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VOICES OF CHANGE

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Proceedings of the Fourth International Youth Conference
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Foreword

This year's conference, *Voices of Change*, takes its title from my SUSI experience at the University of Montana in Missoula in 2023. Meeting seventeen scholars from across the world confirmed how dialogue and cultural exchange, rather than silence or prejudice, can lead to meaningful and positive change. Believing that younger generations can further grow this seed, we have continued to provide a platform for students and emerging scholars through this conference.

I want to thank Associate Professor Dr. Almasa Mulalić and Assistant Professor Dr. Emina Jelesković, who conceived the idea of creating this platform four years ago and who also joined me in editing this year's proceedings. I extend my gratitude to Associate Professor Dr. Ana Kocić Stanković, my SUSI colleague, who delivered a plenary lecture on *The Voices of (Ex)Change in Contemporary American Literature*, where she reflected on how rewriting and reimagining canonical texts can bring silenced voices into focus. I am equally grateful to Associate Professor Dr. Mirzana Pašić Kordić, who spoke on *The Role of Foreign Languages in Building and Nurturing Intercultural Sensibility*, emphasizing how language study fosters mutual understanding and development.

The papers in this volume present a wide range of themes that together illustrate how language, literature, and education serve as forces of transformation. They revisit history through literature and visual culture, examine rebellion and power in Japanese manga and anime, and reflect on existential dilemmas in the works of Meša Selimović. They also explore the influence of music and popular culture, consider the role of translation and intercultural communication, and reflect on identity through postcolonial and feminist readings. Contributions on digital storytelling, inclusive education, and language acquisition further highlight how pedagogy and research can empower future generations.

I also want to thank our student volunteers, who not only hosted participants but also contributed actively to the program. Special appreciation goes to Maida Avdić for opening the conference and to Lejla Hamzakadić and Lamija Ramović for moderating live and online sessions.

I look forward to the 2025 conference, confident that we will continue to preserve and grow this excellent tradition, giving space to new voices and perspectives that shape our understanding of the world.

This volume is more than a collection of student and scholar contributions. It stands as evidence of how intellectual curiosity can transcend borders, generations, and disciplines. Each paper reflects the commitment of young researchers to question, reinterpret, and expand the ways we think about literature, language, and education. Their insights remind us that academic spaces flourish only when they remain open to change and when every voice, no matter how newly found, is heard and valued.

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VOICES OF (EX)CHANGE IN CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN LITERATURE1

Abstract

The paper considers two novels published within the span of one hundred and forty years: Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884) and Percival Everett's *James* (2024) and their authors' use of the notions of language and the vernacular. The main argument is that Everett's innovative use of the vernacular and performativity mirrors Twain's 'liberation' of the American variant of the English language in the 19th century. Considering the notions of voice, subject, empowerment through the creative process of writing, I analyze Everett's protagonist and author's creative contribution in the adaptation of Twain's narrative. Furthermore, the narrative strategy of speculative realism is highlighted as employed by Everett in the process of creating an alternative literary history.

Keywords: *Mark Twain, Percival Everett, African American Literature, Speculative Realism, James*

Introduction

Teaching *American Classics* is sometimes a strange job – you need to somehow explain to your young students, who dwell in this age and time and share digital and virtual spaces with you, the importance and beauty of a novel or a short story written in the first half of the 19th century, a century and a half ago. In this ongoing 'battle' between the classical and the contemporary, it remains somehow necessary, perhaps now more than ever, when memory is so short it encompasses a span of no more than a couple of days, to remind young people of the literary canon and why those works entered the canon in the first place. On the other hand, we have to

[1] Prepared as a part of the project *Scientific Findings in English Linguistics and Anglo-American Literature and Culture and Teaching Applications*, conducted at the University of Niš – Faculty of Philosophy (No. 423/1-3-01).

keep track of the current state of affairs, we cannot bury our heads in the sand and pretend that nothing new and good has ever come up. There are new voices, new concerns, new lands, to paraphrase Emerson. This is where contemporary reworkings come into play, and this is probably the crucial aspect of teaching (any) literature – making connections between the past and the present. Contemporary reworkings, adaptations or works inspired by the classics have become increasingly popular, take, for example, *Bridgerton*, a TV show set in the Regency Era but featuring a variety of characters, especially in terms of their ethnic origins.

I noticed two conspicuous trends in this adaptation 'mania' in popular and high culture. The first one is merely profit and money-grabbing, riding on someone else's coattails, without a proper artistic idea or inspiration. The second, more important for the development of art in general and probably the one on which a lot of art is based is meaningful and deliberate building upon someone else's work. In literature, adaptations have always been popular, and in the last couple of decades, a particularly noticeable trend is writing alternative literary histories, trying to give voice to those who remained unrepresented or unvoiced in 'official' history books, or telling the well-known story from a completely different perspective. Telling (interesting) stories is, again, one of the main tasks of literature, finding ways to imaginatively deal with your own reality and finding new voices to tell these stories has always been a challenge (nowadays particularly, in the age of hyperproduction of everything).

In this paper, I chose to focus on the book that was published last year, Percival Everett's novel called *James* (2024), because I think it represents the afore mentioned better and important side of artistic adaptations and interventions. The novel is an imaginative retelling of the great American classic, Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884), told from the perspective of Jim. Everett himself, an African American writer, gave credit to Mark Twain for the inspiration and influence in the acknowledgements. I thought this a particularly interesting subject for this conference as this novel, published one hundred and forty years after Twain's classic has won the National Book Award for Fiction and was shortlisted for the Booker Prize in literature[2]. Because the theme of the conference was *"The Voices of Change"*, I thought that Everett's novel which, among other things, gives voice to one of the most beloved and most controversial American literary creations would be a fitting subject. Also, as Twain's classic is already a part of many English language and literature

[2] Percival Everett has already received a Pulitzer Prize nomination for his other novel *Erasure* (2001) which was adapted into *American Fiction* (2023), a movie that got an Oscar nomination last year.

curricula, I thought it would be interesting to compare the innovative qualities of both works and how the use of language has changed in order to reflect the shifts in the society, history, and collective memory. I argue that what Twain did in 1884 with the publication of *Huckleberry* in terms of revolutionizing American literature is matched with Everett's retelling of the story from the perspective of an African American character as it also represents an innovative use of contemporary versions of realism. I try to highlight a couple of interesting parallels between the two novels and their respective authors' use of language and realism(s) in order to provoke further discussion and maybe inspire some new and original readings.

The Language/the Vernacular

One of the major achievements of Twain's book is his revolutionary use of the vernacular, of different dialects spoken by the characters of different origins, different social status, different levels of education. After all, this is announced at the very beginning of the novel with this half-humorous explanatory note signed by the author himself (Twain, 1884):

> In this book a number of dialects are used, to wit: the Missouri negro dialect; the extremest form of the backwoods Southwestern dialect; the ordinary "Pike County" dialect; and four modified varieties of this last. The shadings have not been done in a haphazard fashion, or by guesswork; but painstakingly, and with the trustworthy guidance and support of personal familiarity with these several forms of speech. I make this explanation for the reason that without it many readers would suppose that all these characters were trying to talk alike and not succeeding.

Introducing the vernacular into literature is the reason why many critics and writers, Hemingway included, considered Twain the true father of American literature. In his travel nonfiction book *Green Hills of Africa* (1935), Ernest Hemingway credited Mark Twain with initiating American modern literature:

> All modern American literature comes from one book by Mark Twain called Huckleberry Finn. it's the best book we've had. All American writing comes from that. There was nothing before. There has been nothing as good since (p.29).

This quote by Hemingway sums up the almost universal critical attitude towards Mark Twain's writings: he is celebrated as the 'Lincoln of American literature' for introducing the vernacular into fiction. The idea of Huck Finn, a social outcast born and raised on the margins of the *antebellum* Southern society, but also a child, an innocent, as the main narrator and the focalizer of the narrative proved to be of the utmost importance. Using the vernacular, Twain

managed to achieve merging of form and function, as Huck's language became more than just a medium of expression but rather a direct correlative of his experience; in other words, "Huck's language *is* Huck." (Brooks *et al*., 1973, p.1277).

Percival Everett managed to reappropriate the use of language and dialect in his novel but to a completely different purpose. If Huck's language in Twain's novel is Huck, Everett's major 'twist' is that Jim's spoken language in *James* is not Jim. Another major difference between his work and Twain's iconic novel is Jim not using the dialect – in the course of the novel, it is revealed that slaves actually use regular English among themselves but deliberately use slang or code in front of their masters. In *Huckleberry*, it is the use of the black vernacular, ungrammatical sentences, words difficult to pronounce, often mispronounced, that identify Jim as a slave but also sometimes as a comic relief in the novel. However, the language used by Jim, or James, as he prefers to be called, in Everett's novel is a deliberate subversive effort. We learn that Jim can read, that he is very astute in his observations and that the entire vernacular-speaking, superstitious, naïve Jim is merely a performance, a mask that he uses to deceive white people in order to survive in the world of slave-owning South and slavery-condoning North. Performance thus becomes a key word and Jim's behavior, just like this excerpt illustrates is an intentional and premeditated display:

> "And one dem witches, the one what took my hat, she sent me all da way down to N'Orlins. Can you believe dat?" My change in diction alerted the rest to the white boys' presence. So, my performance for the boys became a frame for my story. My story became less of a tale as the real game became the display for the boys. (Everett, 2024)

The purpose of this artistic intervention and change introduced by Everett can be interpreted as an act of empowerment of his character who becomes a protagonist, but also as an ironic comment on the American *antebellum* society which thrived on the exploitation of the black performance, both in terms of their physical labor and their cultural contribution.

The use and the importance of the black vernacular in the lives and education of young African Americans has often been highlighted by many famous African American writers, e.g., Zora Neale Hurston and Maya Angelou. In her famous autobiography *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, Maya Angelou (1997, p.194) quotes an old saying: "If you ask a Negro where he's been, he'll tell you where he's going," in order to illustrate the African American collective strategy of telling partial truth or avoiding to fully disclose the information asked. She explains this as one of the consequences of slavery when saying the wrong thing could lead to one's

death. Therefore, slaves, and even their descendants, adopted silence and telling partial truth as protective strategies: “Thus direct denial, lying and the revelation of personal affairs are avoided” (Angelou, 1997, p.194). This stylistic approach called “masking”, also defined by Zora Neale Hurston in her autobiography, was first formally introduced and analyzed by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. as a literary strategy of “signifyin(g)” (Werner&Shannon, 2011, p.244).

Everett uses his protagonist to explain the notion of signifyin’. Jim is shown giving a lecture to a group of African American children. They use regular English but learn how to hide their meaning and how not to appear superior in conversation with white people:

> “Papa, why do we have to learn this?”
> “White folks expect us to sound a certain way and it can only help if we don’t disappoint them,” I said. “The only ones who suffer when they are made to feel inferior is us. Perhaps I should say ‘when they don’t feel superior.’ So, let’s pause to review some of the basics.”
> “Don’t make eye contact,” a boy said.
> “Right, Virgil.”
> “Never speak first,” a girl said.
> “That’s correct, February,” I said.
> Lizzie looked at the other children and then back to me. “Never address any subject directly when talking to another slave,” she said.
> “What do we call that?” I asked.
> Together they said, “Signifying.” (Everett, 2024)

Although the scene may sound comic, it is in fact a scathing comment on the pre- and post-Civil War laws applied in the American South, which continued to restrict African Americans’ rights to free speech. The power of language is highlighted and its role and abuse by the white supremacy ideology. Everett thus decides to invert the principle of the uneducated language being a marker of uneducated people but rather represents it as a deliberate masking of their true selves and their true meaning.

The Voice

Another important feature of African American literature that Everett uses in his narrative is the protagonist creating himself by finding his voice in the act of writing. The notion of articulating the subject’s own voice is also often described as central to the African

American tradition in literature (Gates, 1988, p.239). Finding one's own voice is about moving from being objectified (i.e., defined and described) to an active state of a subject with the power of self-definition and assertion (hooks, 1989, pp.33-4). The subject-object distinction here is, of course, the post-colonial theoretical concept that illustrates transition from passivity – being an object – to the state of active doing – subjectivity (Ashcroft *et al.,* 2006, pp.201-2). This is exactly what Everett does in his novel – Jim/James literally tells and writes himself into being, he becomes the protagonist, the hero. After all, the book has his chosen name as a title, Huckleberry no longer being the eponymous character. For James, the act of writing is simultaneously the act of reclaiming the language and the act of reclaiming his own identity.

In the world where people can be owned and possess no agency regarding their lives whatsoever, Everett's protagonist miraculously becomes the owner of a pen and then gradually the owner of his own self: "For the first time in my life, I had paper and ink. (…) I wrote: *I am called Jim. I have yet to choose a name.*" (Everett, 2024) In other words, the (written) language becomes the major means of liberation, just like in Twain's novel. Only in this case, it is about liberating one's African American self and the African American identity, and, quite literally, writing oneself into being. A parallel to the scene in Twain's novel when Huck refuses to turn Jim in, in this novel is the birth of a hero, the moment Jim decides he will no longer be a slave, the moment he changes his name to James. It was a practice during slavery to either not give proper names to black slaves, to call them boys, bucks, uncles or to give them short nicknames (Vaughan, 1995, pp.130-1). We should not forget that one of the most common criticisms of *Huckleberry* is the excessive use of the N-word and constant reference to Jim as "n— Jim". In Everett's novel, Jim becomes James, a brave individual who fights back, who fights for his family, exacts revenge, wields weapons and 'lights out for the territory' to be free, just like Huck in Twain's classic.

Realism(s)

Another contribution of *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* was that it ushered realism and local colorism in American literature making it an American classic, continuously raising interest and opening new discussions (Rasmussen, 2007, pp.198-203). In contemporary American literature, a noticeable trend is a peculiar blend of realism and fantasy, a strategy that is at least partially applied in Everett's *James*. This is the feature that makes this narrative so powerful and contemporary, yet linked to the African American historical heritage. Everett's James is

able to read, write, argue philosophy with John Locke and Voltaire; he understands politics and economy and is able to do all manual skilled and unskilled labor. The novel is in that sense difficult to categorize, a common feature of contemporary literature. Contemporary narratives are mostly described as hybrid forms, difficult to define in terms of genre as the writer's main goal is to subvert and/or discard the rules, limitations and predictability imposed by a particular genre. Sometimes described as "New Eclecticism", this new genre can be said to cross the boundaries of genre, media, and culture (Selzer, 2008, p.393). This blend of history and fantasy is sometimes called "speculative postrace fiction and historical fantasy", as it constantly oscillates between history and fantasy (Saldívar, 2011, p.585). A blend of genres thus constitutes a contemporary mode that reconciles a wish for social justice and realism and is a choice of many minority writers as it provides a new way of dealing with the issue of race in the 21st century.

The wish for "retributive (and ahistorical) justice" is something that fuels not only literature but also popular culture, especially movies, e.g., Tarantino's *Django Unchained* from 2012[3], and the means of achieving it also involve mixing truth and fiction (Dischinger 2017: 93). The final chapters of *James* completely resonate with that "Tarantino-esque" trend: he becomes a true hero of the novel, among other things through the power of language. As a complete twist and transformation from Twain's Jim who is partially built on stereotypical minstrel representations, Everett's James becomes a vengeance-exacting justice bearer as we can see in the final passages. His speech slightly resembles Django or Jules from *Pulp Fiction*, and it is clearly taking artistic license on Everett's part and mixing realism with fantasy. But more importantly, in the course of the novel, James imagines himself, writes, and acts himself into being. Unlike Twain's Jim, James will not be identified by racial markers and will choose his own name and identity and *will* ultimately get a chance to save his family.

Conclusion

This brief analysis focusing on two novels published almost a century and a half apart focused on the importance of language, especially the vernacular and its multiple artistic uses which have varied depending on the (social, historic, cultural, etc.) contexts. I have tried to support my argument that Percival Everett with his latest novel *James* almost equaled the revolutionary use of the vernacular by Twain in 1884. Reworking Twain's classic, Everett used a speculative

[3] See, for example, Kocić, 2017.

mode of writing as a tool to explore and problematize contemporary realities and constant changes in the circumstances of African Americans. This artistic strategy is particularly relevant and justified when considered in light of the fact that a contemporary way of representing truth in literature and culture is often multifaceted, fluid, and sometimes even contradictory in order to include various perspectives. Everett focuses on Jim's perspective solely, thus making his slave protagonist almost super-hero like and highlighting his story of self-definition through writing.

The power of Everett's novel lies in the fact that it can be read both as an imagined account of *antebellum* America, as well as a political statement against racism, and many other forms of discrimination and injustice. His deliberate toying with historical accuracy combined with his ironic hints at narrow-minded stereotypes of African Americans from white imagination result in his character of Jim/James who eclipses the entire narrative and becomes the central figure of power. By giving voice and the power to choose his own identity and path to James, Everett renders his story important for the overall history and culture and, additionally, enables readers to form their own opinions, truths and interpretations based on multiple sources. Just like its famous predecessor *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, *James* raises new questions and calls for new voices, debates, and considerations, a true quality and value of great literature.

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RACE, MONSTROSITY, AND URBAN REALITY IN BERNARD ROSE'S CANDYMAN (1992)

Abstract

Candyman is a 1992 horror film written and directed by the English filmmaker Bernard Rose. The plot centers on the legend of Candyman – a dark-skinned ghost, wandering about in a fur-lined coat, and with a hook in place of his right hand. This paper will examine race, i.e. tense racial relations in an inner-city setting, monstrosity, and the harsh urban reality as the most important elements of the film. Their meeting point is Cabrini-Green – both the film's setting and a real-life ghetto in Chicago. Considering the setting, a possible function of the Candyman legend within a broader socio-cultural context might be found in the (re)construction of racial segregation in the form of urban ghettoization as a common feature of the American urban landscape. In this paper, a potential framework for understanding Cabrini-Green as a "landscape of fear" will be provided by drawing from the works of the eminent Chinese American human geographer Yi-Fu Tuan. In this light, Cabrini-Green can be interpreted both as a space and as a place. As a space, it has transformed from a public housing project into a ghetto infamous for its high crime rates, poverty, and low-quality construction. As a place, it symbolizes an urban inferno and functions as the source of monstrosity in the film. Based on a film analysis grounded in cultural studies, this paper concludes that although there is no "real" monster in *Candyman*, with reality taken in relative, rather than absolute terms, it is the reality of the urban environment that is the monster, as well as the violence that encompasses it.
Keywords: *race, monstrosity, Candyman, Cabrini-Green, space, place*

Introduction

From the Industrial Revolution onwards, major cities have been constantly undergoing waves of urban growth. Industrial expansion and population growth gradually led to now

commonplace problems of urban life such as traffic, pollution, and poor housing conditions, to name just a few. However, urban industrialization brought about another serious issue.

As argued by Hill Collins (2004), African American "hyper-ghettos" found today in metropolitan areas such as Chicago, as well as the urban-suburban housing patterns that make Chicago and other cities so-called "Black ghettos", are not without their historical predecessor, but are in fact descendants of racial segregation policies developed at the time of urban industrialization. Today, disproportionate urban development is a staple of modern metropolitan cities, and the polarization between the developing, well-off neighborhoods on the one hand and the poverty-stricken slums on the other is at the heart of any discussion about urban space.

Candyman, regarded by some critics as a classic of its genre, mirrors these divisions as the disparity between the two most important loci of the film, Cabrini-Green and Lincoln Village, testifies to Chicago being divided along the color line, with monsters lurking on both sides. Although the film is based on Clive Barker's short story *The Forbidden* which originally takes place in Barker's native Liverpool, the setting of the film was changed to Chicago. More specifically, to Cabrini-Green – a public housing project that transformed into a ghetto. The writer-director Bernard Rose believed that the big public housing project, such as Cabrini-Green, was the new venue of terror, similar to how the standard setting of horror has always been the old dark house on the hill (Austen, 2018a).

As a result, Rose refitted Barker's original story to Cabrini-Green and decided to focus on the themes of tense racial relations and social inequality in inner-city Chicago. To analyze this dark side of the urban landscape as represented in the film, this paper will touch upon a possible approach to understanding the urban environment as explained by the eminent Chinese American human geographer Yi-Fu Tuan.

Decoding the Urban Environment

According to Tuan (2013), the city, as a manifestation of humanity's desire for harmony both in its architecture and in its social structure, was expected to function as an emblem of cosmic order. This, naturally, referred to the center of the city, not the village or today's periphery. The city, as an embodiment of physical perfection, contained a simple geometric design with the

streets oriented toward the cardinal points. As Tuan (2013) goes on to explain, this aspiration toward physical perfection corresponded to the longing for a stable society.

However, the city has become a place of havoc, despite being initially devised as an environment safe from the chaos of nature. In Tuan's (2013) words, the city has become a disoriented physical environment in which houses collapse on their tenants, fires break out and heavy traffic constantly threatens life. This state of non-stop danger is intensified by the growth of cities, the ever-increasing crime rate, and most important for this discussion, the increase in the spatial division between the rich and the poor (Tuan, 2013).

As a result, within Tuan's approach to the urban environment, fear is the key feature of any city, especially a large city, and this fear of the city as an environment cannot be separated from the fear of the city's residents. More specifically, fear of the poor being a possible source of both moral corruption and disease, i.e. fear of the uncontrollable and unassimilable masses – the "mob" (Tuan, 2013).

Historically, when impending chaos coming from this unassimilable part of the population was sensed by the society's leaders, they would resort to creating so-called "landscapes of fear" (Tuan, 2013). Although the earlier methods included public torture or execution, with time these methods became somewhat more refined and less gory, and finally evolved into a more subtle form of physical confinement. One such landscape of fear is Cabrini-Green.

To provide an analysis of the relationship between race, monstrosity, and urban reality as the most important elements in *Candyman*, Cabrini-Green will be examined as both a space and a place. While actual space is defined in topographical and geographical terms, place is the later inscription of emotions done by humans (Parezanović & Lukić, 2020). To trace how Cabrini-Green as a space becomes imbued with meaning and transforms into a place, the history and background of Cabrini-Green as an urban project will be touched upon, while Cabrini-Green as a place will be interpreted as an urban inferno and as the source of monstrosity.

Cabrini-Green as the Urban Hellhole

The area of Cabrini-Green, situated on the banks of the Chicago River's North Fork, had initially been an industrial slum in which many poor immigrants from Sweden, Ireland, southern Italy, and Germany lived, together with a growing number of African Americans who migrated from the Jim Crow South (Austen, 2018b). The river district was given the nickname "Little Hell" because of the smell of sulfur and the flames of gasworks nearby (Austen, 2018b). However, it was house fires, juvenile delinquency, disease, and infant mortality that plagued the district.

