s novel, Pip, initially the money-minded gentleman, gradually evolves, realising the emptiness of his parasitic existence, which entails rejecting the principles of the upper class society (*Great Expectations*). In addition to this, he provides his secret benefactor with housing and protection, helps Magwitch to get out of the country and, after the failure, he stays with him until his demise in prison. In this way, Pip emerges as a fatherly figure towards Magwitch: “I will never stir from your side, said I, when I am suffered to be near you. Please God, I will be as true to you as you have been to me” (Dickens 408). By depicting Henry Phipps as an ungrateful and corrupted alcoholic rejecting Jack and even ready to slay him, Carey seems to undermine Dickensian colonial discourse. Carey’s evident divergence from the depiction of Henry as a version of Pip from Dickens’s novel can be scrutinised in the context of colonial power dynamics, or, to be more precise, the British outlook on Australia. Jenni Ramone aptly notes that “Pip is marginalised in the figure of Henry Phipps” (176), which is definitely the aftermath of Carey’s conviction that “Dickens’s portrayal of Australia and the Australian” (176) is unfair. According to Carey, to an Australian, “*Great Expectations* is a way in which the English have colonised our ways of seeing ourselves” (in Woodcock 122). In Dickens’s novel Abel Magwitch emerges as the embodiment of Australians, metaphorically orphaned by the Empire, since “the colonial fatherland that has rejected its colonial ‘offspring’” (Ramone 176) created the future generations of postcolonial orphans unable to determine their cultural identity. Carey seems to “disinter” the colonial discourse by deflating the figure of Henry Phipps (Pip’s alter ego) and giving the voice to Jack Maggs (Magwitch) who, in contrast to the original, not only takes control of the events in the novel, but is allowed

to present his own narrative. It makes Carey's novel a story that, as Colette Selles maintains, reverses "the 'cultural cringe', presents a self-assertive image of the often denigrated former colony" (63). Australia and Abel Magwitch in *Great Expectations* seem silenced, "transparent or invisible" (Spivak 265) while their "relentless recognition" as "the Other [is hidden] by assimilation" (265). In other words, Abel Magwitch and his antipodean story are verbatim assimilated by the Eurocentric, hegemonic perspective from which the novel is narrated—Pip's story predominates, Magwitch's is just episodic. Strangely enough, Dickens's fiction abounds in those orphaned, impoverished, oppressed and humiliated by the British system the author makes audible, yet he does not dwell upon the stories of those transported to penal colonies as well as remains silent as for the British colonial exploitation. Convicts, regarded as undesirable citizens of Victorian England or a blotch on English morality, were deported to penal colonies in order to serve their sentences. Textually orphaned due to their ties with their motherland being coercively cut and physically displaced from their country and forgotten by the British Empire, the convicts, having completed the sentences, could not afford to return to the country and stayed in the colonies. Being sent to the penal colony in Australia due to being regarded as a pernicious individual not consonant with the British "superior" culture, Jack becomes the "Other" whose "Otherness" is magnified by the fact that he is also bound to experience the culture that is at odds with the British one. Upon arrival in London, Maggs metaphorically emerges as the drowned out voice of the Australian indigenous culture vanquished by the Western hegemony, detracting and destabilising the colonial discourse, the centre, which loses its paramount stance due to being characterised by the "Other" from the colonial peripheries. This reverse role of the centre and peripheries in Carey's novel alludes to Homi Bhabha's concept of mimicry which is not only an omnipresent symptom of imperial domination, but can also be treated as a veneer of the colonised who imitates the coloniser's culture while distorting and ridiculing its dominance. It has to be noted that Jack is not a colonised individual nor does he

mimic British culture. He is a diasporic individual practicing his culture in the different geographical context. The reference to Bhabha's mimicry aims at emphasising the fact that *Great Expectations* is deconstructed and loses its uncontested authority that seems "ambivalent, split between its appearance as original and authoritative and its articulation as repetition and difference" (Bhabha 107). In the colonial context, mimicry was a metonym of resistance of the subaltern subject created by the Western culture through the prism of a stereotype—the subject is no longer silent and devoid of cultural identity, but an individual who can fight against the stereotypical image of the "inferior Other" imposed by the imperial hegemony. Commenting on Bhabha's notion of mimicry, Sumit Chakrabarti highlights that the colonised mimic man is situated "in the ambivalent position of the hybrid subject who is neither colonizer nor colonized, but something in between" (13). This in-between position means that the subject "who is 'white, but not quite' portends the beginning of the counter-gaze that effectively displaces the social control of the power centre" (13). In other words, hybridity, which "is the sign of the productivity of the colonial power" (Bhabha 112), subverts the coloniser's authority by enabling the emergence and articulation of other histories consciously suppressed by the cultural hegemony of the West. A parallel conjuncture can be noticed in Carey's novel, where the Western authority seems to be deflated by the ostracised "Other" (Jack Maggs) from New South Wales, a hybrid of polarised cultures that pre-eminently epitomises an audible voice of the "inferior" one. As a non-indigenous inhabitant of the settler colony, Jack is seen as culturally "inferior" due to both lacking British cultural sophistication and staying in contact with other races. Anna Johnston and Alan Lawson note that settler colonies such as Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the United States were inhabited by convicts (Australia), "younger sons of downwardly-mobile families ... 'refugees' escaping social rejection, religious persecution, or economic hard times" (362, 363). Those Englishmen "were frequently

characterized in domestic cultural and political discourses as ungovernable, uncultured: as ‘colonials’ they were second-class” (363).

Abel Magwitch in Dickens’s novel is delineated in the demonic and cannibalistic light “with broken shoes, and with an old rag tied around his head ... smothered in mud” (6), having “a great iron on his leg” (6) with “his ‘shuddering’ body [being] representative of his fragile status in English society” (Ramone 177). Pip becomes Magwitch’s guardian, which exposes “an imperialistic assumption that the civilised, sensible England fathers the unruly, dangerous and weak child Australia” (Ramone 176). The emphasis put on the superiority of the Western world over the indigenous one can also be read as the fear and danger of being tainted by the non-Western non-white culture. In *Jack Maggs*, Carey’s critical insight into the marginalisation of the British colony seems explicitly discernible in casting entirely different light on the Victorian society. Thus Carey’s London, described by *The Lancet* as a “doomed city” (Ackroyd 405), connotes a place of moral decline with violence, murder, induced abortion, child prostitution or unquenchable sexual desires. Carey skilfully refers to the negligence or even bereavement of the British colony by introducing the character of Mary Britten (called by Jack ‘Ma Britten’)—a thief who sells the misshapen pills triggering miscarriages, being the dishonourable paragon of “the colonial motherland, Mother Britain” (Ramone 178) or, simply, the lining of colonisation. In his diary to Henry Phipps, Jack Maggs recollects his beloved, motherless Sophina, Silas Smith’s daughter, who, together with Jack, is forced to the thieving deeds. Jack and Sophina’s affair results in their conceiving a baby who is forcibly aborted by Mary Britten and thrown into a cesspool: “There lay our son—the poor dead mite was such a tiny thing. I could have held him in my hand. And on his queerly familiar little face, a cruel and dreadful cut” (Carey 241). The bloody imperial project is tellingly reflected in the infamous actions (aimed at eliminating the ‘hindrance,’ or simply an unwanted human being) taken by Mary Britten who, after fulfilling her “duties,” leaves a room “full of blood in quantities enough to frighten any child” (Carey 211). This

circumstance can be read as a metaphorical association with the colonial scheme the purpose of which was to get rid of those who stood in the way of the imperial advancement, that is to say, the “inferior” races doomed to extinction. Jack’s recollection of cleaning this room “with soap and scrubbing brush” carries another symbolic overtone—to conceal the inconvenient truth from the civilised Victorian society and to feed the public with the empty imperial cliché of the noble mission of bringing civilisation. Jenni Ramone states that the British colonial parenthood is exposed to fiasco in Carey’s novel:

By portraying the figure who represents Britain as colonial motherland as an abortionist and an uncaring maternal figure, Carey is suggesting that Britain had neglected its parental responsibility to Australia, or that it had no ability to carry out such duties in the first place. (178)

The name ‘Ma Britten,’ may also bear affinity to ‘Little Britain’ (Mr Jaggers’s office is located therein) from *Great Expectations*. On his first visit there Pip saw for the first time: “a gloomy street ... the shameful place, being all smear with filth and fat and blood and foam” (Dickens 150, 152). Thus the place connotes the emphatic metaphor of the moral decay and hypocrisy of the British society in the Victorian era—“but that is what becomes of us down here in Hell’s Doorway. Sitting here, said [Mary], looking at the Devil’s thieving ways etc. etc.” (Carey 77). Paradoxically, Mother Britain’s negligence was not only inflicted upon its colonial areas, but also the poorest citizens of London who, according to Dr Simons, were seen “as a race apart” (Ackroyd 403):

swarms of men and women who have yet to learn that human beings should dwell differently from cattle—swarms to whom personal cleanliness is utterly unknown; swarms by whom delicacy and decency in their social relations are quite unconvinced. (403)

Standing for the denigrated Australian “offspring” of the Empire, Maggs—unlike Magwitch who, when he returns to London, feels like an embattled animal to be eventually slain—does not hide in the shadows: he is the confident, independent, well-dressed and affluent businessman who finally returns to New South Wales, leaving the moral grime of Victorian London

behind. He takes care of his two children and lives a prosperous life in the land, “orphaned” in Dickens’s novel. This intentional subversion in relation to the hypotext can also be read in parent-child relations. Unlike Dickensian depiction of Magwitch who needs to be nursed by the British citizen, Maggs in Carey’s novel becomes a real father “who escapes the infantilization engrained in filial models of the relationship between metropolis and colony” (Thieme 121). It turns out, the supposedly weaker, inferior child-like Australia can take care of itself whereas the superior “stronger” British Empire should first clean the mess in its own forgotten alleyways before starting to enlighten the world. In Carey’s novel, the reader witnesses the metaphorical retaliation of the colonial inhabitants for the imperialistic invasion, which is undeniably present in the actions of Jack Maggs. He is the one to discredit Percival Buckle, to take control of the course of events in the story; he is regarded as the aggressor incarcerating some of the British citizens and capable of murder to achieve his goals; in a nutshell, he is the epitome of the colonised and denigrated Australia that avenges itself. According to Linda Hutcheon:

After modernism’s ahistorical rejection of the burden of the past, postmodern art has sought self-consciously (and often parodically) to reconstruct its relationship to what came before; similarly, after that imposition of an imperial culture and that truncated indigenous history which colonialism has meant to many nations, post-colonial literatures are also negotiating (often parodically) the once tyrannical weight of colonial history in conjunction with the revalued local past. (131)

Hutcheon later notes that colonialism experienced in Africa, India, or the West Indies cannot be equated with “the white Canadian experience of colonialism” (133), which can also be applied to non-indigenous white Australians. The critic also points out the fact that “the consequences for white (not Native) writers today of that past are different from those for writers in Africa, India, or the Caribbean” (134). In this respect, *Jack Maggs* can be read as the novel having the status of a postmodern text. However, the intersectionality of postcolonialism and postmodernism in the novel seems explicit because “Carey

sets up a relation between the two terms, such that Australia, seen in a 'postcolonial' sense, and literature, in a 'postmodern' sense, converge" (Kane 519). In other words, Carey demonstrates that the influence of the colonial "past—the 'postcolonial condition'—is transformed into a vision of the future: Australia as a postmodern society" (Kane 522). Maggs ceases to be spoken for as a study object of the Eurocentric world and yearns to define his identity in his own terms not the Empire's. He becomes a voice of the "inferior" culture and all the victims of the British imperialism—those silenced, devoid of their motherland, emotionally and literally orphaned, whose national identity was meant to be uprooted by colonialism.

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Abstract

Jack Maggs by Peter Carey, being the Australian version of Dickens's *Great Expectations*, challenges the Victorian propaganda about the primacy of a white race, openly opposing the Empire's misdeeds and hypocritical behaviour of its citizens. Carey undermines the colonial discourse in the shape of Dickensian imperialistic England as a motherland concerned with its colonial children, implicitly presented in *Great Expectations* when the British gentleman attends to the Australian convict, Abel Magwitch. The moral corruption of the Victorian society seems particularly reflected in the character of Mary Britten—a ruthless abortionist being an allusion to Victorian Mother Britain in its unstoppable colonial expansionism. In this paper I will show that Jack seems to epitomise the colonised and marginalised Australia that avenges itself. Maggs ceases to be spoken for as a study of the Eurocentric world, becoming a voice of those silenced and devoid of their land, whose culture was meant to be uprooted by the colonial power dynamics. Carey's downgrading of the dominant status of the Western culture can be read with respect to Homi Bhabha's concepts of mimicry and hybridity when the non-European culture seems to pose a threat to the Western hegemony, diminishing its authority and enabling the emergence and articulation of other histories consciously suppressed by the colonial discourse. Jack Maggs metaphorically emerges as the drowned out voice of the culture vanquished by the Western hegemony, detracting and destabilising the centre which loses its paramount stance due to being characterised by the subaltern 'other' from the peripheries. Orphaned by the country representing the 'superior' culture, Jack Maggs returns to imperial London to subvert the order of the colonial discourse and narrate his story from the subaltern standpoint.

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**ORAL PARABLES OF REGIONAL ECOLOGICAL WISDOM:
RITUALS OF CO-BELONGING AND MULTISPECIES CARE IN *THE HUNGRY
TIDE* BY AMITAV GHOSH**

Keywords: human-animal relations, indigenous wisdom, mnemocultures, co-belonging, animal sentience, multi-species justice, Anthropocene

Introduction

The animal turn in literary studies has been a neoteric advancement in the posthumanist vanguard that calls for more inclusive research methods. These methods have further promoted ontological apertures calling for the serious consideration of non-human animals as our allies in shared spaces. This article draws on posthumanism as a conceptual framework insisting on moving beyond cartesian dualism and towards a radical openness and ethics of multispecies care.¹ While Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* is broadly read as a contemporary postcolonial text that grapples with marginalized histories alongside climate change, there is lesser attention given to the narrative ethological perspective of this work and its intersection with resilience—a gap that this article aims to fill. At the heart of the novel rests an indigenous performative ritual that has survived orally, which Ghosh has tried to translate into the colonizer's tongue to spread and preserve this ancestral knowledge. The article extends discussion on the indigenous knowledge systems that have faced epistemological ruptures due to colonization and also globalization, and how Ghosh addresses this problem in his work. The ethics of care is pivotal to

the study of human-non-human animal relations as it “attempts to deal with conflict, disagreement, and ambivalence rather than attempting to eliminate it” (Lonkila 481). In *The Hungry Tide*, similar ethical issues surface, where *golpos* (cultural myths), mantras and *Jatras* (folk performance) bring us closer to the kin outside our doors, especially in the wild, therefore well suiting the complexities of care phenomenon in the face of climate change and species extinction. The interest in the field of care under the Literary Animal Studies has burgeoned, expanding its boundaries to the heavier, more serious questions of the Anthropocene, what multispecies care would achieve in such a context and how to achieve it. Annika Lonkila in her article quotes Fisher and Tronto’s definition of care emphasizing that the interdependency of all lively beings consists of practices that seek to “maintain, continue and repair our world so that we can live in it as well as possible” (481). Care is central not only for sustenance but also in fostering empathetic multispecies relations and futures. In *The Hungry Tide*, however, the dilemma of application of care in face of conflict sets in. Whose needs and desires should we choose to care for when there is a conflict of interests rings throughout the reading of the text especially in Kusum’s recalcitrance towards the government favoring the animals over the refugees. Kusum says “Who are these people, I wondered, who love animals so much that they are willing to kill us for them” (Ghosh 284). Hence, the question of care in the face of persistent human-animal tensions and conflicts demands ethical answers. These questions surface profusely as the novel progresses, forming a larger, yet much ignored part of the novel, revealing instances of ethical ambivalence. The tiger burning incident in the novel (Ghosh 315), despite Piya’s relentless resistance, reveals a darker shade of care. Such problematic situations of complex human-animal encounters often reveal the greater need to internalize the fact that our existence depends on suffering of others as much as of ourselves in this world. Such a thought reveals the interconnectedness and mutual vulnerability of both humans and nonhuman animals. The traditional knowledge systems in general help attain such an

internalization as opposed to being termed retrogressive or anti-developmental. Through this novel, Amitav Ghosh reveals that indigenous cultures offer the possibility of living in balance with the environment. Rather than favouring either, Ghosh bridges traditional and scientific knowledge systems, and seeks to decolonize the scientific modern day conservation models by opening up to the traditional knowledge of Sundarbans people. The particular focus is on the oral and performative traditions of Bonbibi, the Palagan (religious musical narratives) performances and the imagining of early widowhood that function as cultural informants of care, balance and respect for the non-human animals and entities. This article shall highlight local practices of care in conflict that open adjacent possibilities towards a resilient multispecies future. Through the theory of resistance and resilience this article articulates how the oral and performative tradition manages to transform and endure through a predominantly western narrative model, a novel.

