IDENTITY(IES)
A MULTICULTURAL AND MULTIDISCIPLINARY APPROACH

ANA PAULA ARNAUT
(ORG.)

IMPRENSA DA UNIVERSIDADE DE COIMBRA
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At a time when the world watches in horror the unfolding drama of millions of refugees and the anxiety of identity figures prominently among globalization's many side effects, this is certainly a very timely book, with contributions that address the momentous issues at hand in ways that are not just varied but also surprisingly illuminating.

It seems only appropriate that the book starts and ends ("Whoever is not Greek is a barbarian"; "The Women of the Other and us") with well contextualized, historical / theoretical reflexions on the unfailingly self-serving construction and ultimate appropriation of "the other", be it the supposedly inarticulate savage of neighboring barbarian shores or the haunting background presence of Arab women - the barely acknowledged half of the West's reified "Rest". In fact, although the chronological distance between the two historical moments is such as to discourage hasty generalizations, the continuities and the potential relevance are just too striking to be ignored.

Joaquim Ramos de Carvalho

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FOREWORD

This collection of essays on the theme of Identity(ies) is one aspect of an initiative of the Social Sciences and Humanities Working Group, one of several task forces operating under the aegis of the Coimbra Group. Although the word "identit(y)ies" is and has been for some time in vogue, it demarcates an important and stimulating area of concern for those of us involved with the Social Sciences and Humanities, in particular, and in higher education, generally. This volume brings together scholars and teachers from six countries and seven of the most well known and highly regarded universities in Europe.

The theme is a broad and inclusive one and the contributions reflect this. While the essays are drawn from a range of areas including History, Literary and Cultural Studies and Linguistics, all are brought together in what is an essentially multidisciplinary effort. All the contributors to this volume are active in teaching and research. They operate on a daily basis between the classroom and the library or archive, recognizing that these sites should not be kept apart; indeed higher education by its very nature requires that there should be a significant relationship between them. It is also the case that, today, the classroom, the library and the archive cannot be defined as geographically or institutionally limited locations. Rather we must recognize that our teaching and research take place in the wider European, and indeed global, higher educational space. It is

in this spirit that this collection of essays is presented. This initiative (open, international, operating areas of study and interest) is thus an appropriate reflection of the work and ethos of the Coimbra Group.

"Whoever is not Greek is a Barbarian"

Juan Luis García Alonso
University of Salamanca

Abstract: In this presentation I will look at the central role played in Ancient Greek identity formation by the duality Greek / Barbarian, originally constructed on linguistic grounds, but eventually evolving into other significant cultural areas. *Bárbaroi* was how the Ancient Greeks referred to all the foreign peoples around them whose language was not understandable. It was, of course, an onomatopoeia that allowed them to imitate the apparent stammer of those who were speaking so "strangely". Interestingly enough the word, particularly with its passage through Latin, became to be the base of something different, to be perceived in the concept of *barbaric*. And so, those who could not or did not speak your language became uncivilized. People(s) not knowing the Greek language, not participating in Greek civilization, religion or literature started to be perceived not only as "different" but as somehow "inferior". One of the legacies of Ancient Greece is then the word "barbarian", still used today in English and many modern languages. This question has been studied extensively, as it says a lot about Greek and Roman culture in general. However, what has been not so much looked at is

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the extent of negativity in the attitudes towards immigrants and foreigners in Greek and Roman society. I will reflect in all these questions, and on how this is echoed in more recent times.

Keywords: *Polis* and Barbarian, Identity formation, Classical Greece, Language Identity, Cultural Identity, Political Science, Greek History, Greek Philosophy.

> "Youths of... all the Hellenic peoples, join your fellow-soldiers and entrust yourselves to me, so that we can move against the barbarians and liberate ourselves from the Persian bondage, for as Greeks we should not be slaves to barbarians".
>
> Alexander the Great
>
> ('Pseudo-Callisthenes' 1.15.1-4)[1]

"πᾶς μὴ Ἕλλην βάρβαρος" ("whoever is not Greek is a Barbarian") is a very old Greek idiom[2] that speaks for itself at several levels, as I will try to show in these pages.

But, first of all, I would like to thank our Portuguese hosts for the opportunity to be here with you. It is very Greek both to offer this hospitality (this is the concept of *xenia*[3] in Greek) and for us, who

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[1] Callisthenes of Olynthus (c. 360 – 328 BC) was a Greek historian. He was the great nephew of Aristotle, who, in his turn, was Alexander the Great's tutor. Callisthenes was appointed to assist Alexander on his trips to Asia. But this is not the author reporting this sentence. His work is actually lost. However, in the centuries following his death, some materials attributed to him gave form to a text, the so-called *Alexander Romance*, from the 3rd century AD, more than half a millennium after Callisthenes' death. Its author is usually known as Pseudo-Callisthenes.

[2] The origin of this saying, in any case, is not known, and it does not appear on any extant ancient Greek text.

[3] See Chirino, 2007 on this, with recent bibliographical references on the question.

are receiving it, to show our appreciation. The rituals of hospitality in Greece created and expressed a reciprocal relationship between guest and host expressed in both material benefits (such as the giving of gifts to each party) as well as non-material ones (such as protection, shelter, favors, etc). The Greek god Zeus is often called *Zeus Xenios* in his role as a protector of travelers. He thus embodied the religious obligation to be hospitable to travelers. There are many stories in Greek mythology that caution mortals that any guest should be treated as if potentially a disguised divinity checking their behavior. This would help establish the idea of *xenia* as a fundamental Greek custom.[4] *Xenia* consists of two basic rules:

- The respect from host to guest. The host must be hospitable to the guest and provide him/her with food and drink and a bath, if required. It is not polite to ask questions until the guest has stated his/her needs.
- The respect from guest to host. The guest must be courteous to the host and not be a burden.

It is basic good manners of *xenia*, then, to thank your neighbours for offering you your home, and Coimbra is a special neighbour in the Coimbra Group community, for obvious reasons. To my institution in particular it is so in one additional level: because this University is our closest neighbour in mere geographical terms.

Now that I have tried to show through my manners how civilised and respectful of my obligations I am, I look at the sentence of my title and experience mixed feelings. Since I am not Greek, would I need to accept I am a barbarian, no matter what?

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[4] Actually all the bloody and terrible events around the Trojan war are originated in a sinful breach of *xenia*. Alexander from Troy betrayed his host ignominiously: by kidnapping his wife during the night and taking her with him back to Troy.

It is with my deepest regret, I have to say, that the Coimbra Group has no longer a Greek-speaking institution among us. This may mean the Coimbra Group itself is a barbarian network, then… In any case, the word *economy* is Greek. Etymologically, it means something like "the rules of the house". But the word *crisis* is also Greek. And it means, etymologically, "times for reflection before judging". Europeans are judging themselves and each other a lot these days. But I am not sure we are dedicating enough time to reflect before we judge.

Βάρβαρος (*bárbaros*) was originally how the Ancient Greeks referred to a person that spoke a language they could not understand. It is commonly accepted this term simply was an *onomatopoeia* that tried to imitate the apparent stammer of those who were using such exotic linguistic codes.

So, at first, apparently, the term did not have any sort of negative connotation about the person or peoples so defined. The correct translation into modern English would be, then, something like, "someone speaking a foreign language, a foreigner". To derive connotations from the term is something that goes beyond language and reflects other identity factors.[5]

This reminds me of the word "gringo", used constantly today by Latin American speakers of Spanish, especially by Mexicans, and particularly by Mexicans living in the US. Originally, the word "gringo", of an obscure and much discussed etymology, used both in Spain[6] and in Portugal, in Spanish and in Portuguese, meant "speaker

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[5] See Isaac, 2004 on the development of xenophobic attitudes in Classical Antiquity. See also Tuplin, 1999. On the semantic evolution of the word see also Skoda, 1980, as well as E. Weidner, 1913.

[6] In Spain it is first documented in 1787, in the second vol. of the *Diccionario castellano con las voces de Ciencias y Artes y sus correspondientes en las 3 lenguas francesa, latina e italiana*, by E. Terreros y Pando: "GRINGOS llaman en Málaga a los extranjeros, que tienen cierta especie de acento, que los priva de una locución fácil, y natural Castellana; y en Madrid dan el mismo, y por la misma causa con particularidad a los irlandeses".

of a foreign language, a foreigner", basically the same as the original meaning of βάρβαρος in Greek. The word is not currently used much in Spain, but for Mexicans in particular the connotations of the word changed with the occasion of the Mexican – American war of 1846. Today it is applied to white Americans, and it is generally derogatory. In Brazil it is still used with the original meaning, and it is often shocking to Mexicans to hear how Brazilians apply this word... *to them!!*

In many cultures the identification of the foreigner, out of his/her many oddities, is done through the language he or she uses. Greek *barbaroi* was paralleled by Arabic *ajam* "non-Arabic speakers; non--Arabs; (especially) Persians". In the ancient Indian epic *Mahabharata*[7], the Sanskrit word *barbara-* meant "stammering, wretch, foreigner, sinful people, low and barbarous". The ancient Indians referred to foreign peoples as *Mleccha* "dirty ones; barbarians". The Aryans used *mleccha* very much like the ancient Greeks used *barbaroi*: at first it indicated the incomprehensible speech of foreigners and then extended the label to their odd habits. In the ancient texts, *Mlecchas* are people not particularly clean and/or who had abandoned the Vedic beliefs. Today this term implies people who are physically dirty. As for the Chinese, historically, they used various words for ethnic groups foreign to them. They include terms like 夷 *Yi*, which was used for different non-Chinese populations of the east. The connotation of people ignorant of Chinese culture and, therefore, 'barbarians' is clearly there.

The term βάρβαρος was already in use in the oldest Greek texts we know, those written 1200 years before the Christian era in the Linear B semi-syllabary writing system[8]. In the Pylos clay tablet collection

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[7] On this work see Badrinath, 2006.

[8] Classical monographs on this are, of course, Chadwick, 1958 and 1976. A recent and beautifully written book on the decipherment is Fox, 2013.

we do find the word simply applied, apparently, to people from out of town. A βάρβαρος in these texts meant "someone not coming from Pylos". The word is clearly very old in Greek, since, apart from appearing since the very first known texts, it has a direct cognate in the Sanskrit word *barbara* ('stammering'), just mentioned.[9]

In a parallel course, we may look now at the word πόλις – *polis*, "city-state".[10] The political organization of Ancient Greece was, at least, particular from our point of view. For centuries, the city and its immediate surroundings enjoyed the status of a free independent state. *Polis* could also mean citizenship and body of citizens. Ancient Greek city-states, which developed during the archaic period (roughly from 800 to 480 BC), were the ancestor of the modern concepts of city, state and citizenship, and persisted (though with decreasing influence) well into Roman times, when the equivalent Latin word was *civitas*, the social body of the *cives*, or citizens, united by law.[11]

The term *polis*, which in Archaic Greece[12] meant simply a city, changed with the development of the governing structures in the city to indicate state (which included its surrounding villages), and finally,

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[9] Whenever there is such a coincidence between a Greek and an Indo-Iranian term, of course, we may assume the word was created before their separation, and could then go back several millennia. These two have perhaps been the most relevant branches for the reconstruction of the Indo-European language family, the language family with more speakers in the world today (almost 3 billion speakers). Indo-European is the common ancestor of most languages of Europe (as well as extensive regions of central and southern Asia, most of the Americas and large parts of Africa). See David W. Anthony, 2007 for an attractive recent account on the reasons why this language would eventually "shape the modern world".

[10] On the complex question of the Greek city-state, a recent very interesting monograph is Hansen, 2006.

[11] *Municipium* was the other main Latin term for this. This was usually how they called a town or city (apart from Rome). Etymologically the *municipium* was a social contract between "duty holders", or citizens of the town. They were independent city-states at first, but eventually it simply meant municipality, the lowest level of local government. See Garnsey 1987 on all these questions.

[12] See Snodgrass, 1980 and Pomeroy, 2009, for an introduction on the Archaic period of Ancient Greek History.

with the emergence of a citizenship notion, it came to describe the entire body of citizens.[13] The ancient Greeks often did not refer to Athens, Sparta or Thebes, and other *poleis* as such; they often spoke instead of the Athenians, Lacedaemonians, Thebans and so on. The body of citizens[14] came to be the most important meaning of the term *polis* in ancient Greece. When the Classical-period Greeks wanted to refer to the totality of *urban* buildings and spaces they used another term: ἄστυ (*asty*). Curiously enough, the word for 'police' in most modern European languages comes from a word eventually derived from *polis*, whereas the Greeks use today the term '*astynomia*', literally, 'the law of the city', for their 'police'. But they use today the word that in Classical times simply designated the body of buildings (*asty*) and not the body of citizens (*polis*).

The development of the concept of *polis* in ancient Greece would with time lead to the confrontation of the two notions of βάρβαρος (at first simply "foreigner", later "barbarian") on the one hand and πολίτης or *politēs* ("citizen", derived from πόλις – *polis*), on the other hand.

In Homer's works (8th century BC), the first known author[15] of Greek literature, the term βάρβαρος appeared only once (*Iliad* 2.867), in the form βαρβαρόφωνος (*barbarophonos*) ("of incomprehensible speech"), used of the Carians fighting for Troy during the Trojan War. In general, in fact, the concept of *barbarians* did not figure largely in archaic literature before the 5th century BC. It has been suggested even that "barbarophonoi" in the *Iliad* signifies not those

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[13] See Patterson, 1981, who explains that, according to a law promulgated by Pericles in 451, citizenship was only awarded to the children of two citizens, the intention perhaps being to preserve the purity of lineage of the Athenians. Cf. also the special legal status of the *metics*.

[14] For a theoretical reflection on the whole process, see Hall, 1997 and 2002; Saïd, 1991; Malkin, 2001 and García Sánchez, 2007.

[15] See Fowler, 2004 on Homer.

who spoke a non-Greek language but simply those who spoke Greek badly, not being Greek their native language.[16]

The Greeks (and the Romans after them[17]) used the term as they were making contact with other civilizations. And so the Greeks applied the term to the Egyptians, Persians or Phoenicians. Then, the Romans would use it for Celts, Germanic peoples, Carthaginians, and soon it became a common term to refer to all foreigners, both in Greek and in Latin. The *Berbers* of North Africa were another example; in their case, the name remained in use, having been adopted by the Arabic speakers and is still in use as the name for the non-Arabs in North Africa (though not by they themselves[18]). The geographical term *Barbary* or *Barbary Coast*, and the name of the *Barbary* pirates based on that coast seem to derive from this word as well. The name of the region, *Barbary,* comes from the Arabic word *Barbar,* possibly from the Latin word *barbaricum,* "land of the barbarians".

Barbaros was also used by the Greeks (and especially by the Athenians), to deride other Greek regions and states (such as Epirotes, Eleans, Macedonians and speakers of the Aeolic dialects), in a pejorative and politically motivated manner. Using this word against someone would feel like diminishing the other's greekness

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[16] See Santiago, 1998 for an analysis of the use of the scarcely mentioned pair Greek / Barbarian prior to Aeschylys and Herodotus. See also Levy, 1984 and 1992; Hartog, 1988 and Cartledge, 1993 and 1995.

[17] See Dauge, 1981.

[18] They are the Amazighs in their own language (*Imazighen / Imazi·en* in plural, and *A-mazigh* in singular). They are considered indigenous to North Africa west of the Nile Valley and up to the They are distributed from the Atlantic Ocean, from the Mediterranean to the Niger. With the conquest of the region by Arabic speakers in the seventh century they gradually started using different varieties of Maghrebi Arabic. There are today about twenty-five million Berber. *i-Mazigh-en* possibly means "free/noble people".

by the linkage to non-Greeks both in "civic manners" and/or in language use.[19]

The 320 year-period from 800 to 480 BC saw a marked semantic shift in the Greek word. What started as a linguistically-motivated labeling of the foreigner, without a clear connotation, started to denote the strangeness, the otherness. With it the connotation[20] came. The negative connotation of the designation of the other came. The superiority of us vs. them came.[21]

And so, the sentence "whoever is not Greek is a barbarian" became to suggest something different. Already in Classical times, Plato[22] rejected the Greek – barbarian dichotomy as an absurdity on logical grounds: dividing the world into Greeks and non-Greeks told one nothing about the second group. Des-personifying the other is a part of the derogatory process:

> It was very much as if, in undertaking to divide the human race into two parts, one should make the division as most people in this country do; they separate the Hellenic race from all the rest as one, and to all the other races, which are countless in number and have no relation in blood or language to one another, they give the single name "barbarian"; then, because of this single name, they think it is a single species. Or it was as if a man should think he was dividing number into two classes by cutting off a myriad from all the other numbers, with the notion that he

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[19] See Malkin, 2001 for a discussion on the perception of Greek ethnicity in Antiquity.

[20] A change occurred in the connotations of the word after the Greco-Persian Wars in the first half of the 5th century BC, when an extensive coalition of Greeks defeated the vast Achaemenid Empire. Indeed in the Greek of these years 'barbarian' is often used to mean Persian in particular.

[21] See Isaac, 2004 on the concept of racism in Antiquity.

[22] The amount of bibliographical production on Plato is staggering. See a recent exercise at a bibliographical repertoire (2012-2013), by an eminent expert, at http://platosociety.org/plato-bibliography-2012-2013-by-luc-brisson-cnrs-paris/

> was making one separate class, and then should give one name to all the rest, and because of that name should think that this also formed one class distinct from the other. A better division, more truly classified and more equal, would be made by dividing number into odd and even, and the human race into male and female; as for the Lydians and Phrygians and various others they could be opposed to the rest and split off from them when it was impossible to find and separate two parts, each of which formed a class. (*Statesman* 262c-263a)

Being Greek implied the *polis*, implied the *polites*, implied speaking Greek, implied Greek civilization, culture, religion, habits, mindsets. The foreign-speaking other, slowly, started to mean all the opposite: no-polis, no citizenship, no-Greek, strange beliefs, religions, habits, no-Greek civilization… even no civilization at all.[23] Because, after all, the Greeks, as Aristotle[24] put it, believed, that

> the city-state is a natural growth, and that man is by nature a political animal, and a man that is by nature and not merely by fortune city-less is either low in the scale of humanity or above it (…) inasmuch as he is solitary, like an isolated piece at draughts. And why man is a political animal in a greater measure than any bee or any gregarious animal is clear. For nature, as we declare, does nothing without purpose; and man alone of the animals possess speech. The mere voice, it is true, can indicate pain and pleasure, and therefore is possessed by the other animals as well (for their nature has been developed so far as to have sensations

[23] See Goossens, 1962; Long 1986; Hall, 1989; Cartledge, 1993; Hall, 1997; Harrison, 2000. Some scholars are of the opinion this Greek/barbarian polarity in classical literature should not be overemphasized: Synodinou, 1977; Luschnig, 1988; Mossman, 1995; Vidal-Naquet, 1997; Saïd, 2002 and Miller, 1997.

[24] See now Knight, 2007.

> of what is painful and pleasant and to indicate those sensations to one another), but speech is designed to indicate the advantageous and the harmful, and therefore also the right and the wrong; for it is the special property of man in distinction from the other animals that he alone has perception of good and bad and right and wrong and the other moral qualities, and it is partnership in these things that makes a household and a city-state. (...).
>
> Therefore the impulse to form a partnership of this kind is present in all men by nature; but the man who first united people in such a partnership was the greatest of benefactors. For as man is the best of the animals when perfected, so he is the worst of all when sundered from law and justice. (*Politics,* I, 1253a)

This last sentence is a key to this question. When outside the *polis* system, a man is not really a man, he is not a *polites*: he is simply a barbarian. Perhaps a man is then not much better than other members of the animal kingdom. Because, in very Aristotelian words, a man is a political animal, which does not exactly mean, as very often taken, that a man is interested in politics. It means than a man is an animal that is different from other animals because of this habit of sharing his life with others in social structures such as the *polis* (*civil*-ized animal).

Against this background, the masterpieces of Greek literature in the Classical period, explored the attractive soul of the barbarian, and particularly at length that of the barbarian woman, where one could find all the excesses the human condition shares with the animal world... when outside the *polis* and the emotional constraints the *decorum* of the Greek morals put on the *polites*, the spectator of the plays in the theatre of Dionysus on the southern slopes of the acropolis. On the walls of the temple of Apollo at Delphi it was possible to read the inscription μηδὲν ἄγαν – 'Nothing in excess', really in good harmony with the Latin concept of *aurea mediocritas*

(or *golden mean*, the desirable middle between two extremes) and the constant urge in Greek thought of avoiding the sin of *hybris,* or extreme pride, arrogance. *Hybris* is a really important moral concept. It is in the centre of many important ancient legends, stories, myths and moral exempla. It refers to someone who, removed from reality, overestimates his/her capacities or achievements, someone who does not know his/her place and behaves with arrogance, offending the divinity, although sometimes the offense is not voluntary. For instance, being "too beautiful" is considered hybristic in ancient Greek religion, and it would imply a sin and a punishment, even if there is no will.[25]

At this point of Greek history, the beginning of the Classical period, the first foreign power is Persia. Persians were the terrible enemy of all Greeks during the first half of the 5th century BC., and so they have a very special position in Classical literature.

As E. Papadodima (2010, 1-2) puts it in a recent study of this question, "by contrast with epic and archaic non-epic poetry, the term "barbarian" appears quite frequently in drama, tragedy and comedy, either as an ethnic designation or as a (pejorative) value term. In many contexts, the term is treated as a distinct or even stereotyped cultural status that is accompanied by substantial connotations of inferiority. These might include for instance the treatment of barbarians as morally corrupt, savage or slaves by nature. These points are far more challenging and telling not only because they refer to the core of the Greek/barbarian antithesis but also because they are incorporated into contexts which often blur, undermine or at least raise doubts about their validity. If viewed in isolation, these points can and do lead to misleading conclusions"[26].

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[25] On the concept of *hybris* see Fisher, 1992.

[26] See Long, 1986 for the depiction of the barbarians in Greek Classical Comedy.

E. Hall (1989: 121-133) remarks that barbarians are portrayed in fifth-century Greek drama, typically, as:

1) Effeminate, luxurious, highly emotional and cowardly,
2) Despotic and servile,
3) Savage, lawless and unjust,
4) Unsophisticated or unintelligent.

She continues remarking the Greeks show the opposite virtues: manliness/bravery, political freedom, lawfulness/justice and intelligence/reason. There seems to be a rough division into two types of barbarians, Eastern and Northern. The former (Persians, Phrygians, Lydians…) are associated with effeminacy, softness, cowardice and servility, while the latter (Thracians, Scythians) are associated with crudeness, savageness and ferocity. Of course, the idea of such superiority can be linked with the different attempts at justifying slavery.[27]

However, Hall and Papadodima show that this presentation of the barbarian does not always lead to an attempt at demonstrating an idea of a Hellenic superiority. The ethnocentric attacks often appear at the end as ambiguous or ironic.[28] This is an interesting nuance, in my view, worth taking into account.

I have always liked this statue of the *Dying Gaul*[29] (today kept in the Capitoline Museum in Rome). It is true Hellenic culture brought the concept of *barbarian* to the table of the Western world. It is true one can read every sort of derogatory comments on the other in Greek literature, or even plain justifications of slavery

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[27] Consider Aristotle's discussion of slavery in his *Politics* (see Garnsey, 1996). See also Schlaifer, 1936.

[28] See Brigham, 1971.

[29] <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:0_Galata_Morente_-_Musei_Capitolini_(1).jpg> Photographer: Jean-Pol Grandmont.

on such grounds. It is true that, through the passage to Latin, the onomatopoeic noun *barbaros* gave way, in our languages, to the concept of *barbaric*, *barbarism*, etc. But it is also true, in my mind, there is an implicit admiration of the other, the barbarian, in the portrayal of this dying Celtic warrior, a very humane closeness to the suffering human being. In any case, as the important monograph by B. Isaac (2004) puts forward with an appalling clarity, racial discrimination or xenophobic behaviours are also parts of the Classical legacy[30].

[30] Fredrickson, 2002 is more cautious in the use of terms such as 'race' applied to the Ancient world. See also Snowden, 1983 and 1997 for another point of view on this. Cf. Bichler, 2000.

I would prefer to end this paper on an optimistic note. But the title I have chosen for this talk reminds me also of another very dangerous, worrisome development of the concept of extreme ideas of ethnic superiority. The last very difficult years in Greece have seen the emergence, among many other sad phenomena, of neo-nazi groups (as is also the case in many other regions of Europe and the rest of the world), such as the political group known as "the Golden Dawn (Χρυσή Αυγή)". During the Greek national elections of 2012 they used the natural concerns of the Greek people for unemployment, as well as the impopularity of the austerity measures in the economic policies imposed from the EU, as well as a very blatant anti-immigration rhetoric. They were able to obtain 7% of the vote, what initially gave them 21 seats in Parliament (later 18, after a second election in June 2012).

Whoever is not Greek… is a Barbarian?

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Planning and Purism: Ideological Forces in Shaping Linguistic Identity[31]

Virve-Anneli Vihman,
University of Tartu

Abstract: National identity is typically conservative, reflecting a collective understanding and carried by symbols and signs that have had time to take root. Yet, history has shown that groups can follow very different paths to emerging awareness of ethnic, national, or other group identity. Norms articulated from a central authority may reflect values embraced by the group represented, or else may impose a novel or external value system. Hence, top-down normativity can serve to support or change group identity, but it is not necessarily conservative. This paper looks at both innovative and conservative normativity in language planning across two centuries of formation of a conscious Estonian national identity. This time period includes most of the period during which the awareness of Estonian national identity developed. Various

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sub-periods within that time show how political practices with regard to language planning reflect differences in values of the periods in question. Throughout this time period, rhetoric on the part of official language planners as well as ideologues and activists has placed Estonian identity in opposition to external models, typically German or Russian national identity, and in affinity with Finnish models. In a country the size of Estonia, whose population is currently under 1.3 million, and in a context of constant foreign contacts and influences, it is no surprise that national identity is constructed in comparison and contrast to other nations.

Keywords: National Identity, Language Planning, Language Reform, Estonia

1. Background: Two centuries of Estonian national identity formation

The generally accepted narrative of the emergence of Estonian national awareness includes the notion of a dark "folktale" past, in which the Estonian people toiled on the land while ruled by various foreign powers (particularly Denmark, Sweden, Germany, and Russia). The centuries preceding the nineteenth are conceived of as a time of serfdom, when Estonian peasants worked the land for foreign landowners. Importantly, during the eighteenth and much of the nineteenth century, when the foreign landowners and political and cultural leaders were German, it was also true that Estonian peasants who gained access to schools and education became Germanised, both linguistically and culturally. Hence, Estonian was a language of the uneducated peasants.

The 1800s, however, saw a National Awakening in Estonia. This national movement, as so many others in Europe, drew on the Herderian notion that language defines a cultural group and the linguistic commonality underlies political claims to national enterprises and the moral right to nation-building (Fichte, 1845; Leerssen, 2006: 100). The model was similar across Europe: "cultural nationalism creates a new sense of belonging together and homogeneity by articulating a common cultural identity, inventing traditions and constructing a shared cultural memory. This provides the intellectual climate and the arguments from which a sense of empowerment and agency in the political field can arise and political nationalism can develop" (Vihman and Barkhoff, 2014: 4).

The Baltic-German and emerging Estonian intelligentsia began to take an interest in the empowerment and liberation of Estonians, and began placing importance on Estonian culture, following the patterns seen in Germany and the kinship nations of Hungary and Finland. This new sense of cultural value and importance had enormous effects on Estonians' social mobilisation and national awareness, as well as, inevitably, the perceived need for language standardisation.

However, Estonia still formed part of the Russian empire at this time, and a backlash occurred in the mid-1880s with the Russification of the Baltic provinces. This was mostly directed against German, the language of the cultural elite and higher education, but the aggressive policy of Russification had effects on local languages as well. The use of Estonian in schools, for instance, was restricted to religion and language ("mother tongue") teaching. The Russification process slowed down in the 1900s and was brought to a halt in 1918, when the Republic of Estonia was established for the first time. The founders of the fledgling republic clearly drew the connection between linguistic and national identity. The new independence fuelled energy for reforming the language as a marker of national identity, and led to

a newly articulated need for language standardisation. The language reform movement is discussed below.

The newly achieved independence lasted only until World War II, when the Baltic countries were annexed by the Soviet Union. The Soviet occupation continued until 1991, when all three Baltic countries reestablished independence. By now, the second period of independent statehood has lasted longer than the earlier, interregnum period. All three Baltic countries have been members of both the EU and NATO since 2004. In the multicultural world of today, amid EU policies which support a broad approach to citizenship, the language question is necessarily discussed in quite different terms than earlier. Perceived threats to the national languages, though they may include the Russian language spoken by large domestic minorities, come just as clearly from communication and entertainment technology which knows no borders. Attitudes toward the Russophone population in Estonia have changed during the post-Soviet period, but still tend to be rooted in assimilationist cultural models (Kruusvall, Vetik and Berry, 2009).

It may be helpful to look at different phases of approaches to language policy and planning along the road to full European membership, and the distinction of belonging to an elite group of languages with its own higher educational system, national government and translations of Microsoft software programmes, rare for such small linguistic populations. Today, much discussion regarding language policy and identity revolves around whether Estonian identity has shifted (or might shift) to include a broader, more inclusive approach to belonging (e.g. articles in popular media such as Ehala, 2011; Piirimäe, 2013; Valk, 2011; Vetik, 2011), or whether this rhetoric is just Euro-friendly political correctness, masking a more intolerant, inward, nationalist construction of identity (Sutrop, 2008; Helme, 2011).

2. Language planning

This paper focuses on two examples of innovative, progressive language planning and two examples of conservative planning, rooted in tradition and norms based on the past, all drawn from two centuries of Estonian nation-building. I use the term 'planning' to include language management and corpus planning as well as prescriptive language policy, but I also make reference to language practices and beliefs (cf Spolsky, 2004: 5; Walsh, 2014).

2.1. Innovative planning

The examples of innovation in language normativity come from the mid-nineteenth and the early twentieth century. Both of these periods witnessed enthusiastic movements for language reform which echoed and bolstered the search for a distinct, defining character for Estonian identity to consolidate the emerging nation. The example of Finnish language reform was seen as a model, and served as a source of inspiration for Estonian language reformers, based on geographic and cultural proximity as well as ethnic and linguistic kinship. However, Estonian language reformers in the twentieth century had farther-reaching ambitions than the Finnish reformers and at least one, Johannes Aavik, made his mark on history for demonstrating how thoroughly a single person could affect language usage.

2.1.1. *New orthography*

As mentioned above, the mid-nineteenth century was a crucial period of nation-building across Europe. The emerging consciousness of Estonian character and culture as distinct from elite German

landowner culture required the discovery of and emphasis on unique Estonian cultural symbols. The national movement also inherently involved linguistic awareness and reform. In the mid-1800s, a lively debate transpired over orthography. As education had involved Germanisation, at least until the 1830s (Kurman, 1968: 21), early writings in Estonian were produced by either Germans who were second-language learners of Estonian, or else Estonians whose education had taken place in German.

Hence, what became known as the "Old Orthography" was based on German, but it was also advocated by prominent Estonian cultural figures like J.V. Jannsen (1819-1890), who founded the first regularly published Estonian-language newspaper, wrote the words to the Estonian national anthem, and played a prominent role in the National Awakening. The flaws with the Old Orthography had been pointed out already in the early nineteenth century (e.g. Rosenplänter, 1813, cited in Kurman, 1968: 23). Most importantly, it was based on German, and hence it was phonetically and phonologically inappropriate for representing Estonian. The phonological dissimilarity of the languages required a different orthographic logic. The Old Orthography was, however, a standardised system, and although it was based on German, systematic rules had been devised to account for peculiarities of Estonian phonology (see Laanekask and Erelt 2003: 287-292). Indeed, variation increased toward the end of the nineteenth century after the new orthography was adopted, involving both variation in how orthographic rules were interpreted as well as variation in language usage in the written language, as the numbers of people writing in Estonian multiplied, and writers drew on various Estonian dialects as well as foreign languages.

As early as 1820, Otto Wilhelm Masing set forth proposals for reforms in both vocabulary and the writing system, among which the most important and longest-lasting was the introduction of the letter Õ, still alive and well in modern Estonian. Masing himself (1763-

-1832) is a good example of a Germanised Estonian, who was said to be of Swedish and Estonian extraction, yet "stoutly maintained throughout his adult life that he was a German" (Kurman, 1968: 21). Many of Masing's proposed reforms never took effect, but the letter Õ was officially brought into use in 1870, and became the most distinguishing feature of the Estonian alphabet. Masing's insight was popularised by the help of support from men of letters F.R. Kreutzwald and F.R. Faehlmann, and by mid-century, it was in general use. Masing wrote in his first treatise on language that Estonian is in need of a letter corresponding to the Russian ы. It is noteworthy that Finnish, the model for so much of written Estonian and Estonian linguistic reforms, lacks this sound and letter; generally, Estonian phonology is much more similar to Finnish than Russian.

Although many of Masing's proposals were not adopted, the process he initiated led to thorough spelling reforms after a period of cultural stagnation in the 1830s. A struggle began in the 1850s between the Old and New Orthographies which was to last for a quarter of a century. Friedrich Reinhold Kreutzwald's conversion to the new system and publication of the national epic *Kalevipoeg* in the new orthography was a crucial victory for the spelling reform movement. Kreutzwald also played an important role as an energetic advocate of the new spelling. Another important argument was economy: the new spelling system was more efficient and saved space, which bore some weight in winning over publishers.

Estonian social structure underwent a period of modernisation in the 1860s, involving urbanisation and greater social mobility, as peasants began to own land and become merchants after non-guild members were granted the right to trade. The new orthography came in bit by bit, as a new, native Estonian intelligentsia developed, and as new converts came to see that the new system was more fitting for Estonian phonology. In 1866, even Jannsen, who continued to publish his newspaper, *Eesti Postimees*, in the Old Orthography,

privately admitted that the new system was preferable (Kurman, 1968: 31). The first national song festival was held in Tartu in 1869, which constituted a manifestation of national and cultural awakening. Changes in general orthographic usage took root fairly rapidly following that year, reflecting the speed of social changes. In 1869, only 20% of printed works used the new orthography. By 1872, Jannsen adopted the new orthography in his newspaper, and about half of the books published used the new spelling; by 1875, the proportion was 75%, and the new orthography gained ground rapidly after this. The 1860s are known as the most intense period of National Awakening, and the new, distinctive orthography was symbolically well suited for a new, distinct national identity.

However, as the new orthography gained ground after 1875, it also increased in diversity. Advocates adopted the new spelling variously and proceeded to modify it further. As growing numbers of Estonians began to write, writers from different parts of the country employed the orthography in various ways, reflecting both regional dialect variation and differences in interpretation. Hence, even as the new sense of Estonian identity brought spelling reforms and a new sense of ownership of the written language, the absence of a normalising grammar became increasingly felt. In addition to the general diversity in spelling, South Estonian writers clung to the Old Orthography. The struggle was seen to reflect pro-German Westernism versus Slavophilia, and its resolution in the 1860s-1870s only led to a renewed need for more thorough standardisation and/or reform.

