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The Legacy of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*: Reimagining the Portrayal of Africa in Twentieth-Century Literature

Lisa Nalbone and Sandra Sousa

> The director, satisfied the anchor had good hold, made his way aft and sat down amongst us. We exchanged a few words lazily. Afterwards there was silence on board the yacht. For some reason or other we did not begin that game of dominoes.
>
> -*Heart of Darkness* (1-2)

The plot seems simple and is widely known. It is the story of Charles Marlow, narrated in his own words, who recounts his journey into the African Congo as a riverboat captain. Marlow's mission is to find Kurtz, an ivory trader who has gone rogue and who has become a threat to the Company's interests.

Joseph Conrad stands as undeniably one of the most significant writers in literary history. This recognition becomes even more apparent over a century after the publication of his controversial work, *Heart of Darkness*. The enduring readership, ongoing academic discussions, and continued scholarly writings about Conrad's works suggest that, akin to other revered writers, his texts resonate with enduring importance in our contemporary society marked by various "post-" labels. One thing remains true: Conrad's writings endure because they encapsulate intricate and timeless truths about the fundamental nature of humanity, providing a source of enduring inspiration and contemplation. His *Heart of Darkness* is celebrated for its complex narrative structure, psychological depth, and profound exploration of the human condition. Moreover, his writings, rooted in their historical and cultural contexts, possess the capacity to illuminate contemporary issues, serving as valuable insights into the present. Throughout the

articles in this volume, we define the term postcolonial in the same way as Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, "to cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day" (2). To that end, the scope of articles includes the imperial presence of Europe in Africa from the nineteenth century forward.

One of the noteworthy recent contributions to the discourse on Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* is Sulaxana Hippisley's essay. In this piece, she articulates her compelling experience as a Sri Lanka-British person of color engaging with the novel and subsequently facing the challenge of teaching it:

> As a result, teaching *Heart of Darkness* proved to be one of the most challenging tasks of my professional career. In the months prior to teaching, I wrestled with the impenetrability of the text—was it the Manichean worldview or the binary oppositions or the winding impressionistic syntax that seemed to reach no obvious conclusion? Something unnameable continued to eat away at my efforts every time I approached its pages. (108)

Engaging with Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* presents a formidable challenge, particularly for instructors and students of color, a perspective underscored by Hippisley's 2019 article and Chinua Achebe's seminal 1977 essay "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*." Negotiating the complexities of this literary masterpiece while addressing the racial prejudices inherent in twenty-first century environments adds an additional layer of complexity. This challenge prompts critical reflections on the ethical implications of teaching colonial texts within contemporary educational contexts and raises broader questions about the persistence of racism in modern societies, as Achebe provocatively suggests.

As Hippisley reminds us, the racist lexicon directed at Africans in colonial literature serves as a stark reminder of the deeply ingrained prejudices and discriminatory attitudes prevalent during the colonial era. Colonial writers often employed derogatory terms and stereotypes to dehumanize and marginalize African characters, perpetuating harmful narratives of European superiority and African inferiority. This language not only reflected the racist ideologies of the time but also reinforced colonial power dynamics, portraying Africans as primitive, uncivilized, and subservient to their European counterparts. Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* is not immune to this phenomenon, with its portrayal of African natives as savages and objects of exploitation by

European colonizers. A few examples of his use of derogatory language and dehumanizing imagery not only reflect the prevailing attitudes of the late nineteenth century but also contribute to the perpetuation of racial stereotypes and hierarchies:

> "Sandbanks, marshes, forests, savages—precious little to eat fit for a civilized man" (4).
>
> "It was just robbery with violence, aggravated murder on a great scale, and men going at it blind" (4).
>
> "The prehistoric man was cursing us, praying to us, welcoming us—who could tell?" (32)
>
> "She was savage and superb, wild-eyed and magnificent" (56).
>
> "[T]hey shouted periodically together strings of amazing words that resembled no sounds of human language" (62).