The scope of this article is to address questions like: what traditions are relevant to build complicated notions about animal and environmental ethics, and possibly to imagine alternate, more resilient futures? How do the non-human beings occupy space in the Indian reflective tradition that sets them in contrast to the western practices? The answers are not straightforward.

Conservation Conflicts

The Hungry Tide narrates the story of the entwined lives of Kannai Dutt, a translator, and Piyali Roy, an American Cetologist, who land in the Sundarbans together, with seemingly diverse motivations that eventually converge towards the end of the novel. Kannai is driven to the Sundarbans to procure Nirmal Bose's writings addressed to him, while Piya's enthusiasm is brought about by her wish to encounter and study the two kinds of dolphins: the Gangetic and the Irrawaddy. Nirmal Bose's diary narrates major events and introduces other characters alongside that make up the plot of the tidal country. Nirmal, Piya and Kannai's narratives supplement each other and "enable the possibility of a sea

change in their attitude toward the animals, the cetaceans and the subalterns” (Lundblad 150). The narrative of the novel moves in the fashion of a Palagan, which is Bengali for ‘singing in turns,’ taking turns to sing about the tigers, dolphins, marginalized people and the state-sponsored conservation policies. The hazy border between the salt and freshwater makes the aquatic life of the Sundarbans “rhizomatic” (151), resulting in the creation of “hundreds of different ecological niches” (Ghosh 131). These microenvironments invoke in Piya the multitudinous “universe of possibilities,” therefore leading the characters to rediscover themselves through their dynamic relationships with the non-humans (131). Sundarbans is ruled by the laws of neither man nor the jungle but by the ebb and flow of tides that continuously wash borders, hence is called ‘*bhati-r desh*’ (or, the tide country). This phenomenon creates liminal spaces for the encounter between the human and non-human animals, making Sundarbans among the most unwelcoming landscapes globally setting alight the paradox to its former label:

Every year dozens of people perish in the embrace of that dense foliage, killed by tigers, snakes and crocodiles. There is no prettiness here to invite the stranger in: yet, the world at large this archipelago is known as “the sundarban,” which means, “the beautiful forest.” (Ghosh 8)

The Sundarbans stands as an anomalous remnant of the eroded utopian dream of Sir Daniel, a Scotsman who saw immense potential in the harsh terrains of Sundarbans and so bought land there to develop an ideal society. The course of his dream was altered by the Western conservationists who declared Sundarbans, which housed massive halophytic mangroves and estuarine ecosystems, to be made completely uninhabitable by humans in order to conserve it. They introduced a massive project to save the royal Bengal tigers that intended to preserve the wilderness:

According to Mick Smith, such a Tiger Project or the massacre in the Sundarbans is to be seen as a type of radical environmentalism, itself a form of “ecological sovereignty” in total control of the biological life of the people living in the Morichjhāpi, ironically rendering the living

landscape of the poor an “uninhabited wilderness” of tiger reserves. (Lundbland 155).

These Western dominated and government backed models based on “deep ecology” and overemphasizing wilderness conservation were criticized by Ramachandra Guha, who found it troublesome to apply Western models of conservation to third world countries. Such projects “without the consideration for the people living there are to be perceived as a form of neo-colonialism and neo-imperialism” (Lundbland 155). *The Hungry Tide* tries to explore care by incorporating subaltern ecological wisdom that changes the Heideggerian belief as stated in *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*: “animal is poor in the world” (Heidegger 183) to—animals and humans are entangled equally in complex webs of relationships. This opens a possibility of an “anti-anthropocentric ethic” (Walther 61). Ghosh, who at the outset may seem to be rooting for the scientific Western ideas of care through characters like Piya and Kannai, on a deeper reading reveals—in the section titled “Home: an epilogue”—that these characters have undergone massive changes and have emerged as responsible community members, standing in solidarity with the people of the Sundarbans. Once Piya recognizes the pitfalls of modern-day conservation that ignores the poor, she returns to Lusibari to carry on with her project with the people of the Badabon trust. Kannai’s self-importance wanes by the end of the novel and he decides to restructure his business so as to take more time out to visit Lusibari. Ghosh weaves indigenous resilience and survival through their relationship with the land and the animals in history and memory.

Planetary Mnemocultures as Care in Conflict

While *The Hungry Tide* has garnered numerous ecocritical responses about human-non-human animal conflict and their intersectional histories (Gurr 2010, Biswas and Channarayapatna 2022), this section of the article concentrates largely on the practices of securing local archival reminders of

human-non-human animal kinship primarily through the *Dukhe'r Golpo* (the story of Dukhe), which is a part of the Bonbibibi myth, in the novel. While Ghosh's default structure is immersed in Western ways of documenting stories in the form of novels or the written word, he has painstakingly tried to open a new form of storytelling through developing the section of the Bonbibibi myth into an audiobook named *Junglenaama* (2021), which is far from a usual audiobook. In a related interview, Ghosh says "For authors and creators, it opens a new form of storytelling and allows them to not only work with their written words but also express themselves through their voice and sounds" (Sarfare). This way it is the closest that Ghosh has come to documenting, in a Western language, the essence of the local reflective tradition. The myth of the Bonbibibi primarily centres around the non-human animals, which in turn facilitates the calibration of the humans and non-human animal relations. It is an age-old folk tradition that has proliferated and prospered in the Sundarbans through compositional modes of Indian reflective tradition. Ghosh, in this way, engages with the question of the animal and suggests that contemporary novels must incorporate and attend to voices other than human. Hence, resilient narratives, which the traditional knowledge systems offer abundantly, need to be incorporated into contemporary fiction. The Bonbibibi myth unsettles the colonial nature-culture divide central to the Western epistemology by incorporating an ethical and cordial narrative about human and non-human animal relations. Folk traditions are community maps that are intensely in dialogue with their surroundings and are embedded with tangible evidence of sustainability through compelling narratives. Where the popular folk traditions usually ossify into abstraction only to reinforce the anthropocentric individuality of the current times, the Bonbibibi myth is one rooted in the performative embrace of everyday ritual lives of the people of the Sundarbans and Ghosh's novel revitalizes this tradition as a relational mode of knowledge transmission. This performative mode of articulation and expression, manifested in *jatra* performances, rewilds this tradition that carries precious

relationships and wisdom through the tides of the *bhatirdesh* into a resilient human-animal future. The myth functions as a kind of *nitishastra*, “not a moral science but a strategic science concerning action knowledge” (Rao 135). It creates a space suggesting strategies to “live with or befriend those unlike us” especially in the conflictual context of the Sundarbans (135). This myth of which the tiger forms a larger part, challenges the Western assumption of human superiority over the animal. The performative tradition, mainly emerging out of cultural memory, is set in contrast to the dominant western communication modes of writing and documentation. These cultural memories or mnemocultures “proliferate through the most primordial forms of speech and gesture” (Rao 10). The novel dedicates a larger section to the Bonbibi performance, therefore affirming realities that are very different from the anthropocentric urge to value humans over nature. Ghosh combats the anthropocentric hyperindividualism of colonial capitalism by making these mnemocultural stories more prominent.

Ghosh tries to change the storytelling tradition by incorporating the legend and tradition of a local female deity who challenges the logocentric thought of humans ruling over the animals. The oral stories, therefore, create, in the words of Jeremy Rifkin, “biosphere consciousness” (in Oliver 26), a kind of awareness that the lives of all beings, human and non-human, are interconnected, entangled and interdependent. In the era of the Anthropocene, caring for the other, if put that way, would reveal another power dynamic where the human self cares for the animal other, therefore reducing this other to an object that needs to be cared for. A caring relationship should rather look like “the moral priority of the other over the self in an asymmetrical ethical relation which language cannot contain” (Chesi and Spiegel 10). In simple words, a caring relationship where the non-human other is prioritized over the human self is a relationship that the Western language has been unable to capture. It is here then that these oral cultures and traditions beat facts especially in the Sundarbans.

Indigenous personhoods are inextricably tied to the land and the beings that are found there in ways for which the West lacks language. Ghosh, therefore, through incorporating the performative tradition of the Bonbibi myth facilitates thinking toward ecological as well as cosmological coherence in incoherent times. The novel realistically relays stories of eco-social fracture by incorporating the myth named after the tiger deity/goddess. This myth revolves predominantly around the man-eater and functions as a signpost for the ecosystem's process of self-healing. Neel Ahuja's article "Species in a Planetary Frame: Eco-cosmopolitanism, Nationalism, and *The Cove*" presents the subaltern stance in *The Hungry Tide* as a critique of rule or anarchic ethics. Ahuja also proposes that, since indigenous people are poetically interwoven into an environmental ethic, "*The Hungry Tide's* valorization of subaltern environmental knowledge must not be regarded as a simple orientalizing or primitivization of the indigene" (Ahuja 29). The answer to why the Sundarban people lived remotely can be traced to their strong trust in the deities that they believe have the nature under control. Ghosh revokes this syncretic legend of Bonbibi, which is a part of the cultural imaginary of both the Hindus and Muslims of the Sundarbans, to highlight the profound force of the myths and traditions in building and sustaining communal harmony and reciprocity. The community here involves not only humans but also, significantly, the wild animals and the forest that they dwell in. In this novel the readers witness human and non-human others (inclusive of rivers, forests and animals), existing in a synergetic ecosystem where hierarchical fragmentation is self-defeating. The fisherfolk of Sundarbans always courted disaster because the tiger, however elusive, had a palpable presence in the spaces where they carried out their work to sustain themselves. The women who were married to these men imagined an early widowhood every time their husbands went off to the jungle to collect fish or honey: "They would put away their marital reds and dress in white saris; they would take off their bangles and wash the vermillion from their heads" (Ghosh 86). Such a practice was believed to be carried out

either to ward off misfortune by living it over and over again, or to prepare for the inevitable. This ritual pays a certain respect to the jungle by acknowledging its dangers. Wendy Doniger talks about the intersection of religion and preservation and the sacrifice of animals, and her critical idea can be applied to *The Hungry Tide*, as the elusive Bengal Tiger instils reactions similar to those of deities (Ledesma). The Sundarbans folk already consider the tigers equivalent to a higher being and are always aware of the imaginary boundary drawn by Bonbibi that they are always crossing for their livelihood. Thus, the ritual of imagining early widowhood stands as an acceptance, respect and sacrifice for the humans to cross the border. Zeenat Khan in her article on Sundarbans asserts that “[n]owhere does a term equivalent to *Nature* figure in the legend of Bonbibi, yet nowhere is its consciousness absent” (2020) which aligns with Ghosh’s novel, where he encourages readers to observe the consciousness arising from the fusion of nature and folk traditions. This fusion establishes a nurturing environment where humans and animals co-exist amidst conflict. Additionally, the novel exudes the decimated voices of the subaltern and the fate of the human and the animal suffering under the western conservation logics.

Sundarbans: Where the Divine and Wild Intertwine

Radhika Raj in her article “Sultry Sundarbans” talks about the uncanny Sundarbans: “Sundarbans is a strange place [...] here tigers swim and fish walk on land” so it is not hard to believe that the forest dwellers have seemingly strange ways to live with under these circumstances (Raj 2022). The Bonbibi-r *Palagaan* has been subject to multiple mutations, both written and performative, whose earliest traces lack records, “which is suggestive of its folk nature—it cannot be traced back to one original performance” (Mandal 2017). Currently, it has developed into *Ekani-palagaan* sung solo by a *gayen* (singer) accompanied by a *dohar* (drummer), and *Bonbib-r palagaan*, an improvised and flexible performance “which enables the performer to make spontaneous

additions into the texts” (Mandal 2017). The Bonbibi folk tradition creates a space for the primal impulse to dialogue with the forest. The dialogues are “colloquial verses without the help of any “divine” language” and one of care and affection towards the shared land and all its non-human inhabitants (Biswas 2021). The Sundarbans folk firmly believe that the forest is their *mahal* (*forest*) and is meant to be both for them and animals. For these people the forest has bonding powers and it “equalizes and unifies” them with the wild and vice-versa. Similar is the positioning of the forest deity that people of the Sundarbans worship:

Bonbibi’s worshippers insist that her cult is at the intersection between Hinduism and Islam and that she protects all communities equally [...] her play can only be acted when people of different jatis come together. (Jalais 81)

The story of Bonbibi apart from being an oral tradition is also recited by the *bauley’s* or the forest fishers as an overture to their forest incursion, when they “*jongolkortegeslam*” or are set to “do jungle” (Ghosh 27). This venture is “a sort of economic agreement about equitable sharing of food and resources between humans and tigers” (Jalais 82). *Dokkhin Rai*, the theriomorph, a human-tiger hybrid in the story functions as a “mythic reminder of our rich evolutionary past as animals” and also as a reminder of our greedy bellicosity against an undeserving victim. The story goes like this: *Dokkhin Rai*, a Brahmin sage, dwelled in the forest and had ascetic powers to transform into a tiger preying on humans for their greedy usurpation of resources from the forest. *Dokkhin Rai’s* greed for the *Badabon* (mangrove) heightened and he declared himself the ruler of the forest:

He becomes a demon (*rakkhosh*) who preys on humans. Tigers and spirits become the subjects of *Dokkhin Rai* and, emboldened by him, also start to terrorise and feed on humans. The trust that had existed between tigers and humans is thus broken. (Jalais 82)

The myth, as narrated in the section “the glory of bonbibí” in the novel, then progresses to how Bonbibí, abandoned at birth, is raised in the forest by a deer who takes pity on her. When she grows up, Allah calls her to save the land of eighteen tides from *Dokkhin Rai*’s atrocity. She calls on her brother *Shah Jongoli* to accompany her to Medina for blessings of Fatima for her odyssey and also to bring some soil from there to the tide country. On arriving at the tide country, with the name of Allah, they mix the earth with that of the Sundarbans evoking the wrath of *Dokkhin Rai*, who decides to wage a war against them. However, *Dokkhin Rai*’s mother Narayani takes the lead in fighting Bonbibí. Narayani, while losing the battle, calls Bonbibí (sai) “friend” which is accepted by her and the war is halted. This story is followed by another story of Dukkhe who is saved by Bonbibí due to his honest intentions, also ending in *Dokkhin Rai* calling Bonbibí “mother” and Bonbibí accepting her as her “son.” What this mother-son relationship then reveals is the intimate bond that humans and animals share and their kinship beyond their taxonomy.