2.1.2. *Language renewal*

The quest for a new orthography was intricately linked to the developing awareness of Estonian identity, linking national and

linguistic identity and framed as a liberation of the written language from the ill-fitting models used earlier. In the early twentieth century, however, the debates over language reform applied to broader linguistic issues, and again language reformers themselves were split between various approaches to language normativity. As earlier, the language question was intimately related to the national question. Finnish was no longer so much a model for language reform, but was seen, rather, as a source to draw from for linguistic enrichment. The language reform movement coincided with a greater social and political movement, leading to and including Estonia gaining independence in 1918. During this time, amid economic progress and cultural empowerment, the language regulators and the language renovators battled for the last word.

Two publications of importance for the story of language planning in Estonia appeared in 1912. Johannes Voldemar Veski authored the first normative guidelines for written Estonian in a pamphlet, 'Rules for written Estonian', in which he introduced to the wider public the decisions reached at the recent linguistic conferences. Veski based his rules on the principles of scientific accuracy and faithfulness to the way people actually speak, hence his rules supported the notion of Estonian identity and uniqueness, but they were conservative, intended to preserve the way Estonian had developed and drawing on Estonian varieties rather than foreign languages (eschewing even Finnish) for lexical enrichment (Raag, 1998: 32-25; Kurman, 1968: 65-67).

In the same year Johannes Aavik introduced his programme for "language renewal", which is considered to be more radical than those of other language reformers (Raag, 1998: 25-26). Indeed, Aavik secured a place in history for the way in which he, as an individual language planner, affected the Estonian language, campaigning for radical changes on all levels of language (see Chalvin, 2010; Ehala, 1998; Raag, 1998). Aavik's guiding principles

were beauty, clarity, and faithfulness to origins (phonological historicity). Language reform movements in Europe tended to be concerned with spelling and word coinage. The Estonian language reforms of the early twentieth century did involve neologisms, but Aavik's proposals – and his long-term influence – went much further. His proposed changes not only targeted the lexicon, but also introduced syntactic and morphological innovations.

The need for standardisation and norms was acutely felt by this point. A central authority was needed to guide the process; two organisations (*Eestimaa Rahvahariduse Selts* 'Society for Public Education in Estonia' and *Eesti Kirjanduse Selts* 'Estonian Literary Society') had been established which combined efforts to standardise the language. Linguistic conferences had been organised, but they moved at a slow pace (four meetings in four years) and the implementation of their decisions depended on how much authority they were seen to possess. The decision was taken to compile a prescriptive dictionary, but the diverse reception of norms issued meant that the language planners had to not only arrive at agreement and issue decisions on correct usage, but also had to establish their authority and compel writers and publishers to follow their decisions. Many of the debates resulted in parallel (inflectional) forms being included in the dictionaries of correct usage, leading to a situation where "not a single Estonian is capable of writing Estonian without the help of a dictionary. This state of affairs comes from the differences between the spoken language and the norm language, and from the changes to the norm which occur occasionally" (Tauli, 1940: 228).

Aavik published a book criticising the language usage of contemporary poets, in which he claimed that "before Kreutzwald and Koidula, errors in usage were made under the pretext of poetic license; now, to a certain extent, they are made in the name of, and under the cover of, language reform". Kurman cites an optimistic

nugget from this book, in which Aavik advises poets: "*Do not write poetry!* Thereby you will only squander your talent and gifts... wait [instead] for a number of decades until the [literary] language has been completely formed" (Aavik, 1922, translation from Kurman, 1968: 77). Considering the speed of language change and the amount of debate still ongoing today, nearly a century later, the poets would certainly have kept from squandering their talents had they waited for a "completely formed" literary language to write in.

The language issue caused much disagreement among the Estonian intelligentsia, and led to the development of two main camps for action: the regulators, led by J. V. Veski, who promoted "unhurried evolution" (Raag, 1998: 34) and the revolutionaries led by Johannes Aavik, who demanded major linguistic changes to match the revolutionary social changes of the time. A third camp advocated self-regulation. The following passages by Veski illustrate the regulators' approach to language planning:

> Language is in a way a living being: it sprouts, develops and grows at the same time as it shakes off decaying parts [...] but always enriching itself with new ingredients and conceptions, and thereby acquiring greater flexibility and subtler shades of expression...
>
> All elements, plans and rules needed for the further development of Estonian lie hidden in our language itself, as a member of the original Finno-Ugric language family. (Veski, 1913: 99-100, translation from Raag, 1998: 34)

Intriguingly, Aavik used a different metaphor, which evokes the revolutionary and industrial leanings of the times: he urged the reader to see language first and foremost as an "implement for human dealings, a tool, a MACHINE, the aim of which is to express thoughts, and also often to achieve aesthetic effects!" (Aavik, 1924: 8, my translation) He claimed that one should look at it as an engineer,

"who tries to bend and use phenomena to his/her own advantage" (Aavik, 1924: 8-9). Aavik determined to improve the language, nearly singlehandedly, basing his campaign on his principles of "good" Estonian language: beauty, simplicity, and faithfulness to Finno-Ugric roots. Ideally, change would be based on all three principles, but if pressed, beauty would trump the other two. He drew from elements of Estonian, including the dialects, as well as foreign elements, mainly Finnish, which he saw as providing an ideal source of language enrichment which was nevertheless true to the original, Finno-Ugric character of Estonian. It must be said, however, that he also created many neologisms *ex nihilo,* less typical of the language reform movements of the day than borrowing from foreign or kindred linguistic sources.

(In addition to lexical innovations, Aavik introduced or advocated the use of particular morphological forms, even in linguistic categories as basic as plural formation (proposing a "vowel plural" alternative to the ordinary, sometimes lengthy plural form, e.g. example 1); superlative formation (the synthetic superlative, which shortened lengthy, superlatives, ex. 2), and a short illative formed through fusional means, to reduce the proliferation of the "terrible and ugly s-es" imposed by the agglutinative illative *-sse* (ex. 3, Raag, 1998: 66-67). All of these existed in some regions of Estonia, and were to a greater or lesser extent known to speakers of Standard Estonian, but Aavik promoted their much broader implementation).

1. Vowel plural:	vs. long plural:
õnnelik-e	õnnelik-ku-de
happy/lucky-PL.GEN	happy/lucky-PL-GEN
2. Synthetic superlative:	
ilusa-im vs. analytic:	kõige ilusa-m
pretty-SUPERLATIVE	most pretty-COMPARATIVE

3. Short illative: vs. agglutinative: jõe-sse

a. jõkke
river.ILL river-ILL

b. kiriku vs. agglutinative: kiriku-sse
church.ILL church.ILL

Aavik also proposed, for instance, changes in word order, particularly the "de-Germanisation" of subordinate clauses, and the reduction of certain "ugly" phonemes, such as /t/ and /s/. He advocated his reform and enthusiastically campaigned to bring changes into common usage through linguistic treatises and literary translations. Raag investigates the extent to which Aavik's proposals took effect, and shows that indeed, each of these did, to some extent, affect Estonian in the long term, despite the fact that Aavik went into exile in 1944, hence losing some effective power as an active example for advocating his preferred linguistic choices.

2.2. Conservative planning

While the periods of innovation coincided with the nation--building project and social progressivism of the times, the periods of conservative language planning we turn to now are less united by a single ethos. However, they can both be understood in the light of responding to a perceived threat. That threat was obvious in the policies and totalitarianism of the Soviet period. In the early 2000s, the perception of a threat may be more open to interpretation, but it derived from both the domestic non-Estophone population and the external influences coming from English and Europeanisms in all spheres of life.

2.2.1. *Soviet language planning*

The conservative language policies of the Soviet period served two ends, as was necessary in order to satisfy both the local Estonian authorities as well as the ultimate seat of power in Moscow. This period was characterised by strengthened central control over society, including greater control over language usage. Language policy included forced migration of people from across the Soviet Union (Kamusella, 2009: 36-37; curiously, not mentioned in Comrie, 1981), as well as the introduction of Russian and the Cyrillic alphabet in all levels of officialdom, from the linguistic landscape in cities and towns (bilingual street signs, many shop and other signs only in Russian) to official paperwork, much of which was only acceptable if completed in Russian, as well as the compulsory teaching of Russian in schools (Kamusella, 2014; Verschik, 2008: 26-30). Stricter control was exacted over printed matter in any language, however: this included censorship regarding the content but also a stringent demand for linguistic conformity, in Estonian texts as well as Russian ones (even as early as 1941).

In the pre-Soviet period, trained philologist editors had emerged as a new vocation, partly as a result of the development of the Estonian-language university and support for the field of Estonian philology. However, this was often seen by publishers and editors as an unnecessary expense, and was waived in favor of greater freedom and less restriction. Indeed, freedom of language use reigned in the Estonian press until Soviet times (Raag, 1998: 39).

The "Sovietisation" of governance and bureaucracy changed this. In the media and press, Sovietisation meant extensive "linguistic precorrection" of all printed matter, which was not systematically questioned until the late 1980s, when the Singing Revolution was ushered in on waves of anti-Soviet feeling in society and a rising general confidence and courage to protest the political order.

Meanwhile, in the Soviet Union, every newspaper had mandatory positions for editors of linguistic correctness, and every published piece of writing underwent not only political, but also linguistic correction and was subject to approval (Elisto, 1948: 67).

Tellingly, the reformer J. Aavik fled to Sweden in 1944 (along with other important figures in linguistics and language planning, such as A. Saareste and V. Tauli), while the language regulator J.V. Veski stayed in Soviet Estonia, and this too had an effect on the language planning of the times. The Estonian Literary Society was abolished in 1941, but the Mother Tongue Society was allowed to continue its activities. Language planning suffered a "drastic decline" (Laanekask and Erelt, 2003: 321) as the earlier planners, especially Aavik, were denounced as having made serious errors. The language reform was labelled a "bourgeois language reform" and said to "have served reactionary forces and not the interests of common people" (Laanekask and Erelt, 2003: 321-322).

The parallel forms given approval for usage, which had been admissible and advocated by Aavik as enabling more choice and richer expressiveness for language users, were now greatly reduced in the Dictionary of Correct Usage: the "prevailing trend was to fight against 'useless parallel forms' and for 'popular language'" (Laanekask and Erelt, 2003: 322). Maintaining correctness across all forms of printed matter entailed certain decisions regarding preferred usage, and the Dictionary of Correct Usage reflected this as well as enforcing it. "Rigidity was further intensified in a totalitarian society by the common understanding that if a speech form is not listed in the 'linguistic Bible', it is not a correct speech form" (Laanekask and Erelt, 2003: 322).

Language regulation during this period served a paradoxical duality of purpose. The authoritarian, controlling approach was clearly a tool for totalitarian authority, as was the reduction in the number of publishers as well as organisations mandated to work on

language issues. Estonian corpus planning, however, was defensive and purist. As far as it was able, it reacted to the influx of Russian terms and the dominance of the Russian language in Estonia, and used regulation of Estonian as a form of resistance. Maintenance of Estonian culture and traditions was seen in Estonia as tool for resistance in general, amidst heavy Russian linguistic influence via education, entertainment and immigration. Language planning was an inevitable part of this process. Hence, language regulation served two conflicting value systems; it was endorsed by Moscow, but enforced in Estonia. "The Estonian language community had deep respect for Standard Estonian and its norms because it was the foundation of the Estonian identity. [...] Language served as a means for consolidating the nationality" (Laanekask and Erelt, 2003: 329).

Beginning in the 1960s, both the general interest in Estonian language and literature and local power to influence language planning increased. At the dawning of the Singing Revolution in the late 1980s, Estonian was given the status of a state language and in 1989, a Language Act was adopted. Estonia re-established its independence in 1991, along with the other Baltic countries.

In the immediate wake of the dissolution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the early 1990s were a period of *laissez-faire*, during which the fabric of social order was rewoven in most walks of life. English and Finnish, which had already begun to influence Estonian, now took centre stage. "Usage was liberated over a short period from the socialist but at the same time national rhetoric, being replaced by catchwords of consumerist society and direct foreign loans" (Laanekask and Erelt, 2003: 330). The initial response in the post-Soviet period was, understandably, to reverse Soviet policies in order to pave the way for a new order – both as a reaction to the authoritarian Soviet regime and as a statement of Estonian independence, openness and western orientation. In addition to this,

the 1990s can be characterised as a time of construction of the new system, during which policies and laws were being worked out or finetuned; the transition to a new, capitalist democracy could not occur overnight. Hence, in social, economic and cultural life, much was left unregulated, and an attitude of individual independence and freedom of action prevailed. The lack of regulation also included less control over language use. As Laanekask and Erelt write, the primary goals in the early post-Soviet period were economic prosperity and individual freedom, both of which supported the proliferation of new authors and the lack of editing or proofreading. This reflected (a) a revisionist reaction to Soviet-style approaches, (b) a bow to the "language competence of any authors", and (c) a means of saving money (Laanekask and Erelt, 2003: 330).

2.2.2. *The new millennium*

At the advent of the new millennium, however, the pendulum began to swing back as Estonian society became more stable and the state was poised to join the European Union. This was paired with a renewed strengthening of ethnic feeling among Estonians at the time, which translated into an acute public debate over the issue of membership in the European Union. A public referendum was held in 2003, following nearly a year of active campaigning, in which the economy was the primary argument on both sides; the referendum was approved, with 63% in favor of joining the EU. *Deutsche Welle* reported "Estonia emphatically repudiated fears the country's dynamic and liberal economy would get mired in EU red tape if it joined the union"[32]. So in 2004, along with the other two Baltic countries, Estonia joined the EU and NATO.

[32] http://www.dw.de/estonians-say-jah-to-the-eu/a-967912-1

The EU red tape was matched by an increase of normativity within Estonia, in linguistic planning as in other spheres. In addition to membership in the European Union, the year 2004 also saw the adoption of the Estonian Language Strategy[33], a document outlining policy with regard to language planning and use. The period since then has seen a number of strategy documents and monitoring reports, nationally funded programmes, awards, and other initiatives to support correct Estonian language usage, the development of terminology, and language teaching. After a period of little editing and loose oversight regarding usage, and following "numerous embarrassing failures", demand grew again for linguistic editing: media entrepreneurs hired editors again, and "more respectable publishing houses and periodicals started to pay more attention to editing" (Laanekask and Erelt, 2003: 330).

Alongside the stability of the Estonian state and strengthened ethnic feeling among Estonians, however, ethnic tensions also grew in the years 2006-2007. These culminated in the events known as *pronksiöö*, or 'Bronze Night', in April 2007. As the Estonian government made plans to move the Bronze Soldier, a monument dedicated to fallen Red Army soldiers, out of central Tallinn, groups of Estonia's young, ethnic Russians gathered to protest, and the emotionally charged symbolic event turned into ethnic riots.

Estonia's location on the border between Europe and Russia has meant both an advantage and strategic liability, located at a cultural and political crossroads throughout its history. This was a particular moment when several metadiscourses met and formed an explosive reaction:

> ...the Bronze Soldier chain of events was an ethnic counter--reaction to forceful Europeanization in the last decade, when

[33] http://www.eki.ee/keelenoukogu/strat_en.pdf

> Estonia struggled to meet European standards in multiculturalism and political correctness in order to achieve EU membership. […] Yet, […] it was precisely the feeling of the threat of weakening ethnic identity and the blurring of boundaries between Estonians and Russophones that motivated small rightwing groups on both sides to look for measures to increase ethnic mobilization. (Ehala, 2009: 152)

Since then, tensions in ethnic relations have declined and language planning tends to include more attention focussed on developing Estonian terminology and teaching Estonian as a Foreign Language to non-ethnic Estonians. Hennoste advocates a "polylogical language model", which does not enforce any central sublanguage common to all Estonians, but rather accepts the multiplicity of co--existing language varieties, a model suited perhaps to the diverse, polyphonic society of today (Hennoste, 1999). More traditionalist language planners note that "languages without a strong backbone – without a standard language – have been lost, are nowadays in decline", adding that "in a small society [a standard language] strengthens the identity of both individual and society" (Laanekask and Erelt, 2003: 333). However, the central aims of language planning in contemporary Estonia are to "maintain the written language and to make the language users realize that the language planners do not ban or allow a certain form but they guide, recommend, and give advice" (Laanekask and Erelt, 2003: 334-335).

3. Concluding thoughts

The two periods of conservativism discussed here were both reactive, and both operated in the context of maintenance of Estonian in the face of a perceived *threat*. The conservative language

regulation of these periods continued the general aims of earlier innovative language normativity: the search for national identity and common purpose. During the Soviet period, language regulation was one way to work within the system to protect the language, the most important symbolic carrier of Estonian identity. In the early 2000s, the conservative policies supported ethnic feeling, reacting to (1) an imported value system of multicultural tolerance seen to be imposed from the European Union, and (2) the continued Russophone presence within Estonia, which constituted a language community separated physically, due to the demographic inheritance of the USSR, and cognitively, thanks to the separate information spaces and discourses supported by Estonian and Russian-language media (cf Ehala, 2014). The late 1990s was a honeymoon period for integration but in the early 2000s, ethnic relations became restless.

We might conclude from this that the language planning pendulum, swaying between radical reforms and reactionary rigidity, has currently found a happy balance. That balance, if it lasts, suits language attitudes at large, deriving from the sense of an independent Estonian identity within the framework of a stable Europe. That stability allows for openness and freedom, paired with responsibility, and that independence supports the need for a certain amount of planning and prescriptivism to maintain a strong, standard language and safeguard its usage.

In 2010, Estonian President Toomas Hendrik Ilves revived a tradition of word coinage, dating back to the 1930s, reinstating a word competition also organised in 1972. The President's neologism competition was announced in order to stimulate the creation of good, simple Estonian words for complex, tongue-twisting loans borrowed from international and European lingo. Some very apt words have been invented through this scheme, and have even entered general usage, supported by their implementation by news anchors and other language popularisers. Foreign words such as 'infrastructure',

'sustainability' and 'humanitarian aid' have been given viable, compact, homegrown alternatives with Estonian equivalents *taristu, kestlikkus* and *toimeabi*.

Interestingly, in the discourse surrounding the word competitions of the 2010s, no explicit mention is usually made of Aavik's principles of "good" Estonian language, yet the competition entries reveal that perhaps Aavik's deepest influence can be seen in the ways ordinary speakers think of "good language": it is self-evident that "good" Estonian words should be simple, clear and beautiful. Beauty may be in the ears of the listener, but Estonian boasts an astonishing amount of neologisms based on aesthetic principles which have stood the test of time and remained in fashion.

Language planning imposes values, but it also reflects cultural values of the times. It both mirrors and shapes ethnic identity in various ways. At different points in the development of the Estonian language and nation, forward-looking and back-facing ideologies have supported language planning, while leaving intact the fundamental insight underlying language reforms, renewal, planning and policy throughout the past two centuries: for the relatively small Estonian population, language and national identity cannot but go hand in hand.

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History as Identity: the Adriatic Sea

Egidio Ivetic
University of Padova

Abstract: The Adriatic is a homogeneous sea as far as its form is concerned, and at the same time a complex one when its cultural stratifications are considered, stratifications particularly evident along the eastern littoral, a border zone between civilization models, between Western and Eastern Europe, Central Europe and the Mediterranean. The Adriatic as a region does not have a common historiography, there is not a single version of its past accepted by all the nations that make part of it. Recent trans-frontier policies impose a new political vision of the Adriatic, a regionalization of this sea. This tendency will have, sooner or later, a cultural implication, involving the way we look at the Adriatic past.

Keywords: The Adriatic Sea; History and Historiography; Transnational History.

The Adriatic shares a central position in the Mediterranean with Italy and it is one of the characteristic faces of Mediterranean Europe. It was the South for anyone crossing the Alps and the Latin West

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for those landing in Puglia from the Byzantine and then Ottoman Levant. The Adriatic could be a conceptual tool for a transnational approach to study and research the past of a sea. The sea has the advantage in narrational terms that it escapes the ideological straitjackets inherent in nation state categories. The Adriatic is a closed sea, a sea of passage, a frontier between East and West. It is a minor Mediterranean (Anselmi, 1991: 13-36; Cabanes, 2001: 7-26)[34]. A zone where multiple borders of political, cultural, religious and finally national nature have for centuries been interlaced and overlapped. The Adriatic is a homogeneous sea as far as its form is concerned, and at the same time a complex one when its cultural stratifications are considered, stratifications particularly evident along the eastern shore of the sea, a border zone between people, languages, civilization models, but also a border zone between Western and Eastern Europe, between Central Europe and the Mediterranean (Sivignon, 2001, 13-22)[35].

In the Mediterranean context the Adriatic has always had a very pronounced individuality.[36] From 15th to 19th century the Mediterranean sea was roughly considered as the whole of three maritime units-regions, divided by an imaginary line placed between Tunisia, eastern Sicily, Salento (Apulia) and the Ionian Islands: the region to the west of such line was known as the Western Mediterranean, the one to the east the Eastern Mediterranean or the Levant, and the Adriatic sea to the north of the line, the most inland

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[34] See also: Turri, 1999; 2000; Turri, Zumiani, 2001. Meanings of the Adriatic: Matvejević, 1995; Falaschini, Graciotti, Sconocchia; Fiori, 2005; Cocco, Minardi, 2007.

[35] See also: Kayser, 1996; Bosetti, 2006.

[36] The Mediterranean as a historical region: Carpentier, 1998; Horden, 2000; Marino, 2002; Morris, 2003; Abulafia, 2003; Harris, 2005; Tabak, 2008; Abulafia, 2011. See also: Barbero, 2006-2010. Cultural meanings of the Mediterranean: Matvejević, 1999; Chambers, 2008; Cassano, 2011. The sea as cultural and historical topic: Peron, Rieucau, 1996; Bentley, Bridenthal, Wigen, 2007; Klein, Mackenthun, 2004; Corbin, Richard, 2004; Frascani, 2008.

regarding Europe (Braudel, 1966: 7-145). Since the 19th century, this particular significance and central role of the Adriatic has been decreasing. Today the Adriatic is divided among six states: Italy, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro and Albania. That number would be seven if we also count Greece, considering that northern part of the island of Corfu is bathed by the Adriatic. It is notable that the Western Mediterranean includes six states, while the Eastern Mediterranean is shared by ten states (Lacoste, 2006).

The Adriatic does not have a common historiography, there is not a single version of its past accepted by all the nations that make part of it. Instead of that there are various, sometimes conflicting, national historical visions that reflect current political situation.[37] As if the national states possessed the sovereignty on the past of the Adriatic territories pertaining to them. This vision of the past is communicated under nationalistic rules of interpretation. According to such theories, the long-lasting Venetian or Ottoman domination is represented as an occupation and an economic exploitation of the populations on either side of the Adriatic that have created today's nations in the region (Novak, 1962: 39-107)[38]. Generally, the foreign political factor is introduced as dominating owner or landlord, a recurrent *topos* in the historiography of the Eastern Adriatic as is also often found in the rest of South-East Europe. The foreign dominations are those represented by the Hungarian kingdom, Venice, the Habsburg and the Ottoman empire, but also by fascist Italy. These historical entities have developed and imposed imperial systems in order to control the regions situated next to the Adriatic, the Alps and the Danube, dominating the western Balkans; such systems were almost always considered as imperialistic entities

[37] As examples of conflicting visions of the adriatic past, see: Cassi, 1915; Randi, 1914; Tamaro, 1918-19 ; Novak, 1932; Novak, 1962.

[38] See also: Graciotti, 2001.

judged by the 19th century way of thinking. Needless to say how such prejudiced interpretations limit access to primary historical sources and complicate the collaboration among historiographies.

The history of the Adriatic sea therefore pays tribute to national histories. But national histories are not the only ones. The historian who wants to write a synthesis of the Adriatic history must bear in mind at least a dozen regional histories and tens of local histories of towns, islands, villages, sanctuaries[39]. Seen from the minimal local or regional perspective, the Adriatic appears as a protagonist, not as a background of national events. In this way one may discover ancient trade between the sea coasts, migratory flows of various population groups[40].

After all, the Adriatic reveals itself as a sea-region; its history is a regional one in which we find the sum of past of the regions facing it: Apulia, Abruzzi and Molise, the Marche, Romagna, Ferrara, the Venetian lagoon, the Karst Plateau with Trieste, Istria, Dalmatia, the Croatian shoreline and the ancient Croatia, the Bay of Kotor, today's Montenegrin coast till the Drim river, the Albanian coasts and Corfu, considered the entrance key to the Adriatic. In order to encompass such plurality of histories it is necessary to start from the interpretation model elaborated by Fernand Braudel, the one that still remains unequalled (1977, 1978). The Adriatic, like all seas, is formed: (a) by a "liquid space" or "liquid plain" (Braudel's terms), in which in time we measure routes, traffic of goods, coastal trade, exploitation of the resources, fishing activities, political and military control, maritime sovereignty; (b) by the coast, or better to say within whole coastal regional systems, a sort of membrane that represents

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[39] See, for example: Anselmi, 1988.

[40] For what concerns historical contacts between two littorals, we have a conspicous bibliography: Palumbo, 1973; Di Vittorio, 1981; Branca, Graciotti, 1983; Palumbo, 1989; Graciotti, 1992; Graciotti, Massa, Pirani, 1993; Braccesi, Graciotti, 1999; Graciotti, 2009; Bruni, Maltezou, 2011.

the marine front when coming from inland and the terrestrial front when approaching from the sea, almost everywhere and always populated habitat, at least with minimal settlements; (c) by a wide surrounding area: as the great Mediterranean (Braudel), there also existed through the centuries a great Adriatic, in a way a crown of inland regions closely related to the sea; an extended area, having not easily detected precise borders since they could be placed some 40-50 kilometres from the coast, but could also include places like Benevento, Bologna, Padua, Lubiana, Sarajevo.

The Adriatic has its time, inside its "long durée". There are some fundamental aspects that characterize it, there are similarities and specificities compared to the rest of the Mediterranean. Like elsewhere, the urban system has been defined in the Roman age, between the 1st century BC and the 5th century AD, with the foundation and the development of cities in Apulia and on the eastern coast, from Aquileia to Apollonia (near Valona) (Cabanes, 2001: 23-106). The disposition of these centres, their connections with islands and inlands, the formation of zones of influence, of countrysides (*contadi*) and then of the regions, as well as the net of roads into the continent, are all aspects that influenced the Adriatic history all the way to the present Brogiolo, Delogu, 2005).

In the 6th century the Byzantine age begins. Byzantium had the control of the western Adriatic coast (one thinks of Ravenna and Romagna) till the 8th century, while Venice, Dalmatia and what will become the Albanian coasts made part of the Byzantine Commonwealth till the 11th-12th centuries. The territorial and maritime arch developed between Venice, Dalmatia and the Levant was in conflict with the inland where the Lombards and the Slavs had been settled. From an inner sea, the Adriatic turned into a border sea between Byzantium and the new populations. During this phase the Adriatic maritime routes strengthened along the south-east/north--west axis; the eastern Adriatic became communication link between

Byzantium and the Ravenna exarchate and then with the Venetian (Ducellier, 2001: 107-312). Venice-Rialto became the inheritor of the Byzantine maritime system. Remnants of the Byzantine tradition are to be found in the Serb and Greek religious confession along the coastline and the inland of south-eastern Adriatic, but there also belongs the city of Venice, especially its most ancient sight (Saint Marco).

Venice imposed its authority, but not yet its sovereignty, over Dalmatia in the year 1000. The first crusades brought the Adriatic sea in the focus of communication between West and East; not only Venice-Dalmatia but also the cities of Apulia had a remarkable development from the 12th century onwards. While the western coast of the sea with the exception of Apulia, due to technical-maritime reasons remained relatively passive to the economic and political transformations, the political role of the Ecclesiastical Church remained also marginal, but Venice developed along the oriental coast its economic, political and cultural space, in particular after the forth crusade of 1202-1204 (Ortalli, Ravegnani, Schreiner, 2006).

The control of the Eastern Adriatic was fundamental to the aims of the political and economic dominion that Venice formed in the Levant between 13th and 15th century (Doumerc, 2001: 201-312). Its geo-strategic dominance in the entire Adriatic became a reality with its sovereignty over Dalmatia, 1204-1358 and 1409-1707, over Istria 1267/1420-1797 and Ionian Islands, 1386-1797. The Adriatic became in effect "the Gulf of Venice" (Hocquet, 2006; Judde de Lariviere, 2008). The Venetian hegemony was nonetheless constantly questionable. The first antagonist of Venice was Hungary, between 1102 and 1409. Genoa, the rival in the Levant and in the Black Sea, did not hesitate to attack the "Most-serene" Republic in the heart of its gulf, besieging certain lagoons (Krekić, 1997: 43-65). Then came the turn of the Habsburgs between 16th and 18th century. Venice clashed twice with the Habsburgs, in 1508-1516 and in 1615-1618; no other wars ensued only because both rivals were threatened by the

Ottomans. Much more complex was the relationship between Venice and the Ottomans. Venice fought seven wars against the Sublime Porte between 1469 and 1718, but in the meantime it managed to acheive long periods of peace, 1573-1645 and 1718-1797 (Ivetic, 2011: 63-72). After all, the Ottomans were less dangerous neighbours than the Habsburgs who tried on more occasions to tilt militarily and economically the Adriatic hegemony of Venice (Chaline, 2001: 313--505). On the other hand, the Ottomans had politically united the Levant under their empire, becoming a sole opponent in numerous markets. The role of the kingdom of Naples in the Adriatic context remained marginal from 16th to 18th century; nevertheless, the role of Apulia was that of being a commercial bridge towards the Levant. The republic of Ragusa completed the political picture, being a small Venice and, together with the Venetian Dalmatia, the interface of the West on the Balkan shores.

From 15th to 18th century the Adriatic became in all aspects a region where various civilizations coexisted. Apart from being a shoreline-border between Catholicism and Orthodoxy, the Eastern Adriatic became the westernmost zone where Ottoman Islam held coasts of Dalmatia and Albania, beginning from the 16thcentury (Ortalli, Schmitt, 2009). Today this aspect is often underestimated. The historical continuity of Islam in the Adriatic is also underestimated. Nevertheless, the Adriatic basin, at least judging by Venetian dominions and the Italian shore, was culturally homogeneous area during the 17th and 18th century, especially from the point of view of literature and arts circulation[41]. In 1797 the Venetian Republic collapsed with the arrival of the Napoleonic troops, so the Habsburgs became for several years a dominating force in the Adriatic (Ivetic, 2011: 23-38). The French return in the years 1805-1813 brought the end of the republic of Ragusa, the creation of the kingdom of

[41] See: Zorić, 1989; Branca, Graciotti, 1983; Graciotti, 1992.

Italy and, in 1809-1813, the birth of the Illyric Provinces, a piece of metropolitan France on the Adriatic coast. The Restoration gave back to the Habsburgs both direct and indirect dominion over the Adriatic. The 19th century was a century of modernity and of the rise of national communities (Chaline, 2001: 430-505. Above all, the eastern coast witnessed the contrast between rises of the Croatian and the Italian national feeling (Clewing, 2001). Italy's unification in fact provoked a sharp political division in the Adriatic. Beyond Italy, Austria (Austria-Hungary from 1867) and the Ottoman empire recognised in 1878 the princedom of Montenegro as a coastal state. In 1913, as a result of the Balkan wars, the Ottoman sovereignty came to an end (1479-1913) leaving place to Albania. Although the sea was a place in which the rival Italian and Austrian naval forces collided, the economic contacts between the two coasts remained very much in effect till 1945.

In 1918 Yugoslavia succeeded Austria-Hungary and the Montenegro on the eastern bank. The tensions between this new state and Italy never ended, partly because imperialist aspirations of fascist Italy wanted to materialise in the Adriatic and the Eastern Mediterranean (Sivignon, 2001: 507-587). With the occupation of Albania in 1939 and with the occupation of the Yugoslavia in 1941, Mussolini made the Adriatic an "Italian lake" (Rodogno, 2002). That was an experiment that collapsed in September 1943, allowing the German Reich to show off in the form of the Adriatische Kustenland on this sea, and therefore in the Mediterranean.

In 1945 Yugoslavia rose again, now popular, socialist and federalist, and the Adriatic became the dividing line between Western Europe and Eastern Europe, although Tito, the Yugoslav leader, had left the Soviet block in 1948. Enver Hoxa's Albania experienced one of the most oppressive communist regimes, passing from the patronage of Moscow to the one of China, suffered the most complete isolation in comparison with the adjacent countries. The fall of

the socialist regimes in Yugoslavia and Albania, the end of the Yugoslavian federation in 1991, opened a new phase in which the Adriatic became the boundary between the united Europe and the troubled zone of the western Balkans. The war in Europe reached again Adriatic coast in 1991 and 1995, during the Yugoslav conflicts.

A definite change came into effect only in 2004 and 2013. Beside Italy, Slovenia and Croatia entered the European Union as member--states. In 2006 the Euro-region of the Adriatic was constituted as a trans-boundary entity aimed at developing relations among regions that share waters of this sea. In a way, those trans-frontier policies, for example in the InterReg projects of the European Union, impose a new political and cultural vision of the Adriatic, a kind of regionalization of this sea[42].

A common history is revealed to have a central role. The Adriatic past - the Roman heritage, the Orthodox and Byzantine heritage, the Venetian civilization, the Ottoman civilization, the Habsburg world, the age of nation-building and of national contrasts – nowadays turns into a different value, becomes a transnational heritage shared between Adriatic littorals. The transnational historical dimension is considered a tool for overcoming the "centre-suburb" logic imposed by the national political and cultural perspective, a logic that has reduced the Adriatic parts to a tourist periphery. In a different way, the sense of cross-national Adriatic belonging, a model proclaimed recently within local political environments, appears as the alternative for the future of this sea-region in order to overcome its peripherical character.

After all, the Adriatic as a boundary and in trans-boundary context constitutes a "historical object", a European historical area,

[42] See: Botta, Capriati, 2003; Botta, Garzia, Guaragnella, 2007 ; Bucarelli, Monzali 2009 ; Botta, Scianatico, 2010 ; Trinchese, Caccamo, 2011; Canullo, Chiapparino, Cingolani, 2011. See also: Pécout, 2004.

and represents in itself a transnational heritage for nations that could find their own territorial and cultural border in it[43].

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Sound / Unsound: Classroom Identities and the Sounds of English

Diana Silver
University of Coimbra

Abstract: Can English pronunciation be taught, is it being taught, and how does producing oral English impinge on students' identities? This paper begins by considering some recent controversy around the teaching of English pronunciation, highlighting the intensely personal nature of the skill. It continues by looking at results from a small survey of teachers in public and private schools in the Central region of Portugal, examining their attitudes and practice. We see that while the majority claim to do some pronunciation work weekly, a large minority devote very little time to it, and that what deters them most are curricular pressures and the lack of support from class materials. Finally, based on interviews with university students, including some from other countries, we look at their attitudes to speaking English, particularly to pronunciation, how their classroom experiences fit with their lives outside school, and to what extent English speaking is part of their shifting identities. Over half reported that they had done very little or no oral production or pronunciation work in their English classes (in theory precisely the 'safe space'

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where such new phonological identities can be rehearsed), and that this had hindered their development of their identities as English speakers. Released from the school classroom, however, most of these university students felt freer to take the risks of speaking English, some even playfully trying out new identities in social settings.