Like many other twentieth-century public housing projects in the Northeast-Midwest area, Cabrini-Green was envisioned as a model of urban redevelopment, to create conditions for a more democratic urban living. During the 1940s, when the project was in place, the real estate market took a turn for the worse and nearly a quarter of the homes in Chicago were falling apart and in desperate need of renovation, while the Black families in the city's segregated districts were excluded from the open market (Austen, 2018b). New public housing, such as Cabrini-Green, offered tenants a promise of a better life.

However, the Chicago authorities handling the Cabrini-Green project were underfunded and poorly managed. And, as Austen (2018b) claims, the high-rise developments were intentionally built in those neighborhoods that were already racially segregated. Even more so, after the 1950s when many Chicagoans moved to the suburbs, the public housing populations became not only poorer but also uniformly African American. Consequently, Cabrini-Green, poverty-stricken and crime-ridden, became utterly isolated, while the neighboring housing projects had been turned into high-class condominiums, resulting in "heaven and hell [being] separated by just a few blocks" (Schweiger, 1992, p. 25). The Cabrini-Green project was located in between two of Chicago's most affluent neighborhoods – the Gold Coast and Lincoln Park, or as it is called in *Candyman*, Lincoln Village. What this change meant for the film's spatial dimension was that the main protagonist Helen could observe Cabrini-Green from a safe distance, at least until she decided to cross the color line into uncharted territory.

By the time *Candyman* was filmed, Chicago was home to 10 of 16 American poorest census districts, all of them being large public housing projects such as Cabrini-Green (Austen, 2018b). Although other public housing projects in the extremely segregated city of Chicago were even larger, poorer, and more infested with crime, it was Cabrini-Green that entered the

popular imagination as the symbol of the "inner city" and became the setting of numerous films, urban crime novels, rap songs, and the like (Austen, 2018b). Little by little, Cabrini-Green became one of the scariest places in all of urban America.

Candyman – The Tale of Urban Legend, Monstrosity, and Race

Trevor Lyle, at the beginning of the film, describes urban legends as "modern, oral folklore" and as "the unselfconscious reflection of the fears of urban society" (Rose, 1992, 7:11-20). This film is centered on a legend – the legend of Candyman. The story goes that Candyman, a well-educated son of a slave, was a talented artist who had become successful by painting portraits of wealthy Whites.

Upon being commissioned by a wealthy landowner to capture his daughter's beauty in a portrait, Candyman committed the ultimate offense – he fell in love with and fathered a child with a White woman. Once captured by the lynch mob, his right hand was sawed off and honey smeared over his naked body for him to be stung to death by bees. Finally, his dead body was burnt on a pyre and his ashes were scattered across what was to become Cabrini-Green. According to urban legend, Candyman appears to those who dare pronounce his name five times while looking in the mirror. Afterward, he brutally slaughters them with a hook now attached to the stump of his severed right hand.

This legend caught the attention of Helen Lyle and Bernadette Walsh, two graduate students writing a thesis on urban legends. However, Helen refuses to write what she describes as "a nice little boring thesis, regurgitating all the usual crap about urban legend" (Rose, 1992, 17:20-26). Instead, when she hears about the gruesome murder of Ruthie Jean attributed to Candyman in the crime-ridden neighborhood of Cabrini-Green, the plot begins to unravel as Helen is seen studying reports of other violent crimes that took place there and that were supposedly committed by Candyman, with one of the newspaper articles titled "Cause of Death, What Killed Ruthie Jean?" / *Life in the Projects*" (Rose, 1992, 12:02-03). However, merely studying newspaper articles and crime reports is not enough for Helen. Rather, she insists on visiting Cabrini-Green.

Fourth-hand information that Helen acquired from the Black cleaning ladies at the university proved strong enough to even send her into one of Cabrini-Green's high-rises where, as Bernadette puts it, "the gangs hold this whole neighborhood hostage" (Rose, 1992, 17:13-

15). The spatial dimension of the film gains momentum at this moment when Cabrini-Green is introduced as a ghetto. Even more so, when the fear that is woven into urban space becomes a crucial element in understanding Cabrini-Green both as the setting of the film and as a real-life ghetto.

Fear and the Urban Reality

In his 1992 review of *Candyman*, the American film critic Roger Ebert claimed that certain urban settings can embody fear, similar to the way how urban legends are based on actual fears of those who believe in them. In the film, fear becomes a leitmotif stressed already at the beginning when what seems to be a huge swarm of bees appears behind the high-rises as if it were a cloud made up of the sins and fears of civilization itself (Parezanović & Lukić, 2020). This feeling of imminent danger is intensified with Candyman's opening warning: "With my hook for a hand, I'll split you from your groin to your gullet", followed by what appears to be a woman's scream and then a close-up of Helen face (Rose, 1992, 02:45-52).

However, the towers of Cabrini-Green are not merely something in the distance. On the contrary, they are almost identical to the buildings surrounding them. And that is precisely at the very core of the film: wherever you are in inner-city Chicago, the danger of Cabrini-Green is always closer than one believes it to be (Austen, 2018a). This danger is not merely a construct present in the film, but a reality for those living in Cabrini-Green as the film references a real-life murder. As reported by Steve Bogira (2014), the film might have been inspired by his articles on the murder of a woman called Ruthie Mae McCoy who was a resident of another notorious housing project – Chicago's Grace Abbot Homes, and who was shot to death by an intruder who broke into her apartment through a hole behind the bathroom mirror. In the film, Helen realizes this imminent danger of Cabrini-Green later on when she and her colleague Bernadette go into the bathroom of Helen's pricey condominium and find that she can also remove what is behind the mirror to be able to enter the apartment next to hers. This is when she also learns that her building, the high-class Lincoln Village, was originally conceived of as part of Cabrini-Green.

Taking everything into account, one possible interpretation of the film is that it is more about what Cabrini-Green symbolizes – it symbolizes a source of fear, more specifically fear of the ghetto. What an example with the mirror shows is that the boundaries between myth and

reality in the film are blurred much in the same way as the threatening nature of Cabrini-Green as the setting of the film is virtually impossible to discern from its infamous reputation in real life.

Where is the Monster?

As has already been mentioned, *Candyman* is regarded as a classic in the horror genre (Badley, 1996). But how does monstrosity function in this film? One explanation might be that Candyman is not the primary source of monstrosity, but merely the corporeal manifestation of public housing perceived as a threat.

Decades before *Candyman* was filmed, public housing represented the unruliness and otherness of American cities. However, as already indicated, it was Cabrini-Green that was perceived as the symbol of an urban project gone wrong – a bogeyman that embodied poverty, violence, and tense racial relations (Austen, 2018b).

This is best seen when Helen investigates a location in Cabrini-Green where, according to legend, Candyman disemboweled a young boy. The setting of that scene might be described as the urban nightmare at its finest – a men's public toilet at an infamous inner-city housing project (Austen, 2018a). The toilet's small, solitary building is surrounded by Cabrini-Green's high-rises, virtually abandoned but seemingly haunted by multitudes. Helen enters the bathroom alone, without a clue what danger she exposes herself to. While taking photographs needed for her research, she enters one of the stalls and gags on the stench. However, Helen is adamant and enters yet another stall. At this moment Candyman's chilling announcement that he is "the writing on the wall" becomes literal as the bathroom walls are laden with spray-painted threats, the one on the last stall being "SWEETS TO THE SWEET" (Rose, 1992, 45:50-53; 36:24-30). Intrigued by this clue, Helen enters the last stall and lifts the toilet seat only to be frightened by a swarm of bees. Although she initially recoils, Helen continues to snap away with her camera.

However, the scene does not end there as Helen turns to find a young Black man, in a leather trench coat and a metal hook in his hand, blocking the exit. Accompanied by his gang, one of the thugs grabs her by the arms. "I hear you're looking for Candyman, bitch. Well, you found him", the first one says, his face expressing pure hatred (Rose, 1992, 38:55-39:01). With the end of his hook, he hits Helen on the head, leaving her unconscious on the floor of what

might be Chicago's most terrifying public restroom. The scene ends with the four thugs casually walking away, the camera capturing their leisurely pace, with Chicago's skyline lurking in the distance.

At this moment the film embodied the true horror of Cabrini-Green – its casualness of violence (Austen, 2018a). There is no monster *per se* in this scene – no zombie, ghost, or vampire. It is the urban environment that is the monster, as well as the violence that encompasses it. If one recalls Tuan's claim that fear of the city as an environment cannot be separated from fear of the city's residents, this scene becomes even more horrifying as it is the leader of an infamous gang, known as the Overlords, who has appropriated the urban legend to sow fear among the already troubled residents of Cabrini-Green. As Austen (2018a) describes it, this is yet another routine act amid Cabrini-Green's poverty and despair.

Therefore, the real horror is not the ghost of Candyman splitting his victims in half. On the contrary, the real horror depicted in the film is something far less otherworldly – it is Black-on-Black violence, racism, the myth in which Black men inherently desire White women and vice-versa, the hopelessness of the ghetto and its residents, male violence toward women, women both as victims and as the monstrous feminine, and finally, the power myth itself has (Badley, 1996). In addition, it is the horror of the urban environment as both a space and a place of disarray and decay.

Finally, all this establishes Cabrini-Green as the urban inferno. By introducing a new type of space that fills the viewers with dread, Cabrini-Green transforms into a place and ultimately functions as the source of monstrosity in the film. As such, Cabrini-Green provides a haven where the more corporeal bogeyman can feel at home.

Conclusion – Myth or Reality?

According to Austen (2018b), horror is all about the uncertainty between what is real and what is imagined when the danger is not visible, and in these shadows of the unknown, when an attack is anticipated, terror requires that stories of danger flood the mind. One such story is the legend of Candyman. However, this legend is far more than an ordinary myth. On the contrary, it reflects the grim and troubling urban reality of Chicago.

There is no doubt that Cabrini-Green, similar to the Grace Abbot Homes, was an actual place – a nightmare vision of fear, racial paranoia, and urban housing at its worst, while the fictional Cabrini-Green represented in the film was the (re)creation of that fear (Austen, 2018b). What the film successfully managed to capture is precisely this blurred boundary between what is real and what is imaginary. When Helen – a middle-class White woman and an aspiring scholar enters the world of Cabrini-Green, she finds herself face to face with a poverty-stricken and utterly marginalized African American underclass. Once confronted with the poverty, crime, and racial antagonism that characterize Cabrini-Green, Helen becomes exposed to the harsh reality of Chicago.

For the well-off White middle-class academics such as Helen, the true terror is having to confront the otherness of Chicago – the darkness that encompasses residentially segregated areas such as Cabrini-Green. By the film's end, the viewers come to understand what Helen established at the beginning – that the residents of Cabrini-Green tell stories of the monstrous Candyman as a way to comprehend an otherwise incomprehensible harshness of their lives.

At the film's end, the residents gather outside their homes in Cabrini-Green and light a massive bonfire to exorcise not only Candyman but also the daily horrors of living in the ghetto. Unlike Candyman, who exists solely because of rumor and whispers, the reality of segregated housing is not a mere element of folklore, but the hard truth. The real source of terror then is not Candyman himself, but the grim reality the film depicts.

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THE NOVELIZATION OF GARDNER'S 1989 *BATMAN*: A COMPARISON WITH THE ORIGINAL 1989 MOVIE BY TIM BURTON

Abstract

The rise of the Batman franchise inspired the development of many of its portrayals including the 1989 Burton Batman film, which was proposed as a "solid take on the Batman mythos brought down by too much Prince music and a ridiculous final act" (Taylor, 2008, p. 9). Its novelization *Batman* was published by Craig Shaw Gardner the same year, featuring very similar characters, plot, and dialogue, attempting to follow the film with minor changes regarding subplots. This paper contrasts the 1989 film and book, analyzing the plot, the mise-en-scène and its novelization, the romance between Bruce Wayne and Vicki Vale, and the character of the Joker. The paper makes a case for why the movie is a greater art form than the book when contrasting certain decisions related to elements of narrative control. Additionally, Gardner's syntactical and narrative decisions within his novelization lead the author of this paper to conclude that the book cannot be added to the corpus of "good literature."

Keywords: *Batman, the Joker, Tim Burton, Craig Shaw Gardner*

Introduction

The Batman franchise has been popular ever since the comics were released, undoubtedly due to the famous rise of superhero series at the time. It is no wonder then why those stories were the focus of movies and shows in Hollywood after their release. One may argue that the marketing approach which Hollywood takes regarding their tie-in products, such as movie novelizations, are partially responsible for how successful franchises become. However, this approach has at times faced criticism for prioritizing the commercial aspect over the artistic value of its films (Mahlknecht, 2012). Other film industries have not demonstrated as much creativity in producing marketing strategies that are as effective as Hollywood's, which not

only boost public awareness of a film but also create additional profit through sources through these tie-in products. It is debatable whether these products have artistic merit in and of themselves such as the novelization of the 1989 Batman film directed by the prominent Tim Burton. This movie was described as a "solid take on the Batman mythos brought down by too much Prince music and a ridiculous final act" (Taylor, 2008, p. 9). Its novelization *Batman* was published by Craig Shaw Gardner the same year, which fans have purchased and consumed to immerse themselves further into the Batman universe. In this paper, I will attempt to analyze the various features of both the movie and book by examining the fabula, the mise-en-scène and its novelization, and the depictions of characters.

Fabula

Both the movie and the book feature almost the same plot, dialogue, and characters. Gardner attempted to follow the movie as closely as possible. The plot follows primarily the characters Bruce Wayne (Batman), Vicki Vale (photojournalist), and Jack Napier (The Joker). As a photojournalist, Vale is interested in investigating the strange sightings of Batman, who seems to be motivated by exterminating Gotham City's criminals. Wayne later falls in love with Vale during a fundraiser that he hosts and a relationship between the two develops, riddled by tension as she tries to discover the reasons behind his elusive nature, which are later revealed to be his secret of being Batman and the mysterious murder of his parents. This was the key event which shaped his quest for justice in Gotham City.

Meanwhile, Gotham City's criminal overlord, Carl Grissom, sends Napier into a raid to have him killed because the latter had a love affair with the former's mistress. However, Napier survives, becoming severely disfigured by a chemical accident, which later motivates him to become the Joker. The Joker returns, murdering Grissom and taking over his operations to terrorize Gotham by chemically poisoning many citizens with Smylex. Afterwards, the Joker becomes infatuated by Vale and lures her into a museum where he murders everyone in the vicinity with poison. Batman rescues Vale from the Joker and provides her with the information to rescue future citizens from Smylex. In the meantime, he also discovers that the Joker was responsible for the mysterious murder of his parents, and the conflict between the two becomes personal to him.

After Wayne reveals his identity as Batman to Vale, the Joker invites Gotham City's citizens into a parade by stating that he will give them 20 million dollars. Batman arrives at the parade and rescues the citizens from the Smylex gas, which the Joker was motivated to use to murder the citizens at the parade. The Joker is later confronted and killed by Batman, who later reveals the famous Bat-Signal which will be used to call him for help in relation to future crimes. At the end of the story, Vale and Wayne are implied to be in a relationship in the aftermath of the action, and Vale gives up on her mission to reveal the identity of Batman to Gotham City.

The mise-en-scène and its novelization

Gotham City is important to the context of both movie and book, as it is "an essential part of framing the narratives of the citizens who live and navigate the space on a daily basis...as it plays an essential part in the Batman universe, as protecting it is a main motive for Batman's existence" (Forssell, 2019, p. 7). Considering Monaco's (1977) statement that every art form is shaped by its technology (ch. 2), it is important to notice that film as a recording art is more direct in its approach between observer and subject (ch. 1) in relation to portraying certain scenes and settings. As a pictorial narration, the 1989 movie depicts the city in the color pallets of primarily black and gray, symbolizing the soul of the city as a place full of crime from the lowest parts of the social class to the upper class, where the criminal overlords and the politicians rule.

The book as a linguistic narration develops the gothic scenery seen in the movie even further as soon as the prologue. It introduces the city by describing the night such as that it was "like any [night] in the city—too hot, too humid, too loud. The sound of music mixed with car horns, laughter, and the occasional scream. The streets swarmed with life, ten times as busy now and the sun was gone and the scum of the night could crawl from their holes, like roaches who needed the darkness to feed" (Gardner, 1989, prologue). Gardner effectively develops the criminal nature of the city by providing an ironic repetition with each change of scene using the simple statement, "Welcome to Gotham City," emphasizing precisely how much decent people are not welcome.

Forrsell (2019) contrasts the Joker and Vale's color palettes (green/violet and white, respectively), in relation to Gotham's black gothic backdrop. Joker's colors embody a stark

and clownish contrast in relation to the background, which symbolize chaos and deception, whereas Vale's white colors in the movie are used to embody virtues such as purity, freedom, and love. Batman, whose color palette embodies the black of Gotham City, represents the "lone ranger, …[giving] him the element of surprise…[as] he awaits his prey in the dark and strikes when the time is right" (p. 47). Vale and the Joker's colors represent the main motivations of Batman, raising the question of which color themes (good or evil) will penetrate his own darkness in the end.

Considering the technology used at the time of its production, the movie is excellent at depicting the elusive nature of Batman. The director utilizes rapid changes of shots to encompass certain characteristics of Batman, such as his dexterity. The audience of the film shares the same point of view as Batman's opponents—a natural choice by directors in action films for the purpose of emphasizing the anticipation of criminals in relation to the hero they are fighting. In this movie, Batman is observed to vanish because of how quick he is, and the camera employs various angles in order to create this effect and keep the audience as tense as his opponents, even though they ironically side with Batman. Furthermore, Batman utilizes smoke and various toys to confuse his opponents about his given location at any moment, underscoring both his cunning and slippery nature. These fighting methods can be compared to the gunfights employed by his opponents, signifying the differences between them in terms of creativity in battle. Even though Batman is mortal and vulnerable like those he battles, he is different than them in terms of his creativity in relation to technology and the environment, which makes him a formidable opponent.

The book is more helpful than the movie in providing certain details that are not mentioned in the movie, such as how exactly the Joker managed to persuade both Vicki Vale and Bruce Wayne to come to the museum (Gardner, 1989, ch. 9), a point of confusion for me as the viewer of the movie. Additionally, since the movie focuses more on action points of the plot, it was difficult to remember character names or how they were related to each other, which is a feature that the book more successfully elaborates on.

However, the movie is better at demonstrating the murders that followed because of the nature of pictorial narration, which more directly encapsulates action in relation to colors, music, and themes. Nothing can quite match the abstract nature of music nor how it affects the viewers psychologically. Gardner (1989) is unsuccessful at depicting the nature of sound in the novel as he attempts to literally capture the music beats: "The boys followed quickly, toting

the champagne and the glasses, and of course, Steve-arino carted that huge ghetto-blaster. *Boom, shakalakalaka. Boom, shakalakalaka.*" (ch. 10)

The nature of music, particularly in relationship to the Joker in the movie, who utilizes it to juxtapose overall friendliness in relation to his love for chaos and insanity, could have been utilized in the book in a more successful way instead of attempting to relate it literally as the movie did.

Additionally, Gardner unsuccessfully develops the voices of the various characters that he is describing through free indirect discourse. For instance, we may analyze the following excerpts from the novel:

> She lifted his feet and rescued a *Vogue* magazine with her picture on the cover. Imagine that, Jack thought. He had been resting his Italian shoes on her face. (Gardner, 1989, ch. 1)
> 'It's Batman!' the guard screamed.
> It was nice to be recognized. (ch. 16)

We may notice that the subtle irony of Napier's thoughts, who is psychologically portrayed as an evil villain, matches the irony found in Batman's thoughts in Chapter 16, when he thinks sarcastically about how good it is to be recognized by the common man. The book is riddled with instances like these where the characters sound like each other, even though they are substantially different from one another in terms of their motivations and personality traits. As such, they prove to be unconvincing characters with no depth.

Additionally, the book is riddled with various cliches embedded in the adolescent syntax of the 1980s. Vicki Vale as a photojournalist, who supposedly is well-adept at narrative, having traveled the world and taken pictures of famous historical sites, describes her love affair with Bruce by stating that they are "two crazy people in a crazy world" (Gardner, 1989, ch. 15), creating the impression that she thinks more like an adolescent than an older woman with a serious career in photojournalism as someone who has been "inside castles and palaces, to meet with kings and queens" (Gardner, 1989, ch. 3), which requires a certain caliber of diplomacy and education. Furthermore, we might examine the following action description for a similar reason:

> Then Batman was on his feet, using the brand-new corpse for a shield. He heaved the lifeless excrement through the air. The body landed on top of one of his friends. The one who was still alive fell back over a garbage can to crack his head against a wall. He fell down, out cold. Batman was already on the third piece of slime. He rabbit-punched the slime's throat, then gave his gut a good kick with a steel-toed boot as the thug went down. Now there was only one more little matter to take care of. Batman pulled his mask back into place as he turned to face his final business. The last piece of living trash had his gun out, but he was shaking too much to aim. Batman smiled. The trash screamed and ran. (Gardner, 1989, ch. 11)

The syntax used in this description utilizes words such as "lifeless excrement," "garbage," "slime," "one more little matter," "last piece of living trash," to describe the opponents that Batman faces. This word usage takes the reader out of the narrative as it is difficult to seriously relate Batman, described as a quiet and intimidating 35-year-old hero, to the descriptions of adolescent syntax. Understandably, Gardner is attempting to employ shorter sentences to quicken the pace of the action and perhaps appeal to a younger audience, but the vocabulary that he uses takes the reader out of the narrative, considering the overall context.

The romance between Bruce Wayne and Vicki Vale

The romance between Bruce Wayne and Vicki Vale is lackluster, precisely because there is no depth to their relationship. Even though the movie is more effective in encapsulating the romance between the two characters, I would agree with Taheri and Mostafevi (2021) that Wayne in the movie still "lacks a great spiritual transformation" (p. 388) in relation to Vale. The viewers are confused about Wayne's relationship with Vale and how they inspire one another. Nevertheless, there are a few cinematic elements in the movie that were well-executed and made the relationship more believable. If we consider the novel, Gardner manages to provide a more developed background to Vicki Vale, but the romance between the two characters manages to be even more implausible and characterless than in the movie.