The opening scene of the Bonbibí *palgaan* to Kanai’s surprise “was set in a city in Arabia and the backdrop was painted with mosques and minarets” (Ghosh 102-103) as opposed to the expected genesis from heavens or the Ganges, which reinforces the realism of this tradition which further makes it believable. The putative reason for the resolute belief of the people of Sundarbans in Bonbibí’s glory is because of the fear of dwelling at the precipice and their daily dependence on it. Jauhar Kanungo and Lima Kanungo in their essay “The Disappearing Mahal and Changing Directions of Worship in the Sundarbans” reveal that:

the most terrible fear was that of fear itself. Once in its grip, you were incapacitated. But even then, they would come back to the jungle as they do not have land to till. And those that had could produce only one crop per year. So they would come back to the jungle again and again. (53)

The unrelenting faith of these people in chanting the *mantras* and practicing performative rituals of folk tradition and legends including, but not limited, to

the Bonbibi *palagaan* is because of their deep connection to the forest and its beings. Ghosh in *Gun Island*, the sequel to *The Hungry Tide*, extends his reflection that legends and myths may open up previously invisible worlds that once pieced together are more fully understood. These are not lifeless fragments in an academic archive but alive with still unheard meaning. These stories extend ecological awareness and an environmentalist structure of feeling where the most important thing in preserving the future of humanity is the preservation of its relationship to other species. The people of the Sundarbans live in an unpredictable terrain where the tides cause the land to submerge and ascend each day. The mangrove shoreline dynamics, ever-changing due to persistent cyclones, drastically affect humans and non-human animals alike. In the face of such punishing climate conditions exacerbated by climate change, the question that can be asked is what makes these people still dwell on these islands in the face of fear, largely of death, due to starvation and conflict with the wild. There are no straightforward answers but these stories about the natural world, passed down across generations, can function as a bridge between our world and the world of the non-human animals that dwell with us.

Indigenous cosmologies recognise non-human animal agency and need to be highlighted in our readings of literary texts wherever they are underrepresented. The myths have preceded us and will most definitely outlive us as well. These stories open an ethical space for renegotiating the parameters of our entangled existence. *Golpos*, *mantras*, and traditions are performed by a particular class of Bonbibi worshippers: “fakirs, ojhas (ghostbusters), and gunins (occultists), who tame the Royal Bengal Tiger of the Sundarbans” (Khokhan 3). These “biocultural formations—called *jatis*—are the guardians of memory in Indian cultural traditions” (Rao 305). They are deemed respectful as they provide “protective mantras” such as “Baghbandhan” (taming the tiger), “Mukhabandhan” (muzzling up the mouth) etc. (Khokhan 3). Where the Sundarban people find Bonbibi as an intimate kith and kin, we see in Ghosh’s

text certain characters appropriate colonial modernity in a way that “ruptures the relation between *Jati* and culture by stigmatizing and recoding them in accord with lithic theo-cultural protocols” (Rao 305). For instance, Nirmal’s consistent practice of writing diary and preserving memory is as “deeply chiselled in lithic orthography” and, in simpler words, Nirmal’s focus shifts from preserving the cultural memory in the form of written word than the oral (Rao 43). When asked about the story of Bonbibibi, he dismisses Kannai by saying: “It’s just a tale they tell around here. Don’t bother yourself with it. It’s just false consciousness; that’s all it is [...] But no, they prefer imaginary” (Ghosh 101). Nirmal’s dismissal of oral stories as merely imaginary makes him a subscriber of the massive cultural fracture through which art, spirituality and science are isolated from each other. Nirmal seems to privilege rational speech by discarding the “non-linguistic melopoiac reflection and imagination” (Rao 9) of the mnemocultures that reverberate through South Asian peripheries. This article augments its initial engagement with what makes these oral stories so important to the people of the Sundarbans by arguing that they serve as a means of a spiritual relationship with the living world, especially in the Anthropocene.

Henry Corbin, a twentieth-century French theologian, wrote extensively about imagination as a sensory experience and declared that the Western reader has to be awakened to another order of things as opposed to his old ingrained ways of thinking. For Western readers, the term imaginary equates to unreal. Here the concept of reasoning imagination provides some nourishment as “it neither polarizes the two faculties (of reason and imagination) nor subordinates one to the other” (Rao 67). What it does, as Rao explains, is form a fertile foundation of mnemocultures that float through timeless pasts, bearing indescribable impressions, and while they remain constantly receptive to imaginative futures, they do not follow specific patterns of storytelling from the past (82-83). This, in turn, cultivates a much-needed traditional ecological storytelling in all its embedded, land and water-based glory, discussing the

hows and whys of engaging with the non-human communities and thinking with our entire web of kin. As D. Venkat Rao remarks in his book *Cultures of Memory in South Asia*:

Myth and religion are still the resources for reflection on these articulations for many; in other words, imagination still intimates us with these regions. But to explore these archives of planetary relations—the very nature and concept of science would need a rearticulation. (Rao 38)

This re-articulation is possible through these narratives that bring forth the realization that we are not separate from non-human beings, that our survival is contingent upon them, that these stories, involving non-human beings who playfully, dangerously, generatively inhabit our world, need to be told for a common resilient future. Fairn Herising's reference to the "transformative potential of the margin" realigns "new centers of knowledge gravity" pulled from the borders of Western-centric knowledge" (Lauck 91). By the end of the novel, what survives the cyclone is the collective unconscious of the fisherman Fokir, whose traditional knowledge enables Piya to take a more ethical and relational route towards her conservation project. Fokir's knowledge stored in Piya's GPS holds the archetypal patterns of ancient stories that were orally transmitted, which would then provide access to crucial data to maintain ecological balance.

Conclusion

In *The Hungry Tide*, the tides conflate, erasing the boundaries and forming new territories of porous and permeable ecological relations where humans, animals, water, deities and demons intersect. The novel locates humans and animals as a part of a porous continuum. Ghosh steps away from the anthropocentric structuring of neighboring relations by placing humans and animals in a constantly evolving web of asymmetric powers. The boundaries are retained and relayed through oral stories and rituals, where these boundaries are markers of respect. The encounter of the humans and animals is

inevitable in Sundarbans and may not always be a cordial one. Ghosh, through the novel, reveals that just like the waters of river and sea do not blend evenly in the Sundarbans but interpenetrate each other and create many ecological niches, similarly Sundarbans is a world of not one but of the many and these worlds exist alongside each other maintaining their separateness as well as their sanctity. Pramod K. Nayar in his essay "The Postcolonial Uncanny" states that the Bonbibí myth and other indigenous knowledge in the Sundarbans teach the cosmopolitan humans about the boundaries of knowledge, while also presenting an alternative and sustainable belief system (90). This is how they constitute an ethical postcolonial, by caring panoptically, for the humans of the Sundarbans and also the non-human animals. Such a reading of *The Hungry Tide* reveals that Ghosh has been attentive to the specific local and regional traditions which facilitate the shaping of ethical relations and encounters with the marginalized others and thus decenters the exploitative power matrix of the colonial discourse.

Endnotes

1. I am aware that Posthumanism as a framework is not bereft of its "ethico-political limitations" as Fayaz Chagani maintains in his essay "The Seductions of Posthumanism." Similarly in this essay, my focus shall be on how to overcome the nature-culture dualism that has emanated from the Euro-American centres of modernism, the application and appropriation of theories like posthumanism is what scholars have turned to, which has had serious implications for the humans who have not been able to pull themselves out of the category of sub-human. *The Hungry Tide* deals with these subhumans (*gramerlok*) who seem to be pitted against the man-eating tigers of Sundarbans. On a closer reading, however, we find that these humans are not against the tigers but the Western models of conservation that carry the agenda of marginalizing them further.

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Abstract

This article studies *The Hungry Tide* by Amitav Ghosh as an exemplary text that cuts through the simplistic ideas of human-nonhuman relations. Adapting Bhri Gupta Singh's idea of agonistic intimacy, to a slightly different context, this article endeavours to investigate the cohabitation of ostensibly adversarial neighbours (humans and nohuman animals). The article seeks to elucidate the ways in which mythic and ritualistic oral traditions, related to the guardian spirit Bonbibí, function as mediators, fostering amity in these potentially contentious human animal relations. Ghosh points out the fallacy of ignoring the indigenous ecologies and highlights the absurdity of applying straight jacketed anthropocentric models of care in such contexts. Focusing on the multispecies ethos of the Sundarbans the novel embraces the porous and rhizomatic human-nonhuman kinship. This form of intimacy invokes existence of cohabitation and conflict and Ghosh's novel is a case in point for exploration and understanding of such encounters.

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**THE POIESIS OF SUSCEPTIBILITY:
LANGSTON HUGHES AND QUEER BLACK FRIENDSHIP**

Keywords: Langston Hughes, Harlem Renaissance, Queer Solidarity, Susceptibility, Black Poetry

Poem
by Langston Hughes
(To F. S.)

I loved my friend.
He went away from me.
There's nothing more to say.
The poem ends,
Soft as it began,—
I loved my friend.

Langston Hughes is undoubtedly one of the most prominent figures of the Harlem Renaissance, not least because of his advancement of *jazz poetry*. This essay will review his poem “Poem” (1925) alongside some parts of his essay “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain” (1926) and Isaac Julien’s movie “Looking for Langston” (1989) to examine how the phenomenon “Langston Hughes” and his art can until today be understood as “performances of queer citizenship [which] contain ... an anticipatory illumination of a queer world, a sign of an actually existing queer reality, a kernel of political possibility within a stultifying heterosexual present” (Muñoz 49). While there is a debate about Hughes’ actual sexual orientation,¹ I am more interested in the effects that his (sexual or political) orientation (whatever it might have been historically)

created on his art and thereby on his readers. In A. B. Christa Schwarz's words, the question is how "Hughes produces a multiplicity of meanings, works with an ambiguity of terms, and employs textual strategies, thereby opening up spaces also for gay readings" (72). Although they mention ambiguity and multiplicity, for Schwarz a "gay reading" seems to mean a narrowing down to a singular meaning of the poem. They identify the world created in the poem as "male same-sex space" (72) or "all-male context in which admissions of love supersede a display of hardened masculinity" (73). The third verse ("There's nothing more to say"), they argue, "constitutes a refusal to display further intimate emotions" (73), something they consider to be a potential fall back into a traditional, hardened role of (Black) masculinity.

However, taking Sara Ahmed's thoughts on queerness into account, one can ask whether there is not more to say about the poem "Poem" by thinking about the poem's "potentiality of not following certain conventional scripts of family, inheritance, and child rearing, whereby 'not following' involves disorientation; it makes things oblique, which in turn opens up another way to inhabit those forms" (569). I suggest adding "friendship" to the list of intersubjective relations that are conventionally scripted. What if a queer reading of Hughes' poem does not mean starting from the denotation of a *beloved friend* to end at the connotation of a *sexual partner*, but rather following Foucault and using the potential queerness and ambiguity of the subtext "to arrive at a multiplicity of relationships" (135), at a queer "mode of life" which is much more "disturbing" than any forbidden sexual act could be (136). Foucault suggests that when queer "individuals are beginning to love one another—there's the problem" (137). For is there anything more disruptive to a system based on racism, sexism, and homophobia than the moment when the marginalized subjects build bonds of love among one another?²² While modern systems of disciplinary and regulatory power require nation-states to prohibit love and to replace friendship (especially between groups at the margin of the norms) by law, order, and duty to wage successful wars, there are other regimes that made

better use of the affective sphere. For instance, the Sacred Band of Theben, “an elite corps consisting of 150 pairs of [male] lovers and beloveds” (Ludwig 341) used their soldier’s mutual love for one another to create a powerful army based on the idea that soldiers, in the end, will not fight for their nation but to “protect their friends.” Is it then really a “soft” beginning to claim, as a Black, potentially queer man in White supremacist and homophobic America: “I loved my friend”? There is indeed “nothing more to say,” at least not on the verbal level of commands and order, precisely because the poem exceeds that sphere and aims towards the force of the soft, affective, and suggestive. It is a shift that gives way to a disorienting rupture within the existing socionormative *background* upon which Black (and male) bodies could relate to one another.

“He went away from me” points, then, backward to where he came from, how he came into being, maybe even when he “came” (in any possible sense). With Ahmed (549), one might ask: What was his “arrival into the world” of the poem’s “I” and thereby in our world and what conditioned how he emerged as what he “appears to be in the present”? Yet, one might also be excited to gossip about the reasons for his departure. In their Muñoz Memorial Lecture, Judith Butler (2) reflects on gossip mattered for José Esteban Muñoz as a “form of sustained attention and investment made highly communicable,” a means of disidentification, of departing from what forecloses ways of becoming connected by “ask[ing] another to imagine along, build[ing] a reality, mak[ing] it true, if only for the duration of the communication.” For the duration of the poem, Hughes invites us to gossip with him about why and where his friend left, to engage into utopian speech about where he might have arrived now, about his future, his life and death, the very possibility of a Black, male, and queer future in this world.

“The poem ends.” Is that an answer, and end to that gossip? Unlike the three previous verses, it does not end with a *period*, but punctuates, with a comma, the opening of a *temporal period* between the moment when “the poem ends” and the (real?) end of the poem. According to Butler (6), one of Muñoz greatest

contributions, way beyond a Queer of Color Critique, was to critically “ask, who can imagine a future, to whom does the future belong.” As not everyone is equally allowed to create and imagine a utopia for themselves, “[t]heories of queer temporality that fail to factor in the relational relevance of race or class merely reproduce a crypto-universal white gay subject that is weirdly atemporal” (Muñoz 94). Hence, the question: Why and when does the poem end, and what happens when half of the poem consists of its ending? Maybe it is a rem(a)inder that one century ago what came after Black, queer, intimate, male friendship was nothing ... but death, quite literally the death of the friend, or (taking literally literal) the death of the communication. And not only in that moment but also regarding the future as the archives (or rather lack thereof) about Black, male, and queer friendships show. Is there “nothing more to say” because there is no one left to listen? Neither now nor then?

On the other hand, in his essay on the “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain,” Hughes (30) writes that “[w]e build our temples for tomorrow, strong as we know how, and we stand on top of the mountain, free within ourselves.” In other words, it is at the border of the impossible, of speaking to someone who has just left, of writing about (racial, class, sexual) themes that one cannot write about, of imagining a world that is not (yet) intelligible in the existing terms of thinking about the world, it is in this margin (between “the poem ends” and the end of “Poem”) where one *susceptibility is made*.