Keywords: Pronunciation of English, Teaching Pronunciation, Pronunciation and Identity

Introduction

This paper begins by considering some recent controversy around the teaching of English pronunciation, highlighting the intensely personal nature of the skill, and goes on to look at what teachers are currently doing with pronunciation in Portuguese schools in the Central region.

I work with university students, many of them recent school leavers, and some of them from other countries, and I move on to consider their attitudes to speaking English, particularly to pronunciation, how their classroom experiences fit with their lives outside school, and to what extent English speaking is part of their shifting identities.

Theoretically, I have adopted a sociocultural approach to language learning, seeing learners' identities, as Ros i Solé (2008: 204) puts it, as "culturally complex and dynamic, fluid, multiple and changing". This is particularly relevant in the case of young people, such as the first year University students that I interviewed. I follow Joseph (in Llamas and Watt, 2010: 9) in believing "people's choice of language, and ways of speaking, do not simply *reflect* who they are, but *mak*e them who they are, or more precisely, allow them to make themselves".

Teaching pronunciation: the controversy

That pronunciation has been a neglected area of English teaching is well recognised. The neglect seems surprising, however, given the results of Jenkins' research (2000), which point to the "almost negligible role of incorrect grammar as cause of miscommunication. This is in marked contrast with the importance most coursebooks give to grammar, and the amount of class time most of us as teachers dedicate to this area" (Walker, 2010: 26). But is this neglect of pronunciation in any way justifiable? – is it to some extent a natural and inevitable state of affairs, or is it something that needs to be remedied? This 'question that simply will not go away' was raised in typically lively style in Scott Thornbury's blog *An A-Z of ELT* (posted 1/8/2010). Thornbury himself is sceptical about the value of pronunciation teaching: after referring to findings supporting his scepticism, however, he remains unsure about how to react:

> Now, is this *bad* news (we can't do much to help our learners achieve acceptable standards of pronunciation)? Or is it *good* news (we don't have to teach pronunciation, and can spend the time saved on more important stuff)?

As expected, Thornbury's blog aroused plenty of controversy among teachers and some researchers worldwide. ALiCe_M (2010: 6) wrote that "correcting the sounds somehow feels more personal than correcting a grammar error". The eminent Stephen Krashen referred to his own paper (1997), and conjectured, on what he admitted is "flimsy evidence", that "accurate pronunciation in a second language, even in adults, is acquired rapidly and very well. We simply do not use our best accents because we feel silly".

Other writers, such as Setter and Jenkins (2005), found that pronunciation has been "universally considered to be a 'difficult'

aspect of an L2 to teach, probably *the* most difficult". This may be because L1 pronunciation habits are formed early. A group of Australian teachers found that

> by far the majority of pronunciation problems stem ... from *cognitive* causes. ... Learners need to 'unlearn' the concepts they have held since babyhood for ... sounds, and replace them with the similar but different concepts needed to speak English. (*Teaching pronunciation*, 2001: 20)

Furthermore, since pronunciation projects our social and ethnic identity, L2 learners may be "subconsciously resistant to change, despite superficially wanting a 'native-like' accent". A major problem, they found, was the subconscious level at which pronunciation operates, which makes it difficult to work on. Daniels (1997: 82) gives a powerful image of this resistance to "the development of a new ego", presenting our accents as:

> a sort of umbilical cord which ties us to our mother. Whenever we speak an L2 we cut that cord, perhaps unconsciously afraid of not being able to tie it up again when we revert to L1.... A possible way of avoiding the cut is to continue using the sounds, the rhythm and the intonation of our mother tongue while pretending to speak L2.

Most teachers will have experienced such resistance, particularly perhaps on the part of teenage boys anxious about their emerging adult selves. As Walker says (2010: 66), "adolescents are often struggling to define their own mother-tongue identity, especially in front of their peers. This would not appear to be the best moment to ask them to take on a new identity through pronunciation". Could the comparative confidence of many young teenage girl students

in producing L2 sounds, which some teachers have noticed, reflect their relative confidence in their own identity, and a corresponding willingness to 'try on' other identities as presented in the sounds of a language?

'Spending time on more important stuff'? Pronunciation teaching in Portugal

We have seen that whatever else they may disagree on, few dispute that teaching and learning pronunciation is difficult; what correspondents worldwide (many of them Brazilian) on Thornbury's (2010) blog say, is that they continue to do it, despite the difficulties. Is this determination also seen in Portugal? – what aspects of pronunciation are focused on, why, and how frequently? This section looks at the results of a small survey carried out in 2011/2012 in the Central region by means of a questionnaire, respondents being 14 state-school teachers, Portuguese nationals, and, for purposes of comparison, 7 British language-school teachers. In addition to the questionnaire, I conducted informal interviews with 7 teacher--trainers from schools in the Central region. Results of answers to a few of the survey questions are shown here, with some comments on each set.

Table 1	Number of replies	
How often do you spend any time in class on the pronunciation of English?	State school (total 14)	Language school (total 7)
At least once a week	5	6
Every 2 -3 weeks	2	0
Once a month, approx.	3	0
Rarely	4	1

In Table 1, focusing on the teaching of pronunciation in class on a regular basis, the majority (62%) of respondents here have some pronunciation work weekly, with language-school teachers tending to devote more time to it, but 38% do phonological work once a month or less.

Table 2	Number of replies	
If 'once a month' or' rarely', choose 1 or 2 of the following: I don't teach or practice pronunciation more often because -	State school (total 7)	Language school (total 1)
students' pronunciation is good already	3	1
uncertain what model to present	3	0
too many other matters to deal with in class	6	1
coursebooks don't deal with it	5	0
techniques are old-fashioned	2	0
students uninterested	0	0

In Table 2, results show that what deters teachers from devoting valuable class time to pronunciation are curricular pressures and the lack of support from class materials, rather than satisfaction with the status quo.

Table 3	Number of replies	
If 'weekly' or 'every 2 or 3 weeks', what areas of pronunciation do you focus on?	State school (total 7)	Language school (total 6)
Phonemes	6	4
Prosodic features	7	5
Linking sounds in connected speech	4	4
Relation of sounds to written forms	7	3

From Table 3 it seems that a very high percentage of teachers focus on features (e.g. intonation) that extend beyond single phonemes or syllables. Many teachers obviously realise that this is a necessary and agreeable area for class work, while not neglecting individual sounds.

Table 4	Number of replies	
What aspects of pronunciation do your students have most problems with?	State school (total 14)	Language school (total 7)
Recognising/ producing sounds	7	3
Prosodic features	10	5
Sound/ spelling relationship	12	4
Others (inserted): linking, weak forms	0	1

Table 4 shows that the major difficulty for students, as seen by these Portuguese English teachers, is the lack of a close relationship between sound and spelling. This is clearly related to the classroom activity preferred by this group, which was reading aloud.

Having shown something of what local teachers allege about their practice, I now consider how some students perceive their school experience, how it relates to their English speaking outside school and to their identities as English speakers.

'Performing identity with words' – and sounds: what students say about their English use

This quote from Makoni and Pennycook (2007: 110) highlights the role of language in the construction of identity, and vice versa – on language as 'a semiotic restructuring as a claim to a particular

identity'. Here I present results from the interviews I conducted with students, together with some comments.

In 2013 I conducted semi-structured interviews with 14 students at the University of Coimbra. Their year, subject and country of origin is shown in table 5. My aim was to find out, in so as far as I could with the methods I used, students' experiences and feelings about their use of spoken English within and outside the classroom. For this I tried to focus on students in the 1st and 2nd years of University, when their memories of school might be relatively fresh.

Table 5 – Interviewees		Nº of students
Subjects studied	Tourism	4
	Law	3
	Portuguese	3
	Geography	2
	Archaeology/History	1
	European Studies	1
Nationality/Home University	Portuguese	7
	Brazilian	3
	Czech	2
	Bulgarian	2
Students' years at University	1st	7
	2nd	5
	3rd	2
Language of interview	English	8
	Portuguese	6

Summarising briefly some results from the interviews: in terms of their school experience, over half of the students reported that that they had done very little or no speaking or work on pronunciation in their English classes (a contrast to what our local school teachers said that they do). Unsurprisingly, a factor that hindered about half the students in their development as English speakers was exactly this

lack of opportunity to practice speaking in the classroom, though one also mentioned her teacher's "strange pronunciation".

With regard to feelings about speaking English outside the classroom, many students said they felt more at ease outside than inside, when they might be in the presence of a judgmental teacher. Morgan (1997: 432) sees the English classroom as a social environment formed by Gidden's 'reflexive project of the self'; Jenks (2013: 166) asks how students can create relevant identities, and how their use of English affects these identities. It is clear that this creation can be encouraged by the teacher, but can just as easily (or indeed more easily) be hindered, as these students suggest.

On their feelings about speaking English in general, and about their pronunciation in particular, several respondents expressed some confidence in their English, though 2 said that their feelings depended on the situation ("*surprises are more difficult*", said one). Feelings of dissatisfaction, or even shame and embarrassment, surfaced from over a third of the students. One talked about her "Stone Age English", another said "*I have it in the head but it doesn't come out right*", while another cited embarrassment as the reason why he doesn't like speaking English to girls. With pronunciation, nearly half expressed dissatisfaction: "*It's horrible*", said one (it wasn't horrible, to me); "*It worries me a lot*", said another (quite unnecessarily in her case, I thought), while another said she became aware of her pronunciation 'errors' when speaking with others. These last few comments point to Johnstone's view (in Llamas and Watt, 2010: 31) of pronunciation as an evocation or creation of a social identity – in these cases, the students may be rejecting the identity they suspect they are creating – that of a fumbling, ineffective, uncool, 'unsexy' English speaker.

When asked if speaking English was a significant part of their identity, it was interesting to see that most European students were more or less positive, with comments ranging from a weak "sort of" to a decisive "*Certainly – and I want to live in England*". The

three Brazilians, on the other hand, didn't feel it was part of their identity at all, but this is not surprising given that their English was at elementary level.

I also asked students if they felt they could assume a different identity when they spoke English; most said no, but there were some surprising responses. Two, quite proficient speakers, exchange students, said they liked to assume different national identities in English, being able to 'pass' as for example, Russian or Italian, by 'putting on accents' in social situations with other foreign students: in effect, they were playing with different sounds of English. Another student admitted "*I feel me, but a bit more confident*"; another said she could imagine she was a Londoner, and then imagine different alternative identities for herself, whereas a Czech student said that, compared to Czech, "English feels more polite, ... so I feel more polite, slower".

In conclusion: Data from local teachers indicates their willingness to focus on some aspects of English speaking in the classroom, but for many of these students, even those who spoke relatively fluently, their classroom speaking experience was inadequate or even undermining of their identities. It is not surprising that, released from the school classroom, most of these university students felt freer to take the risks of speaking English, and even sometimes of trying out new identities.

If there was anything surprising in what I found, it would be this apparent mismatch between what these teachers said they did and the reported experience of students. However, questionnaire responses are often unreliable; in addition, these teachers and these students were not necessarily from the same region or even the same continent: we need a closer comparison before we can draw useful conclusions. Nevertheless, it is clear that some teachers still need convincing of the value of a sympathetic focus on oral work in class.

I shall end with two small personal narratives showing examples of the role of pronunciation in the affirmation of identity. Clara,

a Portuguese student, recalled how, as a child on holiday in the Algarve, her English pronunciation had been ridiculed by older, foreign children: the 'users of the dominant discourse' in the Algarve, namely the English-speakers, had denied 'audibility' to Clara, to use Miller's term (Pavlenko and Blackledge, 2004: 291). But, rather than undermining her confidence, this had become an incentive for her, she said, to develop her identity as an English speaker.

As Joseph says (2004: 20), identity can fairly be seen as 'a distinct and major function of a language'. Speaking for myself, I recently had my identity as a reliable informant on local topography implicitly questioned when I was asked directions, near here, by a couple of Portuguese tourists. I had hardly started explaining in Portuguese when one exclaimed that I wasn't "*from here*". I explained that no, I wasn't, but that I had lived here for many years and so could easily give them the directions they wanted, and proceeded to do so. However, although the tourists evidently understood the content of what I was saying, I could see I was not being given credence, simply because my simple directions were being produced with non-native pronunciation, and I strongly suspected that the tourists would soon find someone else more 'reliable', or at least less foreign-sounding, to ask. My sense of identity as a 'local' and as a reasonably competent foreign speaker of Portuguese had been called into question, an experience I didn't like. I was reminded of Joseph's observation (2004: 24) that we make instant judgements when we hear somebody speak, and infer 'whether we consider the person to be intelligent, likeable, trustworthy and so on' (I'm not sure which of those qualities I was found to be lacking on that occasion). I was also reminded of Block's 'perhaps exaggerated sense of identity as an acceptable interlocutor' when his proficient responses in the local language, Catalan, were ignored in favour of Castilian, more expected of a foreigner in Spain (Block and Cameron, 2002: 131). In both Block's and my experiences, simple communication – here

transferral of information – was not the only thing that was going on. For all the parties, our identities – in these cases, our identities as trustworthy informants, as local residents, as speakers of first and foreign languages – were crucial players in the interaction game, as indeed our identities always are.

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Language Loss and Changing Identities in the Mirandese Community

Cristina Martins
University of Coimbra

Abstract: Mirandese is a minority language spoken in a small area of Northeastern Portugal, on the Portuguese-Spanish border. Having descended from Astur-Leonese (Menéndez Pidal, 1962; Vasconcelos, 1882), one of the romance varieties spoken in the Iberian Peninsula during the Middle Ages, Mirandese has survived in contact with Portuguese (and also with Spanish) over the course of several centuries in small, close-knit, bi- and trilingual communities. However, recent sociolinguistic data highlight the fact that Mirandese is, at present, a *definitively*, or even *severely endangered* minority language (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2003). At the core of language loss in the Mirandese community are the rapidly changing social identities of its bilingual speakers.

Keywords: Mirandese, Language Loss, Sociolinguistic Identity

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What is language loss?

Language loss can be regarded as a broad term covering a wide variety of processes by which the physical integrity of a given language is affected to different degrees. Language loss phenomena can extend from mild to extreme, ranging from *language attrition* (Opitz et al., 2013) to *language extinction* or *language death* (Crystal, 2000). Even if inherently associated with linguistic variation and change, language loss phenomena do not stem, however, from the same mechanisms underlying the formation of dialects or sociolects, or the historical transformations of a given language. While the latter examples of linguistic variation and change are largely due to the very fact that *languages are actively used* by speakers, manifestations of language loss are, quite on the contrary, a direct result of the *decreasing use of a language* by speakers.

Language loss phenomena develop in different sociolinguistic contexts, all of which seem to share two defining features. In these contexts, (i) the afflicted language has come into contact with another language; (ii) the relationship holding between the languages in contact is asymmetrical, mirroring the unbalanced power dynamics in which their prototypical speakers are involved.

To illustrate, let us consider two typical scenarios in which language loss can occur. In the first of these, a language (A) has come in to contact with another language (B) as a result of the geographical migration of a group of native A-speakers. Consequently, native A-speakers now form a minority group in the otherwise larger B-speaking community and, as first generation immigrants, they also display varying degrees of non-native proficiency in language B. Native A-speakers in this case may choose to assimilate rapidly into the host community, preferring to use the non-native B language as much and in as many situations as possible (and thus actively contributing to a process of *language substitution* within the minority

group), or they may, in contrast, resist prompt cultural and linguistic assimilation by preserving the use of their native language in all verbal interactions involving minority group members. However, and be it as it may, over the course of the native A-speakers' individual life spans, most will eventually display language attrition phenomena of different types in their productive uses of A. Very mild language attrition will surface for instance in the form of occasional difficulties in lexical retrieval, but more profound markers of this same general phenomenon can also be expected to arise in the phonology and the morphosyntax of the native language A.

Structural attrition of the type described tends to increase significantly in second-generation emigrants, speakers of what is now commonly referred to as a *heritage language* (Cummins, as cited in Polinsky and Kagan, 2007). More relevantly to our present discussion, what starts out as structural attrition in the heritage language spoken by first and second generation immigrants usually culminates, by the third generation, in complete or near complete *language substitution*. As the cycle of language substitution comes to a full circle, the heritage language can be said to be *lost* in the community. Notwithstanding, and even if the heritage language ceases to be used by individual speakers, family groups or a larger community in immigration settings, it often continues be spoken elsewhere in the world, by other speakers, in other communities. Thus, in this first scenario, language A doesn't actually die, even if it does, in fact, lose a group of its potential speakers.

A quite distinct outcome unfolds in the second scenario. In this case, a particular language ceases over time to be used by *anyone*, *anywhere*, *at all*. This is *language death* (Crystal, 2000), and it is nothing other than the culmination of a prior multi-stage process in which phases of increasing severity of language endangerment advance in sequence. Examples of this very process are, quite unfortunately, very easy to come by. Recent evaluations have

rated more than a third of the existing 6000 world languages as *vulnerable*, *definitely endangered*, *severely endangered* or *critically endangered* (Moseley, 2010), and it is needless to say that, on this scale, only *extinct* follows the *critically endangered* category (UNESCO 2003).

Mirandese is precisely one of these threatened languages of the world, falling between the *definitely endangered* and *severely endangered* categories on the UNESCO (2013) scale. In the following sections, data sustaining this classification will be presented and discussed.

What is Mirandese and why has it survived?

Mirandese is a minority language spoken in a over a dozen rural communities in Northeastern Portugal, on the Portuguese-Spanish border. The language historically descends from Astur-Leonese (Menéndez Pidal, 1962; Vasconcelos, 1882), one of the romance varieties spoken in the Iberian Peninsula during the Middle Ages. Mirandese has been spoken throughout several centuries in a small area of roughly 500 km2 of the Portuguese territory, coexisting with Portuguese, and also, even if to a lesser extent, with Spanish, and it shares many structural properties with both of these languages (Martins, 2009; Martins, 2014; Vasconcelos, 1900).

A number of factors have favored the maintenance of Mirandese over time (Cahen, 2009; Carvalho, 1973; Martins, 1994b; Merlan, 2009; Vasconcelos, 1900), namely the geographical isolation of the region where the minority language is spoken, the traditional insufficiency of telecommunication systems and of roads linking the region to the rest of the country, the prevailing primary sector based economy, and the traditional communitarian model for managing local affairs.

It is not surprising then, that Mirandese speaking communities have also always been very small and close-knit. Every inhabitant of a Mirandese rural locality is typically acquainted to every other inhabitant, a fact that contributes to the dense interconnectivity of the social networks represented by each local community. Interpersonal relationships also tend to be founded on a number of redundant personal and professional bonds, a feature that acts as a powerful reinforcement mechanism of the existing links in each network. It is common, for example, for two Mirandese speakers to be both neighbors and co-workers, while also belonging to the same extended family. Thus said, the Mirandese speaking communities consist in what sociolinguists regard as *high density* and *multiplex social networks*. As stated by Milroy (1980: 52), "multiplexity and density are conditions which often co-occur, and both increase the effectiveness of the network as a norm-enforcement mechanism".

The structural properties of the social networks to which Mirandese speakers typically belong are crucial in understanding the manner in which the minority language has interacted with Portuguese and with Spanish at the symbolic level. Drawing on Gumperz's (1982) classic dichotomies, Mirandese has traditionally functioned as the *we-code*, thus symbolizing the minority *in-group*. Portuguese, on the other hand, was generally viewed as the *they-code,* representing one of the relevant *out-groups* to be considered in this particular context, and Spanish (taking Gumperz's categories a bit further than Gumperz himself) has normally been looked upon as more of a *they-they-code*, given its direct association with an *out-group* that is simultaneously perceived as being *foreign* (Martins, 1997).

In this balanced arrangement, that was still clearly in place until the mid-twentieth century (Santos, 1967), each of the languages in contact, representing different symbolic values, also took on distinct communicative functions, according to the language-verbal interaction domain pairings presented in table 1.

Table 1 – Traditional language and verbal interaction domain pairings (Martins, 2008)

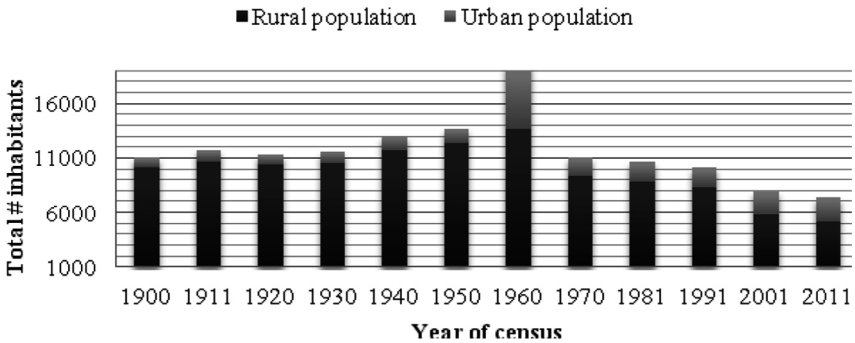
Languages	Traditional verbal interaction domains
Mirandese	informal, intimate, domestic, local affairs
Portuguese	formal, institutional (administration, church, school officials)
Spanish	all verbal interactions involving Spanish nationals

Hence, the three languages, functionally distributed in this complementary and uncompetitive manner, were able to coexist in these communities during a long period of time, in a very stable *diglossic* framework (Ferguson, 1959; Fishman, 1967).

What happened to the Mirandese speaking communities? Evaluating trends in vitality

From the mid-twentieth century onwards, the active use of Mirandese has declined at a pace and to an extent that is unprecedented in its century-long history. It is needless to say that the first contributing factor to this falling trend is demographic. Current estimates of the number of active speakers of Mirandese fall somewhere between 5000 and 6000 individuals, representing only 0.05% of the general Portuguese population. As chart 1 reveals, the number of local residents, i.e., the number of the potential speakers of the minority language has declined dramatically since the sixties of the twentieth century.

Chart 1 – Number of residents in the Mirandese speaking area from 1900 to 2011 (source: Portuguese National Censuses)



Furthermore, intergenerational language transmission patterns observed by Martins (1994b) (chart 2), and more recently by Merlan (2009) (chart 3), clearly indicate that the youngest generation of parents no longer prefer the minority language in verbal interactions with their children. This is a crucial indicator for the assessment of language vitality, since the interruption of intergenerational transmission of a language has been repeatedly shown to be extremely difficult to revert (Barreña et al., 2006, Batibo, 2005).

Chart 2 – Language(s) used when speaking to children by rural informants, according to age of parents (Martins, 1994b)

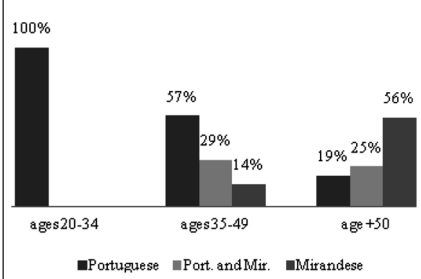
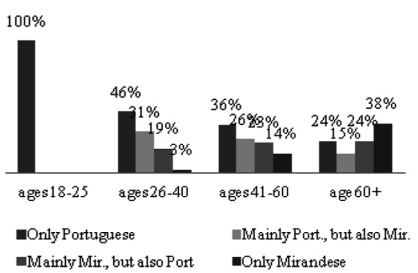


Chart 3 – Language(s) used when speaking to children by Mirandese informants, according to age group (Merlan, 2009: 329)



The process leading up to language death obviously involves the complex interplay of other variables, besides demography and intergenerational transmission levels. In fact, it can be argued that patterns of intergenerational transmission of a minority language are, in themselves, a behavioral symptom of underlying subjective variables, namely those related to speakers' language attitudes. An analysis of the trends in existing language domains (factor 4 on the UNESCO language vitality evaluation checklist), and of the community members' attitudes toward their own language (factor 8 on the same checklist) are thus also crucial in understanding the dynamics of language loss. We will first look at the available data regarding the first of these relevant factors.

As was explained above, in the Mirandese speaking communities the minority language coexisted over the centuries with Portuguese and also with Spanish in a very stable diglossic arrangement. However, from the mid-twentieth century onwards, *diglossia leakage* (Fasold, 1984) emerged as evidence of the disruption of the stable associations previously in place between each of the languages and their traditional verbal interaction domains (table 1). In short, Mirandese speakers progressively started to prefer Portuguese during informal verbal interactions involving local affairs and intimate matters and also, very significantly, in their own households, and they did so at the cost of their minority language.

The reasons for this change in behavior are objective, but also subjective. Objective factors include the growing generalization of basic formal education (in Portuguese) amongst the local Mirandese residents, but also, and crucially, the social contact with a large number of Portuguese monolingual speakers who migrated to the Mirandese speaking area during the sixties of the twentieth century in order to work on the hydroelectric projects that were being developed there at the time (cf. the demographic spike in chart 1).

For the local Mirandese speaking population, both events represented a significant increase in their exposure not only to the linguistic habits of Portuguese monolinguals, but also to negative attitudes towards the minority language. The new residents were reported to be generally unappreciative of Mirandese, frequently mocking the minority language speakers (Santos, 1967). Elementary schoolteachers also represented a pervasive source of negative attitudes towards Mirandese, as they often attributed the learning difficulties experienced by their students in developing Portuguese reading and writing skills to negative transfer effects from the minority language (Martins, 2008).

Increased exposure to the monolingual Portuguese speakers deeply contributed to a reinforcement of the already existing negative attitudes that the Mirandese *themselves* nurtured towards their minority language. To be true, in the eyes of its own speakers, Mirandese had for long been felt to be a double-faced coin, simultaneously representing some positive attributes, such as in-group solidarity, honesty and integrity, but also a number of important negative traits, of which ignorance and lack of cultural sophistication are examples (Martins, 1994a; Martins, 1994b; Martins 1997). The negative attributes breach from the fact that the minority language has traditionally been spoken by a population of uneducated peasants, who have experienced little or no social mobility. Thus, the Mirandese language has never really provided its speakers with highly attractive social payoffs. Portuguese, on the other hand, has consistently functioned as a one-way ticket to move up the social ladder and to eventually move out of the community.

By letting Portuguese progressively invade the informal verbal interactions regarding local affairs and the intimate conversations in their homes, Mirandese speakers have actually signaled a very significant change in the symbolic values attributed to at least two of the three languages operating in their community. Accordingly, in

the last few decades, Mirandese has shifted from being the *we-code* to the *only-some-of-us-code*, while, at the same time, Portuguese has progressed from its former *they-code* status and is now functioning as a local *we-code*. Spanish, in contrast, has maintained its traditional symbolic status and is still considered to be a *they-they-code* in the community.

At the core of the swift pace of language loss in the Mirandese community are, above all, the rapidly changing social identities of its bi- and trilingual members. The use of the minority language has progressively receded in local conversations and, more importantly, in adult-child interactions because Mirandese speakers no longer fully identify with the minority group to which they belong and wish to assimilate (to some extent) into the majority group. Research on linguistic minorities in other settings has in fact shown that "only those individuals already enjoying favored social status feel able to indulge in ethnic preservation activities while those in more subordinate social positions are eager for assimilation" (Ryan, 1974:154).

Why should anyone care about language loss?

To end, and even if on a somewhat speculative and perhaps provocative note, my attempt will be to argue that language loss, as illustrated here by the case of the Mirandese community, might actually be an *identity* problem that *all* humans should be concerned about.

My final thoughts, while not exactly reproducing the detailed arguments put forth more than a decade ago by Juan Uriagereka (2000), have, however, been strongly inspired by the author's article *Linguistic Variation and the New World Order*. In a (very small) nutshell, Uriagereka (2000: 25) argues that "if we do not keep

[linguistic] variation alive, we may be in deep trouble", and does so by summoning linguistic properties that illustrate the necessary interplay between nature and nurture in determining linguistic variability as we know it. Linguistic diversity is thus, arguably, not only shaped by social interaction and culture (a commonly accepted fact), but it is also grounded in the biology of the human language faculty.

If one is willing to accept this premise, then it is perhaps also admissible to sustain that the language faculty, as we know it, thrives on linguistic variation. If one is furthermore willing to concede that human minds, as we know them, have been shaped by the language faculty, then the next logical step in this line of reasoning would be that human minds, as we know them, actually depend on the very existence of linguistic diversity. *Ergo*, "if we do not keep [linguistic] variation alive, we may be in deep trouble" (Uriagereka, 2000: 25).

But for those who prefer to rule out this type of logical exercise (with its catastrophic outcome) in which I have chosen to engage, considering it to be too far-fetched and/or even loosely-founded, may still, notwithstanding, be willing to keep an open mind for other more generally accepted arguments in favor of the preservation of linguistic diversity. To this effect, and to end with a perhaps less controversial argument, let us just posit that cultural diversity is a defining feature of a civilized world, and that languages are manifestations of the intangible cultural heritage of humans. Monuments in ruins are recovered every day because they represent cultural value (and often even added economic value) not only for local communities, but for human heritage. Perhaps endangered languages can be regarded similarly.

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Belonging and Place in the Age of Globalisation. The Case of Swiss *Heimat*

Juergen Barkhoff
Trinity College Dublin

Abstract: One of the most important and least understood cultural effects of globalisation might well be the weakening of the relationship between place and identity. This article draws on recent cultural theories of globalisation and explores the impact of globalisation on the specific traditon of *Heimat* in the German speaking world; a concept which posits, since the late 19th century, a particularly strong link between personal biography and cultural memory of place and between rootedness in place and identity. The article examines how increased mobility and global connectivity impact on our sense of place and what consequences that might have on notions such as belonging, citizenship or agency. The lecture draws on examples of cultural and literary narratives of rootedness, migration, displacement and reembedding in German speaking Switzerland. It contrasts the work of Thomas Hürlimann, a Swiss writer who analysis critically the fundamental changes the forces of globalisation have brought upon his homeplace in the centre of Switzerland in the Alps with that of transcultural writer Melinda Nadj Abonji, who

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reflects in her semi-autobiographical writing her experience of migration from the Vojvodina in Serbia to Switzerland as a living between cultures and as the painful, but also enriching experience of loss of *Heimat* and the attempt to find or create a new homeplace.

Keywords: Globalisation, Belonging, Place, Cultural Identity, Swiss Literature

Globalisation, the "complex, accelerating, integrating process of global connectivity" (Tomlinson, 2007: 352) is clearly the most important and influential mega-trend of our time, and accordingly it is has been studied from many angles. Its cultural effects, and especially those influencing aspects of identity and self, are however far less well studied and understood than those relating to, for example, the economy, politics or society. One particularly important aspect in this is the question of how hyperconnectivity via electronic media and our increasingly mobile lives affect notions of place, belonging and settledness and weaken the relationship between communicative experience and the association of communities with place. As early as 1991, in his influential *Consequences of Modernity*, Anthony Giddens described these processes as a "disembedding" of the individual. Garcia Canclini in 1995 analysed the related phenomenon of „deterritorialisation", and in an important contribution on cultural globalisation Tomlinson (2007) recently hypothesised that this weakening of the relationship between place and cultural identity might well be the most important long-term effect of globalisation.

Let me, as a cultural and literary historian of the German-speaking world, examine this topic with recourse to the specific German concept of *Heimat*. It is a distinct and untranslatable term for the

special place that is a utopia as much as a past memory and place of longing; a term that connotes community, belonging, ease of orientation, acceptance (as long as you don't violate the norms too drastically) and rootedness in history, tradition and daily practice; a term especially loaded with significance, emotion, memory and expectation. It is what anthropologists call an 'anthropological place' (cf. Augé, 1995: 42 ff.), a place of relations, of history and of identity, a signifying space and and a universe of recognition. It is often the actual place of birth and that of family history and of the history of a community and a region. It is thus a place where personal and collective memories intertwine. In the following I will use this specific tradition of *Heimat* as a significant and symptomatic foil for my wider exploration of the role of place and belonging in the age of globalisation.

To begin this exploration let us briefly go back in time to the onset of our modernity at the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century. "'Wo gehen wir denn hin?'", Immer nach Hause. "'Where are we going to?' 'Ever homewards'" (von Hardenberg, 1987: 164)[44]. In 1802, at the onset of the modern age, the Romantic poet Friedrich von Hardenberg was already expressing the subtle but fundamental dialectic between increased mobility – the modern compulsion to be on the move both mentally and physically – and the longing for home as a place of origin and belonging. Hardenberg's *nom de plume* Novalis tellingly means 'new land, new territory': he sought, in the spirit of modernity, to conquer new frontiers in his thinking and writing. European Romanticism, for which he was a central early influence, was at the same time a sharp diagnosis of and a counter-movement to the unfolding dynamics of modernity around 1800. Novalis's dictum captures very well the conundrum that in an

[44] All translations from the German, with the exception of the Ernst Bloch quotation, are by the author.

age increasingly dominated by mobile lives the question of where we come from and belong to does not become obsolete, but on the contrary comes into sharper focus then ever. Novalis also ingeniously captures the fact that this 'home', this place of an alluring "totality temptation" (to borrow Marc Augé's anthropological term, 1995: 48) is forever elusive. We are always, restlessly and endlessly, seeking it, moving towards it. This implies that we will never reach it, never be totally at home anywhere. With its elusive promise, however, home or *Heimat* holds a curious power over us. But does it still have a formative influence on identities? Anthony Elliott's research on the self in modernity has shown eloquently and persuasively that "in a highly mobile world, there are extensive and intricate connections between physical travel, new forms of communication and self-identity. Mobilities restructure the deepest link between the personal and the global, selfhood and society" (Elliott, 2013: 178 f.). Allow me to take as starting point his summary observation, which draws on Zygmunt Bauman's diagnosis of liquid modernity:

> Twenty-first-century society is a world [...] of light mobilities and liquid experiences, a world in which people, organizations, institutions, employment, entertainment, images, messages, money and the like are framed and positioned within global flows that undermine national, societal borders. This growing fluidity and liquidization of the social network carries serious implications for experiences of self, identity, interpersonal relationships and intimacy. (2000: 187)

Following on from this, Anthony Elliott asks the question that is pertinent to this investigation too: are the emerging new modes of identity "less tied to fixed localities, regular patterns or dwelt-in cultural traditions"? (2013: 181)

It is certainly true that new mobilities and communication technologies bring about a growing deterritorialisation of communicative experience. If the term *Heimat* signifies an embedding within locality and its history and traditions, then globalisation clearly creates and accelerates processes of disembedding. Let us see whether we can shed some light on this dynamic by briefly examining the history of the *Heimat* discourse.

The *Heimat* metaphor frames questions of cultural identity principally in a spatial manner. It invites identifications via a spatial organisation which signals belonging, familiarity and reliability and thus evokes a concept of cultures as spatially secluded, homogenous and integrating identities (cf. Böhme, 2005: 602). It is important to remind ourselves of the origins of the discourse on *Heimat* in the late nineteenth century's movement of art and artisanship celebrating region and place. The invention of *Heimat* as a cultural topography that creates meaning, provides orientation and organises interaction was a culturally conservative reaction to the disorientating and often traumatic processes of modernisation during the so called *Gründerzeit* in the last three decades of the nineteenth century. It was a reaction to industrialisation and urbanisation as well as to the increasing mobility of migrant workers and the often uncomfortable or even threatening presence of new migrant communities. Against the threats of massification, anonymity, alienation and the presence of an unfamiliar 'other' it projected a protective, imaginative rural place which, being immune to the forces of modernity, offered a space of retreat where premodern ways of life and cohesive communities still existed. The duality that constructs this antithesis is familiar and still present in today's debates: rural versus urban, agrarian society versus industrial zones, small versus big, nature versus technology, local and regional versus national or supranational. The emotional and sentimental connotations of *Heimat* relate to these antitheses. Looking at the etymology of *Heimat* we can also already

discover an exclusivist dynamic: it was originally a legal term that indicated rights connected to the possession of land and reserved for those settled in a specific community. In Switzerland this notion is preserved even today in the so-called *Heimatort*, or place of home, affirmed in every Swiss passport as the place you or your (paternal) family stem from—and to which you could return at any stage if you were destitute and be housed and fed and looked after. Today this is of practical irrelevancy in a time of social security systems independent of place and origin, but the fact that in Switzerland and for the Swiss it still carries considerable symbolic significance and emotional attachement is particularly telling.