Furthermore, the racist lexicon in colonial literature was often used to justify and rationalize colonialism and the exploitation of African peoples and resources. By depicting Africans as inherently inferior and in need of European intervention and control, colonial authors sought to legitimize the oppressive systems of colonial rule. The representation of the dialectic of race also surfaces in the literature written in Portuguese and Spanish examined in this collection of articles. This language served to reinforce colonial power structures and justify the subjugation and exploitation of African societies for the benefit of European imperial interests. However, despite the overt racism inherent in this literature, it is essential to critically engage with these texts to understand the historical context—largely sanctioned by governance in the imperial homeland—in which they were produced and to recognize the lasting impact of colonial ideologies on contemporary perceptions of race and identity.

The ongoing discourse surrounding Joseph Conrad's personal stance on imperialism and race remains a subject of contention among readers and scholars. This debate persists, with revised analyses emerging, such as the exploration of Gothic elements within *Heart of Darkness*, suggesting that his literary works warrant continued examination and interpretation to unravel the intricacies of his perspectives on these critical themes. While some interpret Conrad's work as a critique of dehumanization in imperialism, others argue that his works perpetuate racist stereotypes. The enduring vitality of these discussions under-

scores the complexity of Conrad's literary contributions and highlights the ongoing relevance of literature as a means of grappling with intricate societal issues.

Commemorating the centenary of Joseph Conrad's death this year in 2024 presents an opportune occasion to engage in a reflective examination of his lasting literary legacy. The profound impact of *Heart of Darkness* on Western literature, exemplified by its inspirational role in the 1979 epic film *Apocalypse Now*, extends further to the influence it has exerted on numerous African writers. These writers have adeptly employed Conrad's work as a lens through which to navigate and articulate the intricate dynamics of the colonial and postcolonial experiences.

Our objective with this set of articles is to delve into the enduring legacy of *Heart of Darkness* within twentieth-century colonial and post-colonial literature, particularly as crafted by both African and European writers. In pursuit of this goal, we scrutinize the influence exerted by Conrad's novel on the literary landscape of both continents, across geographies that include Angola, present-day Equatorial Guinea, Ghana, Mali, Mozambique, Portugal, and Spain. Additionally, we critically analyze the ways in which European and African writers within colonial and post-colonial contexts have either revised or contested the novel's portrayal of Africa and its inhabitants. Concurrently, this thematic issue aims to pay homage to Conrad's life and literary contributions while exploring the sustained relevance of his work in the contemporary milieu.

The first article of this issue, "From African Blank Space to the *Heart of Darkness*: Joseph Conrad and Some Predecessors," by Ricardo Luiz Pedrosa Alves and Ana Beatriz Matte Braun explores a foundational paradox in both fiction and travel texts about Africa in the context of the nineteenth century. Central to their argument is the visual representation of Africa through nineteenth-century mapping of the continent, contributing to our understanding of how writing by Europeans, including Conrad, in the latter half of that century populated the blank spaces as a way of mapping a geographic imaginary. Their study examines the relationship between the intended authenticity of the accounts and the history of writing models, following Mary Louise Pratt's notion of the "anti-conquest" (Pratt 1999) to discuss Mungo Park and the series of publications by Henry Stanley. Their article demonstrates the way *Heart of Darkness* appropriates and dismantles characteristics of these models, especially by activating ambiguity regarding colonial "horror."

In "Is there a Portuguese Female Conrad? An Analysis of 'Imperial Attitude' and Narrative Voice in Guilhermina de Azeredo's *Brancos*

e Negros," Sandra Sousa delves into the realm of colonial literature, employing Edward Said's argument as a lens to examine the nuanced complexities of imperialistic narratives. Focusing on the works of Guilhermina de Azeredo, most saliently *Brancos e Negros* (1955), and Joseph Conrad, the analysis seeks to unveil perspectives that shaped colonial interactions. While both writers were undoubtedly creatures of their time, influenced by the prevailing colonial ideologies, this study asserts that Azeredo's colonial writings in *Brancos e Negros* surpass, at various levels, the boundaries established by Conrad's exploration in *Heart of Darkness*. Sousa's study makes significant inroads in establishing the role of feminist writing in the imperial endeavor.