Both the film and the book emphasize that Vicki Vale's most important characteristic is that she is an attractive woman. Every male character in the film and book lusts for her (Wayne, Knox, and the Joker). A memorable shot in the movie encapsulates this by having an awe-struck Wayne absently leave his cup on the edge of a table after he sees her for the first time, which Alfred (his butler) saves from falling. I was hoping that the book would elaborate on Wayne's motivations further, but Gardner spends almost an entire paragraph describing how

beautiful Wayne perceives her to be (1989, ch. 6) before which he shortly adds that she was "witty and intelligent" without describing how that is so in relation to himself or the context that they are in. In the end, it is not fathomable how Wayne's "needs had been answered by Vicki Vale" (Gardner, 1989, ch. 6), since the author makes no mention of how she is important to him as a character other than that she is "beautiful." One might argue that these needs are purely sexual, but both movie and novel make it clear that she means more to him than a one-night stand, although it is a mystery why.

In the film, their romance is portrayed symbolically through certain elements of the film. For instance, during their first date, Wayne and Vale are shot sitting on opposite ends of a very long table in a very dark, almost ominous dining room. This is an excellent decision on behalf of Burton as a director, since both the table and room symbolize Wayne's distant relationship with the general crowd. Even though he is sitting across the room, Vale asks him to pass the salt, representing her invitation to become more intimate with him, which foreshadows the rest of their relationship in the film. They later spend the rest of their first date with Alfred, the only man who Wayne considers family, where he tells a heartwarming story to Vicki about Bruce as a boy. The colors in the scene are softer and warmer, with tints of browns and oranges, and the music is gentle, mirroring the closeness that the romantic pair are beginning to feel for one another, contrasting the earlier dark colors of the dining room.

This rich scene can be compared with Gardner's decisions in the book, where he changes the scenery of their first date. Here, Wayne and Vale are described as having gone horseback riding, and their conversation is reduced to how horses do not love Wayne, how much she loves photography, and how Wayne is elusive (1989, ch. 5). This decision on behalf of the author does not provide the depth needed to demonstrate how they are affected by one another to proceed with the relationship that they have in the book.

The Joker

Monaco (1977, ch. 3) mentions that the omniscient viewpoint is generally utilized in films rather like in novels. The Batman (1989) movie is no different. Burton chooses for his viewers to spend much time examining the character of the Joker as an insane man, who is adept at art, science, and chemistry. However, even though the movie manages to do this, the book fails to

convincingly depict the thoughts of the "world's first fully functional homicidal artist" as described in both narratives.

One memorable scene in the movie does an excellent task of showcasing the psychological birth of the Joker cinematically. First, there is a shot that indicates the word "surgery" on the wall, and then the camera "slides" into a basement, where a doctor who had been operating on the Joker's damaged face is shown to be horrified by his results. When the Joker takes off his bandages and looks into the mirror for the first time, he begins laughing, smashing both the mirror and the lightbulb in the room. The smashing of the mirror and lightbulb here is crucial as they are tied together symbolically. It demonstrates that he can no longer look at himself in the mirror without contempt, and due to his resentment of this change in destiny, any light within him has ceased to exist. He walks out of the scene laughing like a madman without the audience having seen his face, left to anticipate the moment when this feature will be uncovered.

The movie once again proves to be effective at uncovering the extent of the Joker's insanity in yet another scene. An interesting overhead shot was filmed, portraying Joker holding a picture of Vicki Vale. The room is filled with many other pictures of people scattered around him that he had cut out from photographs, which demonstrate his obsession with "collecting" people as if they were objects. Easygoing gentle music is played in the background when he refers to Vicki Vale as if she were his property, rather like the photographs lying around the floor that he had cut out. The colors are colorful and clownish in the scene, once again juxtaposing the image of the friendly clown with his psychopathic tendencies for chaos, rendering the viewer uneasy and confused by the Joker's future motivations.

In the book, I was hoping to understand the Joker's feelings and thoughts when he saw his new face, especially since Gardner decides to utilize free indirect discourse throughout the novel for all main characters. In Chapter 6, such a depiction proves to be anticlimactic compared to the movie. Gardner briefly and ineffectively describes this event in a manner that the audience already saw on screen, unaware of the significance of Napier's transformation into the Joker. In terms of the Joker's thoughts, he only mentions that "the joke wasn't over yet. It was just beginning," which does not mirror the Joker's true motivations and emotions regarding the situation. Additionally, the readers do not understand the Joker's special fixation on Vale. Considering that the thoughts of a madman cannot be similar to the thoughts of the

protagonist Batman, I find the psychological depictions through the method of free indirect discourse ineffective, undermining both the villain and hero as a whole.

Final (and personal) remarks

Overall, I did not particularly enjoy the movie or the book. I believe that my expectations for the movie were greater since I was comparing it to the more technologically advanced Batman movie series, directed by Christopher Nolan, where the narrative was stronger. However, when compared to the book, the movie has greater artistic value as an art form. Even though the setup of the novel started out more strongly, I believe that Gardner did not have efficient narrative control in relation to the genre as the action proceeded to unfold. Naturally, the setting is supposed to be more emphasized in an action novel compared to other genres because of its nature, but other methods could have been employed to highlight the motivations of different characters, especially since readers are following three points of view. Additionally, if it was not Gardner's goal to showcase the thoughts of characters, then he should have avoided free indirect discourse in relation to them, especially one such as Joker, who in my opinion as a writer is extremely difficult to depict without much research in psychology considering his state of mind. Gardner could have also attempted to make the plot and romance between Wayne and Vale more believable by avoiding the 1980s adolescent syntax and employing the technique of "show, do not tell," respectively. Because of these reasons, I do not believe this work can be added to the corpus of "good literature."

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DRAMA IN FICTION: THEATRICAL CRITIQUE IN ROBERT COOVER'S THE PUBLIC BURNING

Abstract

The primary aim of this research is to examine the merging of literary genres, namely drama and fiction, in Robert Coover's novel *The Public Burning* (1977). By implementing dramatic strategies into the aforementioned narrative, Coover masterfully exemplifies his own critique of post-modern civilization. This paper will utilize the qualitative content analysis method, and it will scrutinize theatrical allusions in Coover's fiction. Firstly, the paper will analyze Coover's use of the mediaeval theatre in order to depict, and thereby satirize, the Cold-War hysteria. Furthermore, to better understand the socio-cultural backdrop of the story, this study will describe the controversial case of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg. Additionally, the study will focus on the development of mediaeval plays and their prominent role in pre-Renaissance Europe. After the theoretical framework, the discussion will shift to the novel's protagonist, Richard Nixon, who perceives his generation as a group of characters trapped within a bloody *pseudo*-morality play. In Nixon's view, his contemporaries behave as characters from mediaeval dramas, theatrical farces and circus entertainments. Nixon witnesses the public execution, which is in fact the public burning of the Rosenberg couple at Times Square, and he soon realises that such a deed is the epitome of a corrupt judicial system. Attorneys, politicians and even the media in the twentieth century would often apply manipulation tactics to keep the citizens at bay, as exemplified by the public execution of the Rosenbergs. The novel critiques all those characters who abuse the law in order to subjugate the less-fortunate individuals. The paper concludes that real life tends to imitate art, because the deaths of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg seem to mimic older theatrical traditions, albeit in a far more tragic and devastating manner.

Keywords: Robert Coover, *The Public Burning*, Genre-blending, Theatrical Allusions, Morality Play, Farce

Introduction

The basic aim of the research is the analysis of theatrical references in American post-modernist fiction, namely Robert Coover's novel *The Public Burning* from 1977. The paper will, predominantly, focus on different intertextual references, such as the European mediaeval theatre, farce and circus. In Coover's narrative, public entertainments are usually depicted through the prism of political speeches and the public execution of the Rosenberg couple at Times Square in New York. The first segment of this research will explore several methodological and theoretical elements, whereas the following chapters will focus primarily on the analytical discussions regarding Coover's *opus*.

After the introduction, the methodology will be determined. The study will rely on the qualitative content analysis and focus primarily on the genre-hybridization and detecting dramatic references which Coover uses to formulate his own critique of the twentieth century. Moving further, the first section of this paper will determine important facts regarding the real-life case of the Rosenberg couple in America. In other words, the first chapter will reexamine the sad fate of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, the different reasons for their arrest, the espionage plot and the final execution at Sing-Sing. Hereinafter, the theoretical section will explore the backdrop of mediaeval dramas, i.e., miracle, mystery and morality plays. It will also present the rise and development of morality plays. Afterwards, the discussion will gradually shift to Richard Nixon's lamentations.

The second part of this study focuses primarily on two analytical chapters. Richard Nixon, being one of the most important characters in Coover's work, observes the events transpiring during the twentieth century. In his deep meditation, Nixon muses over the idea of how the real world basically reflects theatrical performances. In other words, the world of the twentieth century reflects the theatre stage. Additionally, Nixon believes that his own generation would be able to gain entry into History by combating the forces of darkness. These unknown and mysterious forces of darkness are epitomized in the characters of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg. Nixon and his contemporaries have to defeat the dark forces, subsequently executing Julius and Ethel, in order to go down in History. The literary motif of the execution relies heavily on the descriptions of mediaeval morality plays, thereby formulating a new, post-modernist *pseudo*-morality play, which is, by all accounts, bloody and vile.

Lastly, the second analytical chapter will explore the following aspects: the features of the farce and circus depicted in the novel, as well as the way Coover portrayed the Rosenbergs's

trial. The trial is public entertainment for the masses and not a fair judicial procedure. Coover compares attorneys to well-trained actors, or rather thespians of the finest calibre. The author portrays lawyers as silver-tongues who generously apply manipulation tactics in order to reach their goals, while the less powerful individuals suffer in the background of corruption and greed. The dramatic strategies in Coover's narrative function as the author's critique of his own era and various societies throughout the world. Therefore, this research will aim to explore Robert Coover's strong critique of not just one society or culture, but rather of the entire twentieth century, as such. By implementing dramatic strategies, Coover uses literature as his own genre 'playground' in order to create a sharp critique of the post-modern era.

Methodology

This research will utilise the qualitative content analysis of dramatic strategies which can be detected in Robert Coover's post-modernist fiction. Due to the fact that Coover's *The Public Burning* is a novel, this paper will explore the implementation of the dramatic genre within Coover's narrative. For this reason, the tradition of theatrical performances in Europe, most prominently England, will be of particular interest. The novel provides the readers with a substantial number of literary references which are closely associated with the mediaeval theatre in Europe. Furthermore, the three main foci of the research are: morality plays, farces and circuses. The paper will examine older European texts and references which permeate Coover's narrative genre.

The qualitative content analysis is described as "any qualitative data reduction and sense-making effort that takes a volume of qualitative material and attempts to identify core consistencies and meanings" (Patton, 2022, p. 453). The qualitative content analysis is "mainly inductive, grounding the examination of topics and themes, as well as the inferences drawn from them, in the data" (Zhang and Wildemuth, 2005, pp. 1-2). Naturally, we ought to consider that the "qualitative content analysis goes beyond merely counting words or extracting objective content from texts to examine meanings, themes and patterns that may be manifest or latent in a particular text" (Zhang and Wildemuth, 2005, pp. 1). The content analysis will be applied in the analysis of one of Coover's most intriguing pieces of fiction.

An Overview of the Rosenberg Case

Only a small number of death-penalty verdicts can equal the level of controversy created by the deaths of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg. Accused of overseeing a spy network which stole the atomic secrets and handed them over to the Soviet Union, Julius and Ethel Rosenberg were the only spies executed during the Cold-War hysteria. In order to better understand the Rosenberg couple, we first ought to examine their profiles. Julius Rosenberg was an enthusiastic Communist and his employment at the Army Signal Corps Engineering Laboratories made him an enticing recruit for Soviet spies. He was approached and recruited after the Labor Day in 1942. Shortly after, in 1944, Julius in turn became a recruiter for the Russians and he would oversee the operations of several spies, including the one who would cause Julius's downfall. That spy was, in fact, his own brother-in-law, David Greenglass. Greenglass worked on the so-called "Manhattan Project" at the Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico. Once arrested in 1950, Greenglass named his wife and Julius as co-conspirators, but he also eventually named his sister Ethel as another party involved. Ethel was arrested while leaving the federal courthouse, but Ethel claimed that she had no prior knowledge of the espionage (Seven, 2018).

However, Greenglass later told the *New York Times* journalist, Sam Roberts, that he had entered into a deal with the government, implicating Ethel in exchange for his wife's immunity. Sentencing guidelines gave the judge two choices for the final verdict: thirty-year imprisonment or execution. J. Edgar Hoover, the powerful FBI director at the time, suggested the thirty-year sentence for Ethel, believing she would eventually provide the investigators with the names in prison. Nonetheless, judge Irving Kaufman decided on the death-penalty for Julius and Ethel, while David Greenglass was sentenced to fifteen years in prison, but he was later released after serving nine years. The Rosenbergs were executed on June 19, 1953. The sentence was carried out at the Sing-Sing prison in Ossining, New York. There has been enquiry about Ethel's involvement in the espionage scheme. In 2016, the Rosenbergs's son asked President Barack Obama to posthumously pardon his mother. Ethel's guilt remains a matter of debate, due to a substantial lack of documentation both during the trial procedure and after. However, most historians believe that Ethel was guilty of the charges (Seven, 2018). From the historiographic point of view, we can conclude that Ethel legally remains involved in the espionage scheme.

In his novel, Coover does not problematize the question of the couple's guilt or innocence. Rather, Coover's version of the Rosenberg trial serves as an illustration of the Cold-War hysteria of the time. In this context, the Rosenberg trial and execution are satirised to an extent that they are presented as a theatrical performance, with a profoundly judicial background, encompassing elements of the mediaeval theatre, farce and even circus-like characteristics which will be analyzed hereinafter. To emphasize the absurd theatricality of the post-modernist era, Coover transports the execution room outside Sing-Sing and moves the execution-*cum*-theatre to the open-air stage at Times Square in New York.

The Pre-Renaissance Drama in England

Prior to exploring Coover's hybridization of literary genres, we ought to observe how the dramatic tradition evolved in Europe. To be more specific, we ought to examine the development of the pre-Renaissance drama in England. The basic role of the mediaeval religious dramas would be to disseminate the stories of the Bible. In other words, the main role of the mediaeval theatre was to educate the masses and to make them better believers in the dogmas of the time. Coover's critique lies in the portrayal of mediaeval methods which were, also, utilized in the twentieth century.

Miracle and Mystery Plays

Different dramas of the Middle Ages were developed as a mimetic portrayal of religious history. Clerics, and later laymen, would partake in mediaeval dramatic performances. They would enact characters from various biblical stories. Such stories were derived from the Old and the New Testament. The staged performances were mainly organized during religious holidays. In order to better understand the mediaeval theatre, three basic types of dramas have to be scrutinized: the miracle plays, mystery plays and morality plays. In his work *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, Abrams (1999) defines miracle and mystery plays in the following manner:

> The miracle play had as its subject either a story from the Bible, or else the life and martyrdom of a saint. In the usage of some historians, however, "Miracle play" denotes only dramas based on saints' lives, and the term mystery play— "mystery" in the archaic sense of the "trade" conducted by

> each of the medieval guilds who sponsored these plays—is applied only to dramas based on the Bible. (165)

Mediaeval dramas were originally associated with the church's annual festival of Easter Sunday. Nevertheless, the mediaeval theatre was slowly expanded to incorporate events commemorated at other great feasts, for example Christmas and the Epiphany. It should be noted that from the tenth to the thirteenth century, different miracle plays were performed exclusively in Latin, which was the official language of the Roman liturgy. However, by the fifteenth century, religious dramas in vernacular started to gradually flourish. This stage of expansion was defined by various theatre cycles of mystery plays, which in their own right dramatized a wide range of biblical events from Genesis to Judgement Day (Drama, Medieval, 2019). In the fourteenth century, mystery plays were developed in York and Chester, predominantly rendering biblical events. However, the exact way in which such performances were staged is still a matter of scholarly debate. It is believed that each biblical episode was staged on a separate pageant wagon drawn through a town from one location to another. Some parts of the performance cycle were enacted at each point. Soon enough, biblical episodes were greatly enhanced and unknown authors added scenes, as well as comic and serious events of their own invention (Abrams, 1999, p. 166).

Morality Plays

The second stage in the development of the mediaeval theatre was marked by the so-called morality plays. Morality plays belong mainly to the period of the fifteenth, but also to the sixteenth century. Morality plays can be distinguished from earlier miracle and mystery plays, due to their extensive use of allegory and a gradual shift in subject matter. Namely, the subject matter of the morality plays switched from the representation of biblical events to secular features. With the rise of the so-called interludes, which were short forms of stage entertainment, the mediaeval drama lost its original religious concern and inspiration (Drama, Medieval, 2019). Morality plays were quite serious in tone and style, however as time wore on and the performances became more secularized "they began to incorporate elements from popular farce. This process was encouraged by the representation of the Devil and his servant, the Vice, as mischievous trouble-makers. The Devil and the Vice soon became figures of amusement rather than moral edification" (Morality Play, 2018).

After the miracle and mystery plays, morality dramas emerged. Morality plays included themes such as temptation, sin, salvation of the soul, as well as the climatic confrontation with death. Usually, the principal 'character', in this case dubbed Everyman, allegorically represents all mankind. Other allegorical or symbolic characters embody virtues and vices, Death, and/or angels and demons fighting for the soul of the protagonist, or even the whole mankind. A typical morality play would revolve around Everyman, who is tempted by personified vices such as Pride, Anger, Avarice, Envy, Gluttony, Sloth, Lust in a fashion which could be both sinister and comic. These allegories were the precursors of cynical, ironic villains and certain comic figures in Elizabethan dramas, e. g. the character of Shakespeare's Falstaff. One of the best-known and most recognizable morality plays is a fifteenth-century morality play *Everyman*. Interestingly enough, *Everyman* is still performed even in the twenty-first century. Other notable examples of morality dramas from the fifteenth century include titles such as *The Castle of Perseverance* and *Mankind* (Abrams, 1999, p. 166).

Mediaeval Interludes and Farces

A more secular kind of mediaeval theatre developed in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in the form of the so-called interlude. Interludes were a variety of short entertainments performed by professional actors, and they typically involved secular farces and witty dialogues, albeit with a religious or political point. Such farcical elements were used to invoke merriment and laughter among the audience, whereas different farces would usually employ highly exaggerated characters placed in ludicrous situations, applying verbal humor or even physical bustle (Abrams, 1999, p. 40). Interludes were often put on between the courses of feasts or between the acts of longer plays. The better-known interludes are John Heywood's farces, such as *The Merry Play between Johan Johan the Husband, Tib his Wife,* and *Sir John, the Priest* (Abrams, 1999, p. 166). The mediaeval dramas established a cultural bridge between the period of Roman Britain and the Renaissance era, whereas religious performances in theatre shaped the notion of how we understand acting even in the contemporary period. More concretely, mediaeval dramas, especially morality plays, made alterations which would eventually develop into the Renaissance theatre, because:

> As time moved, morality plays more frequently dealt with secular topics, including forms of knowledge (in *Nature* and *The Nature of the Four Elements*) questions of good government (*Magnificence* by John Skelton and

> *Respublica* by Nicholas Udall), education (*Wit and Science* by John Redford, and the two other "wit" plays that followed, *The Marriage of Wit and Science* and *Wit and Wisdom*), and sectarian controversies, chiefly in the plays of John Bale. (Morality Play, 2018)

While Robert Coover's post-modernist fiction generally includes allusions to the mediaeval theatre, *The Public Burning* stands for an exemplary post-modern re-appropriation of the mediaeval dramatic forms. Nixon's contemplations in *The Public Burning* revolve around parallels between the Rosenberg trial and theatre. Coover suggests that Nixon and his contemporaries witness (and participated in) theatricalization of law. The courtroom trial is transformed into an instrument of legal indoctrination reminiscent of religious didacticism of mediaeval morality plays. Coover exemplifies the notion that the mediaeval theatre and the Rosenberg trial have the same purpose: to discipline the masses to accept a particular dogma (Šoštarić, 2017, pp. 157-158). However, in the 1950s, this dogma is something different. It is actually law oriented. The legal dogma is simple: those individuals deemed less worthy than the ruling majority may be prosecuted and legally punished by the society. Coover points out how the societies of the twentieth century are trained to accept a flawed judicial system which functions on the level of *reductio ad absurdum*.

Features of Morality Plays in *The Public Burning*

Morality plays can be perceived as the dramatized versions of the allegorical genre. By definition, allegories are classified as "a narrative, whether in prose or verse, in which the agents and actions, and sometimes the setting as well, are contrived by the author to make coherent sense on the "literal," or primary, level of signification, and at the same time to signify a second, correlated order of signification" (Abrams, 1999, p. 5). Such examples of dramatized allegories can be identified in Robert Coover's *The Public Burning*. Moreover, theatrical allegories are present in the work, especially in regard to the execution scene. The majority of the storyline in Coover's fiction is presented through Richard Nixon's point of view. Therefore, many dramatic elements implemented into the narrative stem from Nixon's perspective of his own day and age. By observing Nixon's thoughts and ideas, different readers can re-evaluate historical events and situations. They can better understand the upheavals of the twentieth century and the subtle critiques which Coover incorporates to convey profound social messages. In his paper "Fantasy: A Portal to Contemporary Literature", Kahrić (2024) argues

that “younger readers can develop their own critical thinking if they observe the ominous motives in such stories. They are able to examine and better understand repercussions behind socio-political upheavals” (p.664). Dramatic references are the guiding points to fully comprehend Coover’s disagreement with the socio-cultural trends of the twentieth century.

All the World’s a Stage?