So we can say that the notion of *Heimat* is and was from the beginning a nostalgic one: that a heightened sense of one's origins, of one's place develops in the moment of loss. "When does the urge to write about *Heimat* develop? In moments of conflict with it? When it is perceived as narrow and oppressive? When one is about to lose it? Or when one has lost it?" asks Rüdiger Görner (2007: 42), one of the many contemporary intellectuals who have revisited and interrogated this specific concept of place in recent times. The *Heimat* discourse is in large parts one of loss and alienation. The German writer Bernhard Schlink, internationally known as author of *The Reader*, expressed this very well in a recent essay entitled *Heimat as Utopia*: "*Heimat* is a utopia. One experiences it at its most intensive when one has gone away and when one is missing it: the real emotion regarding *Heimat* is *Heimweh*, the pain of longing for it [...]. Memories transform a place into *Heimat*, memories of something gone and lost, or even the longing for what is gone and lost, or even the longing for this longing. *Heimat* is a place not as what it is, but as what it is not" (Schlink, 2000: 32 f). In this sense it is the longing for lost origins and for a return to these origins that was also palpable in the earlier Novalis quotation. Is this a longing that weakens or grows stronger under the conditions of globalisation?

If we think of loss of home or homeland, we think, in the first instance, of the experience of migration, voluntarily or forced, of being expelled. We conceptualise the loss of home principally as a movement in space – but it is of course and equally and in the first instance a movement in time. In one important sense we are all expelled from the place where we first developed a sense of belonging and orientation – our childhood. We have all been expelled from the real or imagined idyll of our childhood. The loss of *Heimat* should therefore be thought of as a temporal as much as a spatial dynamic – and one that affects each and every person. The great Marxist and idealist philosopher Ernst Bloch, in the last sentences of *The Principle of Hope*, offers precisely this strong interpretation of *Heimat*. Endowing the concept with utopian vigour and promise, he defines it as "something which shines into the childhood of all and in which no-one has yet been: homeland" (Bloch, 1986: 1376). Recent feminist studies (Ecker 1997; Boa and Palfreyman, 2000) have offered a convincing oedipal reading of this narrative of loss and longing – the painful and enduring separation from the cosiness and security of our place of origin, from its womb-like warmth, so to speak, a place, however, that can also become claustrophobic and trigger reflexes of flight and escape. *Heimat* is in this sense also an anti-utopia, a place of repression and fear: the critical literature of the 70s and 80s in the German-speaking world, and especially in Austria, has created a whole genre of *Anti-Heimat* writings that describe home and the place of origin as an oppressive, intolerant and suffocating environment that we need to cut loose from in order to develop a strong self and an identity of our own.

While this notion of home and place may carry mostly nostalgic or retrospective connotations, looking backwards towards a paradise lost or a prison escaped from, Ernst Bloch stressed its open and future--oriented potential, the sense of agency that arises out of rootedness and a strong sense of identity connected to place. Anthropologists

and neurobiologists tell us about the fundamental importance of repetitions, routines and rituals for our sense of stability, security and happiness. In this sense home is the place where such routines are established and experienced. This does not necessarily have anything to do with cliches of a rural idyll, untouched by the rapid transformations of modernity – an idyll that exists hardly anywhere anymore, if it ever existed, and today is largely the product of the tourism industry. European ethnologists such as Ina Maria Greverius or Hermann Bausinger, who since the 1970s have argued for an active and positive notion of homeplace, one that is neither folkloristic nor exclusivist nor essentialist, have stressed the importance of two dimensions of locality and place that are decisive for our sense of identity: firstly, the notion of a defined locality where we feel familiar and safe; and, secondly, a link with tradition and history, a sense of continuity that exceeds and transcends the individual generation, a link between personal experience and memory and the cultural memory of a real or imagined community (cf. Greverius 1979; Bausinger 2002). The loss or absence of such certainties, routines and mental links to a community and its history in the maelstrom of mobile lives and liquid identities might indeed trigger considerable discontents and anxieties with consequences for our sense of confidence and agency.

However, the notion that the local territory is what enables and defines cultural identity and a sense of belonging forces a binary logic onto the discursive formation of identity, one which in the history of civilisation has proven deeply problematic and destructive, defining identity as it does via the dynamic of belonging and non--belonging, inclusion and exclusion, self and other. In the German context we have only to think of how easy it was for Nazi fascism to essentialise the notion of rootedness for their myth of blood and soil and to make it a centrepiece of their racist and expansionist ideologies (cf. Blickle 2002). But we do not need the Nazis in order

to see the problematic of an identity politics that operates with the rhetoric of origin and belonging, of demarcation and othering. Sociopolitical research has shown that there is a strong correlation between a fixed concept of the home region that idealises images of harmony and homogeneity and xenophobic tendencies, in which migrants and new arrivals are seen as threatening agents of unwelcome and uncontrollable change. Marc Augé in his study of non-places argues that settled people feel easily threatened by migrants or nomadic lifestyles, as they remind them of the principal instability of their imagined securities (Augé, 1995: 119). Political examples for this dynamic are not hard to find. One has only to think of the 2014 elections to the European parliament which returned a strong group of xenophobic parliamentarians from all over Europe to Strasbourg: on the rise are nationalist and xenophobic parties who see the effects of globalisation as a threat and react with a political and cultural closing-in around perceived and postulated notions of origin, belonging and proclaimed homogeneity of cultural identity. In Switzerland, an example to which I will return, the Swiss People's Party (the strongest party with around 30% of the popular vote) deploys cliches of peaceful and homogenous communities embedded in an unspoilt nature for their isolationist policies. This party uses the instruments of direct democracy, which are nowhere as developed as in Switzerland, to reinforce a narrow and intolerant cultural model which underpins xenophobic politics. One has only to think of their won 2010 referendum on the banning of minarets as symbols of an alleged Islamic claim for dominance, or the successful 2014 initiative against mass immigration which forces the government to go against existing bilateral agreements with the EU by introducing quotas on the immigration of foreigners. If this tells us anything, then it is of the enduring, but deeply problematic, appeal of narratives of origin and belonging as a counter to the destabilising and threatening effects of globalisation.

But we also need to look at this from the other side and re--evaluate the deterritorialising effects of globalisation mentioned at the beginning not primarily as a loss or a danger, but as a chance for a more flexible and dynamic notion of place. That is Arjun Appadurai's view in his influential study *Modernity at Large* on the cultural dimensions of globalization. He critiques the illusion of a "cultural bedrock, made up of a closed set of reproductive practices and untouched by rumours of the world at large" (1996: 63), which is no longer sustainable as „even the most localised of these worlds [...] have become inflected [...] by cosmopolitan scripts" (1996: 154). In 2003 Ronald Robertson coined the influential term 'glocalization' for this phenomenon, the intermeshing of global tendencies with local specifics, so that a new focus on the local, which we can observe in many contexts and in many cultures, does not stand in any simplistic opposition to the processes of globalisation, but is rather to be understood as a complementary process in which the local transforms by absorbing global influences, conflating them with regional traditions and cultural practices.

We also need to acknowledge as one effect of globalisation the growing importance of imagined communities in hi-tech communication networks: the revolutions in travel and information technologies mean that the homeplace which migrants are forced to leave is not so far away or unreachable as in the past, and that there is no longer any need for – for example – an 'American wake', a final farewell, which in Ireland had such a central place in the mythology of home. Return, temporary or for good, is now a distinct option and often part of the plan, and communication with home and within diasporic communities is constant and incessant: and not only diasporic identities rely on communication networks that are independent of locality and spatial closeness and do not need a shared territory to feel a sense of community or belonging. As Benedict Anderson demonstrated in his groundbreaking book

Imagined Communities, the exponential growth in the late 18th and early 19th centuries in literacy and the book market, as well as the rise of newspapers and periodicals and a well-functioning postal service, were necessary prerequisites for the establishment of imagined national communities, a functioning public sphere and the building of a shared national identity. Today e-mail, skype, social networks, the internet, satellite TV and mobile phones have become engines of new diasporic communities and public spheres, which Shani (2011: 395) calls "digital diasporas". They have been central drivers for the creation of what Appadurai calls symbolic "mediascapes" und global "ethnoscapes" (1996: 48 ff.) of geographical mobility for the new transational, global imagined communities. How much physical presence, if any, is necessary to create and sustain a sense of community and belonging? This might not least be a generational question: many members of the digital diaspora, among them especially the digital natives of the 21st century, might feel more at home in the symbolic mediascapes and the imagined communities of cyberspace than in their actual physical location.

The importance of place for cultural and political identity is of course also highly culture-specific. It is historically of special importance for communities with traditionally lower rates of internal and external mobility and for societies like those in Europe, for whom the isomorphism of language, culture, ethnicity, political system and territory, the extremely influential notion that those who speak the same language and share history and culture should be united in one territory, was a powerful founding ideology of the nation state (Leerssen 2006; Kamusella 2009). Of course this strong link between place and identity has a very dark, exclusivist and violent side, as it was a fiction that historically found little correspondence anywhere in social and geographical reality and could only be enforced by displacing and expelling those who did not fit into this forced homogeneity.

We also have to ask whether the modern cosmopolitan of today, who is constantly on the move and derives a sense of identity from precisely this outer and inner mobility, might feel particularly at home in what Marc Augé has famously, but somewhat misleadingly, called non-places: motorways, railway stations, hotels and, most importantly in a global age, airports – all transitory spaces that, according to Augé, *ex negativo* define place in hypermodernity. Augé calls them non-places as in his view they cannot be connected to locally and historically distinct experiences and memories and therefore cannot contribute to a sense of identity. But couldn't it be precisely, as Agnes Heller (1995) has argued, these non-places' global homogeneity and interchangeability that create a sense of familiarity and home in modern nomadic subjects? In this sense their very quality as non-places could dialectically flip them into places that create familiarity and mark identity in a global age.

Overall the effects of globalisation and the debates around them counter the myths of origin and purity by highlighting the fact that cultures have always been connected and defined by processes of intercultural exchange and transcultural melange and that cultural hybridity has always been the norm and not the exception. As Edward Said puts it: "All cultures are involved in one another, none is single and pure, all are hybrid and heterogenous, extraordinarily differentiated and unmonolithic" (1993: XXIX). In this light the concept of place has to be critically revised against the essentialising myth of homogeneity and the defensive and exclusionary binary of inside and outside, of us and them, and developed into a new concept that embraces the transcultural richness of plural lifeworlds and multicultural identities. Following this line of argument, Tomlinson, Robertson and others see the active and conscious integration of local and global perspectives as characteristic of cultural identities in the age of globalisation. The movement between regions, countries, cultures and continents becomes more and more the norm, and this

requires a new mental and cultural disposition which enables life in the in-between to be an active process in which disembedding and embedding belong together and become inseparable, and in which embedding is a cultural technique for creating a new sense of belonging. *Heimat* as choice and not as fate. Ulrich Beck in his study *What is Globalisation*? calls this positive mental disposition, which he sees as increasingly typical for the nomadic subjects of today, "place polygamy" (2000: 72 ff.), the ability to feel at home in more than one place. Similarly Agnes Heller (1995) contrasts geographic monogamy with geographic promiscuity, and sees the latter as a distinct and plausible mindset for our global age. These are curious terms, however, for at least two reasons. Firstly, they gender the locality invested with emotions of belonging by ascribing to it the female position. Secondly, and more importantly, the metaphors of polygamy and promiscuity have very strong negative normative connotations that actually work against the intentions and arguments of Beck and Heller: promiscuity is morally dubious and polygamy is illegal in most cultures. Disloyalty against one's place of origin or belonging as an act of infidelity or even criminality? Here the metaphors turn against their authors and their pluralistic argument and indicate perhaps how deep and enduring our mental and emotional fixations on traditional notions of place and belonging still are. Be that as it may, theoreticians of cultural hybridity such as Homi Bhaba (1994), Stuart Hall (1992) or Nestor Garcia Canclini (1995) have argued that cultural hybridity is the mental model that can best accommodate the challenges of globalisation and life in the third space as an empowering experience rather than as deficiency or even deviance. However, given that more than 75% of the world's population still lives entirely settled lives and never moves from the place they were born, we should heed the warning of Edward Said who cautioned against the tendency of modern writers and intellectuals projecting their own sense of dislocation

as a universal condition of culture in a globalised world (Said 1984). The celebration of place polygamy and cultural hybridity is also in danger of romanticising exile and underrating and underplaying the difficulties and struggles which come with loss of place, search for a new *Heimat* and the processes of disembedding and reembedding, especially for the many millions of refugees and migrants who do not leave their homeland voluntarily.

These general observations, trends and figures come to life and can be concretised as individual experiences in life writing: autobiographical or semi-autobiographical narratives of *Heimat* and loss of same, of places and non-places, of processes of disembedding and re-embedding. Under the conditions of globalisation, inter- or transcultural literature, fictional or semi-fictional accounts of the loss of *Heimat*, whether temporal or spatial, of moves between cultures and of processes of glocalisation encode complex negotiations between the past and the present, between an old and a new *Heimat*, and can be read symptomatically and symbolically.

Two brief contemporary examples from Switzerland, encoding different backgrounds, genders and generational experiences, can serve as illustrations of the enduring power of place and *Heimat* under the conditions of globalisation and of the very different ways in which it can be negotiated. The first example is from Thomas Hürlimann, a settled and well-rooted Swiss author from the inner cantons – the geographical and symbolic centre of Switzerland. Hürlimann's biography is deeply enmeshed in Swiss history, as he is the son of a prominent politician. The second example is from Melinda Nadj Abonji, a migrant author who came to Switzerland at the age of five and from the very start wrote not in her native Hungarian tongue but in German. In 2010 she won both the German and the Swiss book prize with her highly acclaimed first novel *Tauben fliegen auf* (recently translated into English under the title *Fly Away, Pigeon*). Both authors put forward a strong and highly

emotive sense of *Heimat*, but one that is neither uncritical nor naive. Hürlimann reflects on the temporal loss of *Heimat* from the perspective of someone who sees his homeplace radically changed and destabilised by the effects of globalisation, and who interprets this as a threat to the identities linked to place. Melinda Nadj Abonji, taking the in-between perspective of a migrant, writes about the spatial displacements of home and *Heimat* as transitory processes. She structures her novel as a narrative of painful loss of belonging to her place of origin and her cultural identity associated with it, and of equally difficult processes of embedding herself in an often alien and hostile Switzerland.

Switzerland is an interesting case of *Heimat* discourse in the germanophone world for a number of reasons. Unlike Germany it is not burdened with the racist and supremacist Nazi legacy of Blut und Boden, *blood and soil*, although it too did invoke strong tropes of belonging and cultural identity linked to place, landscape and history in its concept of *Geistige Landesverteidigung* – which could be translated as mental national defence – in order to mobilise resistance against Nazi Germany in the 1930s and 40s. Today, however, the right-wing policies of its strongest party take very open recourse to the conservative and essentialist aspects of *Heimat* discourse and instrumentalise this for an identity politics that legitimises their anti-immigration policies. Another aspect concerns Switzerland's political structures. Federalism and direct democracy are stronger and more constitutive for the political system and process than anywhere else, and in its 26 cantons the notions of self-government and direct democracy are very closely linked to the concept of locality and place. Many decisions are taken at local level and by the people via referenda, and allegiance to your village, town or canton is often either stronger than to the state and the nation or at least in constant rivalry with it. Thus Switzerland has embedded in its political structures and cultural

identity a very strong concept of place. Economically however Switzerland is of course one of the most globalised economies in the world. Its unrivalled economic success as one of Europe's major exporters of high quality products and as one of the richest and most competitive societies in the world is entirely dependent on its globalised economic network of banks, businesses, financial institutions, pharmaceutical companies and high tech SMEs. The fact that Switzerland has (at 23%) the highest proportion of non--nationals in Europe, but finds it very difficult to integrate these into its impressive political system of direct democracy, is indicative for both these trends. Switzerland thus embodies in a radical way a characteristic tension of the globalised world: its economic system is entirely globalised, whereas its political system is often claustrophobically localised.

Thomas Hürlimann, in a 2001 essay subtitled *My Country in its Biggest Crisis*, reads two of the three Swiss catastrophes of the autumn of that year, which dramatically shook and destroyed foundational Swiss myths and undermined Swiss identity in a fundamental way, as symbolic of these tensions. He starts off with the traumatic grounding of the national airline Swissair on 3 October 2001 – when the planes of the most prominent global symbol of Switzerland were unable to take off because the airline could not pay its fuel bills – followed by the airline's subsequent bankruptcy and humiliating sale to its German rival Lufthansa. Swissair was such a potent symbol as it encapsulated both sides: on the one hand it was a chief agent of worldwide networking and globalised mobility, while on the other it was a prime representative of such typical Swiss trademarks as high quality, luxury, solidity and reliability. Before the Swissair trauma, according to Hürlimann, the Swiss inhabitated

> two Switzerlands: We lead a perfect double life, and we lead it in a way that normally only the insane can bring off [...], in two

> utterly different spaces at one and the same time. [...] We owned on the one hand a great, transcendental Switzerland – where we did our business—and on the other a small, concrete and manageable Switzerland – where we did our politics (Hürlimann, 2001: 10) [...] Switzerland developed into a global player ahead of time. Our watches, our psycho-pharmaceutical drugs, our chocolates conquered the global market [...] one state, two spaces. In the trust of Switzerland Inc. we were global capitalists, and in the 'Swiss Hut' (our term of praise for the country in songs) deeply-rooted confederates (Hürlimann, 2001: 12). [...] No, we did not go mad: at most we believed, just like the insane do, that we were the only normal ones (Hürlimann, 2001: 13).

Hürlimann goes on to use the second national catastrophe of that autumn (the third one being the catastrophic fire in the Gotthard--tunnel on 20 Oct.) to illustrate how these tensions dramatically erupted. On 27 September 2001 in the canton parliament of Hürlimann's hometown Zug, the capital of the small, affluent canton of the same name in the heart of Switzerland, a lone gunman ran amok and killed fourteen local politicians with a Swiss army assault rifle. This massacre, so out of place in a seemingly harmonious, slightly sleepy backwater in the Swiss Alps, was particularly shocking as it so radically disproved a core myth of the Swiss political system—namely, that federalist regionalism and direct democracy fostered and guaranteed a strong sense of belonging and identity which protected the *Heimat* from the dangers prevalent elsewhere in the outside world. The fact that the assault was carried out with a Swiss army rifle, which every adult male serving in the Swiss militia army has at home and which is seen as a central symbol of the strong identification of the populace with the political system and of the will to defend it, of course greatly enhanced the symbolism of this massacre.

Hürlimann's analysis links the dreadful deed of a deranged man to the rapid changes his hometown underwent during the years of globalisation:

> When I was in primary school and an altar boy, the small town by the lake lived in the familiar groove of the nineteenth century, and people were bourgeois, honest, stolid. Then it was decided to lower taxes, and as if by magic we found ourselves turned overnight into an international finance hub, a bay attracting financial sharks from all over the world. Without much having changed on the outside – geranium pots continued to hang from the railway station's platform roofs – the canton capital of just under 20,000 inhabitants was catapulted to the world's fourth-largest oil-trading place, and naturally one functioning according to other laws and speeds than those of the municipality with its parties, guilds and associations. One small town; two spaces; two epochs, and as the one worked ever more slowly and the other kept accelerating, they developed with and against each other an explosive power – in the truest sense of the word a ticking time bomb (Hürlimann, 2001: 14)

With the shooting in the local parliament the considerable pressures globalisation exerts on the local had arrived in the most dramatic fashion in Hürlimann's hometown in the heart of Switzerland. What had seemed to be an idyll was turned into a place of horror. The psychopath acts out and thus highlights the pathologies of the world around him. With this figure of thought, and in what is essentially a predominantly defensive and nostalgic narrative from someone who stayed at home and who registers and analyses and deplores the massive and seemingly uncontollable changes globalisation brings about, Hürlimann explores the mental and political topography of the schizophrenic place that *Heimat* has become for him under the conditions of globalisation.

Melinda Nadj Abonji's largely autobiographical novel *Fly Away, Pigeon* narrates processes of disembedding and reembedding from the perspective of a migrant in a way that accentuates both an acute sense of loss, but also and in the end more importantly and lastingly a sense of agency in creating a new *Heimat* and in working towards an identity that accepts her hybrid or transitory position and draws inspiration and strength from it. Her first-person narrator Ildiko Kocsis moved, like herself, at the age of five from the Vojvodina in Serbia (which was then still a part of Yugoslavia), where she belonged to the Hungarian-speaking minority, to Switzerland. She tells the story of her family, who ultimately succeed in Zurich by taking over a cafe in a prominent location in an affluent village by Lake Zurich at the so-called Gold Coast. The Kocsis even acquire Swiss citizenship as a prominent marker of their success, but their story is described as a long and difficult process, characterised by enormous pressures to conform and marked by countless humiliations and experiences of condescending attitudes and outright hostility and xenophobia.

The theme of *Heimat* is very prominent in the novel from the first page on. It opens with a highly typical and symbolic feature of transitory lives lived between two cultures: the summer return to the village of Ildiko's early childhood years. In the centre of this return is a big Chevrolet, a car from the motherland of mobility and globalisation, a symbol of her family's transitory situation and a potent marker of both their economic success and their growing estrangement from their place of origin. This annual return is on the whole highly ambivalent, which is accentuated by the fact that the first-person narrator wants to keep the image of her early childhood, her original *Heimat*, intact and immune to the changes that her own life is so exposed to: "I hope everything is as it used to be, because when I return to the place of my early childhood I fear nothing more than change" (Abonji, 2010: 13). The author thus opens up

with exactly the tensions we have identified above between notions of *Heimat* as a place of familiarity and reliability and the dynamics of mobility and change:

> The soft singsong of my grandmother, the nightly croaking of frogs, the pigs when they squint with their piggy eyes, the excited cackling of a chicken before it is slaughtered, the damask violets and apricot roses, coarse swearing, the merciless summer sun, along with the smell of steamed onions, my strict uncle Moric, who all of a sudden gets up and dances. The atmosphere of my childhood. This is what I answered after thinking about it for a long time, when years later a friend asked me what *Heimat* meant for me. (Abonji, 2010: 19)

Such images of Heimat are that of a rural idyll of the nineteenth century: an intact, close – knit community, close to nature, rough but loving. As the novel unfolds, these nostalgic and sentimental childhood memories, frozen in time by loss and estrangement and the hope that nothing could change them, are shown to be illusions. The laconic title of the first chapter, 'Tito's Summer' (Abonji, 2010: 5), already shows this by juxtaposing change and stability, politics and nature, threat and promise, the world of the adults and the world of the children. It reveals the *Heimat* idyll as a naive perspective and a sentimental construction. Only from the perspective of the child and in childhood memories is the narrator's world idyllic. It becomes later visible to the adolescent heroine that it is functioning according to a much more violent logic of inclusion and exclusion than the xenophobia the family experiences in Switzerland – especially for women seeking some form of a self-determined life.

The second chapter is situated in Switzerland and serves as a counterpart. It begins with the moment of triumph after 13 years of hard work and painful humiliations: the taking over of the cafe

in a prime location and the granting of Swiss citizenship. The story of Ildiko's parents is one of becoming Swiss by dint of hard work, keeping your head down and over-identification with Swiss virtues such as cleanliness, orderliness, punctuality and politeness. But for all these efforts the Kocsis remain forever identifiable as *Papierschweizer*, 'Swiss' on paper only, marked out not least by their insufficient command of Swiss German – a prime marker of identity but, without a written grammar and a dictionary, a local dialect so much harder to acquire than standard German. The heroine of the novel is part of this, helping in the family business, dutifully working in the cafe as a proper *Serviertochter* (the Swiss term translates aptly as 'service daughter'), but during the course of the novel increasingly rebels against such docile overassimilation. Ultimately it is the Balkan wars of the mid-1990s following the break up of Yugoslavia that demonstrate in the most brutal way possible that there is no return to the former childhood worlds and that a life has to be carved out in Switzerland, even though the repercussions of the war spill dramatically over into the secluded world of the Swiss village. It is of course indicative in this context that this war was waged in the name of precisely the exclusivist, racist and essentialising notions of *Heimat* that are in parts a defensive backlash against the forces of globalisation and also feed Swiss hostility towards foreigners and immigrants.

In its narrative structure, with chapters alternating between the Serbian and Swiss locations, the novel enacts the real and mental topography of the migrants' movements between cultures, the painful processes of loss of *Heimat*, but also the creation of a new sense of belonging. The narrator achieves this by rejecting the docility and conformism of her parents and, in a generation-specific form of assimilation, by joining alternative and protest movements in Zurich like her Swiss friends thus opening up spaces for the negotiation of an open identity as a woman that would have been unthinkable in

her Serbian *Heimat*. Also as a student of history and, in the closing chapter, a writer who chooses the language of her new *Heimat*, the first-person narrator of this autobiographical novel demonstrates the transitory experiences of place polygamy and of disembedding and reembedding as open and active processes. It is a considerable strength of this remarkable novel that it demonstrates in a highly differentiated manner and in an emotive language the potential of transcultural literature to make available to its readers the pains, challenges and opportunities of such hybrid identities.

So what, in conclusion, is the status of place and belonging in the age of globalisation? It certainly continues to be of fundamental relevance, but it can be negotiated in very different ways that impact hugely on cultural identity, sense of self and identity politics, at the level both of the individual and of communities. In an era of hypermobility, the power of place and belonging is weakening, yet must not be underestimated. On the political front it can, as a defensive reaction against the dynamics of globalisation, negatively fuel the rise of nationalisms and fundamentalisms, and remobilise xenophobic and essentialist dynamics of exclusion. On the other hand, and more positively, connection and allegiance to place and community, their concerns and their future, can, when confronted and embraced in an active, inclusive and open manner, be a powerful source of identity and agency. In this sense our ongoing quest for the next frontier might be driven by the ultimately illusionary, but for precisely that reason very powerful, desire to come home. Which brings us back to the beginning, to the Romantic poet Novalis: "'Where are we going to?' 'Forever homewards.'"

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National Identity and the Literary in the Globalization Era: Canada as Case Study

Ana María Fraile-Marcos
University of Salamanca

Abstract: The Canadian nation emerges in the nineteenth century as a self-willing effort at narrating itself. Literature plays an instrumental role in the creation of a system of cultural signification that, as Homi Bhabha points out in *Nation and Narration*, is by its nature ambivalent. This is even more so at present, when the always on-going process of construction of a unified national identity is encumbered by the centrifugal forces of globalization, linked to the realities of neoliberal late capitalism and instant electronic communication, as well as to the subsequent increase of unfettered mobility, transnationalism, multi-nationalism, and hybridity. This essay draws attention to the present moment as one of change marked by new relations between literature, culture, the state and the way Canadians imagine themselves as a nation in the era of neoliberal capitalist globalization. This moment of crisis, defined by social, economic, political and ideological insecurities calls for a re-evaluation and re-creation of the role of aesthetics and the humanities in the face of global disorder

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and the dwindling of national sovereignty. In the following pages I track a succession of key moments in the process of identity and cultural building in Canada before illustrating the shifts in the connection between national identity and the Canadian literary with the analysis of Will Ferguson's Scotiabank Giller prizewinner novel *419* (2012).

Keywords: Canada, National Identity Building, Global Novel, Will Ferguson, *419*

Globalizing processes are changing Canadian understanding of the national public sphere and the resultant altered relations among poetics, culture, and contending versions of empire. Diana Brydon, Manina Jones, Jessica Schagerl, and Kristen Warder.

The Canadian nation emerges in the nineteenth century as a self--willing effort at narrating itself. Literature plays an instrumental role in the creation of a system of cultural signification that, as Homi Bhabha points out in *Nation and Narration*, is by its nature ambivalent. This is even more so at present, when the always on-going process of construction of a unified national identity is encumbered by the centrifugal forces of globalization, linked to the realities of neoliberal late capitalism and instant electronic communication, as well as to the subsequent increase of unfettered mobility, transnationalism, multi-nationalism, and hybridity. Alluding to Hardt and Negri's notion of 'Empire,' the epigraph to this essay draws attention to the present moment as one of change marked by new relations between literature, culture, the state and the way Canadians imagine themselves as a nation in the era of neoliberal capitalist globalization. This moment of crisis, defined by social, economic,

political and ideological insecurities calls for a re-evaluation and re-creation of the role of aesthetics and the humanities in the face of global disorder and the dwindling of national sovereignty. In the following pages I track a succession of key moments in the process of identity and cultural building in Canada before illustrating with the analysis of Will Ferguson's novel *419* the shifts in the connection between national identity and the Canadian literary.

From its inception in 1867 as 'The Dominion of Canada' – the colony federation of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Canada East (Quebec) and Canada West (Ontario) – literature was called in as an indispensable element to confer cohesion, unity and character to an emergent sense of Canadian identity. In 1857 the Irish Nationalist, Catholic spokesman, journalist, and one of the Fathers of the Canadian Confederation, Thomas D'Arcy McGee, for example, saw the emergence of the nation running parallel to the rise of a national literature when he harangued, "Come! Let us construct a national literature for Canada, neither British, nor French, nor Yankeeish, but the offspring and heir of the soil, borrowing lessons from all lands, but asserting its own title throughout all! ("A National Literature for Canada", quoted in Sugars and Moss, 2009: 251). McGee clearly identified the major threats to the nascent national identity, namely, the cultural hegemony embedded in the legacy of the two so-called Founding nations, Britain and France, on the one hand and, on the other, the cultural and economic imperialism of the emerging new world power, the US. In his vision of an autonomous Canadian literature the natural landscape, "the grave mysticism of the Red man, and the wild vivacity of the hunter of western prairies" (Sugars and Moss, 2009: 306) foreshadow the prominence of the Canadian wilderness in the thematic cultural nationalism emerging from English speaking Canada by the time the nation prepared to celebrate its centenary in the 1960s – in contrast with a more urban focus in Quebec's literary production and criticism.

Yet, by mid-twentieth century, Canada appeared still uncertain about its identity. The myriad social and political changes underway after World War II highlighted the absence of a unified sense of national identity, something that the government of Louis St. Laurent saw as hampering the nation's cultural maturity and its position as a relevant agent in the world. Believing that culture plays a critically important role in nation building, St. Laurent ordered an inquiry into the state of national development of the arts, letters and sciences. As a result, in 1951 the Massey Commission, or Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences, issued a report advocating the public support of the arts and culture in Canada: '[i]f we in Canada are to have a more plentiful and better cultural fare, we must pay for it. Goodwill alone can do little for a starving plant; if the cultural life of Canada is anemic, it must be nourished, and this will cost money'" (Sugars and Moss, 2009: 204). The Massey report focuses on the need for an increase in funding and government patronage and considers how the arts, research, broadcasting and conservation could be used to foster a sense of national identity. The result was the creation of government sponsored institutions and funding bodies such as the National Library of Canada (1953), the Shakespeare Festival in Stratford, Ontario, McClelland and Stewart's New Canadian Library series of Canadian classic titles, the academic journal *Canadian Literature*, prizes and fellowships for artists and writers, as well as the funding of Canadian studies abroad. Most important for this purpose was the creation of the Canada Council for the Encouragement of the Arts, Letters, Humanities and Social Sciences in 1957, aimed to "foster Canada's cultural relations abroad, to perform the functions of a national commission for UNESCO, and to devise and administer a system of scholarships" (quoted in Moss and Sugars, 2009: 205). A new generation of writers and artists emerged out of this state-promoted cultural policy – among whom international literary celebrities such as Margaret Atwood, or the

recent Nobel Prize winner Alice Munro stand out – as well as the new fields of Canadian Studies and Canadian Literature, which were then introduced in the school and university curricula; in addition, these measures fostered the emergence of a national public that sustains a market for 'all things Canadian.' The success of this enterprise can be observed in the words of the 2013 Scotiabank Giller prize winner Linn Coady, who has recently declared she is "proud not just to be a Canadian writer, but to be a Canadian – to live in a country where we treat our writers like movie stars" (Bland).

However, linking a sense of identity to a distinctive Canadian environment was a difficult task for the mid-twentieth century thinkers and artists, bequeathed as they were with (the burden of) a double colonial legacy, and concerned with the threat of an ever--expanding U.S. cultural and economic influence permeating society. Northrop Frye famously articulated this challenge as a question when he argued that "Canadian imagination has been profoundly disturbed, not so much by our famous problem of identity, important as that is, as by a series of paradoxes in what confronts that identity. It is less perplexed by the question "Who am I?" than by some such riddle as 'Where is here?'" (Frye, 1971: 220). Along similar lines, Margaret Atwood contends in *Survival* – the thematic guide she was commissioned to write to help implementing a new teaching curriculum with Canadian content – that "Canada is an unknown territory for the people who live in it... a state of mind... in which we find ourselves lost" (Atwood, 1972: 18). The task of writers and critics, Atwood believes, is that of mapping a "geography of the mind" that may give rise to what Benedict Anderson has termed and 'imaginary community':

> What a lost person needs is a map of the territory, with his own position marked on it so he can see where he is in relation to everything else. Literature is not only a mirror; it is also a map,

> a geography of the mid. Our literature is one such map, if we can learn to read it as our literature, as the product of who and where we have been. We need such a map desperately; we need to know about here, because here is where we live. For the members of a country or culture, shared knowledge of their place, their here, is not a luxury but a necessity. Without that knowledge we will not survive. (Atwood, 1972: 17-18)

The immediate success of Atwood's seminal work led to the hegemony of an English-Canadian thematic criticism that held the North and the Canadian wilderness as the unifying cultural tropes, linked to Northrop Frye's notion of the Canadian 'garrison mentality' and to Atwood's 'survival', and contributed to the construction of a widely accepted periodicizing schema for Canadian literary criticism and for Canadian literature that, as Imre Szeman points out, "mirrors the one offered by Said for postcolonial literature in general. There is, first, a nationalist phase of Canadian literature and criticism: a crude, perhaps necessary phase of cultural self--assertion that is now seen as definitively superseded. In its place, there is a more savvy, self-confident criticism that does not see the need to produce in the field of literature a national culture consonant with the demands of the Canadian state" (Szeman, 2003: 157).