In "Postcolonial Otherness and Angst in Liberata Masoliver's *Efún* (1955)," Lisa Nalbone traces the intersection of race, class, and gender from the postcolonial perspective in the relationship between Spain and Spanish Guinea in the middle decades of the twentieth century. The Catalan author writing about the Spanish Guinean experience from the point of view that highlights European and African dichotomies relies on the trope of a love story to tease out sociocultural tensions in a timber plantation and its environs. The economic endeavor figures heavily in the plantation operations and is central to consolidating the representation of the Spanish presence in Spanish Guinea that the author questions through the interactions between the two populations.

"Liberatory Necropolitics: Grammars of Sovereignty in *Two Thousand Seasons* by Ayi Kwei Armah," by Kevin Meehan and Abdul-Karim Mustapha critically examines Ayi Kwei Armah's 1973 novel, *Two Thousand Seasons*. The analysis delves into the novel's unique narrative approach, which involves a first-person plural narrator using a distinct "we voice." Meehan and Mustapha explore how Armah's work diverges from the ambiguity associated with Conradian modernism, particularly in the context of sovereignty and significant scenes, such as one set in the hold of a slave ship. Additionally, the article connects the novel to broader discussions, including theories of sovereignty, Mbembe's concept of "necropolitics," recent marine archeology research off the coast of Ghana, and the novel's relevance to ongoing debates on reparations for the Atlantic slave trade.

Maryllu de Oliveira Caixeta, in "The Crossing of Imani in *A Espada e a Azagaia* by Mia Couto: Translation in the Heart of the Empire," focuses on the novel's main narrator and protagonist, Imani Nsambe, who at times takes on the role of a translator, having been catechized in the Portuguese language during the conflicts following the Berlin Conference. The rarity of a translator like Imani is explored by Mia Couto, who characterizes the overlap of racism with ethnic intoler-

ance in Portuguese colonization. Imani progressively expresses the holistic worldview of her compatriots, through the circularity that connects the first and last chapters, which function as the novel's narrative frame. This article highlights the significance of the novel's last chapter, when Imani momentarily becomes a living allegory of this worldview, thanks to the recent deepening of her bond with the priestess Bibliana. The primary narrator's perspective, as a translator of African cultures, serves as Mia Couto's response to the metaphysical horror communicated by *Heart of Darkness*. Caixeta's article follows the premise that Joseph Conrad echoed the colonialist degradation of nature through Cartesian rationalism. As an anti-colonialist response, Mia Couto's novel presents a historical backdrop of empires impacted by a continuity of life cycles, according to the holistic worldview of the African characters.

Juan Miguel Zarandona's "Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899) in the Genesis of *¿Qué mató al joven Abdoulaye Cissé?* (2023) by Donato Ndongo" examines the precarious representation of the African masculine subject in Ndongo's recent novel, *¿Qué mató al joven Abdoulayé Cissé?* (*What Killed Young Abdoulayé Cissé?*). Ndongo, an accomplished postcolonial African author who publishes primarily in Spanish, proved to be a devoted admirer of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* when he published his essay "Los herederos del señor Kurtz" ("Mr. Kurtz's Heirs") in the collective volume *Planeta Kurtz* (2002), which celebrated the first centenary of the seminal Congo River novel by Conrad. Abdoulayé Cissé, a young Black African immigrant from Bamako, Mali, a son of the Niger River who happens to end up in Madrid, Spain, encounters his death in the most unexpected way, in the middle of the dark jungle of a contemporary European large city. This alien and aggressive territory surrounds and accompanies Cissé's slow and unstoppable fall into darkness and death. From a comparative literature standpoint, Zarandona explores the impact of the so-called first colonial/postcolonial classic on this recent contribution to African letters written in European languages, that is, Spanish. His study elucidates how Conrad's writing reveals the impact of racism, evil, and violence that is still relevant in the twenty-first century. The parallel deaths of Kurtz and Abdoulayé Cissé play a vital role in this comparative study between Conrad's and Ndongo's novels.