References to the mediaeval theatre are predominantly detectable in Richard Nixon’s musings over the nature of the world and the execution of the Rosenberg couple. Additionally, Coover’s protagonist draws on the Renaissance drama, particularly William Shakespeare’s famous metaphor from the comedy *As You Like It* which indicates that the entire globe is actually one enormous stage and that all men and women are playing their allotted roles. Richard Nixon contemplates the world-*cum*-stage idea in the novel and he starts believing that the trial scene is actually a form of initiation drama for himself, as well as for his entire generation. The author of the novel presents such contemplations in the following manner:

> Applause, director, actors, script: yes, it was like—and this thought hit me now like a revelation—it was like a little morality play for our generation! During the Hiss case, I had felt like a brash kid among seasoned professionals; now my own generation was coming into its own—and this was (that lecture at Burning Tree was making sense to me at last) our initiation drama, our gateway into History! Or part of it anyway, for the plot was still unfolding. In the larger drama, of which the Rosenberg episode was a single act, I was a principal actor—if not, before the play is ended, the principal actor—but within this scene alone, I was more like a kind of stage manager, an assistant director or producer, a presence more felt than seen. This was true even of the trial itself: I felt somehow the author of it—not of the words so much, for these were, in a sense, improvisations, but rather of the style of the performances, as though I had through my own public appearances created the audience expectations, set the standards, keyed the rhetoric, crystallized the roles, in order that my generation might witness in dramatic form the fundamental controversy of our time! (Coover, 1977, pp. 126-127)

Coover’s Nixon is a particularly interesting character because of his ambivalence. On one side, he wants to be a part of the larger system; however, through personal improvisations, Nixon subverts his own role within the societal mechanism. Coover’s Nixon almost tragicomically catapults himself outside the previously mentioned mechanism. He attempts to

realize what type of role he is allotted so that he could perform this task systematically and meticulously in order to fulfil the main assignment: he greatly desires to become the president of the United States one day after the current president in the 1950s, Dwight D. Eisenhower. Nixon is cradled in his grandiose ambitions and psychological projection; thus he is oblivious to the irony found in his self-glorification. By drawing on Shakespeare's metaphor, Nixon recognises the manipulative power of public performances in corrupt judicial circles. Therein only the style, the form, and not the very content, remain of paramount importance (Šoštarić, 2017, p. 155). Nixon is the main observer of the storyline. He witnesses the atrocities of a failed judicial system, all the while "facing deep psychological distress because of which he is unable to take responsibility for his everyday life" (Pervan, 2024, p. 79). Nixon's everyday life is founded on the Rosenberg trial. He basically believes that the Rosenberg execution was just a single episode within the entire framework and that he would become the principal thespian before the play is done. However, during the early 1950s and during the episode described in the novel, his own presence was more felt than seen. He was more of a mediator or a stage director than the main actor.

The Purpose of the Execution

Richard Nixon muses over the morality play meant for his generation which is placed in Times Square. Nixon and his generation are living within a mock-morality play. However, this performance is different from the older theatre traditions. The Times Square performance resembles a grotesque theatre which would be observed by various people gathered at the square. It incorporates elements of the grotesque, travesty, but also farces and circus performances. The masses gathered at the execution scene are presented by Coover as willing participants in the execution of the Rosenberg couple. Coover portrays the people of the twentieth century as an easy manipulation target. For the author, many societies are ignorant and informed, but also shallow and submissive. In their servitude, they are similar to mediaeval serfs (Šoštarić, 2017, p. 161). In the Middle Ages, serfs and ordinary citizens would gather around public performances to watch and learn from morality plays. By changing the location of the execution and creating a theatre-like setting at Times Square, Coover presents similarities between the manipulative socio-political machinery and rudimentary dramatic forms of the mediaeval theatre (Šoštarić, 2017, p. 157). Namely, the mediaeval theatre had a prominent role in the society of its own day and age. Religious dramas in the Middle Ages

were meant to both entertain and educate the masses: "The Medieval theatre was a source of entertainment and education for residents of the Middle Ages" (*Medieval Theatre*, 2014). Such a notion is associated with the *dulce et utile* principle. The author of the novel deliberately established parallels between the trial and mediaeval dramatic forms in order to emphasise their common didactic dimension. In other words, the Rosenberg trial during the 1950s resembled mediaeval theatre by its ideological and sociological function. It was an instrument of indoctrination for the population of the twentieth century. However, this time the purpose is not to educate the masses. Rather, the masses need to be indoctrinated ideologically and they need to develop their brutish nature. Likewise, the public execution, dubbed 'the public burning' in the title of the novel, is presented as a method to enhance the ideological cohesion, but it can also be connected to the notion of frightening the masses for the purpose of subtle indoctrination (Šoštarić, 2017, p. 157).

While the mediaeval theatre was supposed to educate the masses and teach them how to become better believers, Coover's dramatisation of *The Public Burning* reveals that the execution of the Rosenbergs was meant to make the people of the twentieth century more docile and to make them unquestionably accept the official myth of personal supremacy and righteousness. However, unlike in the mediaeval theatre, the character of Death is not presented as an allegory on the stage to remind the masses that they should live a pious Christian life in order to save their souls from eternal damnation. Rather, Death is literally present throughout the act of public electrocution which seals the fate of Julis and Ethel. The public execution, thus, becomes an indoctrination method with a clear didactic function: evil and sinfulness, embodied in the Rosenbergs, must be punished and this punishment is glorified as the highest form of purification rites. Coover deliberately blurs the boundaries between fact/reality and fiction, whereby he transforms the morality play into a morbid ritual of national purification. The entire novel, therefore, becomes a condemnation of the brutality in the twentieth century. In Coover's interpretation, the bloody *pseudo*-morality play is a devastating combination of ideology and art (Šoštarić, 2017, p. 157). This theatrical representation is closely connected to the older forms of purification rites.

Purification Rites

The post-modern form of capital punishment, as presented by Coover in the Rosenberg execution, also bears resemblance to the older versions of the purification rites, especially in

their emphasis on the spectacle. In his paper "Public Execution of Justice on/off the Elizabethan Stage: Shakespeare's First Tetralogy", Öğütcü (2016) discusses the role of ancient purification rites. The ancient purification rites were supposed to cleanse societies of any irreligious deeds and they were meant to dissuade people from committing crimes that were considered by the *status quo* to be religious crimes (pp. 364-370). The spectacle in post-modern capital punishments calculates the effect of the execution on the gathered spectators. This means that the people would not only part-take and become afraid, but they would also become sufficiently detached from the event to feel the sacrificial *catharsis*. As a consequence, the nation feels purged of impurity within their society caused by disorder associated with 'the Other'. The process of 'othering' creates a distance between the Rosenbergs and the gathered masses. In his work "Othering, an Analysis", Brons (2015) explains the following: "Othering often sets up a superior self/ in-group in contrast to an inferior other/out-group, it can also create distance between self/in-group and other/out-group by means of a dehumanizing over-inflation of otherness" (72). In this case, Julis and Ethel are dehumanised and they become the out-group, while other people serve the role of an in-group. Therefore, the novel presents the twisted nature of the morality play in the twentieth century, where the killing of the Rosenbergs is justified as a necessary purification process for the community. Hence, the novel depicts Coover's critique of human brutality. Furthermore, it should be noted that the natural balance of the world does not lie in the number of punished people, but in the way the in- and the out-groups co-exist. In their paper, "Where Dystopia Becomes Reality and Utopia Never Comes", Suljić and Öztürk (2013) argue that "natural balance is not in the number of bodies that share the planet, but in the way how they co-exist" (34). In his artistic nature, Coover's Nixon realizes the theatrical and didactical dimension of the trial. Nonetheless, the fictional Nixon still accepts the notion that everything transpiring around him is "clearly a struggle between the forces of good and evil" (Coover, 1977, p. 124). Coover's *The Public Burning* is a totally new, post-modern morality play, wherein Nixon comprehends the connection between theatres and indoctrination. He is fully aware the Rosenberg trial is a carefully crafted lie made up for the purpose of disciplining the new generation of citizens. It is also created for the dark entertainment of the masses. Essentially, the entire morality play genre is a complex metaphor meant to satirize and comment on the Cold-War hysteria which was prevalent in the twentieth century (Šoštarić, 2017, p. 158). *The Public Burning* condemns brutish human nature and it depicts a world in which lawyers, celebrities and the mainstream media participate in the perpetuation of bloodshed. To conclude, Coover renders the dangerous combination of art, law and ideology during the 1950s, which used to be present in a similar fashion within the

mediaeval morality theatre (Šoštarić. 2017, p. 158). However, it should be considered that the morality plays are not the only dramatic sub-genre which can be traced in Coover's novel. In fact, other forms of dramatic sub-genres also co-exist within the narrative. We ought to consider farcical and circus-like elements within Coover's story.

The Judicial Farce and Circus-like Elements

By combining elements of the mediaeval farce and circus, Coover masterfully continues his critique of corrupt and deceitful societies in the twentieth century. In the novel, the author argues that some good people will face their doom simply because of the innocence of their character and because they are unable to fight the manipulative deceivers. Coover portrays the notion of skilled deceivers who will prevail in communities, because they apply manipulation and gaslighting to control other individuals through the use of cognitive dissonance. Coover predominantly reveals the corruption of judicial systems, because he describes lawyers as individuals who are capable of manipulating the evidence in order to make their case.

Legal Corruption

For Coover, lawyers behave like actors. They pretend, they embody a plethora of emotions, they memorize lines and they have a common goal: to make the spectators believe their legal narrative. While common people may exaggerate their defense in order to explain what they perceive as the truth, trained deceivers will use such emotional outbursts to their advantage. Since they are trained in their art of deceiving, attorneys will apply impactful thespian skills as professionally trained silver-tongues. Coover substantiates this notion through Richard Nixon's analysis of the judicial system and the ever-so-present feeling of corruption in the twentieth century. Nixon meditates on this notion, and he explains:

> Practiced liars could overwhelm the hardest evidence against them, turn it to their own credit, and reduce a whole courtroom to tears, while simpler folk, accustomed to telling what they thought of as the truth, could get caught in a small exaggeration or personal embarrassment and become so flustered that everything they said afterwards sounded false. Some attorneys blew their best material right at the outset like a premature ejaculation, saving nothing back with which to bring the jury to climax just before they retired for a decision,

> and so finding themselves getting beaten by an opponent with nothing but nonsense, innuendos, and a superior sense of dramaturgy. (Coover, 1977, p. 127)

Nixon even recalls parallels between the Rosenberg trial and a well-staged theatrical performance. Namely, he thinks about Irving Saypol's words. Nixon recalls how Saypol stole one of the lines from Nixon's early amateur performances. Saypol wanted to appeal to reason alone in the Rosenberg case and not to the emotional depth of the observers. Since a well-turned case resembles a dramatic piece, then convictions do not merely depend on dramatic entertainment. The entire notion of justice turns into entertainment:

> The genius of Irving Saypol—himself just forty-five then—was how well he understood all this and used it in the Rosenberg trial. He even stole one of my lines from the play: "I am not going to appeal to your 'souls,' or to those 'deep secret chords of your hearts'—but to your reason alone!" He himself had said somewhere: "A well-turned case is just like a stage play really," meaning by that not merely that convictions depend upon dramatic entertainment, but that justice *is* entertainment. (Coover, 1977, p. 128)

Farcical and Circus-like Elements

As it was previously established in this paper, Robert Coover places the execution stage outside the Sing-Sing prison. In Coover's version, entertainment ceremonies and elements surrounding the Times Square execution are described in great detail:

> Special seating sections are set up out front, camera platforms are built, backstage VIP passageways, wedding altars, sideshows, special light and sound systems. The streets funneling into Times Square are hung with bunting (the Square is not a square at all, of course, and from above the decorated area looks a little like a red-white-and-blue Star of David); traffic is rerouted so as to cause maximum congestion and rage, a solid belt of fury at the periphery being an essential liturgical complement to the melting calm at the center; and billboards and theater marquees. (Coover, 1977, pp. 11-12)

The entire process resembles a circus or a farce. It should be noted that the sub-genre of farce was an important part of mediaeval theatrical performances. Farcical elements could be interpreted in humorous episodes in mediaeval miracle plays. Abrams (1999) defines the farce in the following way:

> Farce is a type of comedy designed to provoke the audience to simple, hearty laughter—"belly laughs," in the parlance of the theater. To do so it commonly employs highly exaggerated or caricatured types of characters, puts them into improbable and ludicrous situations, and makes free use of sexual mix-ups, broad verbal humor, and physical bustle and horseplay. Farce was a component in the comic episodes in medieval miracle plays, such as the Wakefield plays *Noah* and the *Second Shepherd's Play*, and constituted the matter of the Italian *commedia dell'arte* in the Renaissance. (39-40)

Julius and Ethel find themselves in a ludicrous situation. Their court trial is a public stage, it is essentially a purification rite. They have no right to defend themselves and the gathering masses gather to enjoy the provided entertainment. The event is, in itself, a farce. The execution stage likewise resembles the atmosphere of a circus. The circus proper is of recent origin, however some circus elements can be traced back to the period of ancient Rome. The Roman amphitheater was called *circus*, due to the Latin word for 'circle'. They were mostly reserved for gladiatorial combats, chariot races, the slaughter of animals, mock battles, and other blood sports. The circus ring may be enclosed in an arena, in a building designed for circus performances, or in a tent, and it is generally surrounded by tiers of seats for spectators (Hoh, 1998).

The execution spectacle can be compared to circus entertainments, because the spectators gather to see the blood sport happening within the circle, while the eyes of the audience members are focused on the Rosenbergs, whose deaths symbolize ritualistic punishments imposed on the wicked enemies. The previously mentioned dark forces are to be dealt with once and for all. The Rosenbergs will die at the hands of the gathered masses. The whole situation can be described as farcical or ludicrous; in this open-air death-cell setting, Julis and Ethel will be used to purify the masses. Even the threat of death is not merely metaphorical but is represented in the form of the electrocution chair which is constantly looming in the background of the stage. The chair is the emblem which foreshadows the outcome, i.e., the electrocution.

The Macabre Imitation of Life

Another farcical element which Coover masterfully embeds into his narrative is the notion of how life imitates art. To be more specific, Coover shows the ridiculous interconnectedness of

life and art through Ethel Rosenberg's biography. The author implements particular facts from Ethel's amateur acting work. While in secondary school, Ethel Rosenberg used to act in theatrical performances. She acted in a play dubbed *The Valiant* and this reference functions as an echo of the subsequent real drama in which the historical Ethel Rosenberg participated (Šoštarić, 2017, p. 163). In *The Valiant*, the historical Ethel enacted a younger sister of the protagonist sentenced to death, as a grotesque foreshadowing of the horrifying fate which will befall her in later years. This biographical detail did not escape Coover and he used it to further stress how reality and fiction can be intertwined, but also to show how life sometimes reflects art in macabre ways. Coover portrays the notion that no person is able to parallel the post-modern judicial machinery which creates deception. The post-modern, legal theatre-*cum*-circus overcomes Ethel's youthful ambitions of acting, which she harbored ever since she was a young girl (Šoštarić, 2017, p. 163). Even the scenography of the execution scene at Times Square is a replica of the Death House at Sing-Sing where the historical Ethel Rosenberg was executed:

> This stage is built to simulate the Death House at Sing Sing, its walls whitewashed and glaringly lit, furnished simply with the old oaken electric chair, cables and heating pipes, a fire extinguisher, a mop and bucket for cleaning up the involuntary evacuations of the victims, and a trolley for carting the corpses off. The switch is visible through an open door, stage right, illuminated by a hanging spot. Other elegantly paneled doors, right, exit off to press and autopsy rooms, and upstage left another door leads in from the "Last Mile," or "Dance Hall." Over this entry, which the Rosenbergs will use, a sign is tacked up that reads: SILENCE. Details from the set of the Warden's Office in The Valiant, a one-act melodrama by Holworthy Hall (pseud.) and Robert Middlemass about a condemned man wrongly accused, produced in the early thirties by the Clark House Players on the Lower East Side and featuring starry-eyed sixteen-year-old Ethel Greenglass, are incorporated (a telephone instrument, a row of electric bell buttons, a bundle of forty or fifty letters, etc.), partly to make Ethel feel more at home, partly to impress upon her the ironies of her situation, partly just to surprise her with a little jolt of déjà vu. (Coover, 1977, p. 10)

The narrator sarcastically emphasizes that the purpose of the scenery is to make Ethel feel at home, as well as to surprise Mrs. Rosenberg with a little sensation of *déjà vu*. It all comes down to the same aspect. Ethel Rosenberg's character in Coover's fiction apparently lives in a farce. Ethel's own demise is the reflection of her love for acting. She is thrown into a deadly situation, her integrity is compromised and she cannot avoid the impending doom. Coover's Ethel seems

to function as the victim of the dark and dangerous times, wherein only the bloody spectacle and the judicial hegemony can prevail. *The Public Burning* depicts thespian attorneys who punish innocent individuals. Coover reiterates the claim that the brutality of the post-modern period resembles older and darker forms of human existence. From pre-modernity to post-modernism, human nature appears stagnant, rarely changing and almost never losing its brutal aspect.

Conclusion

This paper focused on the portrayal of dramatic features in Robert Coover's novel *The Public Burning*. In Coover's narrative, the theatrical references serve as subtle hints at the author's disdain for the post-modern brutality. In other words, Coover incorporated elements of the mediaeval theatre in order to depict his own critique of the post-modern period. The paper analyzed Coover's critique of not just one society or culture, but rather of the entire twentieth century.

The methodological chapter introduced the qualitative content analysis which served as the primary approach in the analysis. The next section turned to the historiographic overview of the Rosenberg case and the sad fate which befell Julius and Ethel Rosenberg at Sing-Sing. Thereafter, the discussion shifted to the theoretical framework of the mediaeval theatre. It explored the three different types of mediaeval dramas, as well as their didactic role and development. Next, the research focused on Coover' narrative and introduced the character of Richard Nixon.

Coover's fictionalized Richard Nixon observes the entire world as one large stage where he and his peers have a serious role to play. They must stop the dark forces and help purify the masses. Coover interprets Nixon's musings over the public execution of Julis and Ethel at Times Square and he perceives this act as an initiation to go down in History. Nixon believes that his generation is living within a bloody *pseudo*-morality play. Lastly, the final discussion analysed different farcical and circus-like features which surround the Rosenberg trial. For both Coover and Nixon, lawyers in the twentieth century apply manipulation tactics and behave like well-trained actors who continuously make weaker people suffer. Often the attorneys apply thespian-like strategies to make less-powerful individuals suffer. For Coover, the post-modern era is marked by theatricality and ludicrous situations, which also arise from corrupt legal

spheres of existence. Finally, the last part of this research focused on the portrayal of Ethel Rosenberg's biographical notes. Coover implemented biographical notes from the life of real Ethel Rosenberg and allowed his readers to notice the similarities between art and life. Ironically, Ethel Rosenberg was executed just like one of the characters from a play *The Valiant* in which Ethel enacted one of the characters. This ironic foreshadowing allows the readers to understand the importance of genre hybridization which permeates Rober Coover's dark, yet particularly insightful critique. By dramatizing particular episodes in his narrative, Coover allows his readers to read about the similarities between the Middle Ages and the post-modern era, thereby indicating that human nature does not alter completely. Brutality, bloodthirst, hypocrisy and willingness to make others suffer are all traits which do not change with the passage of time. Sometimes, real life offers more room for violence and bloodshed than any literary or dramatic work.

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DEPICTING POWER AND REBELLION IN RIYOKO IKEDA'S ROSE OF VERSAILLES AND KENTARO MIURA'S BERSERK

Abstract

This paper centers on two manga works: Riyoko Ikeda's *Rose of Versailles* and Kentaro Miura's *Berserk*. *Rose of Versailles,* as a cornerstone of feminist and class-conscious stories in manga, portrays the rebellion of Oscar François de Jarjayes, a woman raised as a man in a patriarchal and classist society in the backdrop of the French Revolution, while fighting tangible social forces such as gender roles, political hegemonies, and classism for the betterment of the world. *Berserk*, being heavily inspired by *Rose of Versailles*, carries similar themes into a metaphysical conflict. As of today, *Berserk is* one of the most influential pieces of contemporary popular media and presents a vision of rebellion centering on the protagonist's (Guts') intangible struggles and the existential agony of fighting in a world governed by predestined fate and cosmic causality. Both *Berserk* and *Rose of Versailles* question the nature of power—what it means to possess, wield, and rebel against it—and the significance of rebellion in oppressive systems, whether those systems are cosmic or worldly. Both show that rebellion, whether against fate or societal structures, may not necessarily yield a positive outcome and most importantly serves as a symbolic assertion of individual struggle and autonomy. This paper aims to show that both works offer distinctive yet interconnected portrayals of how literature can reflect and inspire resistance to oppressive structures, be they socio-economic, gendered, or philosophical.

Keywords: *Rose of Versailles, Berserk, power, rebellion, gender, philosophy*

Introduction

The announcement of Kentaro Miura's death in May 2021 sent shockwaves through the globe. *Berserk* was left unfinished, and his death marked a sudden interruption of a monumental

artistic vision at one of the highest climaxes and cliffhangers in manga history (Traub, 2021, para. 1-3). When the serialization of the work was still left unclear, the impact *Berserk* had on more than just the manga industry quickly showed. Weighty literary discourse and philosophical re-examinations of *Berserk* were spiking in the form of video essays. These readings were meant to be taken seriously, and their task was presented seriously: the manga was analyzed as well as any literary classic was. *Berserk* was dissected under the lens of Nietzschean philosophy, gender identities, coding representations, broader romantic themes, and influence. The story continues under the leadership of Kouji Mori, Miura's best life-long friend, who tries to continue the flow according to the late author's wishes. One thing is clear: *Berserk's* influence was not to be underestimated. What is astounding is how this moment of collective reflection also brought renewed attention to the inspiration behind *Berserk*. One of the most surprising influences on the dark, gothic, and existential *Berserk* is Riyoko Ikeda's *Rose of Versailles*, a shōjo manga set in the timeframe preceding (and the beginning of) the French Revolution. The animated adaptation of the manga came out in the 70s, but Miura's death forced a new interest in the world of Oscar Francois de Jarjayes. A new, modern adaptation is set to be released in January 2025 by MAPPA studios, showing how this renewed interest in a commercial sense (Komatsu, 2024, para. 2).

Despite the dissimilarities between *Rose* and *Berserk*, the two works share remarkable thematic parallels. Both are deeply concerned with rebellion: rebellion against societal norms, oppressive systems, and even fate itself. This paper argues that *Rose of Versailles* and *Berserk* illustrate a shared philosophical exploration of power and rebellion across different contexts (historical, societal, and metaphysical). The aim is to place these works in a dialogue so that reflection of the human capacity for resistance and its consequences in worlds both familiar and alien comes to the forefront.

Individual Virtue, Societal Governance, and Existential Rebellion

Rebellion cannot exist without power just like divorce cannot exist without marriage. To understand rebellion, power itself must be defined first, and power manifests in diverse, but intersected ways. For this paper, three primary understandings of power will be examined: individual virtue, societal governance, and existential rebellion.