Michel Foucault (137), in an interview about gay friendship, suggests that one should try “not so much to liberate our desires but to make ourselves infinitely more susceptible to pleasure” that is to “advance into a homosexual ascesis that would make us work on ourselves and invent—I do not say discover—a manner of being that is still improbable.” When Hughes writes about the soft beginning of a Black, male, and queer friendship, he is himself surrounded by very hardened frontiers along the categories of gender, sexuality, race, and class. He writes thus not about overly optimistic about reality, but about the “still improbable,” rendering us already susceptible to

something cannot yet be. In Gary Wilder's words, Hughes' poem could be understood as *anticipatory*, entailing a "state of readiness for any possibility and a will to overcome existing arrangements by acting from the standpoint of a not-yet redeemed world" (136). That is, while being aware of the normative framework within which soft and loving friendship among Black, queer men is close to impossible, Hughes insists on reclaiming the imaginative standpoint of transgressing the existing limitations without knowing what this might mean. He has nothing to say about this, except from that it is a soft and loving state of intersubjectivity.

Could this be an "anticipatory illumination of a queer world, [...] a kernel of political possibility" (Muñoz 49)? It is surely not a coincidence that the narrator's voice in "Looking for Langston" begins the biographical outline as follows: "Langston Hughes, friend of Countee Cullen, friend of Bruce Nugent, friend of Alain Locke, friend of Wallace Thurman"? A list of some of the most important figures of the Harlem Renaissance, not presented as atomistic, isolated individuals, but as being *in relation*. Or more precisely, Hughes, "friend of" every one of them, is who binds them together. Friendship, then, is no longer (or was never in the first place) unpolitical, especially not in the context of multiply discriminated groups. What this points to is that the "Negro" (art) movement was not only about liberation from *external* restraints, but most importantly about regaining the *internal* freedom of redefining how to relate to one another and oneself, that is, what *community* and *self* can mean when both are negated and devalued, as Hughes (28) puts it, "in the face of American standardization."³

How else can these individualities—who are deemed to never be—find recognition than in friendship, in a supporting community of beloved and loving others (be they, more broadly speaking, queer, Black, feminist, disabled, ...)? Within such a (queer) sphere of *being-friend-of* a "crashing wave of potentiality" (Muñoz 185) arises and takes form which eventually allows for simply *being-oneself*. It further demonstrates clearly the interdependency of

individual's identity formation, for only within "awkward, fractious movement that continues by moving and being moved" (Butler 13), only within this common space the frames of susceptibility get transformed such that the priorly unequal allocation of recognition can be ameliorated. The poem shows this: having been moved by the loved friend's departure, the poet reacts by bringing-into-existence (ποίησις, *poiesis*), through words, what had not been there before: a susceptibility for feeling interdependently bound to the friend, who goes away and continues to be loved. "Poem," the title of the poem, might be the hopeful wish of anticipation of what *could* be when it ends: *poiesis* of frames for love, softness, and friendships. Butler (14) puts it like this:

Perhaps we have the grammar wrong: maybe the structure of that susceptibility is the utopian, and that utopia is neither an object nor an aim. If so, then susceptibility is the capacity to catch the wind that comes from elsewhere, to give way to the protest that arrives damaged and dismissed in advance as impossible. What is deemed impossible within a given horizon turns out to be the potential to break apart the constraining force of that horizon, [...] it does not ask for recognition within the terms of the existing world; it arrives, unrecognizable, to force a reconfiguration of time and space.

Going back to the beginning of "Looking for Langston," one encounters a visual suggestion of how this temporal and spatial reconfiguration expresses a liberating potential and how, in the case of Hughes, it is interlocked with Black, queer, male friendship. The movie begins outside, in the White, cis-heteronormative world, presenting a productive rhythm and rational spatialization. Then, the scenery changes and the viewers are invited to join the private moment of the memorial of Langston Hughes. Synchronous with the narrator finishing the phrase "mind and heart," a teardrop is running down a Black man's face. The camera moves to the body, played by the director himself, and finally zooms out to show that *nobody* is moving ... but the smoke rising in the air. Now, using the structure of the poem, one could retell the same scene as follows: A loving friend (Verse 1) is commemorating a loved friend who went away (Verse 2). In silence, without further words to be said, one engages in

collective mourning (Verse 3) and thereby renders and is rendered by each other mutually susceptible to what (or who) had “arrive[d] damaged and dismissed]” and left “unrecognizable” (Butler 14). Like rising smoke (Verse 4), this moment might be ephemeral, but it can provoke a teardrop to roll down one’s face (Verse 5), i.e., ex-press/exteriorize a friend’s *inner* state of being-moved (Verse 6) and hence move others. Therefore, the poem (as genre and as specific “Poem”) calls for and engages in a reconfiguration of the frames of *who can be moved by whom*. Via the artistic practice of anticipating that what *could be* (although being not yet allowed to in *this* world) might be deemed less unrecognizable. What Hughes teaches in his poem, then, are utopian practices aiming for individuality that is not yet allowed to be: recognizing the force of softness, setting free the power latent in loving friendships in the margins, and engaging in the *poiesis* of susceptibility.

Endnotes

1. A. B. Christa Schwarz (69–70) writes about whether Hughes should be named and/or identified himself as homosexual or asexual. I would, first, like to remind of the term “bisexual” (or “bi” as an umbrella term) for attraction to more than one gender which is sadly left out of the (scholarly) discussion here. Schwarz (84), in this sense becomes object of their own criticism by seeming to “shift emphasis in [...] [sexual] stereotypes rather than transcend them.” Thus, when I use the term “queer” instead of “gay,” I mean explicitly to include bisexuality (As One of many terms of desire indicating a transgression of the homo-hetero dichotomy) in the set of sexual identities. Second, I take Hughes to be “queer” in the sense that he “tends towards” repeatedly being somewhat oblique or strange in relation to the “straight line.” This “nonalignment produces a queer effect” (Ahmed 557), no matter the “orientation” of the historical figure Hughes.
2. Take for instance many current ambitions by right-wing parties in the US or Europe to ban drag and police and punish trans* existence. Apart from the fact that these topics function as successful, scapegoating methods that distract from other issues (like the influence of the gun lobby on politics obscuring the sad truth that more children are endangered by weapons than drag performers), it also serves to separate more conservative, often White from left, intersectionally discriminated queer people, thus dividing the community and preventing friendships and cross-categorical solidarity to be built (which could actually be a danger to the rise of right-wing movements).
3. On this note, let me “gossip” for a second and do *as if* the person behind the initials “F. S.” to whom the poem is dedicated was the German author and critic Friedrich Schiller.

In his series of letters about Aesthetics, he addresses Immanuel Kant's ideas on this topic and argues (very roughly summarized) that art takes over the great responsibility to educate the human being to become *more susceptible* to beauty. Schiller believed that poetry, as *poesis of susceptibility*, will hence make humans also more moral and ethical beings in the political arena. To some degree, Hughes's poem could be understood as both honoring of this politicized tradition of Aesthetics and at the same time as extension towards a more intersectional understanding of what that political arena looks like.

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Abstract

The essay interprets the poem "Poem" by Langston Hughes drawing both from biographical material about the author (e.g., the biopic *Looking for Langston*) and from political writing about queer friendship and solidarity, notably Sara Ahmed, José Esteban Muñoz, and Judith Butler. Instead of engaging in a close reading that tries to do justice to the queerness of the "historical" Langston Hughes, the text tries to identify the power of the poem in providing suggestions of how marginalized individuals can challenge societal norms and open spaces for alternative modes of being. Referring to Michel Foucault's ideas of gay friendship as a disruptive mode of resistance to existing structures of power, the essay develops a more nuanced idea of how Hughes's poetry subscribes to a *poiesis of susceptibility*. In other words, the article argues that the poem allows for a shift away from the dominant mode of subject-formation within oppressive norms by presenting utopian speech and new modes of interrelation, namely Black,

male, and queer friendship. Hence, it rethinks how those to whom the future does not belong can try to reclaim it by creating spheres where potentiality, difference, and otherness can exist and individuals can make themselves intelligible who were previously unrecognizable. Poetry functions in this process as tool that builds and reconfigures the frames of susceptibility allowing for friendships and softness that found no place before or outside of those.

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THE SYMBIOTIC IN “ODE TO THE WEST WIND”: READING ROMANTIC POETRY THROUGH AN ECOCRITICAL LENS

Keywords: Romanticism, Shelley, ecocriticism, Romantic ecocriticism, Symbiosis

Introduction

Ecocriticism is a field in the study of literature where texts are analysed through the prism of ecology. Its advent was a response to the devastating destruction of the earth, or as Glenn A. Albrecht calls it, “tierracide” (2019: 11). The early 1990s gave a clarion call of global warming posing the biggest *irreversible* threat to life on Earth. The rapid increase in the temperatures now had a terrifying name and promised an even more disturbing future. Hence, it is no surprise that the first book to address this problem was draped in themes of grief and lamentation. Jonathan Bate’s *Romantic Ecology* (1991) focused on the widening divide between the past and the present Nature by shifting the focus away from anthropocentric concerns. Bate’s work allowed new engagements with the non-human Nature.

The primary concern of the early eco-theorists was to link the two disparaging areas of studies—ecology and literature—to express a life that goes beyond the orthodox “economic growth and material production” (Bate 9). Bate’s *Romantic Ecology* set out formulations of a life which looked beyond the capital gains of the society. Bate in his text speaks in a tone reminiscent of the very Romantic traditions. The heavy notes of grief play out in his text on the

loss of Nature in the wake of progress (Bate 82). Nearly three decades later, Timothy Clark in his *The Value of Ecocriticism* (2019) revisits Bate's claims and goes on to add how such an analysis helps in identifying the "contradictions, absurdities or injustices" Romantic ecocriticism reveals (2019: 7). The works of Jonathan Bate, Timothy Clark, and recently, Kate Rigby and Glenn A. Albrecht reimagine the cultural significance of a unified (human and non-human) life by focusing on Romantic poetry (Albrecht 2015). The cultural revival of Romantic poetry through ecocriticism offers a second chance to understand the unfamiliar language, thought and sensations of the non-human experiences. Percy Bysshe Shelley in his verse "Ode to the West Wind" harkens to these perceptions and sensations by centering the non-human entity, here the West Wind, and distancing the human speaker's self. Such a phenomenon of 'environmental' or 'nature' poetry is what Clark terms as "ecophenomenological poetry" (2019: 63-64).

This article aims to investigate the integrated relationship between the human and the non-human agencies through an ecocritical lens, particularly in "Ode to the West Wind" by Percy Bysshe Shelley. The paper will simultaneously examine the challenges and reparations of undertaking such a study to counteract the ongoing environmental challenges, including reflections on how the verse represents a Symbiocene relationship between the human and the non-human. It will also shed light on the future prospects of such a relationship.

Romantic Ecocriticism and the Symbiocene

Timothy Clark observes that the revival of Romantic poetry under the guise of ecocriticism is a "reimagination" of various socio-cultural practices. He expands on the idea that the recent trend imitates the Romantic belief where the "environmental destruction can be remedied by cultural means" (Clark 2015: 19). Clark's criticism is crucial in identifying the patterns noticed in the works of Jonathan Bate, the first scholar who pioneered the study in Romantic ecocriticism, with his 'reimagination' of Wordsworth's poetry with the

concurrent ecological concerns. By inserting a non-human component in the poetic genre usually associated with the anthropocentric bias characteristic of the Anthropocene, the new wave of critics allow a redemption arc for Romanticism. Most of the Romantic ecocritical studies, thus, focus on the necessity of balance for a seemingly perfect constitution, advantageous to the human and non-human agencies, as depicted in the “Ode to the West Wind” by Percy Bysshe Shelley.

The Romantic ecocritical scholarship focused primarily on the benefits a relationship between the human and the non-human agencies would reap and how the past, when contrasted with the present, highlights the increasing dominance of the former over the latter. Works by Jonathan Bate and James McKusick advocated a symbiotic relationship between the two agencies by offering a utopian future. Ergo the criticism levied against the scholars as “idealist” and “conservative” speaks about the substantial lack of any practical solutions presented by them to vet against the critical state of the environmental affairs (Davies 5). However, their ideas revolutionized the ecocritical studies as it inspired critics like Timothy Morton and Ian Bogost to develop upon the ideas of Bate and McKusick. Similarly, David Abram and Glenn A. Albrecht also recognize the potential cohabitation of the two disparaging agencies of the human and the non-human. Their works investigate the alternative where the humans address the non-human and collaborate closely with them to revitalize the planet and protect it against further destruction. The idea of preservation was further developed by the theoretical concepts of Deep and Dark Ecology. These ecological theories signify the opposing views on the ways one can attempt to protect the planet. Deep Ecology acknowledges the involvement of humans as “it recognises that neither physically nor psychologically can we live without the green things” (Bate 40). On the other hand, Dark Ecology shuns the involvement of humans as their efforts have affected the planet with additional damage. Critic Emmanouil Aretoulakis, while adopting a Dark Ecological stance, agrees that “as soon as we

stop talking about nature, we will paradoxically cease to objectify, exploit, and thus pollute it" (173).

Kate Rigby in *Reclaiming Romanticism: Towards an Ecopoetics of Decolonization* (2021) presents her views on the process of colonizing Australia by invading foreign agents (people and the non-native flora and fauna) which posit interesting inquiries in ecocritical scholarship. Rigby's work offers a post-colonial perspective on ecology that is a quintessential part of the Australian ecosystem. By aligning the human with the non-human components in her text, Rigby echoes the ideologies of the abovementioned Romantic ecocritics and the Romantic poets through their representation of the *repressed* non-human entities by proposing a "sympathetic re-evaluation of key aspects of European Romanticism" (2021: 3). Shelley in his verse conceptualizes a similar undertaking when he projects his mortal emotions on an ephemeral wind. Through this representation, Shelley gives the centre stage to the wind instead of his human poetic persona. Elsewhere, Kate Rigby in "Ecocriticism and Modernism" agrees that the mortal constraints of humans find an identification in the Freudian idea of the repressed "romantic unconsciousness" where the poet is "aware and in control only of a limited part of what moves and motivates" him (2014: 68). Expanding on the idea of the Romantic unconscious, Bate argues, similarly, that the Romantic poet is aware of his repressed feelings and expresses them in the elemental nature which "brings with it all the thoughts and feelings" one had previously experienced (53). The self-awareness of the limitation broadens the use of natural elements as an expression for the repressed unconscious thoughts. Nature, by extension, becomes, then, animated and a tool for expression. The active reprisal of Romanticism is an assertion of the multifaceted genre of poetry and its actualization in ecocriticism.

Percy Bysshe Shelley presents the formidable West Wind as expressing the speaker's desired power and freedom. The want of freedom, experienced by individuals limited by the society's inhibitions, is the preliminary verbal

expression for the use of the non-human-others in Romantic poetry. For the Romantics, poetry, as Bate argues, is expressed both by language and nature and becomes a means of “emotional communication between man and the natural world” (17). “Ode to the West Wind” personifies this communication between the human, mortal, and non-human, immortal, agents of change. The critical works of Jonathan Bate, James McKusick and Glenn Albrecht attempt to consolidate the two components as did Shelley in his verse. Their works adopt object-oriented ontology highlighting that humans are alike all the non-human entities instead of being the primary or the sole contender. The critics theorize Shelley’s verse in a new setting; instead of placing his poetic persona at the forefront, Shelley exalts the West Wind. Glenn Albrecht in his work coalesces the two forces—non-human and human—in a new setting, a setting which he calls the ‘Symbiocene.’ The term refers to the harmonious amity of Nature and humans in building a companionship proffering both, as is represented in the verse. Thus, Shelley’s verse can be situated in Albrecht’s Symbiocene context.