To these articles, we add a review of *Olha Pra Elas* (*Look at Them*), a documentary directed by Tatiana Sager, in which screenwriters Luca Alverdi Renato Dornelles tell the story of five women unjustly incarcerated in Brazil's penal system. Though geographically removed from the scope of the previous essays, the topic of disenfranchisement that intersects with nation, race and gender is a central issue of the docu-

mentary. The current climate of women's imprisonment in Brazil calls into question the purpose of incarceration within the country's justice system for its uneven consideration of its four purposes of retribution, incapacitation, deterrence, and rehabilitation. The documentary sheds light on the plight of these women who have fallen victim to a system in urgent need of comprehensive reform that addresses the root causes of poverty, inequality, and social disenfranchisement.

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From African Blank Space to the *Heart of Darkness*: Joseph Conrad and Some Predecessors

Ricardo Luiz Pedrosa Alves and Ana Beatriz Matte Braun

Why is it everyone who comes to Africa has to write a book about it?

-*The Snows of Kilimanjaro*, dir. Henry King, 1952

For Stéphane Mallarmé, the Symbolist poet of the late nineteenth century, the world would ultimately become a book. And why not Africa, as well? After all, a character in the film *The Snows of Kilimanjaro* questions himself: "Why is it everyone who comes to Africa has to write a book about it?" For Harry, the protagonist of Hemingway's short story "The Snows of Kilimanjaro," "Africa" inspires authentic writing, especially from the hunter's perspective. Only in that space would authentic writing full of vitality emerge.

However, there is a paradox in the idea of authentic writing. In this article, we would like to uncover this paradox from the tension Conrad creates in his writing and in his written word in *Heart of Darkness*.[1] We focus on the paradox between the quest for authenticity in the writing of nineteenth-century Europeans about Africa and the commodification of the objects that are the books or journalistic accounts. We are also interested in understanding the pressure authors felt to achieve authenticity as well as their quest for authenticity in their writing that exists in contrast to the history that commonly appears in texts and imaginaries about European exploitation in Africa. To do this, we will trace a genealogy interspersed with the texts that preceded *Heart of Darkness* to show how they were constituted and how Conrad related to them, often finding new paths in fictional writing. We will consider three matrices that form the European imagination about African exploration. Initially, we will explore how African maps deliberately reveal a blank space in the center of the continent, legitimizing the "Scramble for Africa." Then, we will address two narrative matrices: first, the pattern of the diary as a source of authenticity in Mungo Park's

writing, especially from the perspective of "anti-conquest" (Pratt 1999), and then the creation of a "Stanley model" of first-person journalistic narrative, designed primarily for publication under a commodified standard. The two narrative models adhere to two institutions that specify their authenticity criteria based on their respective values: the scientism and missionary zeal of the African Association and the commodification of information by the *New York Herald* newspaper.

Heart of Darkness indirectly stages an oral storyteller because an almost implicit narrator opens the narrative. Further, it has at its center the less picturesque dangers of writing of colonization, dangers that we will address in this study, precisely because it is not a typical narrative of colonization, as warned in the preamble of the story. Both before and now, "It was just robbery with violence, aggravated murder on a great scale, and men going at it blind—as is very proper for those who tackle a darkness" (Conrad 15). Any writing by the hands of the colonizer must be understood as a manipulation of this truth of conquest. One of the less explored themes in Conrad's novella revolves around the manipulation of truth represented in the written text. In other words, how the written text is represented in *Heart of Darkness*, particularly the report by Kurtz requested by the International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs. In this great struggle in little-known lands, how can we critically articulate the dilemma between what Marlow calls the "fascination of the abomination" (14) and the "altruistic belief in the idea" (15)?