Many philosophers have long debated, written, critiqued, and examined each form of power, or the meaning of being powerful. For instance, Nietzsche introduces the idea of the 'will to power.' Power is the drive not only to survive but to overcome, to create, and to assert individuality. The will to power is not about domination but about self-overcoming, the act of transcending personal and societal limits in order to shape the world and oneself within it. Thus the individual crafts meaning and values rather than passively accepting the ones that are imposed by external forces. According to Nietzsche, the highest expression of power lies in creating one's own values and rejecting the conformity that most human beings oblige to for the sake of social and, overall, metaphysical acceptance (Nietzsche, 1888, p. 13). This is the notion of individual virtue, it can be seen both in *Berserk* and in *Rose of Versailles*.

Then there is Albert Camus, who believes that to rebel is to live and to live is to be powerful. In *The Rebel*, Camus explores rebellion as a defining human act in the face of the absurd. The absurd is the conflict between humanity's search for meaning and the indifference of the universe, or simply, the meaninglessness of life. Life has no inherent purpose, but the recognition of this absurdity does not, and should not lead to despair. Instead, it must be a refusal to succumb to nihilism, carelessness, or overall negativity (Camus, 1961, pp. 9-10). The person who would be called Camus' rebel does not attempt to escape life's absurdity, but confronts it head-on, which echoes the aforementioned sentiments of Nietzsche. What is important to mention, however, is that Camus distinguishes rebellion from revolution. Rebellion begins with the self and expands outward, seeking solidarity rather than any absolute solutions, since there can never be any. It is motivated by respect for others, and importantly, the challenging of oppressive systems while acknowledging the limits of human power. Camus thus frames individual virtue as an act of resistance in itself, against both existential meaninglessness and societal oppression. Surprisingly enough, we see the Camusian hero reflected in Oscar.

Besides this, existential power and rebellion are also rooted in humanity's defiance of forces that dwarf comprehension, like the vastness of the universe, divine mandates, or even the inescapability of mortality. In *Berserk*'s case, this would be the world as it had been steered by Fate, and by The Idea of Evil. We would argue that this echoes H.P. Lovecraft's cosmic horror. In his works, the universe is governed by unknowable forces, ones that are indifferent to human existence, and any attempts to understand them often lead to madness. Unless Guts is in question.

Now that political philosophy has been mentioned, Michel Foucault's views have to be mentioned too. Foucault's take is a more grounded one, away from the cosmic and metaphysical. He argues that power is pervasive, it is embedded in societal norms, institutions, and discourses, but individuals are not just passive recipients of it. They *can* engage in acts of self-formation which involves critically reflecting on social expectations and choosing how to live authentically within or against them. Rebellion, then, becomes a personal practice of autonomy (or individual virtue), which is an ongoing process of self-creation that resists the standardizing pressures of social power. In other words, where there is power, there *must be* rebellion. Power is that which is taken, observed, shaped, and classified as force that the state, or society, can impose on the individual. It would be something that the individual can defy, but not without consequences ("Foucault: power is everywhere," 2010, para. 5-9). As can be observed, this understanding represents power as a structural and relational phenomenon that shapes collective life. The way this power is upheld is through institutions like prisons, schools, and hospitals which enforce it by shaping people to internalize norms. We see this form of power in action in *Rose of Versailles* directly within the court and in *Berserk's* Conviction arc.

To extend on some of these ideas, in *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, Simone de Beauvoir (1947) defines power as the capacity to assert one's *freedom* while respecting the freedom of others. Then, for her, the concept of rebellion is about the individual's struggle to assert autonomy within a shared world. Rebellion is a *moral* act that has to fight oppression, all while recognizing the ambiguity of human existence, an existence where we are both free agents *and* prisoners of circumstances at the same time (Beauvoir, 1947, para. 15-18). Beauvoir's views are incredibly important because of her critiques which emphasize how norms reduce individuals to fixed roles, particularly when it comes to gender. What happens when those roles get shaken up? We have tragic fates and tragic, confusing lives, like the ones Oscar is forced to live.

All of these thoughts and approaches are connected in some ways, and disconnected in others. What, then, is the ultimate answer to the questions of what power is, and what is rebellion? It can be concluded that there is no definitive understanding of what it means to possess power, but it can be described through different domains of ideas. First, individual virtue centers on one's capacity to assert agency, to act under their own will, and to shape reality despite the obstacles they face. Strength, autonomy, and personal integrity represent essential aspects of what it means to resist oppression on a personal level. In this context, power is not granted or imposed, but, arises from within the individual as a force of will, courage, and

determination. It is the idea that even in the face of overwhelming odds, one can try to fight their circumstances, no matter how difficult they may be.

Second, power in terms of governance operates relationally, shaping and molding collective life through institutions, norms, and hierarchies. In order to function whatsoever, this form of power needs an executive system, a form of legitimization, and *resistance*. The third conception of power is perhaps the most abstract yet deeply existential. It transcends individual agency or political governance. Here, power is a metaphysical struggle against the conditions of existence itself which addresses humanity's defiance of forces that limit meaning, agency, and mortality.

One thing is certain – rebellion arises at the intersection of these forms of power. To have agency means to have the ability to choose and decide. When such a decision defies society, it becomes an act of assertion of individual virtue, a revolt. But, rebellion against human-made laws is not only a matter of agency, but of both agency and justice, often necessitated by injustice, economic stagnation, and historically speaking, discrimination and otherization. The chemistry between this kind of rebellion and individual virtue proves that nobody in this world functions outside a vacuum. Social ideals were dictated and hammered into our heads since the day we were born. To recognize and act on this conundrum in itself is a form of rebellion. Thus, power and rebellion intersect in a Venn diagram where the overlapping domains expose points of convergence. In practice, we see them embodied and tackled through literature which gives readers and critics the space to *examine*. To illustrate, we turn to *Rose of Versailles* and *Berserk*, both of which confront and dissect these dynamics directly.

Rose of Versailles

For many, the revelation that *Berserk* was inspired by a work within a genre often dismissed as unserious and unchallenging literature, one dominated by slice-of-life romance to be specific, was unexpected. *Rose of Versailles* has been written about to a decent degree, but its influence has gradually declined for many decades after its release. It seems to be only now, after some interviews conducted with the late Miura, where he made confirmations about *Rose* being one of his main inspirations for *Berserk*, that the manga has been revisited under an analytical eye (Gramuglia, 2021, para. 2-6). *The Rose of Versailles* is more than a historical

drama; it is a cultural critique of power, gender, and rebellion. Most importantly, it offered a revolutionary space for women to reimagine their roles in society.

Rose emerged during a period of shifting societal values in Japan. The leftist revolutionary movement was on the decline, and consumer culture became a staple of life. Women's liberationists, who were marginalized in the New Left, found new avenues to fight patriarchal and classist ideals. All of this reveals why *Rose*, once it came out, became so influential (Anan, 2014, p. 3). The relative lack of overall scholarly attention given to this manga is revealing in itself. This may stem from the broader undervaluing of the shojo genre, which has often been dismissed as less popular or less significant compared to other manga genres. Another contributing factor could be the manga's exploration of themes that were controversial for its time, such as gender nonconformity and homogender relationships. The main focus in scholarly discourse about the manga is feminist and queer readings and perspectives, which are undeniably valuable. Interestingly, the story also reflects significant socialist undertones, which were likely influenced by Ikeda's involvement in the aforementioned Japan's socialist movements and her feminist beliefs. *Rose* critiques patriarchal norms, class inequality, and the political failures that ultimately led to Antoinette's downfall. When the plot of *Rose of Versailles* is taken into consideration without any other context, we notice the rebellion plot immediately. *Rose* centers on the life of Queen Marie Antoinette during the French Revolution, and a revolutionary androgyne, Oscar. The plot is simple, but the story it tells is complex: Oscar was raised as a boy to succeed her father as a military commander in the French Royal Guard. She becomes the personal bodyguard of Queen Marie Antoinette and goes from supporting the ancient power regime to siding with the Revolutionists and dying at the Storming of the Bastille. Thus, her story represents rebellion on multiple fronts: that of individual virtue against gender expectations, and the monarchy.

As mentioned before, *Rose* is often discussed as a story about gender and the upturning of gender expectations by not only Oscar but also her partner, Andre. The upturning of these expectations is a reflection of individual virtue which fights against preconceptions of both class and gender. Oscar is a cross-dressing noblewoman, and Andre is a male servant, who is forced to spend every waking moment by her side, without ever being able to view her as a woman. He appears a lot more feminized compared to the other male characters in his depiction alone, while Oscar appears more masculine and taller. The androgynous character designs and performances of gender serve as a great source for the reimagining of traditional roles, ones

where both Oscar and Andre destabilize the notions of masculinity and femininity. She is the one who saves him when he is in trouble, she is the one who jumps into action much more often than he ever does, she is the one who beats him in each swordfight, and she is the one who initiates their first and only sexual encounter, not him. In a traditionally (and stereotypical) literary female fashion, it is Andre who begs Oscar for her love, not the other way around. We see that, despite being surrounded by beautiful noblewomen, Andre never gives a single look at anyone else but at Oscar (Ikeda, 1979, Ch. 31, p. 6). To emphasize, the physical relationship between Andre and Oscar has, throughout the entire story, been about intimacy, **not** about reproduction. What gives Oscar the possibility of having this freedom has nothing to do with her noble status, but as she points out, it is because Andre possesses the feminine qualities I mentioned above, that she is free: "It's precisely because you follow me always, like my shadow…that I'm able to move as freely as I wish" (Ikeda, 1979, Ch. 3, p. 6).

Another form of power, agency, and 'fighting the system' can be seen through the manga's celebration of eternal youth and beauty, and the full rejection of motherhood. The reason why is simple. Ikeda positions Oscar as a "masculine woman" and a rebel against the class and political structures of the Ancien Régime. Unlike traditional maiden warriors who restore and return to the patriarchal order, Oscar's story culminates in her leading the Storming of the Bastille and rejecting her aristocratic identity entirely. Oscar has to die after it, and it must be so for the fulfillment of the purpose of her character. Her death signifies liberation from both the consequences of her revolutionary life and the restrictions of the gender roles that would inevitably reemerge after the Revolution (Anan, 2014, p. 8). If there were an alternative ending, one in which Oscar would have survived, what would be her fate? First of all, shortly before her death, Oscar is diagnosed with consumption, which means death. It is a further statement by Ikeda which ensures the reader that Oscar's death is inevitable but let us look at the alternative. Had she outlived the Storming of the Bastille, her noble birth would have marked her for execution. Even if she managed to escape this fate, her options would remain limited: marriage to a man other than Andre which means unhappiness (because he is now dead), a return to cross-dressing (which is a crime), or a life of social ostracism (because of her noble status, her cross-dressing, and even her personality). Survival would mean conforming to societal expectations that would strip her of the autonomy she fought so hard to assert. Even if Oscar and Andre had survived together, their shared life would have likely forced Oscar into the role of a conventional woman, a role she would despise, where motherhood (and the risks and hardships it comes with) would become inevitable. In such a

world, Oscar's freedom could only exist in death. This is an act of ultimate rebellion against the physical and social constraints of her time. Oscar's story is not just about her lack of choice but also about the decisions she can make. She is the flame of personal and political revolution, she is a force too threatening for the oppressive structures she confronts. The story suggests that heroes and change-makers must die; to survive and witness the fruits of their revolution risks framing their actions as selfish rather than selfless. Oscar herself cannot be free if she, as an aristocrat, infringes on the freedom of the common people. In death, Oscar's heroism becomes clearer, and her sacrifice purer.

Marie Antoinette is a clear juxtaposition to Oscar. While Oscar embodies an awareness of political and class injustice, Antoinette is portrayed as aloof, indulging in luxury while her people suffer (Anan, 2014, p. 9). Antoinette is a woman trapped in her role as a figurehead, unable to resist the roles forced on her. In fact, Antoinette refuses to resist them at all. She purely mourns her position of not being an "ordinary woman," doing the exact opposite of Camus' rebellion (Ikeda, 1979, Ch. 43, p. 34). Yet the manga does not present this contrast as a simple binary of good and bad. It instead critiques the social conditions that trap Antoinette in her role by depicting her as an empathetic woman who is to be empathized *with*. Interestingly, Oscar dies achieving immortality as a figure who transcends the gender binary and class differences altogether, and as a Camusian hero, she does not win an ultimate victory against the oppressive systems she fights, but this is precisely the point. She accepts her choices and death with dignity, not living to see the change she participated in making. Antoinette, as we all know, ends up on the guillotine, being forever immortalized as the very figure representing that same class difference and the gender binary that Oscar has died struggling against.

Antoinette was not inherently destined to embody her role as a queen any more than Oscar was born to be the man her father forced her to become. Antoinette is as human as any other character in the story. Activities that come naturally to Oscar and Andre, like riding a horse, remain distant dreams for Antoinette (Ikeda, 1979, Ch. 8, p. 11). Her life is marked by privilege, indulgence, and opportunities unavailable to most, yet it is far from fulfilling. She is undoubtedly privileged and often a snob, but her humanity shines through in her small acts of rebellion against the same society that raised her to be as conservative of a matriarch as her mother. These struggles become even more apparent after she has children. Ridiculed and badmouthed by the public, Antoinette seems genuinely shocked by the overt misogyny directed

at her. It is a reality she had previously been shielded from by her elevated status, showing the genuine naivety rooted in her position (Ikeda, 1979, Ch. 46, p. 7). This can be framed as a privilege Oscar never experienced despite being a noblewoman. From the moment she was born, Oscar faced the full force of misogyny (Ikeda, 1979, Ch. 1, p. 12). The courtly games were significantly designed to police Antoinette's life, and the lives of other nobles as well. Not only did these nobles dictate the life Oscar was forced to live, but they dictated each other's manners, they criticized the attire of women, their forms while they danced, food that they served, etc. The high standards of Versailles, the governmental power, are what ultimately lead them to their doom, and these lives are utterly miserable all the more for it, and we see it present throughout the entire story: prepubescent girls are forced to marry middle-aged men, leading to their suicide; accusations of sexual infidelity lead to starvation; watching the masses ridicule the death of your child just because he is your child, etc. Of course, the masses do not have it easier, but the self-policing nature of the nobles is what greatly contributes to their suffering. The masses are suffering because of nobility, while the nobility suffers because of itself.

Ikeda introduced a third woman whose femininity she sought to explore: Rosalie. Unlike the dynamic and revolutionary figures of Oscar and Antoinette, Rosalie's dainty nature, vulnerability, and weak-mindedness made her far less popular among readers. Rosalie's story, by contrast to the other women, was resolved quickly and concluded with her marriage to a man. It was a controversial decision that fully marked her more traditional role. What makes Rosalie significant, however, is her introduction of a subtle but compelling theme: Oscar's potential homogender attraction. Rosalie develops a clear romantic infatuation with Oscar, which is a fate thread that lingers unresolved even after Rosalie's marriage to Bernard. The implied "doomed gays" story left many readers speculating the nature of their relationship had the story taken place in a more ordinary setting. These presumptions do not come out of nowhere, as there are many repeated hints of Oscar's possible romantic feelings for Rosalie. Oscar appears to have a preference for partners who are more vulnerable and emotional, qualities she admired in Andre, Fersen, and arguably Rosalie as well. Scenes like Rosalie's crying, "If only you were a man," as she wistfully clings to Oscar's coat confirm this suspicion (Ikeda, 1979, Ch. 13, p. 31). In turn, Oscar's frequent comments about how Rosalie "would make such a good wife" and how she would "marry her if she were a man" just add spice to the stew (Ikeda, 1979, Ch. 21, p. 5). These exchanges are unlikely to be accidents of dialogue. Rosalie's conflict with sexuality mirrors Oscar's own (Shamoon, 2010, p. 10). Her experience with gender dysphoria is another layer of complexity in this dynamic. While much of her

dysphoria is socially and politically imposed by her father, it also extends to the romantic side of things. Oscar desires the freedoms and opportunities given to men far more than she desires their physicality, yet Rosalie's role invites readers to question whether Oscar's dysphoria ever extended into a physical longing to escape the limitations of her female form; alternatively, to escape the idea of heterosexuality, and thus, motherhood entrapment.

The power struggle and patriarchal themes that rise between Oscar, her father, society in general, other characters, Andre, and even God become a struggle that is layered, albeit Oscar's struggle is more personal than it is metaphysical as we will be represented in *Berserk*. Oscar rises against the expectations of her gender from the moment she is born – she screams as she comes out of the womb, louder than any other child, male or female (Ikeda, 1979, Ch. 1, p. 12). It is what makes her father, on a superstitious level, believe that Oscar has a male heart. As the story continues, this belief is flipped upside down as we realize that not only is, within *Rose*, rebellion inherent to women more so than it is to men, but that conservativism and the establishment unquestionably equal the masculine. Oscar only becomes free when she comes in touch with the so-called "feminine" truthfulness and emotion that almost all men, except for Fersen and Andre, lack. Her death in the end signifies her freedom from the consequences of a life that she chose, but also freedom from the possibilities of restriction that await her upon the end of the Revolution.

Berserk

Berserk begins with a philosophical question:

> In this world, is the destiny of mankind controlled by some transcendental entity or law? Is it like the hand of God hovering above? At least it is true that man has no control, even over his own will. Man takes up the sword in order to shield the small wound in his heart sustained in a far-off time beyond remembrance. Man wields the sword so that he may die smiling in some far-off time beyond perception. (Miura, 1989, Ch. 1, p. 1)

The quote is a perfect description of what *Berserk* is. It is about a cruel man, in a cruel world, who is fated to fight against the ones who create and perpetuate cruelty. *Berserk* is a world which is a lot more ruthless than the world in which Oscar lives. From the very first page, the audience receives a warning. Demons, rape, famines, war, and malice may be a projection of real life onto fiction, yet what makes *Berserk* a painful story is the fantastical and

supernatural aspect. The contextual ruthlessness alone turns *Berserk's* world into a depiction of a man-made Hell. It is a huge reason why the manga became so popular. In such a world that can be described as nothing short of meaningless, where lives are removed from existence faster than one is conceived, the rebelliousness is what makes Guts and Casca astonishing characters. The plot of Berserk is complex, and the story is still ongoing, but in the simplest words, *Berserk* follows Guts, a skilled mercenary who joins the Band of the Hawk. He forms a deep friendship with the whole group, but especially the leader, Griffith, and a fellow soldier, Casca, who eventually becomes his lover. To fulfill his ambition of ruling a kingdom, Griffith sacrifices the entire Band of the Hawk to demons in a bloody ritual (the Eclipse) and ascends to godhood. Guts and Casca are the only survivors. The trauma and rage of losing over 5000 of his comrades, and witnessing his lover be ruthlessly violated and mentally broken, all while he himself is getting shredded to pieces by demons drives Guts on a relentless journey of revenge.

First, the genre *Berserk* is told through represents a form of rebellion. The gothic and fantasy genres have been closely associated with social revolt in many forms, from gendered ones to elitist preconceptions about ghost stories. Thus, they are often dismissed as trivial literary forms. Miura, just like Ikeda in her feminist-socialist rebellion, had written a story that became successful despite all the odds stacked against it, and consequently, *Berserk's* is deeply rooted in gothic traditions, drawing heavily on European influences such as folk tales, fairy tales, historical myths, and ecclesiastic imagery (Souza & Oliveira, 2023, p. 23). The Gothic, as a genre, is characterized by depictions of decay, corruption, and the supernatural, and it is inseparable from its historical and architectural origins. The term "Gothic" originally emerged during the Renaissance as a pejorative descriptor for medieval architectural styles and was associated with the decline of classical civilization (Hogle, 2005, 64). When Gothic architecture came to symbolize ecclesiastical grandeur despite its reputation, churches were built to be giant and dimly lit, and the idea was to evoke feelings of awe, terror, and devotion in onlookers (Hogle, 2005, 78-79). *Berserk* borrows heavily from this chemistry between reverence and dread, and in the Conviction arc, this chemistry fully blossoms and terrifies (Souza & Oliveira, 2023, p. 24). The Romantics found inspiration in Gothic architecture, in this very chemistry to be specific. Disillusioned with religious suppression and society overall, Romantic writers explored darker human urges and supernatural ideas by returning to medieval folklore and mythology, taking on notions that had once been taboo, or even pagan (Hogle, 2005, 78-79). *Berserk* lines up with this rebellious artistic tradition as well through its fusion

of religious iconography, critiques of institutional power, and exploration of human agency in metaphysical struggle. Guts, in particular, is a character defined by his active defiance, something characters constantly point out (Miura, 1989, Ch. 172, p. 6). He confronts demons that devour masses, incomprehensible creatures far beyond human comprehension with a raw, indomitable will. His journey is typical of Romanticism's celebration of the individual, the sublime, and the tragic. What in the world has Guts seen to not be afraid of monsters like the ones he faces every night?

Guts is a romantic hero in the truest sense, though not necessarily a Byronic one. He is a man defined by his quest for meaning, a rugged yet introspective individual who, despite his pain and horrible experiences, continues to seek answers and revenge. Through Guts, Miura introduces a character shrouded in mystery and suffering, yet a human in his relentless search for purpose. What distinguishes *Berserk* within the gothic and seinen genres is the surprising emotional depth, which Miura himself attributed to the influence of shoujo manga, particularly *The Rose of Versailles* (Gramuglia, 2021, para. 5). Miura brings a rare vulnerability to his characters, even those as stoic and manly as Guts. He has had a lot of (stereo)typically feminine experiences: his vulnerable childhood, his rape, and his love for Casca. To add, romance, something that is often dismissed as frivolous and *shoujo*, is what drives the plot. The love triangle between Casca, Griffith, and Guts is a furthered defiance of seinen. Guts is not a traditional hero. He is a deeply flawed man consumed by rage and trauma. Casca is a strong and capable warrior whose own emotional collapse comes from the devastating betrayal and violation by Griffith, a man she once loved. Griffith is also a figure of tragic complexity. He was once loved by both Guts and Casca and yet he becomes the embodiment of selfish ambition and moral corruption. All are within a fantasy story, all within a gothic story, and all within a seinen story.