Frank Davey's 1974 influential essay "Surviving the Paraphrase", considered a 'seminal attack' on the nationalist criticism arranged along restrictive thematic lines, was an early point of inflexion, opening up the monolithic understanding of a nationalist literature to one that attended to aesthetic value as well as to discussion about the conflicting socio-political purpose of literature and criticism in the formation of citizenship. During the 1980s, coinciding with the rise of a multiculturalism consciousness in Canada and the related legislation strengthening Pierre Trudeau's Canadian federalism with

the passing of the 1982 Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the 1988 Multiculturalism Act, other important events signaled the cultural transformations under way in Canada: from gender and race perspectives, the conferences Women and Words (Vancouver 1983), the Third International Women's Book Fair (Montreal 1988), and Writing Thru Race (Vancouver 1994) drew attention to the material effects of the imperial and colonial underpinnings of nation-building, contributing to emerging discourses that question the self-legitimization of the dominant master narratives. The triangulation between literature/culture, politics, and national identity production is, perhaps, nowhere as evident as when in 1988—the same year the Canadian Multiculturalism Act "for the preservation and enhancement of multiculturalism" (Hutcheon, 1990: 368) was passed – on the occasion of Prime Minister Brian Mulroney's formal apology for the past injustices the Canadian state had inflicted on the Japanese Canadians, parts of Joy Kogawa's *Obasan* (1981), her bestselling novel about the plight of Japanese Canadians during and after World War II, were read in the Canadian House of Commons. The novel's astride position at the crossroads of history, politics and literature illustrates a shift whereby Canadian literature transitions from being an instrumental identity-building mechanism of the nation-state, to contesting, resisting, and troubling previous nation-state metanarratives. As alternative narratives from diverse cultural backgrounds carve their niche within the larger national narrative, Canada's strategy for nation building becomes that of regarding disunity as unity, as Robert Kroetch perceptively notes. For minoriticized cultures the challenge becomes at this point to avoid being coopted by what Stanley Fish labels 'boutique multiculturalism,' or by a multiculturalism discourse that could too easily veer toward ghettoizing celebrations of difference. Simultaneously, literary criticism increasingly turns from an attention to literature as exclusively a textual construct to a concern with the

larger discourses within which literary production and reception are embedded.

The international recognition that Canadian literature achieved in the 1980s with the acclaim of books by authors such as Margaret Atwood, Alice Munro, Michael Ondaatje, or Yann Martel, led to the unqualified celebration of Canadian literature "going global" (Brandt, 2000: 106), as well as to renewed critical debates about what constitutes Canadian literature. Taking into account the multifarious geographic, cultural, racial, and ethnic provenance of many of the emergent writers at the time, some of the arguments revolved around the author's nationality, the setting of their works, and the language in which they wrote. The connection of writing (and writers) to place and space continued thus being of concern for critics, who were intent on demarcating the borderlines of Canadian literature. However, the heterogeneity of the writing from Canada also led to arguments about the important recognition of the links between Canadian writing and that of other regions contending with the legacy of colonialism; or to the dismissal of the nation as a relevant factor in the creation of literature. Thus, in *Beyond the Provinces,* David Staines declares, "We might well describe the history of Canadian literature... as the movement from colony to nation to global village, a global village being a nation beyond nationalism, where the nation's voices are so multifaceted that the distinction between international and national is no longer valid" (1995: 24). To Staines, Canada's cultural conundrum as expressed in Frye's aphorism – "Where is here?" – holds no currency in a world of supranational entities and global mobility that destabilizes the former fixity of center and margins. If, as he holds, "the centre, however indefinable, is none the less unmistakably both here and nowhere and everywhere" (1995: 8), Canada and Canadian culture move beyond the marginal parochialism of the 'provinces,' and onto the global map of intertwined cultural nodes. Yet, the so-called globalization of Canadian literature and culture appears

nonetheless highly ambiguous and problematic. Whereas in *Post--National Arguments: The Politics of the Anglophone-Canadian Novel Since 1967* Frank Davey sees Canada as a weakened "post-national state – a state invisible to its citizens, indistinguishable from its fellow, maintained by invisible political forces, and significant mainly through its position within the grid of world-class postcard cities" (1993: 266), the desire to accommodate global cultural contexts is just one more element accounting for the continuing angst over the intent and purpose of Canadian literature (Kamboureli, 2013: viii). As Cynthia Sugars remarks, the "rhetoric of globalization masks an underlying anxiety about Canadian national and postcolonial identity" (2006: 80), since relying on international success to become recognizable as a national literature/culture is a rather colonial move. Yet, contradictorily, Sugars adds, "This may also be what makes an erstwhile colony postcolonial: that is, when the local becomes identifiable and validated on the global scene" (2006: 82). In order to render the national international, the "national 'here', Sugars argues, must relinquish "its delimiting insistence on identity while maintaining its force as a meaningful vector of association" (2006: 82). Herb Wyile presents this quandary as a "balancing act: to make the study of writing in Canada relevant without capitulating to the forces of commodification, and to break out of homogenizing narratives of national literature while still nurturing writing grounded in Canada... and resisting the homogenizing pressures of global commodity culture" (2000: 222).

Thus, Smaro Kamboureli notes, today's criticism is more interested in a 'contextual approach' to literature, or rather, to 'literariness,' the compendium of interrelated, competing discourses, material conditions influencing the production of literature, as well as the linguistic and structural qualities of literary texts. Literariness understood as such a situational approach is, according to Roman Jacobson, the actual object of literary science, i.e., what makes a

given work literary (Kamboureli, 2012: 6). Accordingly, Kamboureli contends, Canadian literary criticism has experienced "the shuttling of the critical gaze from the 'inside' to the 'outside' of the discipline – along with the characteristic interdisciplinarity it involves" (2012: 27). This 'shuttling of the critical gaze' has led to several developments that are intrinsically related to a concern with "the Real, either in the form of cultural materialism or communal responsibility" (Goldman, 2007: 809). Together with the examination, revision and problematization of the discourse of conquest, settlement, appropriation, dispossession, and acculturation underpinning much nationalist Canadian literature, for example, contemporary Canadian literature and criticism are also intent on pondering the intertwining of globalization processes with local, regional and national conditions that inflect cultural production and the study of Canadian literature today. This self-reflexive move that Barbara Godard calls "metacritical reflection" relies on the idea that "methodology does more than reveal: it actually creates the object of study" (2008: 55), and is accompanied by an ethical thrust to practice criticism responsibly, to reach out to society by addressing issues of general social concern, such as racialization, indigeneity, citizenship and the role of the nation in the age of globalization, all of which held a marginal position or had been rendered invisible in the nationalist cultural discourses of the 1960s and 70s.[45] This involves an epistemic shift in

[45] Some ground-breaking collections have been published in the new millennium signalling advances in the dialogic debates re-evaluating and pushing forward the cultural power of literature and criticism over social transformation and institutions, foregrounding the interaction between creative writing, theoretical practice and the readerships they engage. Recent examples of this metacritical reflection are Laura Moss's *Is Canada Post-Colonial?,* Cynthia Sugars's *Home-Work* and *Unhomely States*, Diana Brydon, Manina Jones, Jessica Schagerl and Kristen Wardes's *Poetics and Public Culture in Canada*, Daniel Coleman's *White Civility*, Imre Szeman's *Zones of Instability*, Diana Brydon and Marta Dvořák's *Crosstalk: Canadian and Global Imaginaries in Dialogue,* and the trilogy by Coleman and Kamboureli, *Retooling the Humanities* (2011); Kamboureli and Zacharias, *Shifting the Ground of Canadian Literary Criticism* (2013); and Kamboureli and Verduyn, *Critical Collaborations* (2014),

thematics, which at present, Kamboureli observes, "takes theme to be not a subject perceived as a stable or transparent construct that can be interpreted exhaustively and thus mastered but as a continuously unfolding constellation of interrelated (though perhaps on the surface disparate) issues that resist an exegetic approach" (2012: 32).

In the following section I offer a critical analysis of Will Ferguson's novel *419* that aims to exemplify the kind of critical and writerly practice that mobilizes thematics through ethical and political concerns that unsettle and attempt to move beyond the inherited parameters of national identity. In the process, I draw on several recent developments in Canadian writing and criticism, namely, the turn to ethics (Goldman and Kyser), the turn to affect/intimacy (Brydon, 2007; Kamboureli, 2011), and the turn to a spatial dialectics that pays attention to the situation of Canada and of Canadian literary production and criticism in a global context (Dobson, 2009; Wyile, 2011; Brydon and Dvořák, 2012; Fraile-Marcos, 2014).

Best known as a humor writer, Calgary author Will Ferguson won the 2012 prestigious Scotiabank Giller Prize for fiction with his thriller novel *419,* titled after one of the most notorious global scams. Without totally renouncing the humor that Ferguson masters and for which he has been repeatedly awarded[46], the novel is rather a sobering drama. It begins with the discovery that Henry Curtis's death has not been accidental. Instead, it is revealed that this retired Canadian teacher whose name evokes that of Kurtz, "the classic Euro--centric caricature of the African adventurer" (Ferguson, 2012: 407)

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among a myriad other important works. The public reception of literature and the social creation of celebrity writers in Canada is the specific focus of scholarly books both in Canada – Lorraine York's *Literary Celebrity in Canada* (2007) and *Margaret Atwood and the Labour of Literary Celebrity* (2013) and outside Canada – Danielle Fuller and DeNel Rehberg Sedo's *Reading Beyond the Book* (2013).

[46] Ferguson has won the Stephen Leacock Medal for Humour for his novel *Happiness* (2002), the travel memoirs *Beauty Tips from Moose Jaw* (2005) and *Beyond Belfast* (2010), and was shortlisted for the same award for *How to Be a Canadian* (2002) and *Spanish Fly* (2008).

in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, has committed suicide after becoming the victim of an email scam known as '419' – after the section of the Nigerian Criminal Code that covers fraud (Ferguson, 2012: 111). From this point onwards, the lives of Henry's wife, Helen, and their children, Warren and Laura, cross and intertwine with those of a handful of characters in Nigeria, a place of variegated landscapes, riddled with cultural, religious, social and political conflicts, where the struggle for survival and endurance is a daily challenge. The novel's setting, therefore, shifts back and forth from an unnamed Canadian city, which is nevertheless identified as Calgary through certain urban landmarks, and the not so remote African landscapes. Actually, what the novel highlights is the (absolute?) erasure of national borders in a world where global human and capital mobility and electronic connectivity make up for a sort of global intimacy that raises important questions about security, justice, humanitarianism, and the foreign Other.

From a computer in Lagos, Western-educated Winston Balogun intrudes in Henry's anodyne life under a forged identity, pleading for help to save a troubled soul. Winston, who considers himself "a student of humanity" (Ferguson, 2012: 64) as well as an effective storyteller who fishes his victims with "words, with wonder" (Ferguson, 2012: 64), manages to create an intimate relationship with Henry by appealing concurrently to his compassion, an emotion that figures prominently in the construction of the Canadian ethos, as well as to his "*thoughtful* greed" (Ferguson, 2012: 64), as Winston puts it[47].

[47] In addition to scholarly publications focusing on compassion from as diverse perspectives as politics, religion, health care, justice, education, literature or cultural studies (see, for instance, Acorn, Howard-Hassmann, Cooper and Rowlands, Beiser, Dallaire), recent news headlines reflect the public currency of the discussion about compassion in Canada, which is widely seen as one of the most cherished Canadian values: "Stephen Harper Conservatives dismantling Canada's compassion: Critics" December 9, 2013 http://metronews.ca/news/canada/878473/stephen--harper-conservatives-dismantling-canadas-compassion-critics/; "Governor General urges charity and compassion in New Year's message" December 27, 2013 http://o.

Intersecting are also the stories of Ironsi-Egobia, the unscrupulous Ijaw gangster who controls the swindle business in Lagos and who forcibly recruits Winston to work for him. The atrocious violence of ethnic cleansing has shaped this despicable character, who as a young man witnessed how the army burned his Niger Delta town, Odi, to the ground and killed his parents. At the Christian seminary in Calabar where he was taken to afterwards he learned about the moral contradictions of love and retributive justice embedded in the Bible: "The Fathers... taught me the Gospel. Turn the other cheek. Love thine enemy. But they also taught: *An eye for an eye*" (Ferguson, 2012: 371-72). He chose to live by the latter. Though trafficking in falsehoods, Ironsi-Egobia does not tolerate anything but the truth from those at his service. Also from the Delta, Ironsi--Egobia's distant cousin Nnamdi has seen his own father poisoned by the encroachment of the Western oil industry in the region, and eventually resorts to black-market fuel smuggling to make a living. However, in contrast with Ironsi-Egobia's particular adoption of Western colonial creeds, Nnamdi takes moral guidance from his father's stories (*Egberiyo*), reflective of his village's spirituality, and ancestral experience, which prove syncretically resilient in the face of the current impact of global economics on the local and national scales (Ferguson, 2012: 165-76). Shaped after real-life Amina Lawal, the other main character is Amina, a young pregnant woman from the Sahel who is crossing the country on foot, running away from the fundamentalist Sharia laws that condemn women who bear children outside marriage to be stoned to death. When Amina's and Nnamdi's

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canada.com/news/national/governor-general-david-johnston-new-year-message; or in initiatives such as that by Jannet Ann Leggett, founder of *Canadians for Compassion*, who has launched a national campaign to invite all Canadians to affirm the Charter for Compassion, and an initiative to collect 100,000 signatures from across Canada, calling upon Parliament to declare Canada as a compassionate nation, following the principles of the Charter for Compassion. http://www.wavesofcompassion.ca/organizations.html

paths intersect against this background of widespread violence and destruction, they envision a hopeful future together, represented by "Dreams Abound", the name of the truck that Nnamdi is driving at the time when he gives Amina a lift. All these characters' separate lives represent different worlds that nevertheless mirror each other.

I suggest that this novel problematizes the ethics of global cultural intimacy by means of its reflection on two different affective reactions to crime that can be identified through the discourses of retributive justice, on the one hand, and restorative justice, on the other. Although both retributive and restorative justice insist that wrongs must be put right, the former usually conflates justice with punishment and imprisonment in an attempt to inflict some sort of suffering on the wrongdoer as a means of paying back; in contrast, restorative justice is, according to Correctional Service Canada,

> a philosophy and an approach that views crime and conflict principally as harm done to people and relationships. It strives to provide support and safe opportunities for the voluntary participation and communication between those affected (victims, offenders, and community) to encourage accountability, reparation, and a movement towards understanding, feelings of satisfaction, healing, safety and a sense of closure.
>
> RJ is a non-adversarial, non-retributive approach to justice that emphasizes healing in victims, meaningful accountability of offenders, and the involvement of citizens in creating healthier, safer communities. (Correctional, 2014)

Therefore, restorative justice may appear as a better approach to crime, one that works "toward social justice and the broader goals of the creation of relations and communities of mutuality, respect, peace, harmony, and equality" (Acorn, 2004: 2), "a better means of ensuring accountability as well as effective deterrence" (Acorn,

2004: 4). However, because restorative justice is deeply invested in intimacy between the victim and the offender, the emotional toll to be paid can be overwhelming and questionably fair for the victim, who must be determined to forgive.

While pointing out the dangers and potentialities of global intimacies, Ferguson's novel interrogates the possibility of engagement with the other as well as the limits of restorative justice in a contest that balances love and the need to do harm to others. By grappling with ethical complexity, *419* partakes of the recent turn to ethics and to affect in Canadian literature and criticism, which are not simply concerned with aesthetics and its "significance for the moral potential of the human being in a given community" (Eskin, 2004: 560), but with our relationship to the other.

If intimacy in the novel is linked to affect, emotions and feelings, it is also anchored in a history of global imperialism whereby the continuing exploitation of Africa by Western powers contends with the retaliatory criminal activities now practiced by some Africans under the pretence of redressing wrongs and enacting a sort of retributive justice. The 419 scam is just a piece in this scheme, problematizing and contesting Canada's self-portrait as a colonial victim in the national metanarrative with an African gaze that makes Canada complicit with the Western imperial and neoliberal projects of late capitalism that contribute to keep the continent in shambles. As Ironsi-Egobia explains, 419 is a business in retribution. After a survey of the plundering of Africa and the Americas carried out by various European Empires, Ironsi-Egobia rhetorically asks, "Why should these bankers, these slavers – these *criminals* – not return some of their lootings to the continent they have helped impoverish? Justice demands it. God demands it. *The sins of the fathers shall be visited upon their children...* Make no mistake, Adam, we are in the business of retribution. We are in the business of revenge'" (Ferguson, 2012: 121). Eloquently, Ironsi-Egobia concludes that if

Nigeria's is a 'culture of corruption,' Western culture is a 'culture of greed,' and the duped Westerners, or *mugus,* who agree to illegal schemes to take money out of a "poverty-stricken nation" (122), profiteering on the country's hardships, are criminals, too, "Aspiring criminals, but criminals still. Are they not accomplices as much as they are victims?" (Ferguson, 2012: 122). Thus, Ironsi-Egobia, whose adopted name works as an incantation meaning 'money come to me' (Ferguson, 2012: 117), rules himself by the Biblical "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth" dictum (Exodus 21:24; Leviticus 24:20; Deuteronomy 19:21) that conflates justice with punishment and the infliction of suffering on the wrongdoer (Ferguson, 2012: 372).

In contrast with Ironsi-Egobia's portrayal of Westerners, Henry Curtis appears as a man of strong ethical principles that clash with any sense of justice based on personal profit or benefit. This personality trait comes to the surface when Laura, his free-lance copyeditor daughter, remembers the time when, as a child, she found a twenty-dollar bill at the Stampede and her father, after asking a number of people around, made her hand it in to a teenage boy who claimed it was his, though it was clear that he was lying. When Laura protested, Henry replied that even when the money was not probably his, "it definitely wasn't ours" (Ferguson, 2012: 31). Laura gets another glimpse at Henry's sense of justice when she first moved away from home to go to university. Henry drives from Calgary to Winnipeg to celebrate Thanksgiving with her, and after he leaves, Laura finds among her notes for a Philosophy essay she was writing, his mystifying rewriting of the ancient maxim *Let justice be done though the heavens fall!*:

> Let Heaven be done, though justice falls.
>
> She'd puzzled over this, her father's inversion of heaven and justice, of love and retribution, of forgiveness and reprisal. (Ferguson, 2012: 36)

Clearly, Henry favours an authentic experience of mutuality, equality, respect, peace, and harmony among individuals, rather than a sense of justice that relies on punishment or revenge for accountability, regardless of consequences.

The news about the email scam that leads Henry to kill himself in despair (Ferguson, 2012: 78) causes an emotional upheaval in his intimate family circle. Yet, whereas his wife Helen quietly accepts her lot as a destitute grandmother who has to move to her son's basement because her savings and house are gone, Henry's children Warren and Laura react very differently. Warren readily and boisterously voices his anger against the cons, against the state forces who did not protect his father, against the bank, and against the Nigerian government. When it becomes clear that Henry's death will be ruled as suicide, and that the Canadian police is going to close the case, unable to take the cons to justice, Warren resorts to "Scambaiting" (Ferguson, 2012: 270) as his way of doing justice: "'Payback,' he explained. 'For Dad" (Ferguson, 2012: 270). As he explains Laura, scambaiters "police the net, set up traps", and when "these 419 weasels come calling, we take the bait. Instead of hitting DELETE, we reply" (Ferguson, 2012: 271). Thus, they intercept 419 cons to tease, ridicule, and expose them on the internet: "The trick is to answer with the most outlandish stories you can come up with, drag it out, waste their time, and then post the entire thing online" (Ferguson, 2012: 271).

Unlike Warren, who vents his anger and then enjoys outplaying the scammers at their own game, Laura remains numb with grief and emptiness until, pondering the idea that "Language. Reveals as much as it conceals" (Ferguson, 2012: 258), she begins entertaining the idea that by scrutinizing the language used in the emails his father received, she could track down the person who wrote them, contact him and travel to Nigeria to do justice. However, again unlike her brother, Laura's sense of justice at this point is more

restorative than punitive, centered on making the criminal look her in the eye and acknowledge the damage he has done. Her primary concern, therefore, is not to get her parents' money back – "'What if,' Laura asked, 'it wasn't about the money?'" (Ferguson, 2012: 139) – but to exact the con's recognition of accountability for Henry's death (Ferguson, 2012: 79). Laura succeeds in her objective once she finds and gets in touch with Winston by mimicking his methods. Competing with the 419ers in cunning and audacity, she creates a false identity for herself and makes up a story that justifies her trip to Nigeria. The setting she eventually chooses to reveal her true mission to Winston is the intimate space of his parents' home. During the small-talk conversation that takes place between them, Laura's words constitute a swirling subtext that simultaneously informs, threatens, and seeks his empathetic response:

> You don't realize how fortunate you are, Winston. Both your parents are still alive... My dad died because of 419. He was killed by Nigerians... My father had his savings stolen, he lost his home, his life. My mother is living in my brother's basement now. And the man who is responsible for this needs to know. He needs to know what he's done, he needs to make amends. I have come to Nigeria to find him. (Ferguson, 2012: 341)

As Laura's mission dawns on Winston, he becomes a reflection of cornered Henry Curtis before he committed suicide. Laura can read Winston's affective reaction in his eyes: "panic, fear, bottled rage. It was the look of a man being driven off an embankment, a man falling through darkness" (Ferguson, 2012: 341). However, Laura is not content with placing Winston on the same spot he put her father. She needs to move him, to provoke his repulsion for the damage he has caused and to eventually make him accept his accountability. For that, she confronts Winston and his parents with a police photograph

of the accident scene: "Her father's pulped features, face smeared, a mouth filled with blood, soft flesh ruptured, an arm dangling, barely attached" (Ferguson, 2012: 342). Although Laura succeeds in prompting Winston's mother's empathetic tears and his father's wish to catch the miscreant and have him sent to jail, Winston, refuses to feel anything beyond fear, and even rejects Laura's accusation that he is "a thief and a murderer": "hold your tongue, or I will cut it from your mouth. I am not a thief, nor a murderer. I am an entrepreneur" (Ferguson, 2012: 344). The discourse of violent neoliberal capitalism that, incidentally, resembles Warren's unscrupulous market-oriented one, thus interrupts the transaction in intimacy that Laura had been building up during their visit to his parents'. When Winston insists that their business is over, Laura lets rage overcome her, demanding the impossible, that he gives her father back to her. Appealing to his intimate emotions, Laura threatens with revealing his deeds not just to the EFCC (Nigerian Economic and Financial Crimes Commission), but even more importantly for him, to his parents. Understanding the position Laura is pushing him into, Winston then tries to delegitimize Laura's claims of intimate emotional reparations by moving from the personal to the communal and historical: "'Is this what you want? Reparations? From Africa? Justice – *from Africa*? Nigeria is not your playground, madam. Africa is not some sort of – of metaphor" (Ferguson, 2012: 344). If Winston seeks sanction for his actions by turning Henry Curtis into a symbol of the continued exploitation of Africa by an unscrupulous, greedy West – "'Your father died from terminal greed, madam'" (Ferguson, 2012: 344) – Laura refuses to let her father be co-opted in this contest of retaliatory justice: "'My father,' she shouted, 'was not a metaphor! Give him back to me!'" (Ferguson, 2012: 345). However, when Laura understands the futility of her attempts to make Winston accountable for her father's death, thereby deterring him from continuing in the 419 business, she herself turns to retaliatory justice, battling against Winston's threats

– "'We are mafia! We will ruin you, we will leave your life in tatters! You will die in Lagos!'" (Ferguson, 2012: 348) – with extortion. After Laura manages to rip him off, she hands him in to security. Yet, in her self-righteousness, she fails to discern between who really deserves to be punished and who does not, making a serious blunder when she denounces Nnamdi, who had Ironsi-Egobia's order to kill her, but decides that he cannot do it. As a result, Nnamdi dies a horrible death at the hands of Ironsi -Egobia, who burns him alive as a punishment for his disobedience, as well as to warn all those under his rule of the consequences of disregarding his orders with moral scruples. Nnamdi's decision to put his own life at stake rather than killing another human being, even if to save his own child's life – "He might die for his child. But he wouldn't kill" (368) – makes him the most ethical figure in the novel. Like Winston before, Laura rejects accountability for Nnamdi's death, blaming Winston instead: "He did this. He killed the boy with the beautiful smile, *not me*" (Ferguson, 2012: 380). However, does not this turn of the tables situate her at the same moral level as the criminals from whom she seeks retribution? This is implied in the lyrics of the popular song that she hears on the radio in Lagos and later on evokes as she feels safe in the plane that takes her back to Canada: "'*419, play the game; 419, all the same,'* And threading through it a question: "Who is the *mugu* now?" (Ferguson, 2012: 385). The spiral of death and violence engendered by notions of retributive justice is complete when even Amina is trapped in the circle of revenge after learning that Nnamdi has been murdered for sparing Laura's life: "Loss demands repayment, and she turned back to Ironsi-Egobia, spoke in sobs. 'The *oyibo.* She has to die too. Don't let her to live [sic]'" (Ferguson, 2012: 379).

While the immorality of Ironsi-Egobia is simply beyond hope, the novel offers the possibility of redemption for both Henry Curtis and his daughter. Like Nnamdi, Henry appears as the father who chooses

to die in order to protect his family from bankruptcy and from the 419 hired assassins. His moral stature is somehow ambivalently reaffirmed at the end when his wife Helen dissolves any doubts Laura might entertain about her father's reasons to be tricked into the 419 scam: "'I don't think it was the money, no. I think it was the girl. I think your father wanted to be a hero to someone, just once'" (Ferguson, 2012: 390). As a result, Henry's nature is restored as that of a compassionate rather than greedy man, moved by the forged story of a helpless young woman trapped in a far-away land. Similarly, and following his example, Laura performs a sort of restorative justice when, rather than keep the money she got from Winston, she decides to send it to Amina and her child in Nigeria and sponsor them to enter Canada as refugees, thus contributing to provide them with a more hopeful future. Choosing love over retribution, Laura seems to act out of a need to somehow repair Amina's loss of Nnamdi, for which she is partly responsible. When Amina and her son do not show up at Calgary airport, and Laura understands that she has been tricked, she smiles, feeling that "her father would have been proud of her nonetheless" (Ferguson, 2012: 391), finally understanding her father's ethics that privileges Heaven over justice. Ferguson avoids a condescending, paternalistic, and ethnocentric ending by stressing until the end Amina's agency, her determination to build up her own life in Nigeria rather than in Canada, and very likely using Henry's money to set shop at Lago's market, thereby realizing her dream to become an independent and self-sustaining woman.

Will Ferguson's rendition of global intimacy delves, therefore, in the connection between literature, storytelling, ethics and affect. The novel's nuanced representation of violence, empathy, complicity, humanitarian responsibility, justice and accountability captures a range of concerns of great currency in a Canadian society that is inescapably confronted with negotiating its position in a glocal world

of porous national borders. Intimacy is paired with globalization when global crime and violence toward people and the environment irrupt in the private spheres of the protagonist characters, showing that "global political economic conditions have profound effects on human relationships" (Pratt, *et al.* 2012: 31) and on their ethical understanding of justice. The novel reflects a neoliberal hyper--connected global world where the state mechanisms of justice fail the citizen. Thus, if the Canadian police investigation of Henry Curtis' death reaches a standstill due to legal, political and financial encumbrances to find and take the Nigerian con men to justice, in Nigeria the violence and widespread corruption caused by the overlapping interests of the state, the international oil companies, the local war lords, among other forces, make it even more difficult for justice to be achieved. It is then left to the individual to either resign or seek to do justice on his/her own, with the chances that this may entail the renewal of circles of violence and victimage.

If, as Michael Eskin argues, "it is the singular encounter between reader and text-as-other, soliciting a singularly just response on the reader's part that is at stake in 'ethics and literature'" (2004: 560), the experience of reading *419* leaves the reader pondering the complexity of human suffering and ethical engagement resulting from new forms of global intimacies marred by long histories of global economic exploitation and geopolitical imbalances between North and South, the West and the rest of the world. While the novel does promote bonds of universal love between self and others, Ferguson also underlines the prevalence of retributive justice when people fall short of admitting empathy, accountability, or genuine forgiveness. Narrative and storytelling may be hijacked by characters of various ethical standards to try to justify their positions as just. Yet, the novel does not succumb to this cooption but provides the reader with the necessary distance to assess the different degrees of victimization and wrongdoing in which individuals and global

actors alike are caught, thus underlining the complexities of the ethics of global intimacy.

Ferguson's novel incites a kind of metacritical approach that relies on interdisciplinarity, illustrating the recent shifting of the ground in the study of Canadian literature, from the inside to the outside of the discipline. Far from reasserting a unified vision of Canadian identity, based on the idiosyncrasy of the Canadian landscape and Canadian history, *419* is firmly anchored in the questions raised by a highly mobile and hyperconnected world in which citizens must rework their relation and ethical responsibility to the Other not just through ideological critique, but also though the spurring of the imagination and a revived poetics.

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'Who Do You Think You are?': A Critique of the Concept of Exceptionalism in the Construction and Analysis of American Identity

Stephen Wilson
University of Coimbra

Abstract: The view of America (and later the United States) as a place apart, essentially different, and the corollary tendency to see it as defined by that difference, is a longstanding one; it can be traced back to the discovery of the 'New World' (and arguably beyond). In 1630 the Puritan leader John Winthrop described the Massachusetts Bay Colony as a 'City upon a Hill' and warned the colonists that 'the eyes of all people are upon us.' Winthrop's words, and the entailed world view, have become part of American public discourse, and have persisted, with appropriate inflections, in the age of American empire and world hegemony. Such thinking is common to those who see themselves as pro- and anti- American, to the left and the right, to those who see the United States as the 'the world's last best hope' (the phrase is Abraham Lincoln's) and those who hold the United States to be 'the Great Satan.' My paper contests the usefulness of the concept of exceptionalism as an analytical tool and suggests that greater attention should

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be paid to continuities between the new and Old Worlds, between America and Europe and that in studying United States similarities are often as significant as differences.

Keywords: Excptionalism, the United States, Americaness, History

I will begin with some basic semantics. This is not so much an exercise in definition or clarification as an attempt to identify an area of ambiguity that is significant for my present purposes. Exceptional can mean departing or deviating from the norm, unusual, rare, and also better than the average, superior, of the highest quality; it signifies both difference and excellence or most often something that is both different and excellent (unusually bad weather could be described as exceptional but the term is more likely to be applied to unusually good weather). Attaching the suffix '-ism' introduces further declensions of meaning. Recourse to an online dictionary suggests a range of possibilities of which the following are the most apposite: an act, practice or process ('journalism') – a manner of action or behaviour or form of speech characteristic of a particular person or thing (a 'Spoonerism' or a 'Bushism') – a state, condition or property ('barbarianism') – a doctrine, theory or religion ('Catholicism?) – adherence to a system or a class of principles or simply a system or a class of principles (structuralism). More specifically, but consistently with the range of meanings sketched out above, when applied to the field of American Studies 'exceptionalism' may denote both an analytical tool, a concept that claims to be useful in understanding and explaining many aspects of the United States, and an idea or belief system (one could say an ideology) that enters the domain of history with indicative, or even imperative, force.

The term certainly has currency; indeed, it may be said to be enjoying something of a vogue. On 24 September 2013, addressing the United Nations, President Barack Obama, declared: 'I believe America is exceptional. In part because we have shown a willingness through the sacrifice of blood and treasure to stand up not only for our own narrow self-interest, but for the interest of all.' However, contemporary usage is inconsistent and even contradictory. In the post-Cold War years, the concept of exceptionalism was often invoked by all sides in discussion of the global hegemony of the United States. It could be argued that to hold the United States to be, in the words of Abraham Lincoln's Second Annual Message to Congress, 'the last best hope of earth', which is essentially what President Obama was asserting in the speech quoted above, and to see it as the 'Great Satan' are both examples of exceptionalism and so it is not merely being exceptional that is significant. In 2009. Donald Pearse published *The New American Exceptionalism*, a study of the United States post 9/11, in which he writes of 'the encompassing state of fantasy called American exceptionalism that had regulated U.S. citizens' relationship to the political order for the preceding half century' (Pearse, 2009: 1). To categorize exceptionalism' as a 'state fantasy' (a concept he derives somewhat reductively from Jacqueline Rose) is potentially interesting but all that finally emerges from the tortuous accounts given of the new exceptionalism is sense of a protean something or other that Pearse doesn't like.

The French writer Alexis de Tocqueville is generally held to have been the first to apply the adjective 'exceptional' to the United States and is accordingly sometimes said to be the first exceptionalist. In *Democracy in America* (1835/1840) de Tocqueville cautioned his readers that 'the position of the Americans is ... quite exceptional' in so far as 'their strictly Puritanical origin, their exclusively commercial habits' and 'a thousand special causes ... have singularly concurred to fix the mind of the American upon purely practical objects'

(2: 36-7). Its claim to primacy gives de Tocqueville's use of the word 'exceptional' a degree of interest but I cannot see that here the word means much more than different.

More interestingly, in 1929 Stalin censured the Communist Party USA (CPUSA) for accepting the argument of the Pepper – Lovestone faction that the economic strength of American capitalism, the country's size and tremendous natural resources and the absence of a rigid class system made the United States resistant to the laws of history, as Marxists understood them, and so to revolution. Speaking in the American Commission of the Presidium of the Executive Committee of the Communist International in May 1929, Stalin condemned 'factionalism' and 'opportunism' and the heresy of 'exceptionalism'. Stalin conceded that while it 'would be wrong to ignore the specific peculiarities of American capitalism … it would be still more wrong to base the activities of the Communist Party on these specific features, since the foundation of the activities of every Communist Party, including the American Communist Party … must be the general features of capitalism, which are the same for all countries.' Stalin's view prevailed and the Wall St Crash and its aftermath restored the CPUSA to orthodoxy. John Pepper (born József Schwartz) submitted to party disciple and remained in Moscow to do work for the Communist International. He was executed in a purge in 1937 (or '38). Jay Lovestone (born Jacob Liebstein) left the Party and became a militant anti-Communist (in the 1950s he collaborated with the CIA).

If the Wall St Crash and its aftermath seemed to many observers to have vindicated Stalin, Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal is often seen as triumph of exceptionalism: the New Deal was what Martin Walker termed an 'American solution', an alternative to a revolution or even to the emergence of a socialist movement. Walker is right to see Roosevelt as essentially a defender of the status quo, one who understood that if things were to remain the same they had to change (an American variation on British Conservative view

that it is better to bend than to break). The New Deal was born out of a fear of revolution and, I would argue, should be understood an affirmation that the laws of history did indeed apply to the United States. Like Stalin, FDR did not believe in exceptionalism. There is also the possibility (and for me it is a deeply intriguing one) of another non-exceptionalist interpretation of the New Deal, one that see in the context of another set of laws of history – those formulated in the late 19th and early 20th century by Henry Adams and his brother Brooks who saw history as process of entropy.

That, however, is another story and a long one. For now, I would make the point that that what is at issue here is not simply difference, of course America is different from other places And other places are different from America) but the nature of that difference and how it is perceived, and on that basis I will examine briefly two canonical instances of exceptionalism.