There is a paradox in the different accounts of travel to Africa, whether documentary or fictional, which has filled European and American publishing since the eighteenth century: the consolidation of a set of themes and forms that comprise a history of narrative frameworks corresponds to a supposed pioneering authenticity of telling what no white man has told before, making the transposition of the matter of adventure without supposed mediations of style or form. There is an "Africa book" that precedes books about Africa. The paradox between the authenticity of pioneering writing and the history of a genre of texts of this nature is what Jacques Rancière proposes, by other means, when discussing writing and politics, in addressing the relationship between a writing "less" than writing (something like a pure emanation of voice, prior to the letter) and a writing "more" than writing, the writing of distinction to which cultural value is given. This tension inherent in literature plays contradictorily with the book (which is truly *dead* due to the refusal of the literary aesthetic that most travel accounts make) and the voice (which is *alive*, potentially authentic without the mediation of the account):

> Só um corpo vivo, um corpo que sofre, é capaz, em última instância, de garantir a escrita. Mas o grande paradigma do resgate da letra também é o lugar do paradoxo reconhecido como verdadeiro. Somente o livro dá garantia que a verdade do livro foi apresentada pela carne. Somente as palavras vêm atestar que é mesmo escrita o que se realiza nas chagas de uma carne como no sopro do vento, nas estrias da pedra ou na estrada de ferro. Somente um excesso de escrita "morta" pode incluir a "voz viva" na escrita morta. [. . .] Mas esse suplemento de voz nunca será nada além de um suplemento de escrita.
>
> Only a living body, a suffering body, is ultimately capable of guaranteeing writing. But the great paradigm of rescuing the letter is also the place of the paradox recognized as true. Only the book ensures that the truth of the book has been presented by the flesh. Only words come to attest that it is indeed writing that takes place in the wounds of flesh as in the breath of the wind, in the grooves of stone or in the railroad track. Only an excess of 'dead' writing can include the 'living voice' in dead writing. [. . .] But this supplement of voice will never be anything more than a supplement of writing. (Rancière 12)[2]

For Rancière, literature cannot give words the referents they lack. What it can lend, however, is a body. In this "antiliterary" condition of literature, the floating statements carry the living body through their enunciation. In this context, textual transparency, which is not mediated by the conventions of narrative genres or travel diaries, aims to project the authentic, the "living" word. Still, according to Rancière, "a 'escrita' não é o contrário da palavra oral, ela é o contrário da palavra viva, categoria que não é linguística, porém filosófica ou teológica" ("'writing' is not the opposite of the oral word, it is the opposite of the living word, a category that is not linguistic, but philosophical or theological"; 97). The nineteenth-century European gesture of writing about Africa is also the gesture of writing about texts already written, in a logic of palimpsest that contradicts the pretension of arriving at the virgin "heart" of Africa.

When Joseph Conrad published *Heart of Darkness*, separately as a magazine serial in 1899 and as a book in 1902, he had already lived a whole imperial experience, whether with the French merchant navy or later with the British Crown and its colonies in the Pacific. He had also worked in the Belgian Congo for the Société Anonyme Belge pour le Commerce du Haut-Congo. He had spent more than sixteen years in these travels. The author's African narrative experience was

also influenced by his experience in the Asian Pacific. The structural homology of the book about Africa with *Youth*,[3] a narrative published a year before *Heart of Darkness* in the same Blackwood Magazine, is apparent. The situation is similar: a group of men listen to Marlow recount his first voyage to the Pacific. From time to time, this narrative situation reappears, even though almost the entire text focuses on the journey. As in the narrative about the Congo, the journey in *Youth* progresses in fits and starts, with many interruptions and delays. However, there is no presence of the "horror" in *Heart of Darkness*; thus, the narrative of *Youth* is a counterpoint illuminated by the youth concerning African history. Despite the journey's setbacks, the young Marlow, in *Youth*, also has a goal. Instead of searching for Kurtz, he is searching for the East. However, when he finds it, the description is very similar to the encounter with the fallen Kurtz in the dark: "The mysterious East was before me, perfumed like a flower, silent as death, dark as a tomb" (*Youth* 66).

It is vital to highlight the long tradition of writings about Africa from the colonial perspective, which predates *Heart of Darkness* by at least a century. In 1799, eleven years after the establishment of the African Association, the Scottish explorer Mungo Park inaugurated the successful genre of African exploration narratives, although there were earlier accounts, as well as others from different continents. Park's *Travel in the Interior Districts of Africa* was booming at the time, and it further intensified after Park's death in Africa in 1805, creating a lucrative niche for publishing.