In certain ways, poetry grants one the liberty to achieve the unattainable by creating a false reality, such as the perfect communion of the human and non-human. In a sense, Shelley’s Ode is an augmented reality which overlooks the destruction of Nature, yet it is this augmented and fractured truth that connects Shelley with Bate, McKusick and Albrecht’s proposed Symbiocene. The aforementioned Romantic ecocritics ascertain the non-human to be the expression of the mysterious artistic creativity and one’s deepest desires that are only manifested in dreams, visions, and poetic diction, therefore justifying Shelley’s employment of the West Wind (Bate 17). Shelley manifests an unusual reality marked by its idealism, thereby welding the ‘ideal reality’ as conferred by Romantic ecocritics.

Furthermore, the knowledge of irreversible time and impending death magnifies the mortal constraints that Shelley recounts in his verse repeatedly culminating not only in the idealism of the West Wind but also its symbolism of the liaison of human and the non-human element. Through his veneration of

the West Wind, Shelley challenges the authoritative stance of humans towards the non-humans, henceforth, satisfying the object-oriented ontology. To substantiate the previous statements, the poetic persona recounts the storm he came across whilst living in Florence, Italy, at the beginning of the Ode. He describes the storm as a violent tempest of hail and rain underlying the authority of the wind. The verse cancels out the dominance of humans over the non-human by representing the speaker, human, as inferior to the West Wind. Through the anthropocentric descriptions of the West Wind, the poet displaces the abstract puissance of the Wind with something that humans can only mildly comprehend. Thus, the speaker effectively designates the power of a "maenad," drunk high on its power, a mythical being but with descriptively anthropomorphic actions and behaviours (Shelley, II. 21). Aretoulakis argues that in "Shelley's poetic vision especially there is a vacillation between the momentary identification with the 'natural' other and subsequent presentation of that other as completely at odds with, perhaps even inimical to, humanity" (182).

Shelley revamps the traditional idea of the Symbiocene with his fusion of the Deep and Dark Ecology through his acceptance of the human vulnerabilities in light of the superior, mighty non-human, West Wind. The verse shows respect to the splendour of the Wind while scaling down the anthropomorphic concerns, particularly in the fourth canto emphasizing the overwhelming difference between the poetic persona, human, and the West Wind, non-human. The poetic persona reflects on the powerlessness of his mortal and infinitesimally weaker body whereas the puissance of the West Wind is described with such expressions as "Wild Spirit," "congregated might," "Atlantic's level powers," "uncontrollable," one with "skiey speed," and "tameless" (Shelley, I, 13; II, 26; III, 37, IV, 47, 50, 56). His representation of the non-human West Wind intimidates the existing nomenclature as well. By presenting the non-human as an independent being, the poet and the ecocritics, likewise, destabilize the concurrent values of what constitutes 'normal.' By

establishing the dominance of the West Wind over the humans, Shelley presents an altered understanding of the world by questioning the 'accepted' power in the relationship between the human and the non-human elements. Many ecocritics along the lines of Timothy Morton, Ian Bogost, and Kate Rigby investigate the vestiges of what the 'Natural' would signify in the context of the human and the non-human agents. Placing Shelley's West Wind in the supposed context of authority ought to place the human over the non-human, but the opposite dynamics of the verse heighten the fact that Nature exists beyond the human comprehension and affairs (Clark 2019: 33). Shelley, however, embarks to bridge the gap between the two. The fifth canto is a vision with the conjoined forces of the two elements for a brighter future. The concluding canto effectively follows after the four cantos affirming the undefeated West Wind and concludes the poetic vision. The beseeching tone of the fifth canto allows Shelley to (i) unify the non-human and the human forces, (ii) accentuate their differences that set them apart and the similarities that make them infallible together, and (iii) carry out the poetic vision for the progeny. The incongruent power relation in the verse reveals insidious effect of the Anthropocene in cleaving "culture and nature, fact and value, and between the human and the geological or metrological" (Clark 2015: 9). Akin to the human's supposed dominance over Nature, the recent studies in ecocriticism challenge the preconceived cultural notions and practices. Shelley as well questions the legitimacy of the supposed human authority with his West Wind.

Shelley's Symbiocene

The speaker in the Ode aspires to merge with the "Spirit fierce" of the West Wind and echoes his passion for a possible communion (Shelley, V. 61). The recurrent hunger in the fourth canto reiterates his incapability of accessing the treasure chest that would grant him such a mighty power and unquenchable freedom. His invocation of the strong West Wind to play him like a "lyre" as it does to a "wave, a leaf, a cloud" serves as an acknowledgement and acceptance

of his incapability to acquire that puissance (Shelley, IV. 53; V. 57). Shelley, through his speaker, accepts his limited accessibility to divine power which brings several binaries to the reader's attention. The elementary thematic concern of the verse deals with mortal constraints and immortal abundance, followed by several other conflicts between the self and the external world. Time is a daunting foe that reiterates humans' fragility and the brief stay they are granted on earth. Shelley builds upon this temporality of the humans and their inability to "outstrip" the speed of the West Wind to heighten the conflict between the immortal West Wind and the "chain'd and bow'd" mortal (Shelley, IV, 50; IV, 55).

The imbalance that Shelley paints in his Ode through the rendition of a weak poetic persona allows for the realization of the cycle of life. The verse emulates the aesthetics of Autumn with its dead leaves which are "driven like ghosts" and the Wind promises the winter's "grave" (Shelley I, 2-8). It is followed with the incoming "dirge" of the "dying year" (Shelley II, 23-24) and an indication of a desolating Winter striking fear in the blooming "azure moss and flowers" causing their spoil (Shelley III, 35). The series of deaths the Autumn wind carries with it is akin to the despair of the brief human life. Shelley, through his verse, draws a depressing image of life with its long moments of desolation, to be swept away only with a gust of Spring. The anticipated arrival of Spring is mentioned in the first canto and again in the concluding one reiterating Shelley's attempt to colour the dull mortal life with hope. The deathly mighty Wind is only defeated by the incantation of the prophetic Spring. Thereupon, the "Ode to the West Wind" is a representative fragment of the human life that affirms the inevitability of death while also ensuring the continuation of life. The fifth canto's portrayal of a beginning and an end is reflective of the inescapable death of the poetic persona at the promise of posterity. The death of human life is like "winged seeds" that lie "cold and low" in the Winter and only awaken with the "trumpet" of Spring (Shelley I, 7: V, 69).

The perspective Shelley offers in his verse can also be argued to represent a symbiosis of two divergent entities in a perfect semblance or the Symbiocene, where the human and the non-human entities—like Nature—form a compatible relationship with each other. The abovementioned adjectives solidify such a relationship through the anthropomorphic characteristics of the non-human. Shelley makes the readers aware of the metaphorical Nature and how congruent it is with the human life through personification. The submission and the eventual acceptance of human fallacies support the concept of the Symbiocene. Instead of showing them as equal, Shelley describes an imbalanced relationship by placing the West Wind, a non-human element, owing to its unimaginable power, higher on the scale than his human poetic persona. The potent West Wind is untouchable and remains untainted in this asymmetrical hierarchy created by the poet. This asymmetrical relationship aligns with contemporary ecocritical studies, particularly the post-humanist Deep and Dark Ecology. With the two polarizing views on how to safeguard the ecology and neither of the two theoretical concepts offering viable solutions, a more hybrid discipline is necessitated. Shelley is receptive to the imbalanced structures, as described in the verse where the first three cantos exude the exuberant power of the West Wind, followed by the admission of the speaker's weak, mortal, constitution which is unable to compete against it in the last two cantos. He presents a hybrid form of dark and deep ecological perspective, as Aretoulakis claims. Shelley in his verse accepts the West Wind to be far superior to his mortal self by continuously contrasting its humanoid poetic persona with that of a "leaf," a "cloud," or a "wave" (Shelley IV, 43-45). This admission is taken further with his request of being used as an instrument and played according to the whims of the Wind. Such a contrasting role reversal of the human and the non-human provides the ground for the hybrid actualization of Dark and Deep Ecology. Shelley creates a picture where the non-human element *needs* humanist descriptions to 'disturb' the balance of the dynamic relation between humans and non-human agents, while also simultaneously *not*

needing them to survive. Through the verse, Shelley creates a magnificent image of the independent West Wind.¹ However, it is to be noted that while Shelley attributes liberty to the Wind, he is in no way alluding to its self-reliance; while the Wind is autonomous in all its right, it also needs the human intelligence for recognition of that supreme power. The role reversal is crucial in the understanding of the ecocritical nuances which the contemporary theories offer as it seeks for balance of the two diverse forces.

Another important factor to consider historically was the increasing commercialisation of natural habitats during the 19th Century. Wordsworth's fight to preserve the sanctity of his beloved Lake District sanctioned the commercialisation of the district into a tourist spot in the later years (Bate 88). Timothy Clark, in his book *Cambridge Introduction to Literature and Nature* (2011), applauds Bate's attempts in showing how the Romantic poets assess the importance of the beautiful Natural world and encourage environmental engagement but at the risk of "over-idealising premodern and capitalist ways of life" (Clark 2015: 19). Glenn A. Albrecht also shares a similar concern when he states that the emotive associations the Australian aboriginals made with their homelands and the eventual nostalgia they experienced on parting with it, "solastalgia"², consecrated their authority over it (2019: 10). The grief and the lamentation they share on their dissociation from the familiar land also premeditate the fundamentals of capitalism, for it allows altered autonomy of nature in the form of tourist parks and national reserves.

The mysterious West Wind crumbles the preconceived dominance of humans over non-humans by presenting the various incapacities of the former ever to achieve the latter's greatness. In that respect, Glenn Albrecht (2019) facilitates active engagement with the non-human and redefines the relationship of humans with their Nature. The Symbiocene asks for participation of the humans to revive the planet but also to accept the autonomy of the non-human(s), here the West Wind. Kate Rigby, too, opens up a similar thread of inquiry when she offers her observation how nature can be a

“matter of negotiation rather than mastery” and can assist in the creation of more “life-sustaining patterns of interrelationship” between the man and its multiple non-human others (2014: 68). Albrecht and Rigby, as ecocritics, and Shelley, as a poet, honor the individuality and independence of non-humans in their respective works. Despite their contextual differences, the thoughts of Albrecht and Rigby echo Shelley’s, particularly in depicting the two divergent elements, human and non-human, at harmony with each other rather than at war. Their respective works seek alignment by giving due cognizance to the silent yet existing non-human elements.

Conclusion

Shelley’s “Ode to the West Wind” brings into conversation several notions of the interrelationship of the human and the non-human agencies by presenting alternate views of the Symbiocene. Nature continues to remain intangible and incoherent to the human understanding which Shelley celebrates in his Ode. While Romantic ecocriticism demonstrates a nuanced perspective to the study of Romanticism while contemporaneously introducing concepts to combat the degeneration of the planet, it is also subjected to rudimentary claims of its apparent failure in offering pragmatic and immediate solutions, as Timothy Clark points out. Yet Clark also believes that *only* through the investigation made by recent scholarship in the field of ecocriticism can considerable changes be made (2015: 19). Percy Shelley’s optimistic conclusion aligns with the continuing contemporary scholarship of ecocriticism that involves a hybridisation of various studies and divergent disciplines.

Endnotes

1. This statement is not true of the concurrent condition of the planet. While the non-human will persevere, they will also perish if not recognized and catered to by the humans for their preservation.
2. Solastalgia: a term coined by Glenn A. Albrecht (2019) to denote the emotional distress, grief, suffering experienced by people owing to the changing climate conditions for the worse as it negatively impact one’s home environments.

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Abstract

In the last thirty years, Romanticism has been approached from various nuanced lenses, and ecocriticism is one such perspective. The recent scholarship allowed a redemptive arc for the early 19th-century poetry, which was earlier disregarded because of its promises of aestheticism and overtly exaggerated fantasies. Most criticism of Romantic poetry focused on its anthropomorphic imagery. As a result, it delineated the peripheral non-human entities as mere embellishments or expressions.

Ecocritical studies of the early nineteenth century, while acknowledging the non-human entities in the poetics of the Romantics, inevitably fell short in accounting for the dualities and concerns of both the agents by effectively erasing the human component from their discourses. The earlier Romantic ecological studies reminisce and idealize the past glories of nature without accounting for the desolating present and their altruistic view in disparaging the human agency.

This paper will attempt to place the above conflicting ideas by presenting the "Ode to the West Wind" in a 'Symbiocene,' a term coined by Glenn A. Albrecht to denote a new era countering the damaging Anthropocene. Additionally, it brings together the two seemingly divergent scales of investigation of human and non-human agencies in ecocritical studies. The paper will also discuss Percy Bysshe Shelley's famous ode in the modern-day context of the deteriorating earth.

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**DEPARTING FROM THE ARCHETYPE OF “MANLY” MAN:
A PORTRAIT OF A MAN IN *SCENES FROM A MARRIAGE* (2021)**

Keywords: hegemonic masculinity, caring man, inclusive masculinity, gender

Introduction

While the crisis of masculinity has been the recurring topic of critical debates, this article argues that it is more accurate to talk about a transition, or perhaps even a revolution in the prevailing masculinity model. Numerous contemporary cultural texts depart from the patriarchal portrayal of a man and present other types of masculinity. That is the case in *Scenes From A Marriage*¹, a miniseries released by HBO in 2021, which presents inclusive masculinity, analysed in this article. In order to demonstrate the changes masculinity has undergone, the successive sections of this article will comment on the notions of hegemonic masculinity, culturally imposed gender norms, as well as inclusive masculinity. The article will conclude with an analysis of Jonathan Levy, the protagonist of the television miniseries, as an example of inclusive masculinity.

Hegemonic Masculinity

Patriarchal or hegemonic masculinity is a cultural construct that for centuries has been the only accepted model of masculinity. Formulated in the 1980s, the notion of hegemonic masculinity has its beginning in research concerning social inequalities, men's bodily experiences, and labour in Australia (Connell and Messerschmidt 830). In their article tracing the development of the concept,

Connell and Messerschmidt point to the existence of multiple hegemonic masculinities and argue that

hegemonic masculinities can be constructed that do not correspond closely to the lives of any actual men. Yet these models do, in various ways, express widespread ideals, fantasies, and desires. They provide models of relations with women and solutions to problems of gender relations. Furthermore, they articulate loosely with the practical constitution of masculinities as ways of living in everyday local circumstances. (Connell and Messerschmidt 838)

Hegemonic masculinity constitutes the notion of an ideal man that is simply a cultural stereotype, probably never to be achieved. Indeed, it is poorly reflected in reality—the men who benefit from patriarchy but do not display excessively dominant behaviour associated with an exemplary hegemonic man represent a model of “complicit masculinity” (Connell and Messerschmidt 832). Next to the “complicit” model of masculinity, there are “subordinate” and “marginalized” ones (Connell and Messerschmidt 844; Howson and Hearn 45). Notably, hegemonic masculinity excludes men based on their sexuality, race, and class (Connell and Messerschmidt), and homophobia and misogyny have played a key role in the creation of this model of manhood (Anderson 2009: 7).