John Winthrop (1587/8-1649), one of the leading figures in the founding of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, arrived in American colonies New England in 1630 at the head of as large party of Puritans. Before disembarking he preached a sermon – 'A Model of Christian Charity (1630 on board the Arbella)' – reminding the colonists that they had 'entered into covenant with [God) for this work' and that by bringing them safely across the Atlantic to their new home 'the Lord ... [had] ... ratified this covenant and sealed our commission' and warned them that they would now have to keep their side of the bargain. In a much-quoted passage he prophesised that:

> ... for wee must Consider that wee shall be as a Citty upon a Hill, the eyes of all people are uppon us; soe that if wee shall deal falsely with our god in this worke we have undertaken, and soe cause Him to withdrawe his present help from us, wee shall be made a story and a by-word through the world. (McQuade et al, 1: 149-150)

This passage has been widely cited as the *fons et origo* of American exceptionalism and it is particularly highly regarded by conservatives and neoconservatives. Ronald Reagan was fond of it. For them the United States is the biblical 'Citty upon a Hill,' the New Jerusalem, set apart from, or even transcending, history. Winthrop is indeed claiming that the American colonists are an elect, a people chosen to build the New Jerusalem but that is not the same thing. Winthrop employed a figural or typological mode of narrative or argument in terms of which the American colonists, wanderers in the American wilderness, are the antitype of a number of Biblical types (most obviously, the Children of Israel wandering in the desert) and so they are not set aside from history, do not transcend it, but are the fulfilment of its grand narrative and as such they are not exceptional but exemplary.

It may further be noted that Winthrop's view of history is a somewhat conventional one in that it is fundamentally 'heliotropic'; that is to say that it sees the progress of religion, learning, society – of humanity generally – as moving from east to west and so following or tracking the westward movement of the sun. The *translatio imperii* and the *translatio studii*, which are also, in their more orthodox and influential versions, *heliotropic*. These tropes generate a universal history in which America is an unexceptional event.

This point becomes even clearer if one looks at later secular versions of Winthrop's providential narrative such as Bishop Berkeley's 'Verses on the Prospect of Planting Arts and Learning in America':

> Westward the course of empire takes its way;
> The first four acts already past,
> A fifth shall close the drama with the day;
> Time's noblest offspring is the last.

The peroration of J. Hector St. John Crèvecoeur's (1735-1813) 'What is an American' is perhaps better known:

> Here individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men, whose labours and posterity will one day cause great changes in the world. Americans are the western pilgrims, who are carrying along with them that great mass of arts, sciences, vigour, and industry which began long since in the east; they will finish the great circle. (Crèvecoeur, 1963: 64)

My second example is George Washington's Farewell Address to the American people. In it Washington exhorts his 'friends' and fellow 'citizens' (Americans 'by birth or choice') to cherish their Union and Constitution and 'to think and speak of it as of the palladium of your political safety', but above all he warns them to beware of foreign entanglements:

> Against the insidious wiles of foreign influence (I conjure you to believe me, fellow-citizens) the jealousy of a free people ought to be constantly awake, since history and experience prove that foreign influence is one of the most baneful foes of republican government... adding that 'the great rule of conduct for us in regard to foreign nations is in extending our commercial relations, to have with them as little political connection as possible.

Washington was seeking to justify his policy of neutrality during the Napoleonic Wars but it is sometimes read as asserting that the United States is not just a new nation but a new type of nation that is above the wars and conflicts of the wicked old Europe:

> Europe has a set of primary interests which to us have none; or a very remote relation. Hence she must be engaged in frequent

> controversies, the causes of which are essentially foreign to our concerns. Hence, therefore, it must be unwise in us to implicate ourselves by artificial ties in the ordinary vicissitudes of her politics, or the ordinary combinations and collisions of her friendships or enmities.

This sounds very well, even exceptional, but I suspect that, as I have said, Washington is presenting policy as principle and dressing up pragmatism and expedience in high sounding generalisations. Also, I cannot help noting that it is suspiciously similar to the traditional British policy of having no fixed principals only permanent interests, of remaining out of European wars but profiting by them whenever possible. Standing aloof from the fight, holding the coats of the combatants and picking their pockets. A policy that gave rise to the designation 'perfidious Albion'.

This point could be enlarged into a more general argument about the American Revolution itself. It is often presented as an exceptional and epochal event, the starting point of a *Novus ordo seclorum*, but it is also continuation of Britain's 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688. Garry Wills has noted that in colonial North America 'the Revolution' was Britain's 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688. To say this is not to deny that the American Revolution was an exceptional and epochal event but to recognise that events of the scope and complexity of the American Revolution can never be reduced to a single interpretation, even an exceptional one.

When the exceptional nature of the United States is invoked as the basis of policy or action it is never to be taken at face value although one must allow for the possibility that those making the claim are deceived as well as deceiving. I am sceptical in regard to the more the more extravagant claim that 'exceptionalism' somehow enters the historical field as an active and becomes a disembodied mischief that can be held responsible for 9/11, the War in Iraq, the

election of Donald Trump and other misfortune. I would very much like to see an explanation of the mechanics of this process but so one has not been forthcoming. As a mode of explanation, it never tells the whole story and it is never a sufficient explanation or the only possible explanation. Of course, the United States is different and there are indeed aspects of its life and culture that could be described as distinctively or typically American such as a fondness for guns and a dislike for social medicine. Having said that when we look at it more closely we find that many Americans don't really like guns all that much and are quite fond of social medicine (the promise of it got Bill Clinton and Barack Obama elected and Republicans are not finding it easy to scrap Obamacare). It must also be recognised that the other side of the Atlantic is no longer the only site for the production of Americanness. I have been studying, writing about and teaching America for a long time and have found it to be many things but it is neither 'the last best hope of earth' or the 'Great Satan'. It is not exceptional. It is much more interesting than that.

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Experiencing the Identity(ies) of the Other(s), Finding That of One's Own on/through the Stage in Wertenbaker's Play *Our Country's Good*

Şenay Kara
Istanbul University

Abstract: Drawing attention to the immense potentialities of cultural, artistic and intellectual engagements and focusing particularly on the transformative and regenerative power of theatre in society, Timberlake Wertenbaker's play *Our Country's Good* (1988) depicts the (hi)story of the noteworthy changes and improvements that a group of underprivileged people experience as they gain access to art. Based on a historical event and set in a colonial environment, the play presents a fictionalized account of the real-life experiences of a group of convicts who, transported from Britain to Australia in 1787 as members of the first Australian Penal Colony, are given the opportunity to be actively involved in a theatrical performance and who, through that involvement, go –both individually and collectively– through a notable process of gaining awareness and self-(re)definition. As these convict-actors/actresses play their roles and experience the identities of socio-culturally, economically and hierarchically very different characters, they

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increasingly recognize the constructedness and, consequently, the questionable, challengeable and changeable nature of identities, social roles and positions. Wertenbaker depicts the production of *a play within her play* and demonstrates the civilizing, rehabilitating, liberating and equalizing power of cultural and artistic practices. This article, while presenting a detailed critical analysis of the dominant themes of class, cultural, racial, ethnic, gender and environmental discrimination and crucial issues like (in)equality, (in)justice, crime and punishment, displacement and (un)belonging as well as the formation and maintenance of identities within these boundaries, pays special attention to the dual function or the uses and abuses of language, discourse, representation, culture and art in relation to all these crucial subjects. There is a detailed discussion of the role of language and narratives not only as tools of constructing but also of deconstructing and invalidating oppressive and unjust social roles and systems, with a special emphasis on the power and benefits of cultural, intellectual and creative practices.

Keywords: Postcolonial Literature, Feminist Theatre, Race-Class--Gender, Displacement, Identity Construction, Rewriting

Based on a historical event and set in a colonial environment dominated by racial, ethnic, class, gender and environmental discrimination, exploitation and violence, Timberlake Wertenbaker's play *Our Country's Good* (1988) presents and problematizes, on the one hand, crucial issues like (in)equality, (in)justice, (in)humaneness, crime and punishment, displacement and (un)belonging as well as the formation and maintenance of "identities" within these boundaries, and, on the other hand, the significant and dual function or the uses

and abuses of language, narratives, representation, culture and art in relation to these crucial issues. In this context, effectively drawing the audience's attention to the immense potentialities of cultural, intellectual and artistic engagements and focusing particularly on the transformative and regenerative power of theatre in society, Wertenbaker's play depicts the (hi)story of the noteworthy changes and improvements that a group of underprivileged people experience as they gain access to art.

The play presents a fictionalized account of the real-life experiences of a group of convicts who, transported from Britain to Australia in 1787 as members of the first Australian Penal Colony established in Sydney Cove in New South Wales, are given the opportunity to be actively involved in a theatrical performance and who, through that involvement, go –both individually and collectively– through a notable process of gaining awareness and self-(re)definition. Under the control of the colonial authorities, the convicts put on stage a play. Wertenbaker depicts the production of *a play within her play*. This is a demonstration and celebration of the civilizing, rehabilitating, liberating and equalizing power of (especially collective) cultural and artistic practices even under the most oppressive circumstances.

The historical event that the play is based on –the staging of a play by a group of the convicts of the First Fleet in the Australian Penal Colony in New South Wales in 1789– was first recorded as "factual" data in some historical sources like actual journals, letters, and other written accounts about the settlement. Then this historical data was fictionalized in the form of a novel by the Australian novelist Thomas Keneally in his historical novel *The Playmaker* (1987). Then in 1988, the (hi)story was renarrated by Wertenbaker, this time in the dramatic genre, with the title *Our Country's Good*. Thus, from the very beginning of the audience's/reader's encounter with Wertenbaker's play onwards, the narrative concepts of rewriting

and intertextuality come emphatically to the foreground as powerful reminders of the concepts of the multilayered nature of human experience, perception, and reality, of the plurality of viewpoints, of polyphony, and of the multiplicity of narratives and representation of phenomena. This strongly underlined intertextual context keeps the audience's/reader's attention on the existence of many other (latent) perspectives, stories and histories, including those of the oppressed, silenced, dispossessed and marginalized ones; in other words, those of the convicts, those of the female members of the convict community, those of the native Aboriginal people of the territory, and also those of the environment, still waiting to be (re) written.

From that aspect, a comparative study including all of the above mentioned historical, (auto)biographical, epistolary, fictional/literary/dramatic resources –the historical records, journals, letters, and other material together with the novel and the play– would provide a thoroughly extensive research covering all the dimensions of the subject. However, here, in accordance with the main theme ("identities") and within the spatial limits and requirements of focus of this collection of essays, the scope of this article will, leaving that kind of an all-inclusive analysis to another wider study, be limited to a critical analysis of the dramatic narrative version of the (hi) story: the play *Our Country's Good* by Timberlake Wertenbaker. For Wertenbaker's plays are especially, in Susan Carlson's words, "often about the making of identity" (Carlson, 1993: 268). They show "her abiding concern with the displacement of peoples and the shifting faultlines of cultural identity", "a planet on the move and a complex web of overlapping identities" (Peter Buse, 2003). And in this play, Wertenbaker "use[s] history to examine and critique the ways in which identity, especially gender and class identity, is created in contemporary society", as Verna N. Foster remarks (Foster, 98/99: 256). This dramatic version of the (hi)story is particularly relevant

in this context because the form of a play in general and especially the device of "a play within a play", or, in Carlson's words, "the play's double theatricality" (Carlson, 1993: 278), offer a continual emphasis on the issue of acting and, consequently, on (temporarily) becoming different selves as well as on the relationship between the self and the identities/social roles he/she performs. Moreover, the fact that the processes of rehearsing and playing different roles are presented as an effective medium of discussing and questioning the making and unmaking of identities in Wertenbaker's play provides a particularly appropriate and productive framework in this regard.

Accordingly, the focal points of discussion in the following pages will be the processes of the construction and maintenance of identities, social roles and positions by the dominant socio--political/economic powers; the inequalities and injustices in these processes of identity formation; the significant issues of raising/gaining awareness about and exposing and invalidating the working mechanisms of those processes; and the function of linguistic, discursive, representational and artistic act(ivitie)s in relation to them – as exemplified and examined in Wertenbaker's play.

The article will analyse in detail how, as these convict-actors/actresses (accompanied by the few officers who contribute to and support the production) prepare for, discuss and play their parts and (anxiously and tentatively) experience the identities of socio--culturally, economically and hierarchically very different characters, the theme of the constructedness of many social positionings comes emphatically to the foreground. The theme will be discussed by tracing the convicts' gradually increasing awareness of the social, political, economic, historical and ideological mechanisms constructing social positions, relations and identities; of the artificial and thus questionable, challengeable and changeable nature of these constructions; and of the vital importance of being able to have a voice and to speak and the function of linguistic and artistic

devices of (self)expression as a means of achieving this voice. The emphasis will be on the role of language, speech, representation and narratives not only as tools of constructing but also of deconstructing and invalidating oppressive and unjust social roles and systems as well as identities and, in David Ian Rabey's words, "patriarchal--imperial impositions" (Rabey, 1990: 518). Following Wertenbaker's points of emphasis, special attention will be paid to the power and benefits of cultural, intellectual and creative engagements –as exemplified not only by the positive results brought about by the convicts' ivolvement in them (whatever aims the authorities might have had in their minds while allowing this involvement) but also by the kind of extensive awareness that Wertenbaker's play provides her audience/readers/us with.

The quotation that the playwright gives before the main body of the text of the play, in other words, the paragraph that Wertenbaker chooses as her epigraph, needs to be taken into consideration and discussed in detail since it is especially significant for the introduction of the main concerns of the play (even though it is available only to the "reader" of the script and not to the spectators of the stage performance). It is a quotation from a sociological study on education, which presents some remarkable data on how strongly an individual's intellectual, creative, and emotional performance and success are linked to the encouraging attitude as well as the opportunities he/she receives:

> Twenty per cent of the children in a certain elementary school were reported to their teachers as showing unusual potential for intellectual growth. The names of these twenty per cent of the children were drawn by means of a table of random numbers, which is to say that the names were drawn out of a hat. Eight months later these unusual or 'magic' children showed significantly greater gains in IQ than did the remaining children who had

> not been singled out for the teachers' attention. The change in the teachers' expectations regarding the intellectual performance of these allegedly 'special' children had led to an actual change in the intellectual performance of these randomly selected children ... who were also described as more interesting, as showing greater intellectual curiosity and as happier. (Wertenbaker, *Our Country's Good*, 1988, introductory pages)

The quotation is taken from *Pygmalion in the Classroom* (1968) by Robert Rosenthal and Lenore Jacobson and the title of the book indicates that the case of Pygmalion, the protagonist of one of the most renowned Greek myths, is considered as parallel to the life--changing experiences observed in the defined classroom.

As widely known (especially through its Roman version in Book Ten of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*), Pygmalion is a sculptor from Cyprus, who carves a statue of a woman out of ivory and who, on finishing it and seeing its perfection, falls deeply in love with it. He treats the statue as if it were a real human being, as if it were a real woman, as if it were his beloved; with extreme admiration, care and affection. In the end, through the constructive interference of Aphrodite, the statue comes to life, becomes a real, living, flesh and blood woman. The sculptor's loving and tender expectations and behaviour result in the fulfilment of his wish.

Here, it should be pointed out that the model of male-female relationship presented in this myth, no doubt, is also clearly open to criticism from the aspect that it obviously reflects just another version and reproduction of the dominant patriarchal discourse of creating an ideal woman for or (re)shaping a woman completely in accordance with the male's desire; like manufacturing an object of male gaze, statically, beautifully and silently standing there. For it is also known that Pygmalion experiences this process of creating an ideal woman for himself after he has had some serious disappointments in his

life with some real, flesh and blood local women, whose "loose morals" he condemns:

> Because Pygmalion had witnessed these women leading reproachful lives and repulsed by the defects nature had bestowed in such abundance upon the female character, he took to living as a single man without a wife. For a long time he was deprived of a companion for his bedchamber. During this time he carved snow white ivory with propitiously wondrous artistry, giving it shape, a beauty with which no woman can be born. He conceived a love for his own work. (James, 2011: 10)

However, at this point, leaving the discussion of this disputable aspect to a later and relevant section in the pages below and following the underlined themes in Wertenbaker's play, first the much more positive concept known as the "Pygmalion effect" or the "self-fulfilling prophesy", in other words, the power of positive expectations, as discussed by Rosenthal and Jacobson will be examined in detail.

Wertenbaker's choice of this quotation as her epigraph (and the consequent direct reference to the Pygmalion effect or self--fulfilling prophesy) functions as a strong introductory emphasis on the main concern of the play, that is, the theme of the potential improvements that can be achieved by the disadvantaged if they are surrounded by a constructive and encouraging attitude, as exemplified by the experiences of the convict actors/actresses. The special device through which this effect or self-fulfilling prophesy can be achieved so effectively in the case of the disadvantageous subjects in Wertenbaker's play is defined as the collective experience of cultural and artistic involvements: the theatrical event.

Our Country's Good, in which the playwright presents the above given (hi)story (the events and the characters) through a combination

of factual/historical and fictional elements, opens with the dismal situation of the convicts. The convicts are depicted as suffering from a physical, social and psychological sense of dislocation, exclusion, and the increasingly violent and dehumanizing treatment that they are subjected to erasing all their sense of self-worth. There is this tone of harshness not only in the relationship between the officers and the convicts but among the convicts themselves as well. In fact, there is sheer violence in the very opening scene of the play in which the first words that the audience hears are uttered by one of the officers, the Second Lieutenant Ralph Clark, as he counts the lashes while one of the convicts, Robert Sideway, is being flogged: "Fourty-four, forty-five, forty-six ..." (Wertenbaker, 1998: 1). Moreover, throughout the play there is the implication that the crimes for which the convicts were transported and punishments inflicted might not sometimes be proportionate and just. While B.H. Fletcher reminds that "Historians no longer regard them as the innocent victims of adverse social conditions and a harsh penal code" (Fletcher, 1967: 4), Christiane Bimberg, for example, states that "the convicts have been sentenced to absurdly high penalties for comparatively insignificant crimes without mitigating circumstances being allowed for" (Bimberg, 1997/98: 409-410). It is stated in the introductory notes to the script that "[f]our fifth of all transportation was for 'offences against property'" – as in the case of a twenty-year-old forest dweller convicted of highway robbery side by side with a seventy-year-old person who stole "twelve pounds of Gloucester cheese" or a "nine-year-old chimney sweep" convicted of "breaking and entering a dwelling house and stealing 1 linen shirt ... 5 silk stockings ... 1 pistol ... and 2 aprons" (*Our Country's Good*, introductory notes).

In such a tough atmosphere of frustration, desperation and suffering, Captain Arthur Phillip, the Governor-in-Chief of New South Wales, is introduced: A character who, in contrast to some

of the strictly conservative, discouraging and discriminatory officers, throughout the play expresses his views on the necessity of "educating" the convicts and thus "redeeming" them instead of inflicting severe punishment. Making references to thinkers, philosophers and prominent figures in history, he introduces his ideas on the notions of justice, crime and punishment and equal opportunities. His references to Jean Jacques Rousseau's ideas, for instance, which he mentions while expressing his belief in the inborn goodness of man, who may then be corrupted by the wrong in society, or to Socrates's statement "that a slave boy can learn the principles of geometry as well as a gentleman" exemplify his constructive attitude in this regard: "When he treats the slave boy as a rational human being, the boy becomes one, he loses his fear, and he becomes a competent mathematician. A little more encouragement and he might become an extraordinary mathematician" (Wertenbaker, 1998: 57). Even though there is no questioning or criticism of the existence of a system in which there are "slaves" and "masters", still it is significant that he draws attention to the potentialities of the human being regardless of his/her social status.

Thinking that "the convicts ... are already being punished by their long exile" (Wertenbaker, 1998: 18), and with his belief in the "intelligence... goodness, talent, the innate qualities of human beings" (Wertenbaker, 1998: 57), he expresses his tendency and intention to give an opportunity to those disadvantaged people – and to bring about results that may be defined in terms of the Pygmalion effect. His comments on the case of one of the convicts, Liz Morden, who is waiting to be hanged for a crime she actually has not committed and who is completely unwilling to communicate with those around her –not even just to defend and, consequently, perhaps to be able to rescue herself– reflect the same attitude: "How do we know what humanity lies hidden under the rags and filth of a mangled life? I

have seen soldiers given up for dead, limbs torn, heads cut open, come back to life. If we treat her as a corpse, of course she will die" (Wertenbaker, 1998: 58).

While defining his own position in this context, Arthur Phillip asks "What is a stateman's responsibility?" and the answer that he himself gives is:

> To ensure the rule of law. But the citizens must be taught to obey that law of their own will. I want to rule over responsible human beings, not tyrannise over a group of animals. I want there to be a contract between us, not a whip on my side, terror and hatred on theirs. (Wertenbaker, 1998: 59)

His awareness of and disturbance with the dehumanizing and destructive effects of the violence permeating their small community there become clearer as he, commenting on the case of one of the convicts who has been sentenced to two hundred lashes for trying to escape, says: "It will take time for him to see himself as a human being again" (Wertenbaker, 1998: 57).

At one point, on hearing the comment of Captain Watkin Tench, one of the most conservative and oppressive officers, that "There is much excitement in the colony about the hangings. It's their theatre" (Wertenbaker, 1998: 4), Arthur Phillip says "I would prefer them to see real plays: fine language, sentiment" and thus comes the idea of the play: He suggests that these prisoners put a play on stage.

Theatre, which for Phillip is "an expression of civilization", will encourage the convicts "to think in a free and responsible manner" (Wertenbaker, 1998: 21). He believes that the participation of these convicts, or this "colony of wretched souls" as he calls them at one point (Wertenbaker, 1998: 58), in a theatrical activity can turn them into a more civilized community.

Yet, this activity, which Esther Beth Sullivan calls "a kind of experiment in social engineering" (Sullivan, 1993: 142), will obviously also help the establishment of a more proper sort of colony, which will act in conformity with the requirements of the colonial British Empire. It is significant, in this context, that the play is planned to be performed on –and as a celebration of– the King's birthday on 4 June 1789. Thus, what Ann Wilson defines as the "problematic nature of Phillip's position" (Wilson, 1993: p.33), namely his humanistic concerns going side by side with his efforts to contribute to the continuation of the oppressive colonial system, is becoming clearer: "A play is a world in itself, a tiny colony we could say", he remarks (Wertenbaker, 1998: 60). Delores Ringer comments that "The Governor ... uses theatre as a way to colonize the convicts, just as disease, guns and the destruction of their environment will serve to colonize the Aborigines" (Ringer, 2012).

The play that the convicts will stage is an eighteenth-century comedy, *The Recruiting Officer*, which was written by the Irish playwright George Farquhar and first produced in London in 1706. It presents two interwoven themes of, on the one hand, a romance of two couples (Plume and Sylvia, Worthy and Melinda) and the lives and acts of some members of the military life of the time, depicted through a critical yet comical perspective, on the other. So, ironically, these convicts, who live in miserable circumstances and some of whom are just expecting their looming executions, are going to act in a comedy. And they start despite the strong rejections from some of the officers.

Major Robbie Ross, for example, is only one of those who show very strong objection to the idea of allowing the convicts to deal with theatre. He, with all his discriminatory and prejudiced attitude, is not only against the idea of bringing criminals into contact with a play and bringing the officers and the convicts together on the same platform and thus on the same level; he is not only against

the cooperation between the hierarchically very different groups of convicts and officers, but he is also against –in his own words– the "Irishness" of the playwright Farquhar ("An Irishman! I have to sit there and listen to an Irishman!") and the –again in his own mistaken words– the "Frenchness" of Rousseau ("A Frenchman! What can you expect? We're going to listen to a foraging Frenchman now", Wertenbaker, 1998: 18, 20). Similarly, being Jewish means being guilty in his view ("You are Jewish ... you are guilty" he says to Wisehammer, a Jewish convict. Wertenbaker, 1998: 52). Being a woman too is, in his view, another one of those inborn sources of inferiority: He calls the women convicts "[f]ilthy, thieving, lying whores" (Wertenbaker, 1998: 18). As will be seen later on, when one of the convicts, Liz Morden, is accused of stealing from the colony's food and is consequently condemned to death by hanging, the decision is made based on the testimony of a drunken soldier, whose words Ross considers more reliable than those of a sober female convict. On hearing Ralph Clark's words that this drunken soldier may not be telling the truth, Ross shows a sharp reaction to Ralph's "taking the word of a convict against the word of a marine" (Wertenbaker, 1998: 83). He claims that "order will become disorder" if this theatrical event is allowed (Wertenbaker, 1998: 25). Theatre, obviously, is a threat to all the discriminatory, oppressive and unjust ideas that shape all his attitude.

Similarly, for Captain Watkin Tench, for instance, who is another one of the officers objecting to the play and who is openly against Phillip's ideas that the convicts can be educated and reformed, theatre is "an unnecessary waste" (Wertenbaker, 1998: 23) and staging a play with the participation of the convicts means "having convicts laugh at officers" (Wertenbaker, 1998: 21). According to his completely deterministic and essentialist view, "the criminal tendency is innate" (Wertenbaker, 1998: 4); a criminal is a criminal and a savage is a savage: "Many criminals seem to have been born that

way. It is in their nature ... It is like the savages here. A savage is a savage because he behaves in a savage manner. To expect anything else is foolish" (Wertenbaker, 1998: 18, 19).

Yet the Governor, Arthur Phillip, for whom "[s]urely they can also be reformed" (Wertenbaker, 1998: 18), is still determined to go on with his project although he is also aware that this event may not be so very effective after all: "Won't change much, but it is the diagram in the sand that may remind – just remind the slave boy –. Do you understand?", he says to Ralph Clark, who is going to direct the play; "We may fail. I may have a mutiny on my hands. They are trying to convince the Admiralty that I am mad" (Wertenbaker, 1998: 59).

However, whether the Governor's aim of strengthening an act of colonialism –going also side by side with his more humanistic concerns– will work as planned is a question. For there is also the possibility that this act of bringing the convicts into contact with art, with acts of creative and critical thinking, especially in that specific historical/geographical background, may bring about what Verna N. Foster defines as "the twin impulses of subversion and conformity" (Foster, 1997/1998: 421).

There is, first of all, the very important fact that this totally new environment –an almost "extraterrestrial territory" in Bimberg's words (Bimberg, 1997/98: 410)– unfamiliar both to the convicts and the officers, combined with this unusual encounter of all the characters within the context of a collective artistic production, turns out to provide a different platform where the previously very strict boundaries tend to become blurred, even if with tiny steps. As Bimberg states:

> The colony dilemma (heavy physical and mental pressures on gaolers and prisoners alike; cultural, social and ethnic dislocation) in fact intersects the whole *colony* and crosses the boundaries

> made so far by social and gender determinations. Under the conditions given and for a limited span of time the cultural and social differences usually separating officers and convicts in England are diminished in that "extraterrestrial" territory because both groups are far from being homogeneous in themselves and because the members of both groups are uprooted and dislocated alike. (Bimberg, 1997/98: 410)

Carlson, similarly, draws attention to the fact that this is a settler colony: "The word 'settler' itself is telling, since it characterizes the main characters of the play as people who have *come from somewhere else* and mean to stay, not as people who carry with them British positions of class and power (i.e., convicts or military officers). The term 'settler' also obscures the hierarchy ... between the two groups of Britons" (Carlson, 1993: 280). Thus in that "extraterrestrial territory", where "the old social, gender, moral, professional and ethnic identities have been overcome and ... redefinitions of identity are emerging" (Bimberg, 1997/98: 412), and under the guidance of the Second Lieutenant Ralph Clark directing the play, the convicts start the rehearsals.

As the convicts start to imagine what it could be like to be someone else; as they start to "inhabit" other lives, in Rabey's words (Rabey, 1990: 525); as they start to vicariously experience the identities of the more privileged members of society while they are acting (as the poor plays and thus experiences the identity of the wealthy, as the female plays the part of male figures, as the officer plays side by side with the convict); and especially because of "the multiple and cross-gender casting" in their performance (Carlson, 1993: 284), in other words, since some of the characters play more than one character and even more than one gender, they increasingly gain awareness about the fact that their socio--culturally disadvantageous positions and who they are and how

they live are not their unchangeable fate but the production, the writing, the fiction of certain socio-cultural, historical, and material circumstances.

The themes, characters, and events in the play that the convicts are preparing to stage, Farquhar's *The Recruiting Officer*, are particularly suitable to contribute to the convicts' process of gaining awareness about, and a more consciously critical perspective on, the issues of class and gender inequalities and the concepts of country, national ties and one's relationship to his/her country. For Farquhar's play, in which, in Jeremy Cooper's words, "a range of comic characters ... portrays –with gentle satire– the huge differences in wealth and social standing in an 18th century town; and Farquhar portrays the very human weaknesses of military 'heroes'" (Cooper, 2015), introduces to the convict actors/actresses a platform where there are so many characters (with their incomparably superior social positions) and their models of behaviour that are completely open to questioning and far from being ideal. The convicts, in Bimberg's words, "take on roles of socially far superior characters who behave in morally doubtful ways in the play, however" (Bimberg, 1997/98: p.411). *The Recruiting Officer* depicts the pragmaticization and commercialization of male-female relationships and of marriage, the use and abuse of human beings, especially of women, the complicated and doubtful practices in the fields associated with heroic notions, the military life, patriotism, and voluntary self-sacrifice for "one's country's good": "Farquhar's play is about gently debunking national heroes, showing them as vulnerable and not entirely honourable human beings", says Cooper. In that context, Alexander Feldman too, similarly comments that "it is her [Wertenbaker's] concern with the formation of national and cultural identities that links *Our Country's Good* to the *Recruiting Officer*". (Feldman, 2013: 152)

Especially when the convict actors/actresses play the roles of the characters who in Farquhar's play already perform cross-gender acts

of disguise –for example, when a convict actress plays the role of a lady in Farquhar's play who, in *The Recruiting Officer*, disguises as a male– there emerge even a much wider and more effective space and distance, from where the fictionality, arbitrariness and artificiality of gender and class roles can be discussed. Farquhar's play, in Cooper's words, is also "about what happens when women gain certain attributes (money in Melinda's case, man's clothing in Silvia's case) that enable them to behave (almost) as men" (Cooper, 2015).

This increasing awareness is especially very significant for the case of the female convicts, who are doubly disadvantaged, doubly discriminated, used and abused, objectified. At one point, for instance, when one of the convict actresses, Mary Brenham (playing the leading role, Lady Silvia in Farquhar's play), is worried that she cannot play the part of a lady like Silvia, another female convict, Dabby Briant, is quick to remind her of two significant points: First of all that the strikingly different circumstances of the convict Brenham and the lady that she will play the part of should never be ignored; and then that an actress, while playing a character on the stage, does not have to "be" the character that she plays; she should only "present" her (Wertenbaker, 1998: 30-31). As their rehearsals progress, Briant herself, dissatisfied with the character of the patriarchally portrayed traditional female figure she is asked to play the part of (a country maid who is expected to "entice" a man and who is expected "to blush"), asks for the role of a male character in Farquhar's play. Though Mary Brenham, while playing Silvia who disguises as a man in *The Recruiting Officer*, hesitantly complains that "It's difficult to play a man. It's not the walk, it's the way you hold your head. A man doesn't bow his head so much and never at an angle" (Wertenbaker, 1998: 78).

Among all these discussions of the (potential) identities that one can "perform", Judith Butler's concept of "gender performativity" and the concept of "identity as performance" become more and

more relevant to explain the situation on two levels reinforcing one another: On the one hand, there is the strong theoretical emphasis on the concept of identity not as an unchanging essence, an intrinsic and stable quality that one is born with but as a continuous process of formation, a series of changing responses given to changing contexts, a series of performances acted under various circumstances (in a way similar to the Lacanian concept of the self being constantly (re) produced by the gaze of the other). Also, on the other hand, there is the obvious fact that these convicts are gaining this awareness about the mechanisms of identity construction as they really –literally, physically, in the theatrical sense– do *perform* various identities on the stage. Butler, whose Derridean deconstruction of all fixed categories of identity is very significant in this context, states that:

> The act that one does, the act that one performs, is, in a sense, an act that has been going on before one arrived on the scene. Hence, gender is an act which has been rehearsed, much as a script survives the particular actors who make use of it, but which requires individual actors in order to be actualized and reproduced as reality once again. (Butler, 1990: 277)

When the convict Dabby Bryant tells her reluctant and hesitant fellow convict-actress not to worry about playing the role of a lady, there actually starts, as Foster points out (Foster, 1997/98: 424), a discussion of the Stanislavskian (representational) approach to acting –that is, to "be" a character, trying to make the audiences believe in the reality of what is going on on the stage– versus the Brechtian (presentational) understanding of acting –that is, to speak the lines of a character with a distance, drawing attention to the fictionality and constructedness of what is going on on the stage (with a constant awareness of the multiplicity and changeability of characters).

Similarly, another female character, Liz Morden, who, as mentioned above, is decided to be hanged for a crime that she actually did not commit but does not just declare her innocence in this subject in a stubbornly taciturn manner just because she can no longer find any meaning in speaking, breaks her silence following her involvement in their collective artistic event and theatrical exercises with new/different identities. And she starts to speak:

> Phillip: Why wouldn't you say any of this before? ... Why Liz?
> Liz: Because it wouldn't have mattered.
> Phillip: Speaking the truth?
> Liz: Speaking. (Wertenbaker, 1998: 82)

She speaks; defends herself; and is rescued. She speaks, telling not only that she did not commit the alleged crime but also narrating all her tragic story in detail concretizing the socio--culturally and materially explicable causality of the course of one's life and experiences versus the strictly essentialist and deterministic explanations of the conservative officers decontextualizing and dehistoricizing human beings and their behaviour.

Another female convict in whose life the element of "silence" has a determining effect is Duckling Smith. She keeps silent as a means of showing resistance to the patriarchal oppression and constant control inflicted on her by the man she lives with now, Midshipman Harry Brewer, whose position is somewhere between the officers and the convicts. Duckling Smith's suffering is not only caused by the miserable past she has lived and was imprisoned for but also by this current, continuous, oppressive male gaze of Brewer who tries to control each single moment of her life due to his extreme and unhealthy jealousy. Brewer too suffers heavily from a sense of guilt because of the executions he has had to carry out in the convict community and, in the end, dies tragically following a complete

psychological disintegration. That it is only after his death that Smith can break her silence and even express her words of love for Brewer shows the huge harm done by all kinds of patriarchal and class oppressions on the victim and the victimizer alike. Later on, through her participation in the theatrical production, she both starts to speak and to be a part of the convict community from whom she was isolated before. Moreover, her pain caused by her loss creates an atmosphere of support and solidarity among the other convicts during the rehearsals.

Another character who desperately needs to tell his tragic story, to express himself, to be heard and understood, and to be included in the company of the convict society is James Freeman, called "Ketch" in the convict community, who is (or rather, who has had to be) the hangman of the colony. While telling his whole unfortunate past to Ralph Clark, starting from his displacement from his Irish environment early in his life, he emphasizes the element of "chance" as the determining factor in his life: Condemned for having killed a sailor during a moment of chaos at the docks, he desperately tries to explain that he "wasn't even near the sailor who got killed" for breaking a strike at the docks and that "they caught five at random" and he "was among the five" (Wertenbaker, 1998: 37).