These travel reports resonated with the European and American audiences. Accounts of Africa were so popular that it was through an "African" narrative that the French author Jules Verne began to gain fame. In the novel *Journey to the Center of Africa* (*Five Weeks in a Balloon*), released in 1863, Verne reaffirms the European desire to traverse the continent. In the following two years, the author would release two more books with similar journeys: *Journey to the Center of the Earth* (1864) and *From the Earth to the Moon* (1865). The analogy between Africa and other "unexplored" spaces extended to other authors writing decades later, such as the American Edgar Rice Burroughs, who published in 1912 both *Tarzan of the Apes* and *A Princess of Mars*, inaugurating two successful series of stories that ran parallel. Returning to Verne's book, the arrival at the African "heart" in the narration is also delayed. It is not until Chapter XIX that the characters begin what they call the actual African crossing. Naturally, everything ends in the publishing of a book, combining scientific travel and the capitalist interest in selling books. Verne's adventurers produced a scientific report and a journalistic account: "The newspapers in all

of Europe spared no praises for the daring explorers, and the Daily Telegraph printed nine hundred and seventy-seven thousand copies on the day it published the summary of the journey" (Verne 159).

One of the central points for understanding Verne's success is the detachment between experience and narrative: the author no longer needed to have been to Africa to make his fantastical story plausible. Verne inaugurates a playful approach to Africa. As we will see later, Conrad will bring seriousness to the genre, severing any lingering romantic undertones. Simultaneously, he casts a skeptical eye upon scientism and the blind reverence for technical progress. He elevates the text's prestige by legitimizing the traveler's authentic experience, whereas most of the real-life travelers were individuals who died in Africa. This was the case with Mungo Park and Hugh Clapperton, a pioneering explorer of Nigeria and the Gulf of Benin (1823-27). The same destiny was waiting the first European to reach Timbuktu, the legendary metropolis. Alexander Gordon Laing was murdered in 1826, a month after arriving in the city (in what is now Mali). These travelers were faced with diseases, accidents, and violence (kidnappings, thefts, murders). In 1828, the Frenchman René-Auguste Caillié became the first European to return alive from Timbuktu, which he described as decadent in terms that eschewed the glory reported in past accounts. His fluency in Arabic was key to his survival.

Later, the Germans Heinrich Barth and Eduard Robert Flegel traced the course of the Benue River, the main tributary of the Niger. A curious fact is that this expedition involved an anti-slavery activist, James Richardson, who ended up dying on the journey. We will address Richardson's account specifically regarding the genre chosen for publication, the diary. The authenticity of the account is at stake. Conrad, as we know, is read through the lens of fictional construction and the authenticity of his personal experience. As Walter Benjamin wrote in his study on the narrator in Nikolai Leskov's work, "'Quem viaja tem muito que contar', diz o povo, e com isso imagina o narrador como alguém que veio de longe" ("'Those who travel have much to tell,' says the people, and with this they imagine the narrator as someone who has come from afar"; 198).

In Richardson's book (1853), the preface by the editor Bayle St. John discusses the genre of the work. He confesses to having considered transforming the explorer's eight journals into a third-person narrative, which he did not undertake, "in order to leave the stamp of authenticity on this singular record of enterprise" (v). The editor supposedly rejected the pursuit of immediate interest in the name of truthfulness (a diary constantly flirts with tedium) and limited his role to organizing and condensing the material. There is also an argument regarding

the respectability of the work: keeping the material as the author left it (Richardson died on his last expedition) for its geographic and ethnographic contributions. Respect for authorship is invoked: it was about turning the publication "into a shape that would have accorded with his own idea of a book of travels" (vi). The preface also tries to overcome the embarrassment of the explorer's death (missionary and anti-slavery activist) in the name of the knowledge he bequeathed to the British Empire, materialized in the diaries. To say this, Bayle St. John speaks of Richardson as "an ardent crusader against the worst form of oppression which has ever been put in practice" (xiii). We know what these crusades were for: beyond exploring markets and sources of raw materials, the British expeditions aimed to establish alliances with some local peoples to resolve conflicts with other peoples. An example would be the recruitment of the Hausa in the Ashanti wars (throughout the nineteenth century). Alternatively, earlier, the British sought allies in Sudan through James Richardson's expedition.