The ideal of hegemonic masculinity, being unattainable, adversely affects men’s well-being, self-esteem, as well as mental and physical health. Will H. Courtenay illustrates some problems with this model of masculinity in the context of boys and men’s health. In *Dying to be Men. Psychosocial, Environmental, and Biobehavioral Directions in Promoting the Health of Men and Boys*, Courtenay shows that research connects society’s expectations with greater pressure on boys and men than on girls and women. According to the psychologist, social pressure requires men and boys not to express their emotions or seek help but to engage in hazardous situations (Courtenay 32-33). Courtenay depicts hegemonic masculinity as “the socially dominant gender construction that subordinates femininities and other forms of masculinity, and reflects and shapes men’s social relationships with women and other men; it represents power and authority” (145). Referring to American manhood, he

states that “hegemonic masculinity is embodied in heterosexual, highly educated, European American men of upper-class economic status” (145). Clearly, this model of masculinity excludes a significant number of identities: gay, bisexual, asexual, trans men, and non-binary persons; men of colour; and uneducated lower-class men. In her article about (un)manly man, Małgorzata Herudzińska elaborates on the definition of hegemonic masculinity by adding that this model has been preserved through the institutions of family, school, the Church, economy, and politics (Herudzińska 295). The fact that multiple cultural factors are responsible for the development and promotion of hegemonic masculinity points to its intricate character. Hence, improving the situation of men enduring physical and psychological hardships caused by the model of masculinity enforced on them requires both time and fundamental reform of cultural, social, political, religious, and economic structures.

Furthermore, patriarchal masculinity is strongly associated with “the denial of weakness or vulnerability, emotional and physical control, the appearance of being strong and robust, dismissal of any need for help, a ceaseless interest in sex, the display of aggressive behaviour, and physical dominance” (Courtenay 145). As a consequence of privileging this model of manhood, men rarely ask for help, repress their true needs, refrain from displaying emotions, and schedule doctor’s appointments with resistance. Furthermore, in “‘Try to be a man’: the Rabbinic construction of masculinity,” Michael Satlow claims that masculinity can never be taken for granted, since one needs to constantly prove that one is a man (19), which exposes men to even more intense pressure. One of the factors that solidify this representation of an ideal man is the power of media. In the paper discussing the image of man in contemporary press advertisements, Iwona Chmura-Rutkowska elaborates on the pressure put on men when it comes to their appearance and psychological traits. According to research, desirable men in press advertising are presented as young, fit, athletic, and handsome, displaying features such as high self-esteem, determination, ambition, and pursuit of success (Chmura-Rutkowska). This

false representation prompts men to repress their desires and adopt the model of a “manly” man promoted and reinforced by patriarchy.

The above description of hegemonic masculinity undeniably demonstrates its discriminative features and detrimental effect on men as well as points to the complexity of problems experienced by men living in patriarchal societies. Hegemonic masculinity excludes and stigmatizes numerous groups of people on several levels: social, economic, political, and cultural. Men are excluded from the hegemonic model due to their sexuality (Connell and Messerschmidt; Anderson), race, and class (Connell and Messerschmidt), and manifestation of traditionally feminine traits such as care, expressing emotions, crying, and helplessness. In other words, hegemonic masculinity’s objective is to “bring together elements of gender to work together to persuade the popular consciousness of the legitimacy of its hegemonic principles as well as the exclusion and marginalization of anything that might jeopardize or not represent the these principles” (Howson and Hearn 49). Hegemonic masculinity does not accept nonconformity and otherness, legitimizing the application of coercion, where required, to exclude and/or marginalize others.

Man-Woman Binary Opposition

In the introduction to *The Gendered Society*, Michael Kimmel ponders upon the relationship between men and women in order to explain why they differ so greatly. In doing so, he refers among others to the common saying that men and women “come from different planets” (Kimmel 1). Nevertheless, the scholar points out that men and women perform the same activities, for instance, watching the same TV programmes and reading the same books (Kimmel 1-2). More importantly, he emphasises that “[w]hen we speak about gender we also speak about hierarchy, power, and inequality, not simply difference” (Kimmel 2). In other words, it should be acknowledged that there is a connection between performing a particular gender and one’s social status. Arguably, the less manly a person is, the more discriminatory behaviour they encounter.

The significance of gender performativity should be brought to attention; the term was used for the first time in Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* (1990). Gender performativity assumes that one's sex does not determine one's behaviour and that gender is an act one performs in order to fulfil society's expectations. The philosopher says that

if gender is instituted through acts which are internally discontinuous, then the *appearance of substance* is precisely that, a constructed identity, a performative accomplishment which the mundane social audience, including the actors themselves, come to believe and to perform in the mode of belief. (Butler 141)

Gender is not innate and stable but artificially created by the repetitious performance of acts compliant with society's vision of a specific gender standard; these norms are reproduced, consolidated, and legitimised through performativity.

Traditionally, men's traits stand in opposition to that of women's; in fact, practices of gendering vary depending on time and place: in different cultures, societies, and periods, various traits have been attributed to men and women. Michael Satlow elaborates on the "typically" manly features, pointing to the fact that in Greek, Roman, and Jewish societies a man was characterised by self-restraint, spirituality, reason, discipline, and wisdom, while a woman was presented as weak, nondeliberate, passionate, and lustful (Satlow). As a matter of fact, every person regardless of their gender can possess the abovementioned traits in varying degrees, and a growing number of scholars claim that having both masculine and feminine traits, androgyny, is of the utmost importance to maintain a balanced life. In her article concerning matriarchy and patriarchy, Aldona Musiał-Kidawa points to androgyny as a means to a harmonious life and mental health. Based on her findings, she claims that it is highly probable for androgynous people to have a better-developed self-esteem, intelligence, the repertoire of behaviour (departure from imposed gender-specific behaviour), spatial imagination, creativity, and the ability to act constructively because they are not restricted by the categories society wants

to force upon them (Musiał-Kidawa 336). The scholar argues that the traditional roles of women and men are not so much reversing, but rather being combined, which results in the extension of cultural competences, and benefits society (Musiał-Kidawa 338). On the other hand, Marta Doroba-Sawa argues that the changes in cultural perception of gender roles, e.g. changing models of femininity, are the source of confusion for men. In her study of the complexities of male identity, the author points to the inability of men to determine their masculinity, brought about by the redefinition of femininity. While women are encouraged to express their womanhood in numerous ways, men do not know how to create a consistent model of masculinity, which, in fact, leads to some sort of crisis (Doroba-Sawa 61-63). It seems that men require more assistance or guidance in exploration of their masculinities so that every man will be able to construct a satisfactory male identity of his own.

Inclusive Masculinity

The second half of the twentieth century was marked by the development of men's studies, including Joseph Pleck's criticism of traditional manhood (1981), the publication of R.W. Connell's *Masculinities* (1993), and Jeff Hearn's work that offered a critique of the connection between hegemonic masculinity and violence and analysed the construction of public men and patriarchies (1998). The evolution of men's studies led to numerous revisions of the concept of masculinity, including the development of the notion of inclusive masculinity, proposed by Eric Anderson at the beginning of the 21st century. Anderson points to the importance of homophobia to the definition of masculinity and claims that the prominence of the hegemonic model of masculinity is connected to the prominence of homophobia in society, due to men's need to defend their heterosexuality and masculinity. The decrease of homophobia allows multiple models of masculinity to appear together. These new models neither claim to be more significant than other forms of manhood nor stigmatise them (Anderson 2015: 434-438; Anderson 2009). Anderson argues that (especially

in sports) men's display of homophobic behaviour frequently is no more than an act: that is, men pretend they do not accept gay men in order not to be rejected by their (supposedly) homophobic heterosexual colleagues (Anderson 2009: 1). Such behaviour is induced, among others, by "compulsory heterosexuality" (Anderson 2009: 3). Reduction of homophobia, appreciation of physical and emotional intimacy, and engagement in previously stigmatised feminine behaviours lead to the construction of inclusive masculinity (Anderson 2015: 434-438).

The intertwinement of male and female gender roles has been studied by scholars like Agnieszka Dudak. According to her research, the transformation of masculinity can be seen in the growing role of a father in a child's upbringing and the satisfaction it gives men (Dudak). Furthermore, the inclusive model of manhood allows men to derive deep satisfaction from care, which is stereotypically considered feminine and thus unmanly. To illustrate, Katarzyna Suwada analyses the experiences of fathers who resigned from professional work to take care of their children. After interviews with a Polish and a Swedish father, Suwada puts forward the following conclusions: when men are not professionally active and instead have traditionally womanly obligations and childcare duties, they acknowledge the difficulties of staying at home and being dependent, appreciate unpaid domestic and care work that needs to be done, and even grow to enjoy it. Moreover, men acknowledge that being a father is not just about providing financial aid but building emotional closeness to their children (Suwada 82-88). The conclusion is that a universal model of caring masculinity (which can be treated as a sub-type of the inclusive one) does not exist yet but has to be individually created by men in accordance with their needs (Suwada 89). As the research shows, there is a strong need to depart from hegemonic masculinity, to build man's identity not strictly around what is "non-womanly," and to turn towards more androgynous and inclusive models of masculinity.

The Portrait of a Man in *Scenes From A Marriage*

Scenes From A Marriage addresses the problem encountered by a man who needs to redefine himself in response to the changing positions and relations between men and women. Directed by Hagai Levi, an Israeli writer, director, and producer, the miniseries was released in 2021 by HBO. The protagonists, Jonathan Levy, a Jewish university professor, and Mira Philips, a successful corporation manager, are portrayed by Oscar Isaac and Jessica Chastain. Interestingly, at the beginning of each episode, Isaac and Chastain are shown on their way to the set, which clearly dissociates actors from characters and highlights the show's fictional nature. Jonathan and Mira have been married for more than 10 years and have a young daughter. Since Jonathan's work hours are rather flexible, he does household chores and takes care of the child, while Mira is the main breadwinner and often travels. The husband is a calm, deliberate and caring person, willing to prioritise the needs of others over his own, but at the same time, he is often absent-minded. The wife's strong personality is accompanied by secrecy and a considerable need for physical closeness.

Prior to the analysis, let me recall the most crucial events of the series. In the first episode, "Innocence and Panic," Mira and Jonathan participate in a survey conducted by a young woman for her PhD about evolving gender norms. Later in the episode, Mira tells Jonathan that she is pregnant. They discuss this pregnancy, trying to express their feelings about this unexpected news. Mira chooses to have an abortion and Jonathan takes her to the hospital, where she undergoes the procedure. In the hospital, Jonathan seems anxious because, as a matter of fact, he wants to have another child. In episode two, after she returns from a business trip, Mira confesses that she has been having an affair with a man named Poli, who also works in a corporation and is younger than her, and that she is going to live with him for a while because she needs the passion Jonathan has never really given her. Jonathan suggests couples therapy because he thinks that their marriage is worth saving. When Mira expresses her

disbelief that therapy would help and decides to leave, Jonathan assists in packing her things since he does not wish her to feel trapped in what she describes as a predictable, passionless life ("Poli"). Devastated by Mira's leaving, Jonathan decides to see a therapist. One year later, Mira visits Jonathan and tries to seduce him; however, Jonathan resists. He tells his wife that when she left, he had no idea how to live and that taking care of their daughter Ava saved him ("The Vale of Tears" Ep. 3). In the fourth episode, Jonathan admits he cherishes care work and housework, and he would love for his daughter to have a sibling ("The Illiterates"). Jonathan informs Mira about what he found out during his therapy, namely that he considers it more important to have another child than to have another partner (Ep. 4). In the last episode, Jonathan and Mira are not married anymore, though the very scene of finalising the divorce is absent in the series. They renew their relationship several months after the divorce ("In the Middle of the Night, in a Dark House, Somewhere in the World"). They live separate lives but meet secretly—the romance continues, even though Jonathan has married another woman, with whom he has a son. Intriguingly, the protagonist admits that he has had several affairs, including the current one with Mira (Ep. 5).

Taking into consideration the entirety of Jonathan's actions and features, it can be argued that he does not represent the hegemonic model of manhood and that his behaviour reflects the tenets of inclusive masculinity. The protagonist does not attempt to convince anybody that he is invulnerable, as a traditional man should be. Quite the contrary, he acknowledges his weaknesses and seeks help when needed. To illustrate, when Jonathan realises how devastated he is by Mira's leaving, he decides to undergo therapy, which he greatly benefits from. Going to therapy is a seemingly simple step but, in fact, one that requires considerable courage, especially for men, who are usually encouraged not to admit that they experience anxiety, depression, or trauma. The protagonist confesses that due to therapy, he is able to recognise the anxiety present in his life since childhood and acknowledges that his frequent mental absence could

have been one reason for his wife leaving him. While Mira is tempting Jonathan with promises of being together again, he is able to resist her because he acknowledges the harm it would cause by undoing the progress he achieved during therapy. In the scene, Mira and Jonathan sit in the living room of their old house. It is night, the lights are dim, and the atmosphere is conducive to sharing the most intimate moments. Jonathan reads his journal to Mira so as to make her understand the pain he experiences. Suddenly, the woman approaches the protagonist and starts kissing him; they lay on the floor. When Mira lands on top of Jonathan, his face expresses doubt, his eyes open and full of hesitation as he says that he does not want to make love to Mira because it is not good for him, it would cause him only pain. Mira takes her body off Jonathan's and lays down behind his back, hugging him and asking him to tell her what it was really like after she left. The close-up is on the former couple's faces as Jonathan depicts the torment he felt in the first moments of separation (Ep. 3). This scene is quite powerful: a man allows himself to be vulnerable, shares the most intimate memories with the person who hurt him, lets someone hear him out and embrace him with tenderness.

Furthermore, Jonathan manifests his inclusive masculinity through putting aside the hegemonic need to dominate others or exercise physical and emotional control and leaving space for other people to express their feelings. He learns how to express his emotions, which contrasts with his behaviour on hearing about Mira's pregnancy when his inability to talk about his feelings creates the false impression that he does not want another child. The married couple are in bed, getting ready to sleep when Mira sits down stiffly and sighs heavily, clearly wanting to share something with her husband. Jonathan carefully observes Mira and patiently waits for her to open up. She admits to being pregnant and Jonathan's response is rather reserved, but he seems surprised when Mira tells him that she does not know what to do about the pregnancy. The husband asks his wife about her feeling regarding pregnancy and Mira admits that she does not know. Jonathan wonders whether it was

simply “meant to be,” for the couple originally planned to have more children, which makes Mira argue that the reality of giving birth was harsh. The whole situation causes an asthma attack in Jonathan. When it is over, they hug and talk about the time Ava was born and how terrible it was for Mira. The woman cries as she and her husband imagine what it would be like to have a second child, but eventually, they decide to terminate this pregnancy (Ep. 1.). Being a considerate and deliberate man and a real partner to his wife, Jonathan accepts and supports her decision to have an abortion. As a husband, he treats Mira with the utmost respect and believes in gender equality. He always takes into consideration what his wife thinks, feels, and needs. Jonathan assures his wife that he is going to support every decision she makes about the pregnancy, which shows that he is undoubtedly a caring husband and man. When Mira’s affair is revealed (Ep. 2), he calmly asks questions about the details, even though he feels offended and hurt. Jonathan does not want to manifest those negative feelings through shouting or verbal and physical violence. Moreover, he does not consider women to be merely sexual objects and treats them with the utmost respect to the extent that Mira thinks he lacks passion and sexual initiative. After divorcing his wife, Jonathan undergoes sexual liberation, which positively affects his life. While lesser restraint helps the man celebrate his sexuality and enjoy physical intimacy with women, it does not indicate that he does not respect women anymore.