Being one of the five who were caught "at random" reminds the audience/reader of the randomly chosen children mentioned in the epigraph discussed in the opening pages of this study as an example of the workings of the Pygmalion effect. Though what James Freeman experiences is the complete opposite of the Pygmalion effect. It is a negative version of it, leading the randomly chosen one not to self-actualization as in the case of the "lucky" students, but to utter destruction. Then, having been told "hang or be hanged" (Wertenbaker, 1998: 37), he became the hangman of the colony and as a result has been very strongly rejected and hated by the rest of the convicts. Now in order to rescue himself

from this isolation, exclusion and hatred and to be accepted into the community, he desperately wants to be a part of the production. And at the end, through his inclusion in the process of this collective cultural production, he can little by little find an opportunity for self-expression and dialogue. His case, as he increasingly finds the opportunity to express himself, makes it clear that what he mentions as the element of "chance" is actually very much related to the material circumstances of an unjust social system based on a lack of equal opportunities.

Although there have been harshness, aggression and hostility in the relationship among the convicts themselves, the collective process of producing a play gradually brings about some instances of empathy and solidarity in their treatment of one another. A remarkable example to this is the scene in which, on being the target of one of Major Ross's extremely cruel, violent and dehumanizing physical and psychological attacks during one of their rehearsals, the convicts –Sideway, Briant, Brenham and Arscott– defy his attack collectively through acting, through theatre, through, in Ann Wilson's words, an "act of non-violent resistance" (Wilson, 1991: 25). As Sullivan states, "After literally fighting the play into existence, the convicts do acquire a new sense of self-worth and community. Through the collaborative process of theatre, a positive and collective identity takes the place of isolated self-loathing" (Sullivan, 1993: 142). Similarly, Wilson, who draws attention to the "theatre as an important therapeutic tool", comments that "the rehearsal process creates a community of players which allows the convicts, who are ostensibly anti-social, to begin to rebuild their social identities" (Wilson, 1991: 24). Even though the changes and their influences on their community are no doubt limited, these tiny steps are significant and inspirational for the dismal circumstances of the convicts. It reminds them that "Whilst there is life there is hope" (Farquhar, Act 2, Scene 2), to use a sentence

from Farquhar's play, uttered by Lady Silvia, the character that Mary Brenham plays the part of.

Another significant point in the play is the emerging interest of the Second Lieutenant Ralph Clark, who directs and also acts in the play that they put on stage, in a female convict, Mary Brenham, and their following relationship. It is important because before their collective involvement in the play, he was completely ignorant of and humiliating to the female convicts. ("How can you treat such women with kindness?" he was asking then and his reaction to the idea of convict women playing the roles of ladies was expressed in his deploring question "How could a whore play Lady Jane" (Wertenbaker, 1998: 8). Even though his participation in the production of the play as the director was originally motivated by his desire to be noticed, appreciated and promoted by his superiors, his involvement gradually becomes deeper and more humane. As they progress in their collective cultural production, the positive change in his attitude to the convicts becomes noteworthy. In his own words:

> ... in just a few hours, I have seen something change... these women who behave often no better than animals ... they seemed to acquire a dignity ... they seemed to lose some of their corruption... but in a small way this could affect all the convicts and even ourselves". (Wertenbaker, 1998: 22)

However, to go back to the dual implications of the Pygmalion narrative that have been mentioned briefly in the opening pages of this study, there are a couple of levels to be taken into consideration in Clark's emerging relationship with Mary Brenham: From one aspect, there is the obvious and very positive fact that the more respectful, civilized and humane attitude that the convicts start to receive during this collective cultural activity brings about a positive response from the convict community which can be defined in terms

of the notion of self-fulfilling prophesy. Yet, on the other hand, it is also obvious that what Ralph Clark does here is actually to recreate Mary Brenham according to his own desire, to appropriate and civilize her before he could accept her (no doubt, with certain limitations) into his life.

Clark is depicted as a man with some rigid and artificial definitions and categorizations in his mind about women, seeing them, in Wilson's words, "either as whores – the convict women ... – or as the Madonna – his wife" (Wilson, 1991: 25). There are on one side, women like his wife back in England, whose picture he takes out and kisses periodically at set times almost as part of a religious ritual, similar to his habit of taking out and reading the Bible – an idealized, spiritualized model of woman; adorable and suitable to be the object of a man's dreams; almost non-physical:

> Ralph: I've never looked at the body of a woman before.
> Mary: Your wife?
> Ralph: It wasn't right to look at her. (Wertenbaker, 1998: 79)

On the other side, there are the convict women who are, at least early in his encounter with them, despicable and almost inhuman in his view:

> While this division certainly distances Clark from women because whores are too sullied to touch while madonnas are too pure, it is important to recognize how this way of seeing women reinforces and perpetuates class distinctions: working class women are whores; middle and upper class are madonnas. (Wilson, 1991: 25-26)

However, this complex encounter of those who have previously been rigidly separated by social, cultural, gender, ethnic and

national boundaries but are now unusually and inevitably sharing some very basic concrete and abstract circumstances and situations enables even unexpected developments. This process of performing a collective creative activity, this new language, this new mode of communication and relationship also have a reforming effect on Clark liberating him from some of the more abstract kinds of imprisonment, as Wilson too points out: "Through his relationship with Brenham, which is, strictly speaking, illegal, Clark is freed from the imprisoning ideology of sentimentality, and so comes to recognize women as sexual beings who are not simply desired but desire" (Wilson, 1991: 26). Wertenbaker shows "theatre liberating those who are imprisoned, either literally, as are the convicts, or metaphorically, as is Ralph Clark" (Wilson, 1991: 29). Yet, despite these considerable changes, there is no place for much optimism or idealizations: As their relationship begins and they tell each other about their dreams for the future, Clark tells Brenham that if they have a baby girl, they will call her Betsey Alicia, which is the name of Clark's wife back in England.

On the other hand, the figure of Mary Brenham is also one of the characters in the play that exemplify and underline the complexity and difficulty of any attempt to recover from the effects of the established oppressive and unjust systems and ideologies. In conformity with Louis Althusser's explanation of the workings of ideology, which "represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence" (Althusser, 1971: 18), the inconfident and hesitant attitude of Brenham reflects the model of the individual who, according to the Althusserian explanation, has internalized the distorted version of his/her true "conditions of existence" under the strong influence of the dominant ideology and who is ready to believe that all the artificial and contradictory elements in his/her life are natural. Brenham feels guilty of her past experiences rather than questioning the harsh circumstances

that have victimized her. “I’ll never wash the sin away”, she lamens (Wertenbaker, 1998: 30).

In a way that can be explained through the Foucauldian concept of Panopticism, she herself confines her identity, her position, her capacities to areas and categories set by the oppressive power of the established system of binary oppositions and hierarchies. Michel Foucauld uses the concept of the Panopticon, which is a prison model that the English philosopher Jeremy Bentham designed in the late eighteenth century, in order to explain the processes of the internalization of the victimizing authority by those victimized in the modern times. Bentham’s prison model consisted of a central tower of observation surrounded by a ring of cells. The plan of this building allowed the guardian in the observation tower in the middle to see every detail of each single cell around him while the prisoners in those cells could not see the supervisor. For this reason, the prisoner cannot even know whether he/she is being watched at a particular moment. Consequently, he/she will always have to behave as if he/she is continuously being watched (even when there is nobody looking), as a result of which the prisoner cannot help contributing to his/her own process of continuous surveillance.

> By the effect of backlighting, one can observe from the tower, standing out precisely against the light, the small captive shadows in the cells of the periphery. They are like so many cages, so many small theatres, in which each actor is alone, perfectly individualized and constantly visible…)
>
> … to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power. So … the surveillance is permanent in its effect, even if it is discontinuous in its action … in short… the inmates should be caught up in a power situation of which they themselves are the bearers. (Foucault, 1977: 200-201)

This significant shaping mechanism that has a strong impact on the construction and maintenance of identities and human behaviour in society shows itself, for example, in the way Mary Brenham views and limits herself. Now, even when nobody tells her what her limits are, she herself, at some points, does it on their behalf, in accordance with the binary categories created by the hierarchically superior authorities/oppressors/victimizers. By accepting that she cannot act like a lady, that she cannot keep her head like a man, that she cannot avoid feeling always sinful, rather than questioning the unequal, unjust and extremely challenging conditions that have led to all those negativities in her life, she is actually acting in a way that the dominant ideology wants her to do.

Still, it is significant that, despite all her naive, shy and hesitant attitude, after she spends a certain time in this collective cultural production, towards the end of the play, she claims for the central place. When she and the other convict-actors/actresses are finalizing their preparations and are rehearsing the bow, she objects to another convict-actor's –Arscott's– claim to be in the middle: "No, Arscott", she says, "I'm in the middle" (Wertenbaker, 1998: 84). Her involvement in Wisehammer's act of writing a brand new prologue for Farquhar's play (which will be discussed in detail in the pages below) is also a noteworthy initiative showing the change and improvement in her stance.

This kind of ideological internalization of the unequal social structures by the victimized also shows itself in the case of Black Caesar, a black convict from Madagascar. On learning that a play is being put on with a cast consisting of the convicts, he too goes to Clark and tells him that he too wants to be included in the activity. When Clark tells him that there is no part for him, his answer reflects the fact that he has already, under the assimilatory power of the dominant ideology, naturalized his victim position:

> There is always a part for Caesar... I will play his servant... There is always a black servant in a play, Monsieur Lieutenant... I speak in French. That makes him a more high up gentleman if he has a French servant... (Wertenbaker, 1998: 46)

Now he, as the victim of this racially discriminatory system, sees and accepts the victimizer's idea that a black person is only suitable to play a servant as a fact. Later on, as he participates in the convicts' discussion of what it is to be English and the relation of the English language to Englishness, he says "I don't want to think English. If I think English I will die" (Wertenbaker, 1998: 54). Yet, it is through demonstrating his ability to speak the language of another colonizer –his ability to speak French– that he tries to convince Ralph Clark to give him a part in the play. Finally, when Clark cannot ignore his insistent wish to participate in the event, he is included in it: At the end of the play, when Wertenbaker's play is ending with a scene where the convicts' performance of Farquhar's play is beginning, Caesar too is seen on the stage. Yet his part is limited to an act which supports the cliché image of the black native: He is beating the drum.

Another character who experiences very significant changes is John Wisehammer, who is a Jew, and who, early in the play constantly tries to create a strong sense of "Englishness" particularly with his sophisticated, extremely conscious and meticulous use of and strong interest in the English language (to the extent that he used to study the words in Johnson's Dictionary) and by always expressing his wish to go back "home", to England, as soon as he finishes his conviction. He is strongly interested in words and his discussion of some particular English words reflect his basic concerns, fears, frustrations and yearnings in life: "friend, country, injustice, guilty-innocent, lonely, loveless"... He examines these words deeply and has certain comments on each of them. "Injustice", for

example, is "the ugliest word in the English language" in his view (Wertenbaker, 1998: 39). And his comments on the word "country" are particularly significant – in relation to both the prologue that he writes for Farquhar's play and the title of Wertenbaker's play, as will be discussed in detail in the following pages:

> Country can mean opposite things. It renews you with trees and grass, you go rest in the country, or it crushes you with power: you die for your country, your country doesn't want you, you're thrown out of your country. (Wertenbaker, 1998: 38)

As he becomes more and more involved in the production of the play, in their collective discussions throughout their rehearsals, and in the complex and extremely hard and challenging stages that they go through all this while, his questionings start to cover his own previously-unquestioned sense of belonging to England too. In the end, he, who claims that "[a] play should make you understand something new" (Wertenbaker, 1998: 74), does understand something new: He understands that he actually does not belong to the country that he left behind. He gradually faces his real circumstances – namely, the fact that he does not actually want to go back to that place where he was constantly discriminated and which actually exiled him. He then decides to be a writer, settle in that new land and write a play about "justice" (Wertenbaker, 1998: 86).

> I don't want to go back to England now. It's too small and they don't like Jews. Here, no one has more of a right than anyone else to call you a foreigner. I want to become the first famous writer. (Wertenbaker, 1998: 85)

Moreover, he performs a radical act of criticism on the whole system he has/they have suffered from by writing a brand new

"prologue" to the play that they are staging, that is, to Farquhar's *The Recruiting Officer*. The prologue that he writes for the play and offers to the director Clark is a satirical response to their transportation from Britain to Australia. As Foster emphasizes, it is "bitterly ironic" (Foster, 98/99: 255):

> From distant climes o'er wide-spread seas we come,
> Though not with much éclat or beat of drum,
> True patriots all; for be it understood,
> We left our country for our country's good;
> No private views disgraced our generous zeal,
> What urg'd our travels was our country's weal,
> And none will doubt but that our emigration
> Has proved most useful to the British nation. (Wertenbaker, 1998: 89)

Yet Ralph Clark, as the director, finds this prologue "too political" and cannot let him deliver it on the stage: "It is very good, Wisehammer, it's very well written, but it's too – too political. It will be considered provocative" (Wertenbaker, 1998: 90). However, it is significant that Wertenbaker chooses a phrase from this prologue, which she depicts as created by an oppressed and underprivileged character but rejected by the authority figure, as the title of her play: "We left our country for our country's good".

Therefore, Governor Arthur Phillip's idea of turning this hopeless, desperate group of people into proper members of the British colony thus ends up, in the case of some of the convicts, with its total opposite – presenting a clear example of Foster's previously mentioned concept of "the twin impulses of subversion and conformity" as the potential outcomes of these collectively experienced cultural and artistic practices and performance and these new, changed, reshaped modes of communication and relationship. On the one hand, the expectations of the authorities while allowing

this theatrical event were to a great extent linked to their colonial intentions of turning the convicts into not only good human beings but also good members of the colonial empire and celebrating the king's birthday. On the other hand, however, the situation is a perfect reminder of the fact that when it comes to getting in contact with the creative and intellectual processes of cultural and artistic activities which enables critical thinking, the results may not always be totally as predicted and under control. For many of the convicts here just end up questioning the ways of the system which they were actually supposed to be obedient and submissive members of and to celebrate.

Thus, linguistic, discursive, rhetorical and artistic devices are presented both as tools of domination and oppression (as when they are deployed by the colonial authorities) and also as a powerful means of questioning and subversion (as exemplified by the influence of the process of staging a play on the convicts). And this exemplifies more the Gramscian concept of hegemony, in which there is more place for the formation of a response to the dominant and determining structures, rather than the more rigid Althusserian concept of ideology, in which even the potential resistance and responses to the dominant structures are determined by these all--surrounding powerful circumstances. From that aspect, at the end of Wertenbaker's play, the convicts' standing up again and their regain of a sense of self-worth, which had formerly been erased by the humiliating, dehumanizing and extremely violent treatment that they were subjected to, are very important.

These are what the characters in Wertenbaker's play, mainly the convicts, start to see as they act and experience the identities/selves in Farquhar's play and as their consciousness, knowledge and perspectives become wider. These are what triggers some change and improvement in their attitudes and stance accordingly. However, there are also very crucial issues which, not only the oppressive

authority figures but also the convicts fail to see or which they tend to ignore, and yet which we, the audiences and readers of Wertenbaker's play *Our Country's Good*, see clearly: While the play provides a deep discussion of the ill-treatment that these displaced convicts suffer, there is also, on the other hand, a constant and sharp reminder of the existence of another painfully displaced, disturbed, terrorized, and fatally harmed character throughout the play: "A lone Aboriginal Australian".

This unnamed Aboriginal Australian makes only four appearances throughout the play, which underlines the most desperately silenced position of the colonized, of the original inhabitants of the place to where the convicts have been exiled. In his first two appearances he is just looking from a distance at, thinking aloud about and trying to make sense of the white men's existence on *his* land. On first seeing the white man's ship, he likens it to "a dream which has lost his way" and decides that it is "[b]est to leave it alone" (Wertenbaker, 1998: 2). In his second short speech, a tone of worry starts to emerge: "Some dreams lose their way and wander over the earth, lost. But this is a dream no one wants. It has stayed. How can we befriend this crowded, hungry and disturbed dream?" (Wertenbaker, 1998: 62). In his third appearance, we see him increasingly more anxious, seriously wondering who these people are and why they are there: "What do they need? If we can satisfy them, they will go back. How can we satisfy them?" (Wertenbaker, 1998: 69). And in his final and tragic appearance towards the end of the play, he, again at the back stage, horrified and desperate, is heard saying to himself (and to the audience of Wertenbaker's play): "Look: oozing pustules on my skin, heat on my forehead. Perhaps we have been wrong all this time and this is not a dream" (Wertenbaker, 1998: 83). This last appearance of the Aborigine as infected with and suffering from a disease unknown to him (and thus implied to be brought to the land by the colonizer) (Bimberg, 1997/98: 415) is indicative of

the devastating effects of colonialism on the whole land and on all its living inhabitants: "They come around the camp because they're dying: smallpox", says Ketch Freeman (Wertenbaker, 1998: 83).

The tone of the words that both the officers and the convicts use to define the environment expresses utter dislike, hostility, distance and unbelonging: It is defined as the "dark edge of the earth", a "stinking hole of hell" right at the beginning of the play by Wisehammer, for example (Wertenbaker, 1998: 1), or as an "iniquitous shore" by Ralph Clark (Wertenbaker, 1998: 7), as a "flat, brittle burnt--out country" by Dabby Briant (Wertenbaker, 1998: 29), a "foreign upside down desert" by Arscott, (Wertenbaker, 1998: 55), "a hellish hole" and a "scrub-ridden, dust-driven, thunder-bolted, savage-run, cretinous colony" by Ross (Wertenbaker, 1998: 80).

As Ringer states, although they are having huge and challenging difficulties in their relationship with this new environment, they do not think of taking advantage of the Aboriginal people's accumulation of knowledge: "Although Aborigines had led ecologically sustainable lives there for over 30,000 years, the first Europeans considered the land barely inhabitable, and they did not look to the Aborigines for either help or example" (Ringer, 2012). For the native people of the land are less than human in their view:

> Even at the end of the play hardly any honest efforts are made to look at the different culture of the new continent in a non--superior way. The officers rather view the scene with suspicion from a distance. Their attitudes range from looking at the natives as if they were insects to feeling endangered by the savages". (Bimberg, 1997/98: 413)

The inhabitants of this environment are automatically defined as "savages" by them all: Throughout the play, these aboriginal people are referred to as "savages", not only by the colonial

perspectives of the conservative and discriminatory officers in the colony, but also by the very victims of those discriminatory attitudes: namely, the convicts as well. Even after they have experienced (and are still experiencing) the tragic processes of class and gender discrimination, humiliation, exclusion; even after they have increasingly gained consciousness about the need for equal opportunities and rights; even after many of them express that this theatrical activity enables those involved in it to imagine what it could be like to be someone else; even after they have learnt about and started to practice little by little some empathy and solidarity; still, at the end of the play, there is no sign of understanding, respect or recognition in their perception of the Aboriginal "Others" on this foreign land.

Even for Mary Brenham, for example, the usual word to refer to the Aboriginal inhabitants is "savage": "Are the savages coming to see the play as well?" she asks (Wertenbaker, 1998: 83). Or, to give another example, the very first words that Arscott, another one of the convicts who has suffered, has been abused, deceived, harmed not by the Aboriginal people but by his very own people, utters on learning that the Aborigines are coming near their camp because of the tragic fact that they are "dying" of smallpox, can shockingly be "I hope they won't upset the audience" (Wertenbaker, 1998: 83). With this attitude, the convicts, who have themselves been shaped and reshaped by the oppressors' victimizing language, whose identities have been defined and fixed by the rulers' narratives based on fictional binary categories, cannot avoid now doing the same thing in their relationship with the racial other.

This is why Bimberg states that as the boundaries between the colonizers themselves are weakening, those between the colonizers and the Aboriginal people are simply increasing (Bimberg, 1997/98: 410, 415). Pointing out to the utterly desperate and tragic situation of the lonely Aborigine at the end of the play, Bimberg adds:

> Whereas the theatre experiment turns out to be a partial success for the colonisers (officers and convicts), the experiment of colonialism has to be regarded as a failure with regard to the extinction of the native culture and its representatives ... The aborigines have not yet taken up their role as historical agents instead of objects at the end of the play. (Bimberg, 1997/98: 414-415)

Therefore, there have been some criticisms that the crucial subjects of racial discrimination and colonialism have a secondary position in Wertenbaker's play (especially compared to Keneally's extensive treatment of them in his novel). Foster summarizes those criticisms as follows:

> Several academic critics, however, have noted some problematic erasures and unresolved tensions underlying the optimistic progress and triumphant conclusion of *Our Country's Good*. For one, Wertenbaker virtually abandons Keneally's presentation of colonization in favour of her own metatheatrical concerns. For another, the transformation *via* theatre, of the convicts as individuals and as a community that *Our Country's Good* celebrates can also be taken ... as a form of cultural colonialism. (Foster, 1997-1998: 417-418)

For similar reasons, Sullivan too observes what she calls an "ideologically naive" side in the play's treatment of these issues (Sullivan, 1993: 150). However, Foster herself, commenting on those criticisms, reminds that the metatheatrical focus allows Wertenbaker to foreground other forms of power relations:

> Discussions of theatre and theatrical role-playing among both officers and convicts and the whole process of casting, rehearsing, and finally performing Farquhar's play raise questions about

> power relations produced by cultural, social, and gender roles. Such questions serve as a critical counterpoint to the main theme of *Our Country's Good* –theatre's power to improve the lives of the oppressed– complicating but by no means negating Wertenbaker's endorsement of theatrical good. (Foster, 1997-1998: 418)

As it has been already discussed in detail so far, it is obvious that the focal perspective in Wertenbaker's version of the (hi)story mainly provides a discussion of the issues of the construction and maintenance of identities, socio-cultural positions, categorizations and hierarchies, the function and uses and abuses of language, narratives, representation and art in relation to them, and especially the empowering effects of theatre with regard to all these issues. And in this effort, there are not idealizations or an exaggerated depiction of the positive aspects. The play presents, to use Wilson's words, only "moment[s] of liberation" experienced by some members of the community (Wilson, 1991: 33). As Wertenbaker herself states:

> I don't think you can leave the theatre and go out and make a revolution. But I do think you can make people change, just a little, by forcing them to question something, or by intriguing them, or giving them an image that remains with them. And that little change can lead to bigger changes. (cited in Sullivan, 1993: 140)

The end of the play reveals that the positive changes and improvements that the convicts have achieved through their cultural practices are not still sufficient for them to perceive the reality of the Aborigines and of the white man's existence in their land and in relation to them. The solitary and deadly harmed Aborigine remains far away, completely isolated and without any communication, dialogue, interaction or contact with the white community. The play depicts that the oppressive exclusion and silence that he suffers

remain. It should also be taken into consideration that actually the very presence of the lonely Aborigine there at the back, in other words, the technique of depicting the utter isolation of this character whose voice cannot be heard by any of the characters in the play, with an emphasis on the suffocating and oppressive separation, loneliness and silence he has to endure, functions as a sharp medium of drawing attention to the very fact that he has been violently dislocated, discriminated, and colonized. It is a shocking reminder of the ultimate destructiveness of colonialism.

Especially within that emphasized tone of intertextuality (discussed in the opening pages of this study), within this framework of multiple voices and perspectives, within that wide web of pre--texts and inter-texts made up of many different (latent as well as actual) versions of this particular (hi)story, the striking need in the end to hear the voice and narratives of the silenced Aborigine too functions as only another reminder of the necessity for the dynamic process of adding more and more layers and perspectives to the (hi)story to continue. Thus, it becomes clearer that within this framework of play within a play, text within a text, story within a story; in terms of these circles of narratives one inside another, one outside another; while the convict actors and actresses (as well as some of the officers) in Wertenbaker's play experience a widening in their perspectives and an increasing awareness as a result of their encounter with processes of creative, intellectual and critical thinking; what they still cannot see or somehow tend to ignore is presented by Wertenbaker's play to "us, to the audiences/readers of her play". So the acts of adding more and more awareness-creating layers, more and more circles of perspectives and narratives may and must continue, ever widening, and always.

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Cailís mo chuid fola/ the chalice of my blood. Stigmatized Female Identity in Celia de Fréine's *Fiacha Fola*

Lillis Ó Laoire
National University of Galway

Abstract: The speaker in *Fiacha Fola* suffers from Hepatitis C, contracted through blood transfusions administered as a medical treatment during pregnancy. Through no fault of her own, her contaminated blood infects her quotidian life. Simple pleasures such as the rituals of courtship or the development of children fall under a grey pall of ill-health. The speaker's campaign to achieve redress in the aftermath of this cruel accident also features prominently. In this mordant collection of nearly 60 poems, a world-weary anger sustains a voice contemplating and commenting on disparity and unfairness that never yields to polemic. The poems consistently contrast the human dimension of women's lives with a bureaucracy struggling to contain and discredit its victims. Drawing on a wide range of references to build solidarity with women across time and cultures, the poems connect powerfully with the patriarchal oppression that pervades women's lives. They reject the stark unceasing conflicts waged on the site of their bodies by opposing ideologies that contribute to a continual

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stigmatization of female identity. Referencing the work of feminist critics such as Máire Mhac a' tSaoi, Susan Sontag, Sherry Ortner and Susan Hogan, this paper explores the ways in which the speaker in the poems recounts a tragedy that invokes 'shame and guilt in us' (Mhac a' tSaoi, 2004: 10) as readers of this powerful work.

Keywords: Culture, Medicine, Hegemony, Scandal, Hepatitis C, Poetry

The idea of illness as a metaphor is a compelling one, and one that in forms the collection of poetry *Fiacha Fola* that I will discuss in what follows. According to Susan Sontag, ethnic groups could be seen in terms of contagious diseases (Sontag, 1990: 82). Citing Mary Douglas (1966), she points out that people who pollute are invariably wrong (1990: 136) another idea that pervades this series of poems. I will argue here that such ideas express a kind of stigmatization of female identity. Through patriarchal systems of domination, women are treated as individuals with a compromised identity that resembles the dominant and correct male identity but that differs in some crucial aspects, notably in the power to give birth and to be mothers. This capacity differentiates them from males and marks them as inferior and ultimately unacceptable.

In case it might be thought that I am over-interpreting this idea, it may be as well to give a reminder of the status women have had in Ireland throughout much of the twentieth century, from the establishment of the State in the 1920s until advocacy groups campaigned successfully for change in the nineteen seventies. Women were accorded status as wives, mothers and homemakers in article 41.2 of de Valera's 1937 constitution, with punitive laws such as the 'marriage bar', prohibiting married women from working in the public service and in banks from 1932 to 1973, thus ensuring

that greater numbers of them remained in the home. This was one prominent example of the treatment of women as secondary inferior beings. Even in the home, their supposed sanctuary, women were not secure. Their husbands owned the property and could sell at will without any legal obligation to have their wives' welfare taken care of. Additionally, they could not collect their government children's allowance nor did they have free access to contraception. In the religious sphere, Catholic women who gave birth were subject to being 'churched' forty days after their confinement. That is, they were brought to church and in a special ritual were blessed so that they could rejoin the congregation. According to *New Advent,* this was considered a blessing and a thanksgiving for happy delivery and the bounty of God, but popularly a sense of shame often hung over the event, with the idea that the ritual represented a ceremonial cleansing not far under the surface. This idea also informs *Fiacha Fola*.

Rapid modernisation in Ireland from the nineteen sixties resulted in better living conditions for more people with women's rights cropping up as a significant issue then and in the decades that followed. Women's rights took significant leaps forward thanks to the work of activists who campaigned for changes in such harshly discriminatory legislation. By the eighties, it seemed as if things were improving, but women in Ireland, as everywhere, could not claim they had full equality. Although women had greater access to education and career opportunities than ever before, deeply entrenched patriarchal structures ensured that they were still often considered lesser beings, incapable of independence and suspect because of their bodies and their capacity for producing life – a deep contradiction given the special status accorded their role in the constitution. Although not unique to Ireland, or rather, the Free State and subsequently the Republic of Ireland, the Irish case is a particularly interesting manifestation of the workings of a patriarchy

that both deliberately and inadvertently ensures the circumscription of women's bodies and, consequently, bestows on them an inferior and stigmatized identity.

Sexuality and gender are key issues in understanding this question and the work of feminist critics can help elucidate how such stigmatization endures by examining the assumptions that underlie it. Developing de Beauvoir's proposal in *The Second Sex* Sherry Ortner argues that women, that by virtue of their being restricted by pregnancy, childbirth and nursing, 'seem to stand for everything that humanity (both men and women) is trying to escape and transcend.' (Ortner, 1996: 14). Ortner also argues that the rise of the state is paralleled by a corresponding rise in patriarchy, 'where the role of the father as an essentially political role emerges' (Ortner, 1996: 15). The idea that women's identity is a stigmatized one derives from Erving Goffman's work on stigma. Women's status as carriers of human suffering who embody the burdens from which humanity seeks to be released, places them in a stigmatized position. On the one hand, they share the dream of liberation from bodily frailties and debilities, while on the other, they represent the very epitome of such weaknesses.

According to Erving Goffman, a stigmatized identity is based on a contradiction. A person that belongs to a stigmatized group has a double identity, one that is encouraged to identify with the 'normal' group but that at the same time is considered different by that group (Goffman, 1968: 124). In our collection of poems the normal male identity is conceived through the patriarchal structures of kinship bonds, of religious affliations and their projected hegemonies duplicated and reinforced through the nation and the state. The idea of the State promotes the ideology that it serves the common good, the good of all its citizens. However, it is clear from de Fréine's poems that this is a fundamentally flawed idea, and that female identity, and indeed the female body, is seen as deviating from the

male norm. The State invested considerable resources in attempting to hide this error and did not take sufficient steps to prevent it. It attempted to mislead those who had suffered because of its neglect of their interests, so that some of the victims died as a result. The case of Brigid McCole received particular media attention at the time and when she died, before a ruling was given on her case, that proved to be a turning point in gaining attention and sympathy for the victims. The view that a female identity is a stigmatized identity that both conforms to and departs from normative male dominated dispositions pervades the pessimism in this collection of poetry.

Although this essay is concerned with the poetry as a response to the Hepatitis C scandal and not with the facts of the case, it is none the less instructive to have a summary of the events, which took place over a thirty year period. Here is a brief synopsis from Anne-Maree Farrell, who has written about the case from a legal and political point of view (2006, 166-7):

> In 1976, it first came to the attention of the Blood Transfusion Board of Ireland (BTSB) that one of the donors whose blood had contributed to a batch of Anti-D had been diagnosed with 'infective hepatitis.' Notwithstanding their knowledge of the episode, senior staff continued using the donor's blood in the manufacture of subsequent batches of Anti-D. In 1977, the BTSB were notified that a number of women who had received Anti-D had developed hepatitis. Senior staff at the BTSB attributed such diagnoses to 'environmental factors' and took no further action. A blood test to establish the presence of Hepatitis C became commercially available by the early 1990s. In 1991, senior staff at the BTSB that blood samples retained from the 1977 Anti-D incident were positive for Hepatitis C. Again, they elected to take no further action to investigate the matter. In a separate incident in the early 1990s, another donor's blood, which had tested

> positive for Hepatitis C but was believed by staff to be a 'false positive result' was used in the manufacture of multiple batches of Anti-D. In January 1994, a member of staff at a regional blood bank reported on a study she had conducted which showed a high incidence of women donors testing positive for Hepatitis C. The one thing they had in common was that they been administered Anti-D (Report of the Expert Group on the BTSB, 1995: Report of the Tribunal of Inquiry into the BTSB, 1997).

Farrell's account goes on to indicate that the Expert report published in 1995 pointed out clear mistakes were made by BTSB staff with significant departures from good medical and scientific practices concerning the production of Anti-D. A group called Positive Action, formed in 1994, sought redress for the Anti-D contamination which had inflicted Hepatitis C on so many women. The organisation had three demands 1. Full disclosure, 2. That compensation be given statutory recognition and 3. That government accept responsibility for what had happened. Brigid McCole, a Donegal mother of eleven, took a case against the government and had it listed for trial. The government continued to stall but when Mrs. McCole died in October 1996, just as her case was coming to trial, it brought the case into full focus in the media and in the public mind. Eventually, a tribunal investigated the matter between December 1996 and February 1997, exposing, according to Farrell, 'a seemingly callous disregard for women who had placed their trust in a state institution' (Farrell, 2006, 167).

Celia de Fréine's work in both the Irish and the English languages, often centres upon women's issues although her writing is not always specifically autobiographical. She is an award winning dramatist and script writer and has published two collections of poetry. De Fréine tackles insidious forms of patriarchy in her writing, revealing the ways that inequalities persist in modern Irish women's lives, despite

gains that give the appearance of their achievement of full equality. The idea of equality as a front for more deeply entrenched societal and cultural bias against women is well observed in *Fiacha Fola,* de Fréine's second collection of poetry, written in Irish and not so far translated. This volume concerns a single important episode in Irish public life, popularly 'regarded as one of the most shameful episodes in the Republic's medical history' (Mitchell and Sexton, 2014: 26). It is an event that began as a matter of medical and scientific interest only, but which, for a number of important reasons, linked to rapid changes occurring in Irish society, developed into a national scandal that resulted in an increase of public distrust in Government and its institutions (Farrell, 2006: 164-5).

The title *Fiacha Fola* gives a clear indication of the subject of this volume. This is an Irish language expression translated into English as 'blood debts.' The term may refers to those duties of care that relatives are expected to perform toward one another. The implication is that the poetry here is about family and its responsibilities, the obligations that a kinship unit carries to watch out for its members and ensure their wellbeing. Indeed, this is a significant theme in the collection. It relates the story of one woman's experience of her long term illness, Hepatitis C, a disease she contracted by having been injected with contaminated Anti--D. This blood product is given to mothers with Rhesus negative blood who are carrying Rhesus positive babies. The reactions that occur between mixing of rhesus positive and negative blood in the mother's blood stream can give rise to Rhesus disease, a dangerous condition with sometimes fatal consequences. The product known as anti-D prevents these difficulties from developing and is universally considered a safe and successful treatment for this condition.

In the case of *Fiacha Fola's* protagonist and narrator, who speaks in the first person in all fifty seven poems, the unintended but unavoidable consequence of her injection with the contaminated

blood product is the contraction of Hepatitis C. This imaginative response to a to 'a seemingly callous disregard for women' successfully comes to grips with one woman's experience of this debilitating condition over a period of 20 years or so, from 1980 to about the year 2000. The poetic voice is sustained, deftly deploying references from the period's contemporary and popular culture to help the reader date the unfolding of an impressionistic sequence of lyrics with this single focus.

The speaker's voice is that of a modern urban Irish-speaking woman, materially comfortable, well-educated and independent, used to her freedoms and, if not quite taking them for granted, accustomed to exercising them without question (Mhac a' tSaoi, 2004: 10). Her decision to marry and have children evokes joy and a sense of equality with her partner, a man that she has freely chosen as much as he has chosen her (de Fréine, 2004: 13). Hints of mutual agency, the joy in the equality of their choice, are, however, suffused with pathos, because the incompatibility of their blood types has given rise to this threat to their future. Enjoyment of an open air student performance of a miracle play transforms into a waking nightmare where the actors appear as victims of a plague transmitted by fleas on the shroud as they proclaim the moment of resurrection. This premonition prompts the speaker to return a borrowed cloak to her friend the very next day (de Fréine, 2004: 14-15). A portentous sense of imminent betrayal pervades the poem, the idea that the miracle of resurrection is contaminated, spoiled and impossible to realise. The vocabulary of the liturgy of the Mass appears in the title of the first poem and again in a later one, "cailís mo chuid fola/ the chalice of my blood", in which the speaker mourns her Rhesus negative blood type. She laments that had she known that her blood was not like that of other girls, that her body was being sustained by *fuil iasachta* – foreign or alien blood (de Fréine, 2004:13), she would have attempted to prevent herself falling in love until she

had found someone who would be a match for her, by attracting her choice of man, to find out if their blood types matched. She would have prayed to Hymnaeus, the god of marriage, to quench the torch of love, to send the celebrating participants away and to prevent the wedding. Nevertheless she would still have begged to be united with her children at any cost.