Before we consider the two main frameworks that emerge from travel accounts to Africa preceding *Heart of Darkness*, we revisit the construction of Central Africa as a blank space susceptible to European writing/occupation. Stealthily, Marlow will claim this reason to embark upon his journey to the Congo, barely referring to the mercenary-professional condition of his endeavor. He hides what Mungo Park and Henry Morton Stanley explicitly state at the beginning of their books. Marlow prefers, sentimentally, to attribute his journey to a passion for maps. We will take a closer look at how European and American cartography constructed the mystique of the blank space in Africa (the so-called "heart of darkness"). Subsequently, we will deal with Park's and Stanley's models.

Since the end of the sixteenth century, there has been a systematic, albeit intermittent, production of maps of Africa. Curiously, and despite their natural inaccuracies, none of the maps until at least 1800 show a blank space in the central African region.[4] The earlier maps do not highlight emptiness or scientific names of discovery.

Therefore, in the nineteenth century, the region that now comprises the Central African Republic and primarily the Democratic Republic of the Congo came to be represented as "unmapped." In a map published in 1818 by Jehoshaphat Aspin, the region is named "Inland parts almost entirely unknown." There is an apparent confrontation of cartographic positions, as Aspin also published a map in Philadelphia, in 1820, which depicts the region as Ethiopia. The same designation, Ethiopia, was used in 1824 by William Woodbridge. A year later, N. R. Hewitt's map, published in Edinburgh, bears the designation "Unexplored Countries."

The map published in Boston by H. Morse in 1825 includes the expression "Unknown Regions." Gradually, these categories of "unknown" or "unexplored" regions became established. When compared to today's map, present-day Zambia is included in the "unknown" zone (unlike what happens with the present-day Central African Republic). A curious description appears on a map from 1830 (J. H. Young, Philadelphia): the space is also a new desert, the "Great Southern Zahara or Desert." "This region has not been explored; it is supposed to be an elevated desert" is the cautious designation printed in the authorless map published in Hartford in 1836. From the 1840s onward, such cartographic publications showing a blank, unexplored, or unknown space in Africa proliferated. "Países desconocidos" can be read in A. H. Dufour's map, edited in 1852 in Madrid. In the 1800s, some maps continued to refer to the region by the name Ethiopia, with one of them even referring to "cannibalism." This moral reference is not isolated. As early as 1861, a map by Edward Weller (London) appeared with the designation "Independent Pagan Tribes." In another map without authorship, published in St. Petersburg in 1871, there was a blank space in the center of Africa. The same occurs in the maps by Charles S. Smith (1872, London) and H. Lange (1872, Germany). Also from that year is Mary Hall's map (Boston). In this one, that blank space appears with the inscription "Native Tribes."

From then on, most of the maps will feature a blank space that will gradually begin to be filled in, whether with references to the region as "the Congo" or in the denominations of "Stanley's Pool" or the "Congo or Livingstone" river on a map from 1880 edited in New York. Another map appeared in New York (by William Swinton) the following year with the expression "Congo State." Watson's map, published in Boston in 1883, is perhaps the last to bring the expression "Unknown Interior." The 1885 map (James Monteith, New York) names the area as the "Congo Free State." In 1890, a thorough colonial map in Paris contained the French Congo, French Sudan, and Egypt. We note the category variation for defining a region in terms of imperial interests. If, until 1800, the issues of "blank space" and "unknown" were practically not raised, they became an imperative during the nineteenth century. As the contemporary Mozambican writer João Paulo Borges Coelho suggests, the delimitation of space is already a narration in itself, and this is even more evident regarding geopolitical interests when a region is presented as a vast void somewhat like a blank slate to be filled with literary output, which guides our study for its authenticity. Defining a void is akin to opening the blank page of Africa, the heart of the continent yet to be written. Like the Moon, the depths of the oceans, or the earth's center, it is a virgin place from the European perspective,

whose imagery fueled economic and cultural expansionism in the form of narratives or diaries akin to hunting accounts or tourist guides: imagery that maps have also constructed.