As previously mentioned, Guts begins his journey as a character who is driven by little more than sheer survival. In the Golden Age arc, he is a man living to see the next day, a young warrior so deeply traumatized, brutalized, and alienated by the world around him that his existence is reduced to a primal, almost animalistic and absent-minded state. Guts is often depicted as an emaciated feral dog in the story as well. The image of the dog used to represent him is skinny but muscled, ravenous, constantly aggressive, and yet desperate to be fed, both literally and metaphorically (Miura, 1989, Ch. 348, p. 5). Guts is, to a good degree, framed as a savage man, who struggles to rise above the instincts that define his fight for survival. This is why Guts, and many others in the Golden Age arc, are drawn to Griffith. In a cruel world,

endless war, and tangible hopelessness, Griffith's ability to dream sets him apart. Whether Griffith's dream is altruistic or a quest for power is not important *to them*. What is important is the fact that his dream exists at all. For those like Guts, who live without purpose beyond survival, the allure of Griffith lies in his singular vision that offers the possibility of meaning in an otherwise meaningless world. It is a philosophy to cling to in times of desperation that Nietzsche warns against. Griffith's eventual sacrifice of the Band of the Hawk shows the contrast between those who have dreams and those who do not. Is life worth anything if *this* is how it ends? Is a dream of happiness, family, or love not enough to be worthy of survival and success? Does it have to be a dream of power for a life to mean anything in that world? The members of the Band, all of whom are loyal to the point of worship, lived to support Griffith's aspiration. *He* was their dream. Yet, to him, this made them expendable. They were nothing but cannon fodder for his ambition. *Berserk* makes a poignant commentary here: in a world as cruel and arbitrary as this, survival without purpose is *not enough*. To have a dream (of power) is to be significant; to dream the wrong dream means to be discarded.

The shared joy and fleeting happiness that once defined the Band of the Hawk are reduced to meaninglessness by Griffith's betrayal. In the Lost Children Arc, Guts tells a little girl who tried to escape her abusive family that "there is no paradise for [her] to escape to," (Miura, 1989, Ch. 117, p. 14). The quote is a good way to look at the whole story: individual struggles and backgrounds are insignificant in the grand scheme of things, in the grand wishes of fate. This view is typically absurdist. Griffith, despite his pretense of kindness before the Eclipse, is quite aware of this absurdity. His dream, and the sacrifices he is willing to make for it, reflect an understanding of the world's indifference to individual lives and individual dreams. Every dream is a small one unless it involves power, a structure, that we established, has to influence other lives to mean *anything*. Yet, while Griffith manipulates this knowledge for personal gain, Guts attempts to carve out a purpose beyond survival, to find meaning in a dream that is just enough to live. Guts is a rebel who fights against the absurdity that Griffith exploits. As Griffith says about his comrades:

> They are...excellent troops. Together we have faced death so many times. They are my valuable comrades, devoting themselves to the dream I envision. But to me, a friend is...something else. Someone who would never depend on another's dream. Someone who wouldn't be compelled by anyone, but would determine and pursue his own reason to live...And should anyone trample that dream, he would oppose him body and soul, even if that threat were me myself. What I think a friend is...is one who is my "Equal". (Miura, 1989, Ch. 12, p. 13)

Guts' estrangement from Griffith can, in part, be traced to the shift of Guts' dream. His existence became tied to avenging the horrors of the Eclipse. There is nothing in him but a desire to kill, to fight, and to exact suffering equal to what Griffith put him through. Guts rebels not only against Griffith here but also against fate which has decided to make Griffith an extension of the God Hand. Is it possible to continue living if life has become meaningless? For Guts, the answer lies in the fight itself, just like for Camus. The overwhelming presence of death and despair is there, but his refusal to succumb to nihilism is his rebellion. He does not fight to uncover some ultimate meaning or to achieve a neatly resolved destiny, just as Oscar did not. The act of fighting and the refusal to give up is what gives his life purpose. His struggle against fate is defiance against a world that would see him crushed under its weight.

On the other hand, Griffith's rise to power is a perfect example of the pursuit of absolute control, order, and virtue. It is what Camus warns against. Griffith's ambition to transcend his peasant origins and become a king, and eventually a god-like figure, necessitated sacrifices so great that they obliterated the values he once seemed to hold dear. His ascent is marked by betrayal, manipulation, and the wholesale destruction of those closest to him, including the very bonds of love and loyalty that once defined the Band of the Hawk. Guts and Griffith both display individual virtues: Guts through his perseverance and rebellion against insurmountable odds, and Griffith through his defiance of the hierarchy he was born into. However, Griffith's downfall seems to come when he embraces the absurd as a tool to achieve power. His transformation into an agent of divine will (the very forces of destiny and cruelty that Guts oppose the entirety of the story) strips him of the individual virtue that once set him apart. By stepping on the lives of those who loved and trusted him, Griffith reduces humanity to nothing more than expendable "ants" in service of his goal. In doing so, he loses the very humanity that Guts fights to preserve, no matter how battered or broken.

When it comes to political power, the Golden Age arc in *Berserk*, which is especially heavily inspired by the courtly intrigue and class dynamics of *The Rose of Versailles*, does not offer extensive critique beyond its exploration of hierarchy and ambition. However, we would argue that the Conviction arc shifts the focus to a much sharper critique of religious institutions (and thus political power), or the Holy See in *Berserk's* case, and their exploitation of power. *Conviction* reveals the extent of institutional corruption and the dehumanization of the vulnerable. One of the most disturbing moments in the Conviction arc is the imprisonment of Casca who is mentally broken after the Eclipse. She is falsely accused of heresy, and subjected to dehumanizing punishment, and her mental vulnerability is weaponized by the establishment.

It is necessary to keep in mind that Casca, at this point, is quite literally disabled: she cannot fend for herself, she cannot communicate or take care of herself. She is in many ways reduced to a traumatized child. It is thus obvious that the punishment does not come from any reasonable source. Casca's suffering stems from the cruelty of those in power. The Holy See, which is led by a zealous religious caricature called Father Mozgus, justifies heinous acts under the guise of piety, including torturing women, killing innocent bystanders, and sentencing a mother to death for "loving her starving son more than God" (Miura, 1989, Ch. 135, p. 17).

Guts fights against Mozgus, but not as a hero. He fights Mozgus to protect Casca. For Guts, justice is not dictated by the establishment's orders but by his own principles – Casca is disabled, and she cannot commit a crime. Thus, the teachings of the Holy See are silly. If God is ever-loving, then why did he put him and Casca through such cruelties (Miura, 1989, Ch. 137, p. 6)? This is most vividly portrayed in the scene where Guts throws Mozgus' burning corpse into the crowd (who cheered Casca's execution just a moment earlier) about to be consumed by a demon. The act is a defiant statement: Your God, your establishment, and all that you have placed your faith in are dead, burning, and powerless. The only choice left is to take matters into your own hands and fight (Miura, 1989, Ch. 170, pp. 6-9). Guts' personal rebellion here becomes connected with his rebellion against systemic power. It is not an act of kindness, heroism, or even vengeance but a challenge to the collective submission that allows oppression to thrive. It can be interpreted as an, albeit unintentional, rallying cry for personal agency against a failed system (one that was built and perpetuated by the masses). Finally, despite all the suffering and the struggle against the metaphysical mentioned above, Guts' fate is bleak. It is marked by physical and emotional torment, and ultimately, some predict death at the time of writing this article. Unlike Oscar, whose gendered existence leaves her with no choice but to find freedom in death, Guts' freedom lies in his Camusian rebelliousness. Death is not the end, it *cannot* be the end. It is a far worse fate than the horrible life he lives. Should he die, his soul will become an eternal prisoner of Griffith's, it would be destined to be tortured and trapped. Like a mad dog desperate to survive, Guts resists. Not out of hope for salvation, not waiting for a miracle, but out of an instinctual, unrelenting drive to live on his own terms. He is a symbol of personal rebellion against the oppressive forces of destiny.

Conclusion

Rose of Versailles and *Berserk* are both deeply impactful stories about defiance, resilience, and the complexity of power. They may be separated by genre and historical context, but they carry a universal human message about struggle. *Rose of Versailles* broke the glass ceiling of 1970s Japan and confronted gender and class struggles in the boldest possible way for its time. The story was a nudge to reconsider the feminine roles in society and history. Most importantly, the way it addressed all these issues was a great inspiration to both readers and creatives, Miura included. Meanwhile, *Berserk* has carried the torch of *Rose*'s influence since its debut. It builds on its foundational ideas by steering them into gothic existentialism. Guts, in popular culture, now represents the character embodiment of undefeated human spirit against ultimate forms of suffering. Rebellion in both stories is not a guaranteed victory, nor an ultimate solution to the world's problems. Oscar's fight against gendered expectations and Guts' refusal to surrender to nihilism are both rebellions that will not lead to change but are in themselves meaningful just for persisting despite the odds they face. They are both tragic and beautiful.

As we look to the future, *Rose* is ready for a renaissance that could offer new audiences a chance to connect with Ikeda's story with its upcoming adaptation on the horizon, and *Berserk* continues on despite the death of the author. How these works will influence future audiences remains to be seen, but one thing is clear: both stories teach us that where there is a struggle, there is meaning.

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THE INFLUENCE OF GOTHIC LITERATURE ON MUSIC

Abstract

With its origins in history, Gothic literature has become a major source of inspiration for various forms of art, including architecture, painting, cinema, and music. This paper analyzes the influence of Gothic literature on music by exploring how its dark themes, haunting atmospheres, and settings have shaped multiple musical genres over the centuries. First, by examining the characteristics of Gothic literature, the paper discusses how elements such as darkness, madness, and the supernatural serve as a foundation for musical interpretation. The study primarily focuses on examples from literary works, musical compositions, and artists to demonstrate how Gothic literature inspires music. By comparing classical compositions and contemporary rock and metal, the paper analyzes specific works and artists influenced by Gothic literature, illustrating how composers and musicians use music to evoke the same sense of mystery, terror, and darkness found in Gothic novels. Additionally, it explores the symbolic relationship between Gothic imagery and music in popular culture, emphasizing the presence of Gothic elements in music videos, album artwork, and live performances. This research highlights the continuing impact of Gothic literature on musical expression and its ability to inspire artists across genres and generations.

Keywords: *symphonic metal, Gothic rock, dark wave, doom metal, heavy metal, opera*

Introduction

Gothic literature is a genre of writing that began in the 18th century (Punter & Byron, 2004). It has characteristics that distinguish it from other literary genres by creating an atmosphere of fear and foreboding. With its gloomy and dark ambiance, readers encounter unsettling plots. The haunting presence of Gothic settings—for instance, ruined castles, mist-shrouded forests,

and abandoned monasteries—weaves its harmonics into the fabric of darkness. In relation to music, from spooky tones echoing in empty halls to the sorrowful laments of a lonely violin, music serves as both a storyteller of human sorrow and a narrator of supernatural events in Gothic literature. This study argues that Gothic literature influences music through its thematic elements, narrative structures, and emotional atmospheres, shaping various musical genres from classical to contemporary

Gothic Literature Elements in Musical Interpretation

To convey the characteristics of Gothic literature in music, musicians must have a solid theoretical foundation. In musical interpretation, theory plays a significant role. For instance, music theory includes scales—groups of notes that sound pleasing when played in sequence, either ascending or descending. While many types of scales exist, the harmonic minor and octatonic scales often evoke a sense of anxiety and darkness due to their dissonant intervals and unresolved tensions. Using minor keys generally creates a darker mood compared to major keys, especially when combined with chromaticism and modulation (Farley, n.d.).

Additionally, instrumentation plays a critical role in evoking Gothic aesthetics. In orchestration, instruments such as low strings (cellos, double basses), brass (especially trombones and tubas), and woodwinds (bass clarinet, contrabassoon) are often employed to create a sinister sound. These dark, resonant tones enhance the feeling of depth and shadow. One particularly evocative instrument is the organ, often used in churches to play hymns, yet capable of producing a uniquely haunting sound. A well-known example is *Toccata and Fugue in D minor* by J. S. Bach, which demonstrates how minor keys can generate intense emotional and eerie effects (Bach, ca. 1704). These techniques remain widely used by contemporary composers and musicians (Farley, n.d.).

Influence of Gothic Literature on Opera

Opera is a theatrical art form in which music plays a central role, with dramatic roles performed by singers. One well-known example that incorporates Gothic elements—such as supernatural beings—is *The Phantom of the Opera*, a French Gothic novel by Gaston Leroux, published in 1909. This novel inspired composer Andrew Lloyd Webber (1986) to create the popular

musical of the same name (Matthias, 2024). The production even includes key events from the novel, such as the infamous chandelier accident that crashes down as part of the Phantom's vengeful spectacle—a striking theatrical effect.

In addition, the symphonic metal band Nightwish was inspired by *The Phantom of the Opera* musical, and they produced a cover song in their own style. Another illustrative case is *Il Dolce Suono* ("The Sweet Sound") from Gaetano Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor* (1835), based on Sir Walter Scott's *The Bride of Lammermoor*. Donizetti originally composed the score with a part for the *glass harmonica*, an instrument with an eerie and otherworldly sound that amplifies the sense of psychological disruption (Camilleri, 2016).

Other notable operas that include Gothic themes are Giuseppe Verdi's *Macbeth* (1847) and *Rigoletto* (1851), Giacomo Meyerbeer's *Robert le Diable* (1831), and Wagner's *Der fliegende Holländer* (*The Flying Dutchman*). Ghost ships—a recurring motif in Gothic literature—appear in works like *The Derelict* by William Hope Hodgson and *The Phantom Ship* by Frederick Marryat. Inspired by this legend, Wagner created *The Flying Dutchman*, a masterful opera that captures the terror and awe of maritime Gothicism. A notable performance at the Melbourne Opera serves as an excellent modern example (Ashley, 2009; Melbourne Opera, n.d.).

Influence of Gothic Literature on Metal Music: Exploring Themes, Lyrics, and Aesthetics

Metal music includes many subgenres that are heavily influenced by Gothic literature—most notably symphonic metal, Gothic metal, and doom metal. These genres are deeply intertwined with Gothic sensibilities, exploring themes of darkness, horror, melancholy, and the supernatural. The narrative structures typical of Gothic literature are often mirrored in metal lyrics, which evoke similar emotional responses such as fear, despair, and longing.

For instance, bands like Tristania feature gloomy lyrics and heavy, immersive soundscapes that reflect Gothic themes. Their live performances and albums often aim to create atmospheric experiences, utilizing stage design, candlelight, and period-inspired costumes reminiscent of Gothic aesthetics. Notably, their live performances of *Midwintertears* and *My Lost Lenore* in Austria in 1999 envelop the audience in a haunting, spiritual world.

Figure 1 *Tristania live concert in Germany* (Micattack, 2005).

On the other hand, many more metal bands have been influenced by Gothic literature, such as *Nightwish*, *Type O Negative*, and *Theatre of Tragedy*. Some even derive their names from literary works. For example, the metal band *Paradise Lost* took its name from John Milton's epic poem *Paradise Lost*, a foundational text rich in Gothic characteristics. In an interview, the band confirmed this connection (Wiebe, 2012).

Gothic literature's influence is also evident in metal song lyrics. The traditional goth band *Witching Hour*, based in London, UK, incorporates literary Gothic themes into their work. In their song *Ligea*, the first stanza reads:

> It's time to stand. Leave some flowers on the grave
> She opens up her eyes and stares him in the face
> She died for a reason but it's merely showing off
> He waits and suffers and she just stares and laughs
> Her spirit is still there, Ligea (Witching Hour, 1994).

As we read the lyrics of the song, the feeling of death, the graveyard ambiance, and spirits are evident, which are key elements of gothic literature Additionally, there is one band, "Cradle

of Filth," in particular, that stands out for mixing romance, the supernatural, and the paranormal. This British metal band's lyrics, featuring a singer who screams like a demon, emphasize Gothic and horror elements. The band was founded in the early 1990s and is classified underthe extreme metal subgenre. Lead singer and band founder Daniel Lloyd Davey, known professionally as Dani Filth has added a British Gothic element to the project, turning it into a gloomy, Gothic-themed band (Lupu, 2023). Moreover, there is another that deserves mention: *Draconian*, with their sorrowful song ."Death, Come Near Me." Its lyrics are as follows:

> O Death, come near me!
> Be the one for me, be the one who stays.
> My rivers are frozen, and mischosen,
> and the shadows around me sickens my heart.
> O Death, come near me,
> and stay (by my side). Hear my silent cry!
> In sadness I'm veiled, to the cross I am nailed,
> and the pain around me freezes my world.
> My cold world...

In the lyrics of this song, there is once again a theme of death, but more sadly, almost a plea, with death being seen as the only salvation. Lyrics containing such emotions can be easily found in many songs influenced by Gothic literature (Lupu, 2023).

Gothic elements on album covers

Figure 2 *Album covers by Estatic Fear, Draconian, Iron Maiden, and The Sins of Thy Beloved.*

Album covers are one of the most effective ways to visualize songs. According to Deena Weinstein in her book *Heavy Metal* (1991), album covers serve as the first interpretation through which audiences recognize a band. Buyers often form their first impression of a band's image, attitude, and emotion based on the album's design. For example, *Iron Maiden*'s album covers—featuring their iconic ghoulish mascot—are among the most recognizable in the genre. However, beyond recognizability, many metal bands incorporate Gothic elements into their album artwork. These often include settings such as dark forests, medieval castles, dungeons, or graveyards, and may feature violent or sexual imagery. A well-designed album cover, therefore, plays a crucial role in conveying the tone of a band's music and helping the audience anticipate the emotional and aesthetic atmosphere of the songs (Straw, 2001).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the influence of Gothic literature on music has inspired a wide range of genres and musicians, both past and present. Its narrative structures, themes, and aesthetics have shaped everything from the haunting melodies of classical compositions to the heavy atmospheres of contemporary metal. Gothic works continue to serve as a rich source of musical

inspiration, telling stories of darkness, mystery, and the supernatural. Based on the relationships and examples explored throughout this paper, it is evident that Gothic literature has profoundly enriched the artistic expression of composers and performers. Moreover, this influence creates a meaningful experience for listeners, offering them not only music but also deeply embedded stories and emotions.

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PSYCHOLOGICAL THEMES AND CHARACTER ANALYSIS IN NO LONGER HUMAN

Abstract

No Longer Human by Osamu Dazai is written in post-war Japan. The main protagonist is a depressed Japanese man named Yozo Oba who struggles with self-identity. It is semi-biographical, so it reflects the life of the author who struggled with mental health. This paper aims to psychoanalyze Yozo Oba and discover the underlying causes for his self-destructive behavior and broken picture of oneself and to understand his nihilistic views. The research methodology is qualitative including an examination of the book, and theories of personality, such as Freud's psychoanalysis. The focus will be placed on Yozo Oba's self-identity, his close relationships, and his view on society. Preliminary findings suggest that Yozo Oba's behavior comes from unhealed childhood trauma and his inability to fight for what he wants. He is scared that others will not like him as he is, so he constantly masks his real personality. Moreover, as each year passed, he became more immersed in his ideology that he is the one who is not human because he cannot understand others and that happy life was not meant for likes of himself. In conclusion, this paper sheds light on the psychological themes and character analysis of Yozo Oba.

Keywords: *Osamu Dazai, No Longer Human, Psychoanalysis, Yozo Oba*

Introduction

No Longer Human is a Japanese novel by Osamu Dazai (previously known as Shūji Tsushima) first published in 1948, and it is considered a modern classic because of its complex psychological themes. The research methodology for this paper is qualitative. This includes examination of the book, and theories of personality, such as Freud's psychoanalysis. According to Cherry (n.d.), Freud's psychoanalysis is a theory that explores the unconscious

mind, personality structure, and defense mechanisms and uses techniques like free association and dream analysis to uncover repressed emotions and conflicts influencing behavior. To get a better understanding of the novel, we should at least know a bit of the author's biography. Dazai was born on June 19, 1909, in Kanagi, Aomori Prefecture, Japan, into a wealthy family. Regardless of that, he had a challenging upbringing because his mother was ill, and his father was not around as much because of his work. He was mostly raised by servants and his aunt Kiye. He finished Aomori Junior High School and entered Hirosaki University. During this time, he showed an interest in literature and even wrote his magazine. Everything started to go downhill when his favorite author, Ryūnosuke Akutagawa, committed suicide. Dazai, prior to that, was already suffering mentally, but this contributed to it, and he completely neglected his studies and spent all his allowance money on alcohol, drugs, and prostitutes. On the night of December 10, 1929, Osamu Dazai made his first suicide attempt, driven by his deepening sense of despair and inner turmoil. He managed to survive and graduated from university. Later on, he was disowned by his family and tried to commit suicide a few more times. Once, it was a double suicide with a 19-year-old bar hostess, Shimeko Tanabe. Tanabe died, and Dazai lived. After that, his literary career began in the early 1930s, when he joined a literary group in Tokyo and started publishing short stories. He died on June 13, 1948, by drowning himself and his lover in the Tamagawa Canal. Shortly after his death, No Longer Human was published. The novel is said to be autobiographical because it has many similarities to the author's life. It could be said that it was the author’s farewell note because the novel ended with a quote: “Now I have neither happiness or unhappiness. Everything passes” (Dazai, 1948/2014, p. 120) Yozo Oba faces the same challenges as Dazai did. To get a better understanding of his character, the psychological themes of identity crisis, close relationships, and society are the key to Yozo Oba’s character analysis, emphasizing the influence of both individual challenges and society expectations on the human psyche.

The Psychological Themes of Identity Crisis

Yozo Oba’s identity crisis is evident throughout the novel. It can be analyzed through two parts: childhood and adulthood. In his early childhood, he was already masking his real personality, and he thought that if he could make others laugh, it would not matter how he felt. It is evident in this quote:

> As long as I can make them laugh, it does not matter how; I will be alright. If I succeed in that, the human beings probably will not mind it too much if I remain outside their lives. The one thing I must avoid is becoming offensive in their eyes. I shall be nothing, the wind, the sky. (Dazai, 1948/2014, p. 48)

This stems from his fear of people and distrust towards them. Whenever he has to encounter living beings, he feels immediate distress and shame. According to Pradana (2017), Yozo recognizes that people consistently conceal their genuine selves, always wearing masks. He believes that masks will fall off when people are angered, and their true colors will show. The thing that added more to his fear was the assault in his own home by a maid. He did not tell his parents about it because he thought his father would never understand it. Yozo kept it all in.

Other traits that marked his childhood are: peculiarness, pessimism, and passiveness. It can be seen that he is peculiar in the way he thinks. As a child, we see the world a bit differently, but in Yozo's case, he constantly tried to compare himself to other people, and he would always come to the same conclusion: that he is not like them and that no matter how much he tries, he will never be. This is seen in the quote: "All I feel are the assaults of apprehension and terror at the thought that I am the only one who is entirely unlike the rest." (Dazai, 1948/2014, p. 21) Also, from such a young age, he was struggling to find meaning in life, and he thought he was born with a flaw. No child should ever feel like this, but Yozo did.