The significance of changing gender roles is stressed at the very beginning of the series. Jonathan and Mira participate in a survey by a PhD student who researches evolving gender roles and their influence on monogamous marriages, which points to the importance of this topic also in academia. The questions asked by the student demonstrate the growing importance of care to men and point to transformations in the roles of husbands and wives. Care for a partner’s well-being, sensitivity to another person’s needs and satisfying them before addressing one’s own desires, and the importance of having children seem to reflect features traditionally ascribed to women. Care, associated with

effeminacy, is crucial for the transition from hegemonic towards inclusive manhood. It blurs the boundaries between traditional masculinity and femininity and enables a more unrestrained expression of a person's gender. In a patriarchal world, it is the man who provides for the family and is often physically and emotionally distanced from his children. On the other hand, the woman's domain is the home, as she is constantly occupied by housework and care work. In *Scenes From A Marriage*, the gender roles are reversed: the husband stays at home and provides his child with care, while the wife is the main breadwinner, usually absent. Commenting on the changes to gender roles and swapping the duties of the wife and the husband, the director of the series stated that such a transformation "changes everything" (Levi in Tallerico). Indeed, the reversal of gender roles allows Jonathan and Mira's relationship to reflect more accurately contemporary models of marriages or partnerships in general. What is more, despite possessing certain "feminine" characteristics, Jonathan remains masculine. The protagonist seems to have a better predisposition to care work than his wife and admits to enjoying maintaining the house and nursing his daughter Ava. He confesses that he would love to have more children and his dream is fulfilled after he divorces Mira: a son is born to him and his new wife. With respect to Ava, Jonathan often expresses his deep concern about the influence of Mira's visits and romance with Poli on her well-being, which worsened during separation. It is not to say that Mira does not care about her daughter but to emphasise this kind of fatherly tenderness which is rarely seen on screen.

Arguably, such a portrayal of a masculinity model significantly differing from the hegemonic one positively affects the viewers struggling with expressing masculinities other than the dominant ideal of manhood. Significantly, Jonathan is not merely a fictional character as in the interview for *The Times of Israel*, Hagai Levi admitted that he drew from personal experience while creating Jonathan: "The morning pages Jonathan reads [to his wife]², I took from my own diaries, kind of. And I've been through a divorce. I know the price that kids

pay” (Levi in Rosen). Possibly, this confession may deepen Jonathan’s significance for the viewers, for he is not simply an imaginary person and his problems mirror real-life struggles.

Importantly, the portrayal of a reserved professor by such a masculine actor as Oscar Isaac seems to be significant in relation to the supposed (danger of) effeminacy associated with inclusive masculinity; Hagai Levi considers Oscar Isaac quite masculine, even “a male sex symbol” (Levi in Tallerico). This might be perceived as an illustration of gender performativity. Arguably, three levels of performativity can be noticed in the show: 1) Jonathan performing his masculinity; 2) Oscar Isaac portraying Jonathan’s masculinity; 3) Isaac acting out his gender in real life. This notion of identity as performance is reinforced by the self-referentiality of the show: each episode begins with the actors arriving on the set and adopting the personas they play. While Jonathan is portrayed as more feminine, Mira displays several traditionally masculine features: financially and emotionally she is more independent than Jonathan. The transition in gender roles, the institution of marriage, and the relationship between spouses is accompanied by a change of attitude towards divorce. People, especially women, feel more free to dissolve marriage if it is not satisfactory instead of saving it whatever the cost may be. Levi’s drama indicates that terminating a marriage does not necessarily mean losing something or someone, e.g. spouse, house, or children, but gaining freedom, just like Mira. Divorce does not always indicate the end of a relationship. Mira and Jonathan still meet, though secretly, and they even seem to discuss their relationship more openly than during their marriage.

As a concluding remark, one could suggest that Hagai Levi’s miniseries provides the audience with a perceptive and comprehensive portrayal of modern marriage. According to Mangan, the show ponders on the negotiation of a long-term relationship, the possible inevitability of marriage struggles, and the meaning of passion between spouses. Questions are also asked about the consequences the pursuit of individual well-being has on a relationship,

expectations connected with gender roles, and “the ways in which we judge women who leave. Especially—as Mira inescapably does, despite her best endeavours at mitigating the effects—those who leave children” (Mangan). Undoubtedly, *Scenes From A Marriage* depicts a complex relationship between two quite different people. The drama’s purpose is not to moralise or present ideals of femininity/a wife or masculinity/a husband but to examine human imperfections (spouses’ imperfections) in detail. Most importantly, it portrays changing gender roles in contemporary society and the challenges related to this.

Towards Inclusive Masculinity

To conclude, the hegemonic model of masculinity excludes numerous people while favouring quite a narrow group of men. Hegemonic masculinity is connected with patriarchy, homophobia, misogyny, and social and racial inequalities. On the other hand, the fact that it is increasingly possible to hear and read about inclusive masculinity, encourages men to engage in behaviours previously stigmatised as feminine. Bergman’s original miniseries reflected the changes in gender roles in the 1970s and arguably contributed to the number of divorces (Mangan); Levi’s show may hopefully bring about a gradual, yet radical change in the prevailing model of masculinity. *Scenes From A Marriage* documents the changing gender roles particularly with regard to attitudes towards care: men express their need to care for others, while women acknowledge their desire to focus on their individual needs and to take care of themselves, as shown by the protagonists of the series.

The show presents a new model of masculinity, more adjusted to the contemporary society. The example of Jonathan’s character and behaviour in *Scenes From A Marriage* suggests that a man partially dependent on his wife can be content with taking care of the house and children; he can devote himself to a woman and treat her as his partner. A man can also express his feelings and ask for help when he needs it. It implies that a man should not be ashamed of

behaving in ways stigmatised as feminine. Jonathan's masculinity is characterised by the display of traditionally masculine and feminine traits—it includes reason, strength, care, feelings, empathy, and respect for other people, and excludes violence, emotional restraint, and urge to dominate others. The main character represents the model of caring man that is increasingly more frequently encountered in real life. Such an image of masculinity should be more widely represented in the media to demonstrate the existence of various masculinities, not only the unattainable ideal of hegemonic masculinity.

Endnotes

1. The series is a remake of Ingmar Bergman's series of the same title released in 1973, which depicts the process of the dissolution of Marianne and Johan's marriage. Marianne is a divorce lawyer and Johan works at university as a psychology professor. The spouses are not happy with their marriage, especially Johan, who admits to an affair with Paula, a woman younger than him. The couple separates and later divorces. During the separation, Marianne undergoes therapy, which helps her understand herself better. Moreover, she has a new partner and starts enjoying sex. Both protagonists remarry other people but secretly have an affair (*Scenes from a Marriage* 1973).
2. A reference to the task Jonathan was given by his therapist. The protagonist was supposed to write every morning a three-page-long text regarding his feelings.

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Videography

Scenes from a Marriage. 1973. Created by I. Bergman.

Scenes from a Marriage. 2021. Created by H. Levi.

– 1.1: Innocence and Panic; 1.2: Poli; 1.3: The Vale of Tears; 1.4: The Illiterates; 1.5: In the Middle of the Night, in a Dark House, Somewhere in the World.

Abstract

The aim of the article is to discuss the portrayal of masculinities in *Scenes from a Marriage* (2021) in which the departure from the archetype of a "manly" man is presented and inclusive masculinity is introduced. The article explores notions of patriarchal, that is, hegemonic masculinity, traditional manhood, and inclusive

masculinity. Furthermore, it discusses the concept of gender and the manner in which masculinity and femininity are socially constructed as binary oppositions. Moreover, the article points to the significance of changing models of masculinity in creating a society based on equality. It contains a practical analysis of the figure of Jonathan from *Scenes from a Marriage*. It demonstrates the high value of inclusive masculinity, which should be more widely represented in media.

CONFERENCE REPORTS

POLITICS AND POETICS OF DIFFERENCE

APPROACHES IN ANGLOPHONE LITERATURE, CULTURE AND LINGUISTICS

Organised by: Academic Association for Doctoral Students of English, Student Feminist Society, Department of Anglophone Literature, Culture and Comparative Studies, Institute of Literary Studies, Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń

Conducted in: English

Took place on: 2-3 June 2023

Took place in: Toruń (online)

Report by: Natalia Jaworańska, NCU Toruń

The conference “Politics and Poetics of Difference: Approaches in Anglophone Literature, Culture and Linguistics” took place on the 2nd and 3rd of June, 2023. It was addressed to BA, MA and doctoral students from various countries and the online formula of this meeting enabled numerous participants to take part in the conference. The conference’s focus was on the theme of difference and diversity present in contemporary Anglophone literature, culture and linguistics. Participants pondered upon, among others, how difference is approached in postcolonial, feminist and queer theory and posthumanism. The two days were filled with 29 inspiring presentations divided into 9 sessions, each followed by a thought-provoking discussion.

Prof. Marzenna Cyzman-Eid, Vice-Dean of the Faculty of Humanities at Nicolaus Copernicus University, opened the conference on the 2nd of June and expressed her enthusiasm regarding so many young people meeting to discuss the most pressing issues within the Humanities. The first session of the conference was devoted mainly to postcolonialism. The papers presented therein explored the ideas of cosmopolitanism through the lenses of postcolonial critique (Arnab Das & Dr Madhumita Roy, Indian Institute of Engineering Science and Technology, Shibpur), exoticism and difference in postcolonial literature (Raluca-Andreea Donici (Nechifor), “Vasile Alecsandri” University of Bacau), postcolonial rewriting of Derek Walcott (Izabela Poręba, University of Wrocław) and Russian empire mania and historicism (Michał Kózka, Jagiellonian University, Kraków). Sessions 2 and 3 were held

simultaneously and covered such topics as identity and social inequalities (Sruti Manjula Devaprakash, Ambedkar University, Delhi), mental health stigma and PTSD in Virginia Woolf's works (Daniela Anisie, "Vasile Alecsandri" University of Bacau), representations of madness and creativity (Bernadetta Jankowska, Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń) and discovering William Wordsworth's writing through cognitive and linguistic difference (Julian Rakowski, University of Łódź). Between sessions three and four two plenary lectures were delivered. The first one titled "Imagining Solidarity Across Difference: Literary Visions of Shared Struggle" was presented by Dr Anna Bernard from King's College, London. The second keynote speaker, Prof. Dominika Ferens who represented Wrocław University, discussed "Intersectionality, Affect, and Form in the Writings of Sigrid Nunez." The last session of the first day explored identity and individualism in the urban environment (Dhanya Raghavan, Université de Montréal), as well as fragments and feminist thought in Sappho (Vinky Mittal, Ashoka University), exclusion and inclusion in Cather and Chopin (Anne-Laure Sabathier, University of South Carolina) and recognising difference in Hughes' and McKay's poetry (Samu/elle Striewski, Columbia University).

The second day of the conference began with presentations about visual narratives: the first one discussed semantic refractions in TV series adaptations of comic books (Kinga Matuszko and Mikołaj Głos, University of Rzeszów); the second one explored multiculturalism in Shaun Tan's "The Arrival" (Kamil Dukiewicz, Kazimierz Wielki University, Bydgoszcz). The next presentations pondered whether Goethe would get a Booker (Agata Stanisławska, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań) and discussed cottagecore as aesthetics, movement, community and trend (Edgar J. A. Jephcote, Nicolaus Copernicus University, Toruń). The following session focused on several posthumanist themes. The presenters explored diffracting the Anthropocene's differences between solarpunk and the new weird (Anton Belenetskyi, Jagiellonian University, Kraków), discovered philosophical and literary visions of the equal coexistence between humans and non-humans (Dorota Drożyńska, Jagiellonian University, Kraków), contemplated nature, loneliness and (post)humanity in the adventure puzzle game *Birth* (2023) (Agnieszka Staszak, Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń) and discussed Artificial Intelligence in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun* and Kogonada's *After Yang* (Natalia Jaworańska, Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń). Session seven featured diverse themes: Katarzyna Świętochowska (independent scholar) discussed what happens when a strong Nordic female character turns slightly American. Natalia

Rzonsowska (Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań) compared conceptual metaphors of war and freedom in King George VI's speeches at the beginning, during, and after the Second World War. Piotr Matczak (Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań) explored the divisive force of the American Dream in Charles Bukowski's *Factotum*. The next session incorporated a presentation discussing Daisy Rockwell's translation of Geetanjali Shree's novel ('Ret Samadhi') in the context of the politics of negotiating differences (Kritika Nautiyal, Indian Institute of Technology Madras, India) as well as two presentations concerned with themes located within queer studies, feminism, and postcolonialism: Hanna Stelmaszczyk (Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań) focused on Gothic otherness in queer narratives in Truman Capote's *Other Voices, Other Rooms* and Randall Kenan's *A Visitation of Spirits* and Shurouq Ibrahim (Ohio State University) explored representations of "Sisterhood" in contemporary postcolonial women writing. The last session of the conference focused on different aspects of feminist studies: cyborgian motherhood in *Raised by Wolves* (Wiktoria Rogalska, University of Łódź), teenage girls and plastic surgery in *Fix* by Leslie Margolis and *The Fold* by An Na (Agata Rupińska, Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń) and dimensional women in the poetry of Anna Akhmatova (Eliana Wilhelm, Houston Christian University).

The conference "Politics and Poetics of Difference: Approaches in Anglophone Literature, Culture and Linguistics" proved to be remarkably fruitful, filled with many inspiring and thought-provoking discussions.¹

Endnotes

1. All details concerning the event can be found at <https://differenceconferencetorun.wordpress.com/>.

ABSTRAKTY

Akshita Bhardwaj

Oral Parables of Regional Ecological Wisdom: Rituals of Co-belonging and Multispecies Care in *The Hungry Tide* by Amitav Ghosh

W artykule omówiono powieść Amitava Ghosha p.t. *Żarłoczny przytyw* jako tekst, który wykracza poza uproszczone idee relacji między ludźmi i nieлюдźmi. Dostosowując koncepcję agonistycznej intymności Bhrigupatiego Singha do nieco innego kontekstu, w artykule podjęto próbę zbadania współistnienia pozornie wrogich sobie sąsiadów (ludzi i zwierząt niebędących ludźmi). Artykuł ma na celu wyjaśnienie, w jaki sposób mityczne i rytualne przekazy mówione związane z duchem opiekuńczym Bonbibu pełnią rolę swojego rodzaju mediatorów, wspomagając relacje życzliwości w potencjalnie napiętych stosunkach między ludźmi i zwierzętami. Ghosh wskazuje na błąd ignorowania rodzimych ekologii i podkreśla absurdalność stosowania prostych, antropocentrycznych modeli opieki w takich kontekstach. Koncentrując się na wielogatunkowym etosie regionu Sundarbanów, powieść proponuje rozumienie relacji między ludźmi i nieлюдźmi jako porowatego i rizomatycznego pokrewieństwa. Ta forma intymności odwołuje się zarówno do wspólnego istnienia, jak i konfliktu, a powieść Ghosha jest próbą zbadania i zrozumienia takich spotkań.