Like much of the referential framework in this volume of poetry, the irony of a woman choosing the words 'the chalice of my blood' reveals a strongly feminist approach to the work. Although the title 'blood debts' or also, the debts of kinship, at first glance seems to endorse family values, the values enshrined in these particular bonds are staunchly patriarchal, a view reinforced by the reference to the 'chalice of her blood' in the first poem. This is further emphasized by the reference to *fuil iasachta*, foreign blood, revealing an internalized obsession with purity and an absence of contamination in the blood lines. Clearly, patriarchal supremacy in family relationships parallels Catholic hegemony in the religious sphere. The homology between these two powerful dispositions alludes also to another larger mirroring of images, that of the role of the State in the decision--making that profoundly affects women's lives for worse in many cases. The 'nation', a group sharing common ethnicity, culture and history may also be viewed as the family unit writ large. If the state can be imagined as a patriarchal entity, politically fulfilling the role of a father, the nation has frequently been invoked as a mother. Nation and state are often equated, so that a sovereign political entity may also be seen in familial terms, with its laws and institutions seen as more elaborate and institutionally established configurations of a family unit. The duties of such a macro-entity towards its citizens may also be considered to emulate the blood ties that bind kinship groups together as the root '*natio*', that which is born, implies.

Consequently, without progressing beyond the opening poem, the underlying stance of the whole work is laid out, a view that

implicates these powerful entities in the subordination of women. The ties that bind constrain more than they support, an idea underlined by the words *cailís mo chuid fola,* 'the chalice of my blood', placed in the mouth of a female speaker – a complete impossibility in a ritual liturgical context, the site of the most powerful utterance of this central phrase in the Catholic Mass. Additionally, the trope of the woman's body as a vessel containing blood is also implied. This foreboding of the beginning foreshadows another later poem titled 'Is é seo mo chorp/This is my body', a second subversive liturgical reference, undermining the idea of the body as a sacred container (de Fréine, 2004: 56-57). The body carries the genes of her ancestors and has carried the children she gave birth to. But it also carries the thoughts that she cannot overcome thoughts, that she has been betrayed, and that a wound has been inflicted that cannot be healed.

The fact that pregnancy and childbirth are centrally concerned in the misfortune that has been inflicted on the narrator of these poems is therefore necessary to the sombre tone that pervades the poems. As Susan Hogan remarks:

> childbirth was, and remains, (perhaps because of its very liminality), a political, and ideological 'hot-spot' and a contested site with regards to male/female power relations, and the application of rituals; consequently, every aspect of the management of the event was potentially highly inflammatory, and subject to rival proscriptions (2008: 141).

Hogan's claim of woman's pregnant body acting as a conductor of political and ideological disagreement and controversy resonates again and again throughout this collection. The initial independence of mind and agency that this speaker emits is repeatedly rendered null and void through her engagement with the health system, by

implication a patriarchally organized hierarchy, in which patients are to be seen and not heard, and especially so if they happen to be female and pregnant. The representation of the conflict in the poems constitutes a portrayal of a major denial of individual identity, compounded by a suspicion of gender that amounts to nothing less than a stigma.

The Hepatitis C virus affects mainly the liver. It can remain asymptomatic but can also cause many debilities including cirrhosis after many years. It can be treated and between 50 and 80% of cases can be cured. Due to the refusal of professionals in the health system to acknowledge her concerns about her health, her condition therefore remains undiagnosed for many years. In a poem titled 'Linn Bhuí na gCaolán,' an idiomatic phrase signifying literally yellow bile, but figuratively indicating a matter of extreme sensitivity, the dual meaning of the phrase is exploited to remind the reader that the idiom at root refers to body fluids, the humours of medieval medicine. In this poem, the everyday demands of a suburban mother with a husband and children to care for are briefly outlined (de Fréine, 2004: 18-19):

> 'm'fhear is m'iníon ag súil lena ndinnéar / my husband and daughter expect their dinner
> Mo mhac ag caoineadh ina chliabhán / my son crying in the cot
> An triúr acu ina mbulla báisín/ the three of them making my head spin

This already stressful situation is complicated by her feelings of nausea that causes her to retch so strongly that she must go to the doctor. Unsuccessfully, she tries to persuade the doctor that her skin has turned yellow. Because of her insistence, the doctor brings her out into the direct sunlight to look closely at her, and replies that there is nothing the matter with her skin, that is has a natural

colour. The last line of the poem observes drily that the doctor is an Indian. Although amusing, the point is made that the doctor is male and that he represents the system. His status as a post-colonial subject, a person of colour, operates in a subversive and bitterly humorous critique of the system in which he, like the speaker, is enmeshed. Because of the power of that system, masquerading as her benefactor, while contributing simultaneously to her oppression, her protesting voice remains unheard despite her certainty that something is seriously wrong.

Another poem, 'Coinnigh ort/Keep Going' (de Fréine, 2004: 21) reinforces the effects of a surreal relationship between the female patient and the medics. The obstretician asks her how she is and she replies that she is both sick and tired and that she believes she is suffering from jaundice. He replies that he is an obstretician, that he knows nothing about jaundice but that she has no gynaecological problems and that she may undertake her *dualgais an phósta ar an bpointe boise* / marital obligations again immediately. The specialist's focus on his own area of expertise, effectively the reproductive and sexual organs, and his seeming utter unconcern for any other illness, or for a holistic view of the patient's welfare, accentuates the deeply paternalistic debilitation that the system of patriarchal values enforces. Although mostly conceived as a male female divide, the system has its female enforcers too. In another poem, Achainí /Plea, dealing with the birth of another son, to whom she refers as 'Iúdás beag eile/another little Judas, because he is born on Spy Wednesday, the Wednesday before Easter, the feast of the Resurrection, a central religious festival in the Catholic year. The idea seems to be that all males betray women and that even sons are not trustworthy. This again emphasizes the irony of the volume's title. The recurring problem of jaundice surfaces once more. The speaker implores the nursing sister, a nun, for a liver test. The sister patiently explains that her jaundice was an

exception that occurred during her pregnancy and that it will not occur again. The narrator observes wryly:

> éisteann sí le m'achainí cé go bhfuil sé / she listens to my plea although it is
> thar am aici a paidreacha a rá / past time for her to say her prayers
> is tabhairt faoi chosa deisceabail Íosa a ní / and to begin washing the feet of Jesus' disciples.
>
> Comhairlíonn dom gan a bheith buartha / She advises me not to be worried
> Ach nach féidir feidhmiú m'ae a thástáil / but that she cannot test the working of my liver
> Nuair nach bhfuil tada mícheart leis / when there is nothing wrong with it.

The patient's request and thus her involvement in her own health and welfare emerge as peripheral to the working of both the health system and the religious duties required of clerical nursing professionals. This liminal status gains added intensity and ironic bite by being juxtaposed with the story of Christ's washing of the feet of the disciples before his own betrayal and crucifixion. The speaker reminds us of Cassandra, the daughter of King Priam, who was doomed to foretell the future but whose prophecies would never be believed. A curse put on her by Apollo for rejecting him led her to be considered insane. The allusion reiterates the idea that women's lives are blighted by the tyrannies of patriarchal structures invested only in perpetuating their own power and authority. The speaker's situation is compounded by a host of skin disorders, an annual rash, raised purple marks on her neck that cause raised eyebrows and wagging tongues in the supermarkets (de Fréine,

2004: 31). Such backbiting implies doubts about her fidelity to her husband, as her lesions resemble *ailp na seirce,* a love bite. Additionally, she suffers from lupus, a disease named because of the resemblance of the marks it leaves on human skin to wolf bites. Moreover, she suffers from being ridiculed during a warm spell. While others expose their skin to the sun, she remains covered wearing long sleeves and a broad brimmed hat. Her skin conditions are attributed to a host of causes, even to her laundry detergent or her fabric softener ironically known by the brand name 'Comfort'. There is no point in even venturing to explain that she has tried all possible permutations of laundry detergents and softeners to no avail. Such quick diagnoses of the conditions as autoimmune reactions, considered psychosomatic expressions of hysteria in the early twentieth-century, are now treated with anti-histamines. This treatment actually exacerbates Hepatitis C through its suppression of immune defences. (de Fréine, 2004: 35).

The pervasive irony in 'Mochthráth an Mhic Tíre/ The Wolf's Early Hour' again takes a dialogical form. Her specialist asks her if she knows what lupus is and she answers that a friend of hers died because of it. He dismisses this reply saying that no one dies of lupus currently. Disagreeing silently, she remembers how her friend's sister, during the course of the funeral, remarked that her physician had told her that those affected rarely lived beyond middle age. Her own specialist recommends cortisone, which bloats the body, and the speaker imagines herself as inflated Michelin woman floating above his bald crown, while he squeezes her (de Fréine, 2004: 43).

The timescale of the long suffering narrator is marked by references to popular cultural events and Irish sporting achievements. *Fame*, the hit musical film produced by David da Silva and directed by Alan Parker in 1980, acts as a date marker. The speaker, however, emphasizes the contrast between her own existence and the charismatic characters in the film. The poem 'I wanna sleep

forever' paraphrases the title song 'Fame' by Irene Cara, in which the line is 'I wanna live forever'. The speaker's chronic fatigue means she cannot even bear to see close friends (de Fréine, 2004: 26/27) Their anthem is invalidated. John Treacy's silver medal win in the marathon race at the 1984 Olympic Games in Los Angeles, provides another temporal sign. Like 'Dráma Miorúilteach', this powerful poem contrasts the excitement generated by the success of an Irish athlete at a major global sporting event with other sinister events that unfold simultaneously. The narrator feels so ill she cannot share in the buoyant mood of her family and neighbours at Treacy's achievement. Her mind is on her debility, represented by her macabre and surreal Alice in Wonderland-inspired description of how the neigbour's white rabbit has escaped into her own garden and that the large German Shepherd from the bottom of the housing estate is chasing it (de Fréine, 2004: 32). This powerful and horrifying image reinforces a strong sense of cognitive dissonance, a slippage between the simple joy and pride of collective, communal happiness in an Irish sporting figure's international win, and her own helpless exhaustion and inability to engage with the either the victory or the general mood of celebration it has engendered. Furthermore, it emphasises the profound disconnection between the majority's shared sense of ethnic and national identity, reinforced by unusual achievement of an Irish athlete's Olympic achievement, and the acute individual feelings of alienation and estrangement she experiences that distance her from such an integrated consciousness.

The complexity of her distress and suffering are relentlessly documented in language so simple and unadorned as to appear unartful. Such plainness is not accidental, but a carefully chosen strategy to emphasize the extreme banality of the suffering endured. The careful use of medical jargon, not usually practised in vernacular spoken Irish, is highly effective in emphasising the narrator's predicament. As one critic has observed:

> Sometimes the medical terminology is alien and threatening to the reader in Irish, but users of lesser-used languages are like guerillas in turning weakness into strength: this weakness is used to great effect, and de Fréine uses the cold clinical technical dictionary words to indicate threat: Is deacair a thuigbheáil go bhfuil / galar uathimdhíonachta orm/ [it is difficult to believe that I have an autoimmune disease]. (Ó Dúill, 2005: 75)

Despite her long suffering however, an account she hears on the national radio airwaves finally proves that her conviction has not been groundless. Titled 'Morning Ireland', after the main morning radio programme on the national station, RTÉ1, she recognizes her own situation in the news item. Her confusion is palpable at this report. The initial headline story is confirmed by further news broadcasts. The pessimism of the initial poems is now augmented by a specific reflection on the enormity of the impact of these revelations:

> Ba chuma cá mhéad scéal scanrúil / Regardless of how many frightening stories
> A shleamhnaíodh isteach id chloigeann /That slipped into your head
> Níor taibhríodh duit an tromluí seo - / You never imagined this nightmare –
> Bhí cónaí ort i ndaonlathas, /You lived in a democracy
> tú féin is do chúram, faoi rialtas iontaofa / under a trustworthy government
> a chaomhnaíodh gach saoránach / that cherished each citizen
> I bhfad ó shaotharlanna fhir na seacbhuataisí / far from the laboratories of the men in jackboots

The confirmation of the betrayal of her trust in the protection afforded her by her citizenship paradoxically acts as a positive

motivating force that allows her some hope. Recovering some of her sense of independence, she can now re-activate her previous desire for some influence over the management of her own health. This early enthusiasm is soon frustrated however, by the tortuous bureaucratic delays engendered by the enquiry. Her blood samples are sent back and forward from Ireland to Scotland for a period of six months. She is sent to a new physician, a professor, who finally tells her that she has not been mad, and that all the previous diagnoses regarding the symptoms of the rashes, the jaundice, the pain and fatigue are not the result of auto-immune disease or unsuitable detergents, as she had insistently been told, but are directly attributable to Hepatitis C. Her relief at being vindicated is immense, so much so that she weeps:

> Éistim lena bhfuil a rá aige. / I listen to all he is saying.
> Breathnaím ar a bheola ag fabhrú na bhfocal –/ I look at his lips mouthing the words
> An heipitíteas ba chúis leis na hairíonna uilig. / Hepatitis caused all the symptoms
> Fáisceann an faoiseamh deora asam. / The relief wrings tears from my eyes. (de Fréine, 2004: 77)

The cheque she receives as compensation for her suffering feels like an inordinate burden. She cannot bear to touch it for fear she will collapse and expire under its weight. The idea of putting a valuation, a price on the suffering she has endured prompts a series of stark questions:

> Cé faoi é luach a leagan ar mo bheatha? / For whom is it to put a value on my life?
> Cé faoi é luach a leagan ar m'intinn? / For whom is it to put a value on my mind?

Cé faoi é luach a leagan ar mo chorp? / For whom is it to put a value on my body?
Cé faoi é luach a leagan ar aon chorp? / For whom is it to put a value on any body?

The questions lie at the heart of the poems in this volume – the deep and continuing distrust emerging from the victim toward a State that has fundamentally betrayed its own citizens. The travesty of a democracy and of its responsibilities toward its participants is evoked through the figure of Shaharzad, the female slave, whose ingenuity as a storyteller earned her a stay of execution from her master for a 1001 nights. Shaharzad tells the truth, that the contamination was discovered and that no new blood was taken from those who provided the infected samples. But she also says that the existing samples, those with the potential to expand the disease to unwitting receivers of that blood, were not recalled, thereby ensuring that the disease would spread. The idea is unconscionable, and yet the flat, undramatic style in which the poems are written make it entirely believable and acceptable. While it may be an abomination that should be shouted aloud and widely publicisied, the ordinariness of the horror paradoxically becomes an entertaining story, one more narrative in the game between female slave and male master, one more small victory creating a delay that stays her execution.

The penultimate poem in the collection is a free translation of the Russian poem Maria Tsevtaeva, an address to all women, whose very being, as women, renders them as predestined for hell.

Diúgadh na deora dar súile. / The tears were sucked from our eyes.
Tarraingíodh an ghruaig dár gcloigne /The hair was pulled from our heads
Sracadh an fheoil dár gcnámha. /The flesh was torn from our bones.
Cnaífear de shíor ár n-aenna. / Our livers will be gnawed forever

> Go deimhin, a dheirfiúracha dhílse, / Indeed, dear sisters,
> Níor éirigh linn éalú as ifreann. / We have not succeeded in escaping hell (de Fréine, 2004: 86).

The collection has indeed been prophetic. Other cases have emerged where the health system has been found to have treated issues around pregnancy in ways that can only be regarded as cruel, unjust and unfortunately institutionalized. There is the case of the women who were given an obligatory symphisiotomy – a surgical procedure that breaks the pelvis in order to facilitate an easier birth and others, to enforce, what is then called a "natural" birth, instead of taking a small pelvis as an indication for the necessity of a caesarian section. And there was, in 2012, the case of Savita Halapannavar, a young Indian dentist who requested a termination because she was miscarrying, but who was refused because a foetal heartbeat still remained. She was told by a staff member that it could not be done because 'Ireland was a Catholic country.' Other details have emerged since then, but the shock produced nationally and globally by her death indicates the horror felt by millions at what happened.

Nor have the horror stories of poor treatment for mothers giving birth stopped. Portlaoise Hospital's maternity unit made national headlines because of a number or babies who dies in childbirth. Another Asian woman Dhara Kivlehan, in Sligo, died in 2010, because of complications arising from childbirth resulting finally in an apology from the Health Services Executive. On a related front, the story of the Tuam Mother and Baby Home and the treatment of its occupants shocked the nation, coming in the wake of *Philomena,* by Stephen Frears (2013) the story of Philomena Lee's experience in a mother and baby in Roscrea in Co. Tipperary. Ms. Lee's son was taken from her through the agency of an adoption arranged by the nuns who ran the home. Based on the facts of Philomena Lee's life,

the film details her subsequent search for her child and how she eventually found him buried in the cemetery of the very place where he and his mother had lived for his first years, before they were separated. De Fréine's collection, detailing the banal ordinary nature of other serious, if non-fatal cases, highlights the misogyny that is present in the system, which no legislation can truly improve.

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The Women of the Other and Us

Catarina Martins
University of Coimbra

Abstract: It is by now a common place in identity theory that the construction of an identity for the individual and collective Self implies and is correlated with the concomitant construction of an Other or of a set of differences that allow for the contouring of the I /We. Yet the analysis and epistemological reflection about these processes of Othering or of producing, interpreting and valuing difference, is far from exhausted, since they are extremely complex, ambiguous versatile, delusive, multidirectional, multilayered and reach from representation and discourse inextricably to social and political practices. Framed by this extremely broad set of questions my paper will focus upon the construction of an understanding of the West that sets itself against its many Others through complex logics that involve cultural, racial, ethnic, religious and national paradigms, but are moreover deeply sexualized. Indeed, it seems that Western thought, knowledge and politics, both in their more conservative patriarchal and in their more progressive feminist models, and in ideological stances that can be segregationist or solidary in their intentions, need to create an Other that will invariably be evoked as a non-sexualized block or referred to as a generalizing male norm, but that in fact almost always involves the simultaneous creation

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of the Other of this Other: the non-western Woman, or the Woman of the Rest. The word "rest" will express here the many ways in which these women are in fact pushed back to the ultimate layer of crossed processes of Othering that condemn them to silence and invisibility both within their cultures and as instruments of Western identity and "real" politics.[48]

Keywords: Muslim Women; Islam; Colonialism

> "They cannot represent themselves; they must be represented"
>
> (Mohanty, 1988)

> "When you don't even feel you have to listen to the voices of the people whose cause you're championing, it's a reasonable indication of the fact that this has less to do with them than with you"
>
> (Hussain, 2013)

Let me start my article with these two quotes. The first is are two well-known Marx sentences that Indian feminist theoretician Chandra Mohanty uses to conclude her 1988 article, titled "Under western eyes: Feminist scholarship and colonial discourses", which deals with the way non-western women are represented both in western humanist and in feminist discourse. The second comes from an article published in a US-based news site named Salon.com, in

[48] Another version of this article will be published in a collection of articles that honors the work of Maria Irene Ramalho, one of the main mentors of my studies in feminism.

which a political analyst called Murtaza Hussain (2013) discussed the appropriation of Malala Yousafzai's struggle against the Taliban by anti-Islam crusaders. These ignore the Pakistani activist's own statements concerning her religious and cultural identity and convert her into an icon in favor of so-called western values. This, the author argues, contradicts 14-year old Malala Yousafzai's repeated and vehement claims that her combat for the education of girls is rooted upon Islam and Pashtun culture:

> The Taliban think we are not Muslims, but we are. We believe in God more than they do, and we trust him to protect us… I'm still following my own culture, Pashtun culture… Islam says that it is not only each child's right to get education, rather it is their duty and responsibility. (Yousafzai, as cited in Hussain, 2013)

It is evident that we must admire and support Malala. However, like Hussain points out, we must ask ourselves if our way of championing her cause is actually true to its objectives. The fact that Malala's words are often unheard as opposed to the discourse that underlines how she was saved by the West and how her story is an example of what a barbaric culture is capable of may well be prejudicial to her and her companions of struggle. This discourse not only arrogantly ignores Malala's better knowledge of the context she lives in, but also places her in an unsustainable position within a representation of her own culture that she obviously doesn't share. We are putting Malala up against herself when we uncritically let expressions of generalized perceptions of Islam modeled upon the Taliban to be spread, such as:

> Given the requisite beliefs… an entire culture will support such evil. Malala is the best thing to come out of the Muslim world in a thousand years. She is an extraordinarily brave and eloquent

> girl who is doing what millions of Muslim men and women are too terrified to do—stand up to the misogyny of traditional Islam. (cited by Hussain, 2013)

Hussain (2013) notes:

> Although Malala may claim to be a devout Muslim acting in accordance with Islam, this is merely an inconvenient detail that can be safely ignored. It's simply another expression of the naked ignorance and fear of the brown, Muslim hordes on the other side of the Earth...

The debates over the Muslim veil or all the different kinds of clothing Muslim women cover their bodies with are perhaps since 9/11 one of the most evident expressions of this process of Othering – and one that has its focal point on women. I am thinking, for instance, of the *burqa* as the most powerful icon of women's oppression in popular public discourse, in politics and juridical measures in the West, since the US and their allies adopted the politics and rhetoric of "War on Terrorism". Within this frame of representations the "women of cover", as Muslim women were designated in US President Bush's speeches (Abu-Lughod, 2002), have a male counterpart: the bearded dark-skinned terrorist modelled upon Bin Laden or the Taliban. Both icons complement each other and are not accidentally gendered. Indeed it is their sexual identity that sustains their distinct roles in the difference that is construed in relation to the West: the man is supposed to be object of our hatred, since he personifies the barbarism and savagery of a tradition or culture that is represented as ahistorical and unchangeable by definition and that poses a threat "to the world as we know it"; the woman will be the object of our sympathy, especially because she is presented as the main victim of the iconic Islamic male. The fact

that the "covered" Muslim woman is not a menace reveals the extent to which these women are completely reduced to the category of objects, denied the capacity of free thought, agency and voice. In fact, they do not exist beyond their iconic function which does not serve a better knowledge of the Other but power assertion by the West through a representation that reinforces a discourse of western civilizational superiority. [49]

Lila Abu-Lughod (2002) analyses how popular American media broadcasts turned the politically complex Afghanistan affair into a question of "culture" and "religion", whose explanation depended crucially on the "Muslim woman". She is stricken by the reasons why "these female symbols" and their "liberation" were mobilized in the context of the "War on Terrorism", in order to feed cultural divides. According to Abu-Lughod, the speeches of First Lady Laura Bush

> ... collapsed important distinctions that should have been maintained. There was a constant slippage between the Taliban and the terrorists, so that they became almost one word – a kind of hyphenated monster identity: the Taliban-and-the terrorists. Then there was the blurring of the very separate causes in Afghanistan of women's continuing malnutrition, poverty and ill-

[49] This process has been profoundly strengthened most recently with the terrorist attacks of ISIS (the so-called Islamic state) in France and the ban not only of the *burka* but of its derivations, like the *burkini,* an item of clothing that was banned from several beaches by some French municipalities in the name of French values – such as laicity, but also freedom. Muslim women were forced to unclothe by armed men in an extreme manifestation of this process of construction of the Self and the Other that, in this case, enacts France and the narrative core of its national identity (*liberté, fraternité, solidarité)* as itself the icon of the West against the Rest (which is made to be simplistically the opposite of this core values). That using arms to force women to wear or not to wear a certain piece of clothing is not understood as a form of oppression fits into a discursive confrontation in which women are handled as voiceless objects, their clothing as civilizational icons, and their bodies as the territory of a cultural divide that is disputed by males. The analysis of the most recent developments of this debate are the current object of my work and cannot yet be dealt with in this article.

> -health, and their more recent exclusion under the Taliban from employment and schooling, and the joys of wearing nail polish. (2002: 783-4)

The public addresses by the American and also the British First Ladies never mentioned the political history that had led to Taliban rule, including over a quarter of a century of US and other interventions in the region. Instead they used simplistic rhetoric strategies such as the conflation between the Taliban, the terrorists and Islam, and the creation of "chasmic" divides between these "monsters" and the civilized world. Isis, the so-called Islamic State, and its widely broadcasted savage practices have become the prevailing representations of Islam in the media and political discourse, which led to an almost hegemonic perception of Islam as homogeneous and overall barbaric. This discourse is rapid to erase the implications of Western interventions in the Middle East since the Iraq war or even before that. Rather, this amputated and distorted representation of Islam is constructed as the origin of the very need of Western intervention in Syria and elsewhere.[50] As Abu-Lughod points out:

> Instead of questions that might lead to the exploration of global interconnections, we were offered ones that worked artificially to divide the world into separate spheres – recreating an imaginative geography of West versus East, us versus Muslims, cultures in which First Ladies give speeches versus others where women shuffle around silently in burqas. (2002: 784)

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[50] As I said before, this article cannot yet reflect deeply the most recent developments that would sustain my argument. However, I will just point out that the response of French Prime Minister François Hollande to the Paris terrorist attacks in 2016 was an indiscriminate bombing action in Syria that occurred parallel to the internal discourse on the oppression of women by Islam.

Other practices that are highly publicized in the West as being intrinsic or essential to Islam or other non-western cultures, Asian or African, are, for instance, polygamy, child marriage, crimes of honor and dilapidation – no matter how circumscribed they may actually be. News about young children being raped to death in their wedding night in Yemen or campaigns by human rights organizations to prevent the dilapidation of women in Nigeria, for example, are very frequent in the media and social networks. They are most frequently succinct in the presentation of the matter and rely on sensationalism. As well-meant such campaigns and petitions may be, they may also have prejudicial effects, mainly because they do not take into account the complex social, political, cultural and subjective factors at stake and ignore the efforts and opinions of local women's organizations. Indeed most of these well-meaning campaigns fail because they are based on presuppositions of what the Muslim or the African woman need and want and, again, do not care to listen to those whose cause they are championing.

In fact, in 2013 we still seem to be dealing with the colonial political dynamics Mohanty identifies in western discourses about non-western women, which paternalistically take for granted – and let me go back to my first quote – that "They cannot represent themselves; they must be represented" (Mohanty, 1988: 82). In her analysis Third World women are produced as a "singular monolithic subject" (1988: 61). The heterogeneity and materiality of their life stories, their subject status and their voice are discursively and politically suppressed. According to Mohanty, through a relation of structural domination, Third World women are reduced to icons of, as she puts it, "'the third world difference' – that stable, ahistorical something that apparently oppresses most if not all the women in these countries" (1988: 64). This kind of "ethnocentric universalism" (1988: 64) is the mark of the colonial power of "any discourse", including the feminist, "that sets up its own authorial subjects as

the implicit referent, i.e., the yardstick by which to encode and represent cultural Others" (1988: 64). Again, it is the West we are talking about when the women of the Rest are basically seen as nothing but victims:

> This average third world woman leads an essentially truncated life based on her feminine gender (read: sexually constrained) and being 'third world' (read: ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition--bound, religious, domesticated, family-oriented, victimized, etc.). This (...) is in contrast to the (implicit) self-representation of western women as educated, modern, as having control over their own bodies and sexualities, and the 'freedom' to make their own decisions. (...) These distinctions are made on the basis of the privileging of a particular group as the norm or referent". (Mohanty, 1988: 65)

We must add to this that the contrasting representation of western and non-western women has its correlation in the conception of a "good" western man that is able to live with women on equal terms, and a "bad" non-western man that embodies gender oppression.

Indeed, what is at stake here is a play of discourse that is very close to what became known as "colonial feminism". Gayatri Spivak (1988) denounces the use of the woman question in British colonial policies concerning sati (the practice of widows immolating themselves on their husbands' funeral pyres) in order to legitimate rule, by, as she puts it, having "white men saving brown women from brown men". Leila Ahmed (1992) describes at length how the dispute around the Islamic veil originated historically in a colonial dispute between males in the context of the British colonial occupation of Egypt. Women are thus instrumental in rhetorical strategies that pose as ethical missions but actually legitimate imperialistic politics. Moreover, as Uma Narayan (1998) points out, another process of

subalternization can be added to this when non-western women also function as symbols of their own essentialised tradition in the dominant discourses of political affirmation of their own nations or communities, and become instruments of patriarchal nationalist or culturalist projects that are oppressive to them. The consequences of these processes are several and affect the West, the Rest and the Women of the Rest.

As I have been suggesting all along, the rhetoric on the Other is always more about the Self. By producing difference, the West is actually reinforcing its identity and position of superiority in a hierarchy of civilization. The identity of the Self, like that of the Other, is a construction that obeys political interests in specific historical moments and materializes in narratives that arrange the past and the present as is suitable. These constructions also manage to appear as real pre-givens and hide its construed character and to cohabit with the opposite of their own identity narrative. As Narayan points out:

> The colonial self-portrait of 'Western culture' had (...) only a faint resemblance to the moral, political and cultural values that *actually pervaded* life in Western societies. Thus liberty and equality could be represented as paradigmatic 'Western values', hallmarks of its civilizational superiority, at the very moment when Western nations were engaged in slavery, colonization, expropriation, and the denial of liberty and equality not only to the colonized but to large segments of Western subjects, including women. (1998): 89-90)

Today, for instance, while the discourse of the defense of human rights is spoken out loud to justify military interventions in Arab countries – military interventions in which the West poses as savior –, more rigid policies are drawn that condemn immigrants and

refugees to death in the Mediterranean Ocean. The ban on the Muslim veil in public spaces in France or the *burkini* issue are both part of a campaign to "free" Muslim women from gender and cultural oppression and part of the liberal discourse on the supposed neutrality of the State. This same discourse however intentionally selects and produces difference when only this piece of clothing, and no other religious symbol, is considered transgressive of laity as an intrinsic trace of the French Republic, that is, of French national identity, and when it reinforces an idea of "cleanliness" from alien cultural expressions in the public space while tolerating gender oppression in the private sphere (such as polygamy amongst immigrant groups, which was allowed until too much pressure was exercised by polygamous families upon French social aid services) (Narayan, 1998). As was the case in the historical beginning of colonialism, the West builds a narrative of the Self that erases internal heterogeneities, which might otherwise be perceived as enriching, and reaffirms a unified identity which has a single color of skin, obeys a single paradigm of religious faith and still has patriarchy as its norm. The discourse on the Other also contributes to reinforce national identities based on the notion of a pure "Volk" and to replace possible class solidarities with xenophobia in a context of strong social inequalities. Indeed, the production of difference is beginning to threaten the European project by creating divides between a center that pursues politics and rhetoric in relation to peripheral countries that have typical traits of colonial discourse. Not surprisingly this discourse is also gendered and includes the supposedly typical behavior of the southern European Mediterranean male towards their women, namely concerning domestic violence and the exploitation of female work.

Within this dichotomic frame of thought there is no room for an understanding of the Self and of the Other that takes into account not only the heterogeneities, discontinuities and historical change on both

sides of the divide, but also their complex encounters and relations which, in reality, build a continuum of ambiguous, multidirectional and multilayered interconnections. This is a hegemony building process that in fact contradicts all the most benevolent discourses and practices and ends up preventing intercultural dialogue and multicultural integration. The reinforcement of narratives of cultural blocks, whose identity is transferred to an ahistorical and therefore unchangeable sphere, colored with ideas of originality and authenticity that actually cover up their deeply contextual character, also deepens internal inequalities, by presenting other sources of oppression, such as class or gender, as secondary when compared to racial, ethnic, religious or cultural threats. Women and the poor in the West are forgotten when the line of conflict is displaced to the border between the Self and the cultural Other. Indeed, gender--based oppression in the West is often not even perceived as such, when oppression is defined according to the social practices of the Other, and western Women are elected as models of emancipation (despite all the violence and inequalities they are still subject to).

Last but not least, the women of the Rest become the subaltern of the subaltern in this chain of discursive construction of differences. Although they apparently occupy the first place in western preoccupations, they serve merely to demonstrate the barbarism of the Other and Western civilizational superiority, and to legitimate the redemptive role of the West – a strategy of imperialistic domination. The reduction to an object status denies the actual women not only agency but also the expression of subjective aspirations and desires, which may well include the wish to live within the cultural and religious references that give them a sense of identity, or the will to transform these references in a sense that they alone are able to determine, without paternalistic guidance by the hegemonic powers of the West, western feminists, or men of their own communities. The iconic representations that hide what they are supposed to

show also render invisible these women's capacity of developing adequate means of resistance to what they recognize as violence, oppression and need. Therefore, the perception of the women of the Rest as eternal victims is still an obstacle even for progressive transnational feminism, which has difficulties in engaging dialogues with individuals and in listening to them as subjects in their own rights, without the filter of essentialist constructions of their culture. Indeed, even when we engage in common combats for fundamental human rights such as freedom and equality, we do not easily understand that these no longer respond to a western conceptual normative and have been appropriated by different collectives in many geographical and historical contexts in distinct battles against diverse inequalities (Narayan, 1998). To go back to the example I first mentioned, we in the West are generally reluctant to acknowledge that Muslim women may find it possible – and often find it wishful – to live in freedom and equality within Islam. This is what admirable human rights activists such as Malala Yousafzai tell us, or what Islamic feminists affirm – Islamic feminism being considered an oxymoron in Western contexts. As Abu-Lughod argues, if we care to listen to the women of the Rest, we will discover

> … not that Muslim women are in fact carefree, but that their lives are as diverse and complicated as *all* lives are, and that when we make facile and unfounded judgments about culture's role in those complications we forestall consideration of any actually effective strategies for playing an appropriate role in their alleviation. (Abu-Lughod cited by Hussain, 2013)

Solidarities are in fact needed but only those that are capable to transcend all kinds of essentialisms and consider the individuals in the specificities of their material existences. As Spivak (1988) claims, we should not try to represent these women, but create room for

their voices to be heard. When and wherever possible we should put an unbiased microphone in front of them. That's what I tried to do here.

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Ana Paula Arnaut is a Professor of Contemporary Portuguese Literature at the University of Coimbra. In addition to publications in several national and international journals, she has also published *Memorial do Convento. História, Ficção e Ideologia* (1996), *Post-Modernismo no Romance Português Contemporâneo: Fios de Ariadne-Máscaras de Proteu* (2002); *Homenagem a Cristóvão de Aguiar: 40 Anos de Vida Literária* (org.) (2005), *José Saramago* (2008), *Entrevistas com António Lobo Antunes. 1979-2007. Confissões do Trapeiro* (ed.) (2008), *António Lobo Antunes* (2009), *António Lobo Antunes: a Crítica na Imprensa*. 1980-2010. *Cada um Voa como Quer* (ed.) (2011). *As Mulheres na Ficção de António Lobo Antunes. (In)variantes do Feminino* (2012), *Viagens do Carnaval: no Espaço, no Tempo, na Imaginação* (co-editor with Maria Aparecida Ribeiro) (2014), *O Ano da Morte de Ricardo Reis de José Saramago* (2017).

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