His passiveness can be seen in such a way that he did not want to form any meaningful connections with people and whenever he was bullied by others, he would do nothing. This comes from his belief that other people are worth more than he is. Another example of his passive nature is that when his father asks what he wants as a gift from the capital, Yozo stays silent even though he wants a lion mask. He was afraid that his father would be disappointed by his answer. "Whenever I was asked what I wanted, my first impulse was to answer nothing" (Dazai, 1948/2014, p. 24)

The only positive thing that marked his childhood was the fact that he was smart. He had a good reputation among his friends and teachers. In school, he never studied much but ended up getting high grades.

Going into adulthood, his childhood traits shaped who he was. He was still unable to make decisions for himself and would rely on others. One of the main examples of this is when

his father wanted him to continue to go to university, even though he did not want to, he did not obey.

> I wanted to enter an art school, but my father put me into college intending eventually to make a civil servant out of me. This was the sentence passed on me and I, who have never been able to answer back, dumbly obeyed. (Dazai, 1948/2014, p. 41)

Things just kept adding up and with his inability to make decisions and fear of people, he developed social anxiety. As stated by Pradana (2017), he experiences discomfort and apprehension in the presence of others. His distinct perspective and internal negativity play crucial roles in the progression of his anxiety.

The main difference from his childhood was that he developed self-destructive tendencies. He started to drink alcohol, smoke cigarettes, and do drugs with Hiroki. After he was drunk, he felt like he could finally be himself and all his worries seemed to disappear. Soon after, he became addicted and the allowance that his father sent him lasted him only three days.

He did not care about his physical health and how all of this affected him. His mental health was even more in decline, and he tried to commit suicide a few times. With each failed attempt, he was feeling even worse.

From all of this, we can conclude that Yozo's identity crisis started in childhood and continued through his adulthood. Unfortunately for him, he never got out of the loop and resolved his inner conflicts. "Now I have neither happiness or unhappiness. Everything passes" (Dazai, 1948/2014, p. 120) This follows Sigmund Freud's psychological theory that early childhood experiences and relationships with parents shape who we are.

Close Relationships

The second factor that influenced Yozo Oba's psyche was his close relationships. They can be separated into three categories: family, friends, and lovers.

Family plays a crucial role in a child's development. How we are treated as children reflects what kind of adults we will become. As specified by Pradana (2017), if the family fails, the child is likely to grow up to be an adult who struggles to accept societal norms.

Yozo comes from an aristocratic family in northern Japan. One may think that his life ought to be amazing since his family is rich, but that is not the case. His father is a very strict man who works as a member of a political party. He is the head of the house.

During all his childhood, he was trying to stay on his father's good side because he found his punishments terrifying. He never expressed his needs and always did what his father wanted him to do.

In particular, he was not very close with other family members; it could be said that he didn't feel loved. He would usually spend his days observing what they do and trying to figure out what it is to be a human being. "Why must human beings eat three meals every single day? What extraordinary solemn faces they all make as they eat! It seems to be some kind of ritual" (Dazai, 1948/2014, p. 20)

In his first year of college, he started cutting classes and secretly attending art classes. The only time he would go to university would be when his father would be back in town. He felt terrible guilt and felt like he was disappointing his father.

Regarding friends, he did not have any close ones because of his fear of human beings until he met Hiroki. He met him during one of his art classes. They clicked together because, in a way, Hiroki also could not understand other human beings, but he knew how to communicate with them.

This helped Yozo a lot because he could feel relaxed when he was with Hiroki. He also introduced Yozo to alcohol, drugs, and cigarettes. It was not a nice way of life, but he thought that it was the best thing that happened to him.

> I soon came to understand that drink, tobacco, and prostitutes were all excellent means of dissipating (even for a few moments) my dread of human beings. I came even to feel that if I had to sell every last possession to obtain these means of escape, it would be well worth it. (Dazai, 1948/2014, p. 45)

Later in life, he met many women, but he only fell in love twice. First, it was with a woman named Tsuneko. She worked as a hostess at a bar in Giza. When they first met, Yozo felt nervous, but as they had conversations, he realized that she was like him.

Tsuneko went through a lot of hardships in life, and she did not fear death. According to Pradana (2017), Yozo views death as a source of happiness and freedom. This is why he could relate to her.

She also showed genuine feelings and care for him; it could be said that he felt loved for the first time. But one time in the bar, he could not afford to pay her a drink because he had no money. He felt terrible because of it, and when Tsuneko proposed that they commit a double suicide, he gladly accepted. Tsuneko died, but Yozo survived.

The second time he fell in love was with a seventeen-year-old girl named Yoshiko. He left his wife for her because he liked Yoshiko's carefreeness. During their time together, she was assaulted by Yozo's acquaintance, but he did not do anything to stop it, even though he could have. Because of this, he felt ashamed and tried to commit suicide again, but he failed.

It can be determined that Yozo's relationship influenced his psyche, mostly negative. His family did not show him what proper love is, and his fear of his father affected him so much that he felt guilty whenever he wanted to do something for himself. The only friend he had introduced him to stuff that only furthered his demise. It could be said that Hiroki was a sin in disguise. And lastly, the only two women he loved were just as emotionally undeveloped and immature as him, so they could not have helped him in any way.

Societal Expectations

The final factor that influenced him was the society that surrounded him. He is confused by all the rules that he must follow and constantly questions them. "What, I wondered, did he mean by "society"? The plural of human beings? Where was the substance of this thing called "society"?" (Dazai, 1948/2014, p. 82)

According to Adeline (2008), Yozo realizes that society praises individuals to their faces but criticizes them behind their backs. To be accepted and recognized as a legitimate member of society, one must conform to its expectations, even if it means pretending to be someone they are not.

The society that he lived in was also very judgmental for people who had mental health issues. This can be seen in the way people treated him after he committed double suicide. Immediately after the act, he was put in jail for safety reasons, and policemen mocked him. His family also showed no support for him and told him to get his life together or else he would be disowned. He was labeled as a mentally unstable and troublesome person.The only thing that he shared with society was his belief in God. But even with this, he was peculiar. He did not believe that God was gentle and that he only punished people for their sins. "I could believe in hell, but it was impossible for me to believe in the existence of heaven." (Dazai, 1948/2014, p. 80)

All of this implies that society has failed Yozo and that his psychological state has gotten even worse because of it. If society actually provided adequate help and support, instead of mockery and judgement, Yozo could have gotten better and lived the life of a normal human being.

Conclusion

Psychological themes and character attributes that are present in "No Longer Human" by Osamu Dazai are Yozo Oba's identity crisis, his close relationships, and societal expectations. What we already know is that Yozo is a very complex character. The decisions he makes in adulthood are mostly influenced by his unhealed childhood trauma. He never felt loved by his family and was utterly confused about how to connect with others. Another thing that confused him was how to act as a human being, and he came to the conclusion that there is nothing wrong with society but that it is he who is utterly different from others. All of these things played a role in shaping his psyche and are the reason for his demise. The general message that we can get from this is that every decision we make, not only for ourselves but for others, will have some sort of effect. It can be described as pushing dominoes; once we make one bad decision, the next just follows up on it. This was the case with Yozo Oba.

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PSYCHOANALYSIS OF KATNISS EVERDEEN IN SUZANNE COLLINS' TRILOGY *THE HUNGER GAMES*

Abstract

Suzanne Collins' first novel in *The Hunger Games* trilogy is a work of dystopian fiction released in 2008 (Cunningham, 2024). Survival, sacrifice, and fear are just some of the prevalent themes that emerge throughout the plot. Aside from being set in the made-up land of Panem, the novel tells the story of a highly segregated society that boasts drastic inequality between its poor districts and the wealthy Capitol. Katniss Everdeen, the main protagonist, is among the poorest, thus being forced to hunt to obtain necessities like food. Her skills are later tested in the annual games, where she is forced to fight to the death. Thanks to her innovative nature and outside-of-the-box thinking skills, Katniss outsmarts many of her rivals. Being the underdog, she sets off to infuriate those in power and gains many supporters. The aim of this paper is to explore the intricacies and past events that triggered Katniss to transform and embody the symbol of a rebellion. The main objective is to break down her initially rejected metamorphosis into the Mockingjay into somewhat comprehensible fractions. Her suppressed trauma, defence mechanisms, and selfless traits foreshadow the uproar of the nation. This is achieved by employing descriptive qualitative research methods, interpreting her emotions, actions, and, above all, her psychological state. To conclude, the Mockingjay is not simply an alter ego that Katniss is compelled to portray, as many assume, artificially. On the contrary, it is the precise thing that allows her to reignite the fire within her to offer hope to her people, unite, and avenge them.

Keywords: *Katniss Everdeen, Mockingjay, trauma, coping mechanisms, selflessness*

Introduction

Being one of the most prominent novels of the century, *The Hunger Games* trilogy embodies extremely bleak themes of tyranny and bigotry. Nevertheless, its main protagonist serves as a tool to ultimately help bring the corrupted system down and free the nation. The novels show a gradual growth and resistance seen in this young teenage girl as she grapples with the realities of being a part of the games more than once. The said games are held every year and consist of two tributes, ages twelve to eighteen, from each district, who must fight in an arena until one remains. Katniss's much-despised public life starts here, being broadcast all over the country, as she is forced to put on an act for entertainment purposes. The more convincing she is, the more sponsors she will have that can aid her in her survival. The utter disbelief of these events makes her act out more than once, causing Katniss to attract unwanted attention. In turn, this makes her a great candidate for being the face of the revolution. Disobeying the rules and essentially putting a target on her back is rather intriguing to the viewers, making her even more popular. Katniss's transformation into a bold and confident figure is not only pivotal to the plot but also significant in acknowledging the prevalent themes of resistance, identity, and sacrifice. The journey from being survival-driven to embodying a symbol of a revolution illustrates the struggle she inevitably undergoes. The whole evolution of Katniss is showcased by employing a qualitative research method. Her sheer existence challenges norms and aims to demonstrate a heroine the world has yet to see. Thus, Katniss Everdeen's unresolved trauma, various coping mechanisms, and sacrificial nature led her to become a symbol for the much-needed revolution in a dystopian world.

The Traumatic Life of Katniss Everdeen

The traumatic life of Katniss Everdeen contributed to her character building. Many individuals find comfort in the well-known phrase "What doesn't kill you makes you stronger" (Jayawickreme, 2021), meaning that at the end of the day, we benefit from the trials and tribulations life throws at us. In a sense, one of those very trials resulted in the existence of the infamous mocking jay, which inspired our heroine's nickname. Coincidentally, the mocking jay is a symbol of resistance in and of itself. It aims to represent the two groups merged by Panem's pitiful leadership.

First and foremost, the genetically modified birds, and then those that seek to put an end to the dictatorship that rules over them. The former, also known as mocking jays, are an extension of the government's unsuccessful attempt at eavesdropping on its citizens (Brigida, 2015). Panem originally produced the so-called jabber jay, whose primary objective was to document private conversations and use them as evidence to eliminate possible threats and silence potential rebels. However, as they became apparent to the public, individuals began manipulating and utilising them to propagate misinformation and toy with those in power. Once they had been used against them, the Capitol decided to unleash them into the wild. After some time, they began mating with the well-known mockingbirds, resulting in mocking jays, or, in other words, hybrids. As a by-product of this, they possess a unique ability to mimic both human speech and bird song, which also aids them in their survival. The government's failure to control these creatures turned them into a symbol of resistance (Brigida, 2015). As a direct descendant of those rebels, Katniss's life story mirrors that of the rebellious bird. She carries a pin of said creature on her at all times. Her troubles and traumas are linked to it in the sense that they both originate from District 12 and hence bear the weight of the community's poverty and hardships. The pin keeps her grounded and serves as a reminder of who the true enemy is. It not only portrays all her past anguish, but it also showcases the level of revolt towards those who initially caused it.

Throughout the trilogy, Katniss has been a witness to many horrendous acts committed by the Capitol and has seen a fair share of violence at what most people would consider to be a relatively young age. One of the first turning points in her life was the tragic loss of her beloved father. This unforeseen event sent his wife, Katniss's mother, into a deep depression. Her inability to cope with the grief subsequently leads to neglecting her kids' basic parental needs (Astrom, 2018). Therefore, Katniss is forced into the role of the primary caretaker and financial provider for the family. She suppresses her emotions and does not have the necessary time to reflect on what happened to process her father's death. Instead, she has other, more prevalent issues to worry about, such as her little sister, Primrose. Katniss, for the time being, views herself as an individual whom other people rely on and thus must deliver on the task at hand.

Simply put, her autopilot switch is flipped, thus her survival skills are heightened. Subconsciously, her surroundings led her to believe that she was better off relying on herself than on others (Ardi, 2018). This is seen in the way she handles poverty and how capable she believes herself to be. Among other things, the brutal killings and utter dehumanisation of the

74th hunger games made her pessimistic outlook on the world even more valid. In addition, losing Rue, a friend that she gained in that short period, added to the already existing agony. The previously mentioned mocking jays, used as a communication tool for the pair, continue to haunt Katniss, even after Rue's death. Despite these moments of weakness, her rebel-like attitude did not go unnoticed. By playing the system and having both her and her teammate Peeta almost commit suicide live on television, she essentially put a target on her back. The Capitol is forced to bend its rules to avoid absolute havoc by murdering the nation's favourite. To eliminate her without starting a revolution, President Snow finds a way to send them to the next hunger games, hoping the problem will solve itself. Despite her familiarity with the quest at hand, Katniss suffers from extreme nightmares because of PTSD. As time progresses, she is retrieved from the games to be used as a pawn for the uprising that is about to start. Katniss is devastated upon finding out that Peeta, her teammate and love interest, is being tortured and brainwashed by the Capitol. This indeed motivates her to channel that anger, sadness, and hatred towards retrieving him, but in doing so, she gets to visit other districts for the first time and sees the amount of destruction left by the Capitol. Adamant about challenging them and ending this once and for all, Katniss uses her trauma as an instrument or even as a weapon to carve out her future the way she sees fit. As stated by Katniss herself, if we, the Districts, burn, you, the Capitol, shall burn with us, meaning that if they have endured suffering, so will their fascist government (Collins, 2010, p. 81).

Coping mechanisms used by Katniss Everdeen

Coping mechanisms utilised by Katniss Everdeen played a significant role in her survival, subsequently influencing her growth. Withdrawal, not to be mistaken for the meaning of a sudden stop in substance abuse, is when a person rids themselves of external stimuli, avoiding interactions with others (Ramberg, 2012). This usually follows a period of loss or an array of traumatic events. In their minds, spending less time with those around them makes them less vulnerable and thus more tolerant if something unfortunate happens to them. Katniss Everdeen's most prominent coping mechanism is withdrawal. Her mind is essentially her refuge, offering her tranquillity when she most needs it. This form of escape shelters her sanity from collapsing. Furthermore, her haven is said to have disappeared when she lost her father at a very young age (Ramberg, 2012). For lack of a better word, illusion can serve as an advantage as well as a disadvantage, meaning that if she is to fall in love with or connect with

someone, like her teammate Peeta Mallark, she must let her guard down. Katniss used withdrawal as a psychological means to distance herself from Peeta right after they won the games. As the constant manipulative tactics of many surrounds her, she is choosing to guard herself from being heartbroken once again. Not entirely sure of Peeta's intentions, she should keep him at a safe distance rather than let her relationships distract her from what matters. One careless slip in behaviour could have great consequences for her and her family. Katniss's emotional unavailability stems from her childhood and suppresses her deepest desires. This creates an inner conflict that is essentially a ticking time bomb. Meaning that the more she tries to ignore her feelings, they become even more intensified until they eventually break free. Examples of this are seen in the aftermath of Peeta's abuse and how she interacts with him. Thus, this acquired trait of avoiding people at certain times arguably aided her in healing some parts of her past to move on and continue being the strong and agile girl all Panem knows (Turnbull, 2019).

Another central coping mechanism for Katniss is her ability to role-play. Role-playing involves acting as different personas or different versions of oneself to trick those who are watching. This action can aid in someone's perception of themselves, therefore positively influencing their mental health (Berceanu, 2022). Her pretending is not only on the surface, as in the garments she is wearing, but also in her demeanour and connections to people such as Peeta. Their love is a by-product of a forced romantic relationship they ought to have for the audience to have mercy on them. At first, she is not fond of this idea until they find themselves in life-or-death situations where they do benefit from this act. This is highly strategic from their point of view and indeed proves to be beneficial as it helps them win over many viewers. She is first forced into the role of this figure, and only later does she truly start identifying with the Mockingjay. This imposed character of Mockingjay ends up being her alter ego in a way. By being forced to change her behaviour when portraying this persona, she inevitably ends up being consumed by it, uniting with her true self as one. If it were not for this forced charade, she might not indeed have had an idealised version of herself to look up to. Subsequently, she gained those exceptional qualities that the Mockingjay had and thus became the hero long-awaited by many.

Lastly, the coping mechanism that initially appears of little value, yet provides Katniss with comfort, is her singing. While singing, she finds solace and a sense of deep connection to those who have passed away, such as her father. He was the person who initially taught her all the songs she knew. Aside from serving to stay connected to him, she sings to deal with the

grief and pain caused by Panem. Upon losing her friend Rue, she is heard singing in the forest, triggered by the event that just played out before her own eyes. She was not able to protect herself, so feeling helpless, she burst out in song, which left many speechless. As seen in the lyrics of the poem: “Here it’s safe, here it’s warm. Here the daisies guard you from every harm” (Collins, 2008, p. 326). The lullaby “Deep in the Meadow” is a reflection of the constant suffering and sadness experienced by those in the districts. By performing it in the arena, Katniss reassures the people that there is hope in defeating the common enemy that is President Snow. This led her singing to become a large part of her campaign for freedom and a staple that Mockingjay uses as the revolution progresses.

Sacrificial nature of Katniss Everdeen

By putting herself in harm’s way to protect others, she showcases the true virtues of a hero worthy of praise. To put one’s happiness and well-being before one’s own is considered ethically admirable and is known as being altruistic (Sutton, 2023). This theme, depending on the situation at hand, evokes a wide range of emotions such as empathy, compassion, love, and gratitude. Katniss does not necessarily view her sacrificial nature as a virtue, unlike the spectators. Instead, she sees it as a means to protect, best illustrated in the act of volunteering as tribute to save her beloved sister Prim (Moreaux, 2013). Guided by her instincts, she doesn’t hesitate to consider the consequences this action might bear for her. Her character lacks the egoistic and narcissistic traits often seen in protagonists of such tales.

Moreover, at the following year’s games, she makes a pact with her mentor, Haymitch, that if Peeta were to be selected, he would volunteer in his place. Her affectionate nature towards Peeta is what makes her go behind his back to ensure his survival ultimately. However, that was not the first time she insisted on saving his life. During the prior games, the two of them were the only ones left at the end, meaning one of them would have to die for the victor to be crowned. Katniss manages to find a loophole in that they would both eat the poison berries and die so that the Capitol would not have their winner. To avoid the negative outcome of nobody making it out alive, the Capitol intervenes, changing the rules at the last minute and proclaiming that from now on, if the two remaining people are from the same district, they shall both be considered winners (Collins, 2008, p. 480). Her willingness to commit suicide alongside her teammate shows Katniss’s true virtues. Putting their lives at risk to challenge the

makers of the game is an extraordinary act of audacity that shapes her descent into the figure of Mockingjay.

And lastly, becoming the Mockingjay is the most sacrificial action of them all. Not only is she risking her life, but also the lives of those closest to her, to achieve something greater than herself. Katniss understands the weight of the issue at hand and hence insists on finishing what she initially started. Disregarding her own needs in the process is the very thing that enables her to succeed in her goal. Influenced by family, her identity rapidly develops, contributing to her overall mental state as well as her image as the Mockingjay (Trippel, 2021).

Conclusion

The Mockingjay becomes the epitome of fighting for equality, a fight only made possible by the traumatic experiences, survival skills, and selflessness of Katniss Everdeen. The values she holds are deemed to be of higher recognition, as she is the one who was able to defeat a highly narcissistic government. She represents every one of those souls whose spirits and livelihoods were crushed by the Capitol. Seeing her story through a more academic lens aids us in recognising why it was so important to have an individual of such stubbornness and valour as the poster child of the revolution. Unfortunately, the fictional story of Katniss Everdeen can be seen as mirroring our contemporary world in many ways. The grim themes present in the trilogy only creep into our political and social situation in the 21st century. Although we do not necessarily have a figure like Katniss to guide and encourage us to alter certain parts of our world, these kinds of books plant a seed in our minds to look out for manipulation and propaganda distributed by those in power. Questioning and preserving our critical thinking skills is most certainly a way in which we can avoid such horrific futures. We should be led by example to be fair, wholeheartedly seek justice, and never surrender until we reach our desired goal. Good luck and may the odds be ever in our favour (Collins, 2008, p. 29).

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THE EXISTENTIAL DERVISH: AN ANALYSIS OF EXISTENTIAL THEMES IN DEATH AND THE DERVISH

Abstract

The novel *Death and the dervish* by Meša Selimović was published in 1966. A product of its time, the novel explores many concepts of this period, primarily the philosophy of existentialism which was prevalent during the author's life and time of publication. In an interview, Selimović expressed his admiration for existentialism and provided an explanation of the themes which are similar to the ones explored in this philosophy. The novel follows the first-person recollections of sheikh Ahmed Nurudin, a dervish of a tekke, who comes experiences many issues in his life, whereby he explores his own decisions, beliefs and ways of thinking. During his reflections and choices described by the narrator, we come to see the themes of the novel. This paper aims to analyse existential themes, primarily through other sources of existentialism, and see in which ways they are incorporated into the novel. The qualitative research method was applied, with the novel as a primary source of information and different pieces of philosophical and fictional existentialist literature as secondary sources. The conclusion of this paper is that Meša Selimović explored many existential themes throughout his novel with key concepts, such as the concepts of authenticity, freedom, absurdity, and meaning.

Keywords: *Death and the dervish*, existentialism, Meša Selimović, literature, philosophy

Introduction

We all have our own viewpoints on existence. Whether we acknowledge it or not, our views are shaped through many experiences with the world around us. At some point or another, an individual comes face to face these facts and begins to question them and tries to seek out the

truth. In an overgeneralized sense, this is what the philosophy of existentialism is all about. Solomon (2005) described existentialism as "an attitude that recognizes the unresolvable confusion of the human world yet resists the all-too-human temptation to resolve the confusion by grasping toward whatever appears or can be made to appear firm or familiar" (p.xi). On the other hand, Walter Kaufmann (1956) pointed out that we should reject the term altogether due to the ambiguity of its history and the rejection of the label. However, we can use the previous quote by Solomon as a starting point. We can say that existentialism analyses the experience of the individual and his pursuit of meaning and creation of himself in a world that has no concrete answers. Some of the main themes in existentialism according to the *Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy* (2023) are the themes of authenticity, freedom and absurdity. We will use these three themes to analyse the novel.