Zainab Faiz

The Symbiocene in "Ode to the West Wind": reading Romantic poetry through an ecocritical lens

W ciągu ostatnich trzydziestu lat badacze literatury zaczęli przyglądać się literaturze okresu romantyzmu z nowych, dużo bardziej zniuansowanych perspektyw, takich jak, między innymi, ekokrytyka. Najnowsze badania przedstawiają dziewiętnastowieczną poezję, do tej pory pomijaną i lekceważoną ze względu na duży nacisk na estetyzm i nadmierną fantazyjność, w nowym świetle. Większość opracowań krytycznych poezji

romantycznej w dość ograniczony sposób skupiało się na jej antropomorficznych wyobrażeniach. W konsekwencji, ukazały one występujące w poezji tego okresu byty nie-ludzkie jako zaledwie dodatki o charakterze estetycznym.

Chociaż ekokrytyka lat 90. XX wieku dostrzegła istnienie bytów nie-ludzkich w poezji Romantyków, nie udało jej się jednak uwzględnić w swoich rozważaniach współistnienia obu rodzajów bytów ze względu na usunięcie z dyskursu czynnika ludzkiego. Wczesne rozważania ekokrytyczne poświęcone poezji romantycznej idealizują wspaniałą przeszłość natury, kompletnie pomijając zarówno jej obecną degradację jak i swój własny altruistyczny pogląd polegający na dyskredytowaniu i lekceważeniu ludzkiej sprawczości.

Celem tego artykułu jest umiejscowienie i osadzenie tych sprzecznych idei poprzez omówienie „Ody do wiatru zachodniego” (Ode to the West Wind) w kontekście Symbiocenu, terminu stworzonego przez Glenna A. Albrechta w celu wyznaczenia początku nowej ery przeciwstawiającej się wyniszczającemu Antropocenowi. Dodatkowo, artykuł połączy dwa pozornie rozbieżne sposoby badania ludzkich i nie-ludzkich sprawczości istniejące w ramach ekokrytyki oraz omówi odę Shelleya we współczesnym kontekście ciągle pogarszającej się kondycji Ziemi.

Natalia Jaworańska

Departing from the Archetype of “Manly” Man: A Portrait of a Man in *Scenes from a Marriage* (2021)

Celem niniejszego artykułu jest omówienie modelu męskości ukazanego w serialu *Sceny z życia małżeńskiego* (2021), w którym następuje odejście od archetypu męskiego mężczyzny w stronę mężczyzny opiekuńczego. W pierwszej części zgłębiane są pojęcia męskości patriarchalnej, tj. hegemonicznej, mężczyzny tradycyjnego oraz męskości inkluzywnej. Dyskusji zostaje również poddany podział binarny mężczyzna-kobieta oraz sposób, w jaki płeć kulturowa jest narzucana przez społeczeństwo. Artykuł przybliży obraz mężczyzn w sfeminizowanych rolach oraz wskazuje na kluczową rolę androgynii w tworzeniu społeczeństwa opartego na równości. Drugą część artykułu stanowi praktyczna analiza postaci Jonathana z serialu *Sceny z życia małżeńskiego*, która demonstruje, że mężczyzna może być szczęśliwy opiekując się domem i dziećmi, może poświęcić się dla kobiety oraz przyznawać się do uczuć. Taki obraz męskości

powinien być w mediach szerzej reprezentowany, aby pokazać, że istnieje wiele rodzajów męskości oprócz szkodliwego ideału, jakim jest model hegemoniczny.

Miriam Kobierski

AI the Creator? Analysing Prose and Poetry Created by Artificial Intelligence

Sztuczna inteligencja jest już na tyle rozwinięta, aby wykonywać mechaniczne i skomputeryzowane zadania, ale jej zdolność do przekazywania emocji, odtwarzania ludzkiej świadomości oraz poziomu myślenia i odczuwania jest jeszcze w fazie badań. Niniejszy artykuł zajmuje się przede wszystkim literaturą wygenerowaną przez sztuczną inteligencję, skupiając się głównie na krótkich fragmentach tekstu i poezji. Wybrana metoda badawcza w tej pracy to badania jakościowe. W artykule przeprowadzona została analiza językowa poszczególnych tekstów, a także ich porównanie ze sobą. Dla celów artykułu przeprowadziłam eksperyment, w którym grupa uczestników miała za zadanie określić, czy przedstawiony tekst został napisany przez człowieka, czy sztuczną inteligencję. Dodatkowo, w niniejszym artykule zostanie przedstawione stanowisko w dyskusji, czy poezja napisana przez SI powinna zostać uznana za autentyczną.

Rafał Łyczkowski

Conflict of Cultures: A Marginalised Orphan of the Colonial Discourse 'Disinterred' in *Jack Maggs* by Peter Carey

Powieść *Jack Maggs* Petera Careya to australijska wersja *Wielkich Nadziei* Karola Dickensa. Carey krytykuje wiktoriańską propagandę dotyczącą wyższości rasy białej, otwarcie sprzeciwiając się występkom imperium oraz obłudzie jego obywateli. Autor podważa obraz imperialnej Anglii jako ojczyzny troszczącej się o swoje kolonialne dzieci, jaki pośrednio przedstawia w swojej powieści Dickens, kreując postać Abela Magwitcha, skazańca z Australii, który otrzymuje pomoc i opiekę od angielskiego dżentelmena. Moralne zepsucie wiktoriańskiego społeczeństwa jest szczególnie odzwierciedlone w postaci Mary Britten, bezwzględnie abortującej nienarodzone dzieci, co jest aluzją do niepoahamowanej ekspansji kolonialnej wiktoriańskiej Brytanii Matki. W niniejszym artykule wskażę, że *Jack Maggs* jest uosobieniem skolonizowanej, osieroconej i marginalizowanej Australii, która mści się za ekspansję brytyjską. *Maggs* nie jest już przedmiotem badań świata eurocentrycznego, lecz głosem uciszonych i

pozbawionych ziemi, których kultura miała być wykorzeniona poprzez dynamikę władzy kolonialnej. Podważenie wyższości kultury Zachodu może być odczytane jako nawiązanie do pojęć mimikry i hybrydyzacji autorstwa Homi'ego Bhabhy, według którego kultura zdominowana umniejsza autorytet władzy kolonialnej, umożliwiając wyłonienie się i artykulację nowych historii, świadomie tłumionych przez dyskurs kolonialny. Jack Maggs, będący głosem kultury zduszonej przez hegemonię Zachodu, destabilizuje centrum, które traci swoją nadrzędną pozycję, ponieważ jest ukazane przez 'innego' z peryferii. Osierocony przez kraj reprezentujący 'lepszą' kulturę, Jack powraca do imperialnego Londynu, aby zburzyć porządek dyskursu kolonialnego i opowiedzieć swoją historię z drugorzędnej pozycji.

Noemi Neconesnic

Representations of Trauma and Solidarity in Regency Romance

Obecny status popularnych romansów w środowisku akademickim charakteryzuje się ambiwalencją; choć odrzucany i wyśmiewany przez niektórych, gatunek ten przez ostatnie cztery dekady był również przedmiotem badań naukowych. Wiele na jego temat napisano, choć nie zawsze z bezstronnej perspektywy—zaś niektóre uogólnienia dotyczące romansu sformułowane zostały na podstawie nieodpowiednio dobranych przykładów, jak argumentowała Regis (2011). Obecnie uczeni wykazują coraz większe zainteresowanie tym gatunkiem i jego różnorodnymi formami. Niniejszy artykuł skupia się na konkretnym podgatunku popularnej powieści romantycznej, którym jest romans regencyjny. W artykule pokrótce opisuję cechy romansu historycznego, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem romansu regencyjnego i konstrukcji bohatera romantycznego. W ramach tego typu narracji omówione zostają cechy i rola bohaterów związanych z wojskowością, a w szczególności postaci weterana wojennego, z bardziej szczegółową analizą tego typu postaci reprezentowanego w cyklu powieści Mary Balogh *Survivor's Club* (2012-2016). W swym artykule wykazuję, że wojskowi bohaterowie Balogh są przedstawiani jako mężczyźni, kompetentni i godni szacunku i miłości, nawet gdy zmagają się z niepełnosprawnością fizyczną i / lub traumą emocjonalną.

Celem mojej analizy jest udowodnienie, że popularna fikcja romantyczna pozwala na przedstawienie istotnych relacji między postaciami wykraczających poza wątek rozgrywający się pomiędzy romantyczną parą. Twierdzę, że fabuła osnuta wokół zalotów typowa dla romansów nie wyklucza możliwości rozbudowania wątków

pobocznych, a związki nieromantyczne mogą być przedstawiane z głębią i służyć ważnym celom, uzupełniającym rozwój związku romantycznego. Co więcej, w powieściach Balogh solidarność przejawiająca się w relacjach nieromantycznych okazuje się niezbędnym etapem procesu przezwyciężania powojennej traumy. Stąd wniosek, że popularna fikcja romantyczna nie jest ograniczonym gatunkiem, w którym wszystkie historie są do siebie podobne: nawet jeśli głównym wątkiem są zaloty, na kartach powieści romantycznej jest jeszcze wiele do odkrycia.

Zamfira-Maria Petrescu

Linguistic Expressions of Solidarity in the Television Series *Murdoch Mysteries*

Artykuł podejmuje temat językowych wyrazów solidarności w kanadyjskim serialu telewizyjnym pt. *Murdoch Mysteries*. Wybrane odcinki—„The Local Option,” „Marked Twain” and „Colour Blinded”—zostają umieszczone w kontekście historycznym, a następnie przeanalizowane językowo w celu zidentyfikowania preferencji dla stosowania leksemów religijnych bądź wyrażania wprost swojego zdania przez postaci. Analiza skupia się na elementach wykazujących przewagę jednej płci bądź tożsamości etnicznej nad inną za pomocą środków językowych wyrażających władzę i dyskryminację. W dalszej części artykułu podjęta zostaje próba zbadania dwóch możliwości interpretacyjnych: wykazanie, że postaci pochodzące z różnych grup kulturowych, religijnych i społecznych w nieoczekiwanych sytuacjach uciekają się do wyrażania solidarności słowami i do okazywania współczucia tym, którym stała się krzywda; a także pokazanie otwartego podejścia do kontrowersyjnych kwestii związanych z życiem prywatnym i prawami człowieka.

Samu/elle Striewski

The *Poiesis* of Susceptibility: Langston Hughes on Queer Black Friendship

Niniejszy esej poddaje interpretacji wiersz „Poem” Langstona Hughesa, czerpiąc zarówno z materiałów biograficznych na temat autora (np. filmu biograficznego *Looking for Langston*), jak i z tekstów politycznych na temat queerowej przyjaźni i solidarności, zwłaszcza takich autorów jak Sara Ahmed, José Esteban Muñoz i Judith Butler. Zamiast szczegółowej analizy, mającej wykazać queerowość „historycznego” Langstona Hughesa, niniejszy artykuł stara się dostrzec siłę tego utworu w stworzeniu przestrzeni umożliwiającej zmarginalizowanym osobom rzucenie wyzwania normom społecznym i otworzenie jej dla alternatywnych sposobów bycia. Odnosząc się do idei

Michela Foucaulta dotyczących gejowskiej przyjaźni jako destrukcyjnego sposobu oporu wobec istniejących struktur władzy, esej rozwija bardziej zniuansowaną koncepcję tego, w jaki sposób poezja Hughesa wpisuje się w *poiesis of susceptibility* (co można przetłumaczyć jako poetykę wrażliwości lub podatności). Innymi słowy, artykuł udowadnia, że omawiany wiersz pozwala na odejście od dominującego sposobu formowania podmiotu w ramach opresyjnych norm poprzez przedstawienie utopijnego języka i nowych form wzajemnych relacji, a mianowicie przyjaźni Czarnych queerowych mężczyzn. Tekst poddaje pod refleksję to, w jaki sposób ci, do których przyszłość nie należy, mogą próbować ją odzyskać, tworząc przestrzenie, w których potencjalność, różnica i inność mogą współistnieć, a jednostki, które wcześniej były nierozpoznawalne, mogą stać się inteligibilne. Poezja funkcjonuje w tym procesie jako narzędzie, które buduje i rekonfiguruje ramy podatności, pozwalając na przyjaźnie i miękkość, na które nie było miejsca wcześniej ani poza nimi.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Akshita Bhardwaj is a PhD candidate in the Department of Indian and World Literatures at the English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad (India). Grounded in the theory of Posthumanism and Literary Animal Studies, her research tends to read nonhuman animal presences in literature and in life that escape the usual registers of anthropocentric meaning. Her other interest areas are Indology Studies, Spatial Literary Studies and Ecocriticism.

Zainab Faiz is a scholar based in India. She has recently completed her Master's from the University of Delhi, India. She is interested in the post-humanist understanding constitutive in our life. Her Master's dissertation was on the effects of grief on human life as presented in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and *The Last Man*. Zainab is currently working on another paper publication which looks at the weaponization of works of fiction under a totalitarian regime. Simultaneously, she is working on Kazuo Ishiguro's works from a larger framework of memory studies and associated identity. Her research interests include memory studies, post-humanism, ecocriticism, and post-colonialism.

Natalia Jaworańska is a Master's Student of English Philology at Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń and a member of Student Feminist Society, NCU. She wrote her BA thesis on selected elements of postmodern ontological dominant in *Rick and Morty*. Natalia is currently working on her MA thesis which analyses the figure of Harley Quinn from *Birds of Prey* (2020) in the context of third- and fourth-wave feminism. Her academic interests include

theory of literature, theory of culture, feminism, posthumanism, and ecocriticism.

Miriam Kobierski holds a Master's degree from English philology at the University of Łódź, where she is now a doctoral student at the Doctoral School of Humanities. Her main area of research is linguistics and she is particularly interested in the field of Artificial Intelligence. As for her academic career, she has presented papers at academic conferences, was on the planning committee of two conferences, as well as published several articles in linguistics and philosophy.

Rafał Łyczkowski is a secondary school teacher. His interests include Victorian and postcolonial literature, especially the Dickensian motif of orphanhood that is still used by contemporary writers. He is currently working on a Ph.D. thesis entitled *Reinterpretations of Dickensian Orphanhood in Contemporary Literature of English-speaking Countries* where he will demonstrate that orphanhood as a literary figure does not only mean the condition of being parentless, but, in the field of postcolonialism, it has relevance to those marginalised by the British hegemony.

Noemi Neconesnic is a first-year doctoral student at the "Vasile Alecsandri" University of Bacău, Romania, where she received a bachelor's degree in English and French literature and a master's degree in cultural studies and discursive practices. She teaches English to primary and secondary school pupils, and she is interested in linguistics, gender studies and popular culture, particularly historical romance fiction.

Zamfira-Maria Petrescu studied philology in Bacău (Romania), where she received a master's degree, and social sciences in Bordeaux (France). As a doctoral student at "Vasile Alecsandri" University of Bacău, she has participated in national and international conferences that approached the phenomenon of humour in literary and non-literary texts. Her research interests encompass

fields such as linguistics, humour studies and the mystery genre. The corpus of her thesis explores multiple themes connected to social and historical issues represented in the Canadian television series *Murdoch Mysteries*.

Samu/elle Striewski has studied mathematics (B.Sc.), and philosophy and comparative literature (B.A.) in Berlin, Paris, and New York City. They published and/or presented among others on queer solidarity, bi+ and nonbinary politics and activism, (eco)feminism, and drag. Current research projects include a critical rethinking of recognition theory in the context of German queer politics (supervised by Axel Honneth) and a rereading of Franz Kafka's work under the light of contemporary anti-trans* movements (supervised by Jack Halberstam). Beyond academia, they engage in several queer activist projects, regularly give drag workshops, and perform themselves in drag.



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