In an interview entitled "O zlu i o dobru" ("Of evil and good") transcribed into the book *Pisci, mišljenja i razgovori* (*Writers, thoughts and conversations*), Selimović (1970) talked about his preference of existentialism and explained some of the themes which he explored within the novel *Death and the dervish*. The themes he discussed during the interview, such as man's urge for ideology, the idea of good, and the pursuit of freedom and meaning were an inspiration for writing this paper, specifically to analyse the existential themes in his novel. Meša Selimović, like many other writers of his age, discussed these issues in his works.

The novel *Death and the dervish* by Meša Selimović (1996) is one of the most famous works of prose in the region of ex-Yugoslavia. The novel follows the main character Ahmed Nurudin and his life over the span of a few months. It is written in a form of a long confessional story, where he explains everything that happened to him and how he came to the situation of writing the work. We get clear and beautifully written insights into his thoughts, ranging from philosophical, social, psychological and historical views which capture his worldview. It is a great piece of literature, full of deeply interwoven insights which leave room for the reader to interpret and analyse in many ways.

The paper applies qualitative analysis of the novel and compares it with other works of existentialism. It examines different parallels within the novel, but also differences in the ways characters act and how they face certain issues, with the focus on Selimović's protagonist Ahmed Nurudin. In his novel *Death and the dervish*, Meša Selimović portrays existential themes through his characters and their interactions with the world while exploring the ideas of authenticity, freedom, and absurdity and meaning.

Authenticity

When analysing the concept of authenticity, we can see a consistent struggle for Ahmed to find his own "true" individual self. Authenticity is a theme which is thoroughly discussed throughout existentialism, and it affects other existentialist themes as well.

To look into the idea of authenticity, we can refer to the work of Kierkegaard (1985) entitled *The sickness unto death*, in which the individual who is struggling with authenticity is not being his true self, or, better worded, as oneself. Authenticity is simply the idea of creating who you are as an individual and what you stand for. Being forced or unconsciously becoming something of a label and restricting yourself of who you truly are is non authentic. In addition, we can use the idea of the herd discussed by Nietzsche (1966) in *Beyond good and evil* where the herd, or people who lean towards conformity or prevailing values and beliefs of a society instead of overcoming and creating their own distinct stance. There is a clear dichotomy in the novel show through the contrast of Hasan and Ahmed's characters.

Hasan, arguably the most important side character of the novel, is a man who does not succumb to dominant opinions and beliefs. For this reason, many people see him as an outcast. Ahmed, while being fond of Hasan, sees Hasan's authenticity as naive and unintellectual. Hasan, on the other hand, clearly confronts Ahmed about his conformity to rules and beliefs, judging him fiercely at time, like in the following passage: "Will you ever stop thinking like dervishes? You act according to destiny, which is determined by God, and you try to save justice and the world… can nothing be done by the will of man" (Selimović, 1996, p.130). Hasan is critical of his friend's timidity towards trying to do good in the world, especially considering the situation in which this is said, where the trouble of saving Harun, Ahmed's imprisoned brother, is brought to a peak. And yet, all we get is a faintheartedresponse, leaving it to the will of God. Subsequently, Hasan answers: "Maybe it's better to adhere to the standards of heaven… Failure doesn't upset you, since you can always rely on eternity… Everything continues into eternity, faceless and vast, sleepily torpid and solemnly indifferent" (Selimović, 1996, p.131). This quote is seemingly a condescending and sarcastic remark of how people like Ahmed tend to reach out towards and rely on the supernatural and something which is not of this world, which tends to lead people to not fully value all which is now.

As the story progresses, Ahmed eventually attains a position of power by becoming the qadi, the very figure responsible for the unjust imprisonment of his brother whom he originally sought to oppose. Due to unforeseen circumstances and in order not to lose his position, he is

forced to go against Hasan, the one person he admired the most throughout the novel. It serves as the ultimate testament to Ahmed's wavering authenticity and his lack of willingness to stand firmly planted in his ground, rather than to simply follow what is given or taken.

Freedom

Freedom is related to the discussion of the essence or existence, where Ahmed is in consistent conflict between what he already is and what he can become. In the work *Existentialism is a Humanism*, Sartre (2007) proclaimed that "man is free, man is freedom" (p.29). The existence of man, according to Sartre, precedes the essence of man, and that, consequently, we are responsible for our very own lives. It is an atheistic proposition at first glance, but we must take into account that even in the view of existence preceding essence, this could be the truth without even being atheistic. In a sense, we as individuals are responsible for our own freedom, and consequently must bear the responsibility.

"But whose accusation, almighty God, you who have abandoned me to the greatest of all human miseries, which is to face oneself?" (Selimović, 1996, p.5) cries out Ahmed in the beginning of the chapter. This statement holds a certain air of grim realization that he must face himself and realize that freedom is his responsibility, since God has left him in the process. Whether he explicitly meant this as a confession of unbelief or a statement of the curse of freedom, is open for interpretation. Later on, we can see during his encounter with Ishaq and his constant calling to him that he is envious of the freedom which he fails to capture in himself.

Ishaq, a mysterious rebellious character who only shows up once in the novel, is the counterpart to Ahmed's weariness to freedom. What must be pointed out is that, after their first interaction, Ishaq is a reoccurring symbol of freedom which Ahmed continues to think of at times of hardship, when the time is pressuring him. Even in their first encounter, Ahmed says: "He had told me: whatever you do, you'll regret it." (Selimović, 1996, p.56), which ties into a passage near the end, in which he restates this by saying: "Man is damned, and regrets all the paths he never took. But who knows what would have awaited me on others?" (Selimović, 1996, p.452). Throughout the novel, we come to different moments of referencing the rebel Ishaq, which can be a symbol of a cry for help, a need for strength to make a choice, which Ahmed does not achieve.

A similar comparison can be made with the character Roquentin in the novel *Nausea* by Sartre (2020), in which the narrator of the novel realizes the contingency of his situation, where everything that had happened led him to where he is now, but he also must take control of his own fate to a certain extent. Ahmed acknowledges this fact, possibly too late, when his fate is already written, like when he states towards the end of the novel: "I know, like every fool, I could say: if what happened hadn't happened, my life would be different" (Selimović, 1996, pp.451-452). This is specifically referring to his lost love in the past, who he accounts as being the reason everything escalated and brought him to his miserable destiny. Freedom and the question of free will is a deeply philosophical issue—one that Ahmed, to a certain extent, understands. He realizes that his own inaction has led him to his current state. Yet throughout the novel, he repeatedly seems to evade that responsibility, attempting to distance himself from the very concept of freedom.

Absurdity and meaning

The struggle of facing the absurdity of existence as well as his loss of meaning in life in the world drives Ahmed Nurudin into despair. In the novel, Ahmed comes into conflict with the absurd and his seemingly senseless existence through his reflections in the novel, where he is conflicted about the order or disorder of the world. The absurdity of existence in *The myth of Sisyphus* (Camus, 2005) is the conflict between man's desire for meaning and the lack of meaning that exists in the world. Man comes into conflict with the absurdity of existence, and feels alienated from the world. This theme can be found in the beginning chapter of the novel, where Ahmed says: "The world has suddenly become a secret to me, and I a secret to it" (Selimović, 1996, p.8). It serves as a beginning statement for Ahmed's inner conflict and his continuous confusion with the world. Due to the retrospective nature of narration, the aforementioned statement is tied into the final lines of the novel, where he proclaims: "The living know nothing. Teach me, dead ones, how to die without fear, or at least without horror. Because death is senseless, as is life" (Selimović, 1996, p.455). It serves as a full circle moment, in which he understood the absurd and its weight, which drove him to a fit of nihilism, driving him to hopelessness.

Throughout the novel, the main character Ahmed has the thoughts of the senselessness of existence as is characteristic of absurdism. The issue that comes into play is Ahmed's constant need to revert back to faith in times of crisis. "Those prayers are a recognized and

accepted solace; they soothe and deaden any dangerous thoughts" (Selimović, 1996, p.34), states Ahmed. Soothe and deaden are key terms to be understood in this instance. The way he uses his faith in times of crises and confusion, and falls back into what he believes gives him comfort and suppresses his urge towards losing his religion. Camus (2005) opposed these actions, stating that this is simply an act of philosophical suicide, a reluctant ignorance of the reality of humans, or more precisely described as the absurd, which he believes that we must face when one is divested of the illusion of the world, instead falling back to them. Ahmed continues to be conflicted with his religion and a longing for something outside of his religion, but is perceived to be reluctant in facing this until the very end. Existentialism is commonly a more atheistic view of the world, where the choice of relying on religion is a restriction, taking back a person's true pursuit of freedom in the world. He realises this himself in his own reflections, such as in the beginning passage of chapter 14, where he says: "Acquired habits lead to repetitions of actions; a feeling of security takes away one's common sense" (Selimović, 1996, p.354). Ahmed becomes afraid to face the absurd in his life, in spite of the fact that he subtly understands that his situation cannot be simply resolved with his faith and acquires a reasoning outside of his dervish ways.

Ahmed Nurudin loses his sense of meaning in life, specifically the golden bird throughout the text. In the novel, Ahmed Nurudin loses his "golden bird" which eventually leaves him lost and hopeless, in what he perceives as a meaningless world. In the beginning chapter of the second part of the book, in which Ahmed talks about the young Mula-Yusuf and the murder of his mother, taking away his golden bird, he comes face to face with his own lost golden bird: "Where are the golden birds of human dreams?" (Selimović, 1996, p.251). The issue is, he realises that this pursuit is futile, as he looks at himself as nothing but unfinished pieces, never finding himself to be complete: "I consisted entirely of accidents, unknown reasons, of a purpose that had existed and been put aside" (Selimović, 1996, p.252). A struggle to find a common ground for which to work for is constantly being put aside. The golden bird from his own past is gone, but he has a pessimistic conclusion saying: "Golden bird, you are nothing but an illusion" (Selimović, 1996, p.454). He concluded that the search for the golden bird is futile; he resorted to doing what he was against, evil, which only drove him deeper to despair.

In contrast to this, through the character Dr. Rieux in *The Plague*, Camus (2002) gives us a portrayal of a character who rebels against the evil of the world despite his lack of concrete

meaning involved in his work. Similar to Ahmed who is facing the evil of corruption, Dr. Rieux faces the evil of a plague taking over his city. Before them both sat a great evil, yet Camus' hero in *The Plague* keeps going on despite it, rebelling against the absurdity of the situation. Nurudin concerns himself with reality and the supernatural, and if what he is doing makes sense in any way, yet Dr, Rieux accepts the world for what it is. Rieux embodies this stance in a quote from Part II of the book, in a conversation with Tarrou: "Perhaps it is better for God that we should not believe in him, and struggle with all our strength against death" (Camus, 2002, p.98). The absurdity of existence requires a rebellion against it, one which Rieux embraces and Ahmed evidently failed to achieve. Dr. Rieux does not force upon himself a definitive meaning, but simply does what he believed to be needed.

Conclusion

To conclude, existential themes of authenticity, freedom and absurdity and meaning are portrayed in the novel *Death and the dervish* by Meša Selimović. Considering the length of the novel and the abundance of details within, this topic can be expanded upon and looked into in more detail. In future, a wider research of this topic can be conducted, possibly branching out to different forms of philosophy to see how they correlate to the novel. This novel will continue to inspire research and analyses of its many themes and ideas.

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LANGUAGE VARIATION AND IDENTITY: COMPARING AND CONTRASTING GERMANIC LANGUAGES-ENGLISH AND GERMAN

Abstract

Together with a few other languages, English and German descended from a common ancestor language known as Proto-Germanic. This shared language history allows for numerous similarities between the languages, not only limited to vocabulary, but also history, regional variations, and standard variants. This paper aims to show the comparisons and contrasts between these two languages through their standardization, grammatical variations, lexical and syntactic differences, and other aspects of language. Alongside showing similarities and differences in speech patterns, the study will shed some light on how honorifics, terms used to express respect for others in writing or speech, are handled in each language and aid in a better understanding of the problems with interlanguage communication. In addition, the study explores cultural implications connected to the background of the two languages through historical events. Both similarities and differences will be shown through examples. The research method used in this paper is qualitative. The findings of the research point to the fact that the languages still having core similarities, even though they were separated into independent languages and developed their own dialects, variations, and identity throughout history. The conclusions show the middle ground of these two languages alongside the items that set them apart from each other.

Keywords: *Germanic languages, English, German, comparisons, contrasts.*

Introduction

English and German are interesting and diverse Germanic languages that took different approaches while evolving and becoming the languages we know and love today. Germanic languages are the descendants of the old Proto-Germanic language divided into North

Germanic, East Germanic, and West Germanic. The two languages are West Germanic languages, alongside a few other languages like Afrikaans and Dutch, for example. They have an extensive shared history, and some parallels can still be seen today. This research focuses on the similarities that connect these languages and the peculiarities that set them apart. The qualitative research method was applied, accompanied by different examples. Aspects of theoretical analysis and framework are discussed in the manner that does not require prior linguistic knowledge and understanding from readers. When English and German language are compared, the most prominent similarities include the history that connects them, standardized versions of the languages, and variants based on the region. On the other hand, the differences include the domains of phonological, lexical, syntactic, and grammatical variations.

The Similarities between English and German

Due to their comparable historical backgrounds, near geological vicinity, standardized variations, and regional varieties, both languages have some significant, recognizable parallels.

The similarities can be easy to find and distinguish when comparing these two Germanic languages since they share not only the common root in the Proto-Germanic, but also history that shaped them and the close geological proximity of the countries speaking these languages (Gast & König, 2018). This proximity and historical roots resulted in shared cognates, or words with similar or identical meanings, which sometimes even have the same spelling and/or pronunciation.

Their writing systems are also connected. Both languages use the Latin alphabet, write, and read from left to right, and have the same or similar pronunciations of some sounds and even words. This is a result of the fact that countries where these languages are spoken are located close to each other and have a permanent bond through their Proto-Germanic ancestry and shared history of cooperation or disputes and even wars.

Another similarity is the fact that both languages have standardized versions that are more prominently used in schools, at work, and more formal aspects of daily life. For English, this would be Standard English, which is used in schools and is considered more proper than certain variations of English. According to Trudgill and Hannah (2008), all contemporary media, books, and everything else that is made for the public and the wider audience is written in Standard English, which is standardized, codified, and modified for the public. As for

German, Hochdeutsch, or High German, is the more formalized version of the language that is seen as accentless and ideal for more formal settings. Again, it is standardized due to similar reasons.

Languages have a standardized version due to the importance of having a middle ground, where speakers of different dialects of the same language would be able to understand each other and not have any problems in communication and information transfer. This is a result of all speakers of the language having learned and used it throughout their schooling, in business meetings, in the office, and by indulging in all types of media.

Also, Trudgill and Hannah (2008) noted that, throughout history, some dialects have become standardized versions of the languages we know today. For example, The Royal Court in London gradually influenced Standardized English. The area where the dialect was spoken had a large influence on the country, alongside individuals or families who have high rankings and the power to make crucial decisions.

High German (Hochdeutsch) was also influenced through similar means with the addition of a religious leader and reformer having an important influence on this process. As discussed by Schmitz (2019), the Germans' belief that they should be united by one religion and one language led them to accept and follow Martin Luther and his ideas. The German language would later be reformed to reflect this idea and unite the German-speaking parts of the world.

Other similarities include regional variants of both languages. English and German have language variants that depend on the region where they are spoken. English regional variants can be divided into British English, American English, Australian English, and many others due to English being the lingua franca, world-spread language, of this age. For German we have German spoken in East and West Germany, Swiss German, and Austrian German as the main and well-known regional variants.

They can be affected by many internal and external factors and can also lead to some disputes and arguments. Austrian German is a prime example, as researched by Rusch (1989). Factors like politics and nationality can affect regional and national variants of a language to a degree where the public must fight to separate language and nationality.

These variants can also be looked at as dialects of these languages. Therefore, British English, Australian English, American English, New Zealand English (also called Kiwi

English), and many others are purely dialects of Standard English. Each dialect has its accent and lexis, but they are still, for the most part, comprehensible and compatible with one another.

The usage of the same grammar, excluding the use of double negatives in African-American English, makes the dialects relatively easy to understand even for people whose mother tongue is a language other than English.

The same also applies to German dialects/variants, but only if we consider the German dialects of each country separately. Germany, Austria, Switzerland, the German-speaking part of Belgium, and even parts of the Netherlands could understand one another; however, they would have to switch to High German in certain situations to avoid miscommunication.

Dialects in Germany can be grouped into 16 official Dialektgruppen or groups of dialects. Some of them include Bavarian, Frisian, Alemannic, Low German, Middle High German, Upper Saxon, Berlinerisch, and many more. They are spoken in different regions of Germany and, the same as English, have their own peculiarities, while High German is the bridge that connects all of them.

Considering all that was discussed above, both English and German find themselves at a crossroads when looking at their historical background, official standard versions of these languages, and the dialects spoken in each region. Thus, both the languages share many similarities worth exploring.

The Differences between English and German

On the other hand, both languages have their own identities and are seen as standalone languages that, throughout history, gained independence and autonomy in the world and have become somewhat incomprehensible to one another due to both languages taking different approaches to grammar, phonology, morphology, syntax, and other linguistic features.

For example, grammatical changes in German included the flexibility of the word order in a sentence, while Old English became unrecognizable to Modern English speakers. According to Toyota (2008):

> The changes from Old-high German to Modern German are subtle: from free order with SOV basic order the word order became V-2 and the passive voice started to emerge. The degree of changes for English is much greater, and Old

> English is much closer to Modern German than to Modern English. The answer for such diversity within the same alignment system is the transitivity and its development. (p. 285)

For most speakers of both languages, the first grammatical difference they would notice is that German, unlike English, has cases. The cases are nominative (subject), genitive (possessive), dative (indirect object), and accusative (direct object). The cases change a word's function in a sentence. They can affect nouns, adjectives, pronouns, and determiners. Table 1 provides an overview of cases in German language and their function.

Case	Function	German	English
Nominative	Subject (the one who does the action)	*Der Mann* wohnt im Haus.	The man lives in a house.
Genitive	Possession	Das Buch *des Mannes.*	The Man's book.
Dative	Indirect object (receives the action)	Ich schenke *dir* eine Blume.	I give/gift you a flower.
Accusative	Direct object (receives the action)	Das Kind isst *ein Bonbon.*	The kid eats a candy.

Table 1 *Cases in German and their functions*

English words, of course, also have functions like subject, direct, and indirect object. However, they are not directly marked by any affixes with a grammatical function, but by the placement of the word itself in the sentence, by using prepositions, or by using a different word completely. Some argue that English does have cases, nominative, accusative, and genitive, to be precise. However, English takes a different approach in showing this than other languages that have true cases in their grammar.

Phonological differences between the two languages also exist, with German having a few more letters than English and different pronunciations of some sounds. Germans also spell letters differently. The extra letters in German are ä, ö, ü, and ß (a sharp/double "S"). The marks above the letters are called "umlaut" and are shifts of the letters a, o, and u.

Another peculiarity involving German words is that every noun, proper or not, is capitalized in German. Also, there are many more articles in German due to the existence of cases. English has the definite article "the" and the indefinite article "a/an", while German has the definite articles "der" (masculine), "die" (feminine and all plurals in the nominative case), and "das" (neutral). These articles denote the grammatical gender of nouns in German.

The indefinite articles include "ein" (masculine) and "eine" (feminine). Both definite and indefinite articles change depending on the given case. Some examples of definite articles are: der Hund-the dog, die Katze-the cat, das Buch-the book; and for indefinite: ein Hund-a dog, eine Katze-a cat, ein Buch-a book (we can notice that "ein" is used for both masculine and neutral nouns).

Another difference is the semantic transparency in German and English. As Günther et al. (2019) discussed, German is much more transparent with its semantic elements (i.e., meaning) while English is more opaque. This means that, for example, German idioms are more straightforward and of a compositional nature, while English idioms are the opposite, being of an in-compositional nature, the meaning of an idiom cannot be predicted based on a part of the idiom, which affects the real meaning of the full sentence.

This does not only apply to semantics but to their letters as well. For example, the letter "a" in English can be pronounced as up to 5 different sounds, thus making it more opaque, while German is much more consistent with the sounds the letters make and thus is more transparent.

A notable difference can also be found in the syntax of these languages. The word order in English is fixed as SVO (subject-verb-object), while German is a bit more flexible and can have a SOV order (subject-object-verb). This applies to standard variations of the languages and does not apply to stylistic choices made by poets.

It is also noteworthy that there are differences in the usage of inflectional endings in the morphology of both languages. As explained by Kastovsky (1994), alongside the syntactic function when the NP is placed before the verb and it is considered the subject, and the NP

placed after the verb is considered the object of the sentence. This makes English a configurational language, unlike German which does not have this to the same extent. However, German uses the case system to do the same.

When it comes to honorifics, English speakers can only show respect by using the titles Mr, Mrs, Miss, and Ms, and occupational titles like boss, president, your majesty, etc. German uses the same titles to show respect like Herr, Frau, Fräulein, Seine Heiligkeit, Majestät, königliche Hoheit, etc. These apply to people of higher ranks, nobility, and the clergy.

However, it also uses the 3rd person plural "Sie", the capital "S" is necessary, with the reflexive pronoun "sich" to show respect at school, in e-mails, academic papers, etc. Due to this being a pronoun in German, it can also be modified by case. The examples include "Ihrer" for genitive, and "Ihnen" for dative. The polite possessive adjective also depends on the gender, case, and number.

Conclusion

Taking into account everything discussed, we can conclude that both English and German share some similarities, but also show differences that shaped the languages as they are today. The most notable similarities between these two languages are their shared history, standardized forms of the languages, and regional variations, while the differences lie in domains of phonological, lexical, syntactic, semantic, and grammatical variations. It is important not just to look at the contrasts between the two languages that set them apart, but also to look into the parallels that form strings that connect them. The paper aimed to show the bridge between these two Germanic languages while still noting the beauty of their complexities and differences, fostering and encouraging a more profound recognition and appreciation of their shared linguistic heritage.

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