Just like in the nineteenth-century maps, the African Association also posited in its inaugural manifesto that Africa is "um extenso vazio, onde o geógrafo, com base na autoridade de Leão, o Africano, e do xerife de Edrissi, autor núbio, traça com mão hesitante uns poucos nomes de rios inexplorados e de nebulosas nações" ("A vast void, where the geographer, based on the authority of Leo Africanus, and the sheriff of Edrissi, a Nubian author, traces with a hesitant hand a few names of unexplored rivers and nebulous nations"; qtd. in Pratt, *Olhos do Império* 128). There was a multiplicity of writings in favor of blank space, those of maps, and those of institutions, business companies, and missions. In travel books, there was the omnipresence of maps, illustrations, photographs, and graphics. The writing of the text, whether as a narrative or a diary, was also the writing of those empty spaces on maps. The gesture of filling in the gaps is contradictory, as it requires negotiating two opposing forces. First, that of degradation, in that books or newspaper articles are subject like a pound of tobacco to the fetishism of the commodity and the imprisonment of exchange value. As Karl Marx observed in *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*: "um volume de Propércio e oito onças de rapé podem ter o mesmo valor de troca, apesar das diferenças do valor de uso do tabaco e da elegia" ("A volume of Propertius and eight ounces of snuff may have the same exchange value, despite the differences in the use value of tobacco and elegy"; 32). Although indispensable, the book is a degradation of the experience of the pioneers.

Mary Louise Pratt, in *Imperial Eyes* (128), explains that the African Association's central objective was economic expansionism, whether in the Niger and Gambia Rivers or on a possible transcontinental trade route. Similar to the later "Stanley model," created in response to a demand from the *New York Herald*, the "model" stemming from Mungo Park perhaps aligns with the endeavor of the African Association to fill in those blank spaces on maps. Pratt explains that this implied a change in perspective regarding the African continent. While during the eighteenth century a campaign emphasizing African poverty, indolence, and debauchery in order to justify the slave trade still prevailed in available travel texts, as in the experience of the African Association, the time had come to seek cities and nations willing to engage in trade and political alliances: "a re-imaginação do interior africano em fins do século XVIII coincidiu com a extraordinária aceleração do movimento antiescravagista após 1770 e a reconcepção dos africanos como um mercado e não mais como mercadoria" ("the re-imagining of the

African interior in the late eighteenth century coincided with the extraordinary acceleration of the anti-slavery movement after 1770 and the reconception of Africans as a market rather than mere commodities"; Pratt, *Olhos do Império* 131).

Until the publication of *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa*, David Livingstone's book published with enormous success in 1857, the ambiguity of an imaginary that encompasses scientism and missionary work (as the title suggests) coalesces in a single project, though it remains a romantic, adventurous project with a narrative marked by numerous bifurcations. For example, we consider Verne's fiction in 1863, in which the proliferation of prejudices about Africans and even the superficiality of the plot no longer obscure the fact that the moral thrust of the book is the superiority of European science, capable of rationally accounting for all the unforeseen events that arise during the balloon journey; all narrative bifurcations, episodes that fluctuate between highs and lows, are resolved by European calculation and restraint.

Park's book narrates the journey between 1795 and 1797, providing rhetorical recommendations in a concise preface. Park comments on the difficulty of writing and keeping a diary during the journey. He says that the work, although true, adds nothing aesthetically as a composition. He reiterates that the text was all planned and commissioned by the African Association, as a publication with collaborations, such as the work of the illustrator James Renell and the writing of Bryan Edwards. At various points, he values the work for the geographical contribution it will make, concluding with a warning to the readers that, imaginative as the readers might be, they should not expect from the book discoveries and wonders that he neither saw nor described. He treats the text as a report in the service of those who sponsored it, considering the material honest and true.

Pratt defines the relationship between travel and literature starting from the eighteenth century:

> Oral texts, written texts, lost texts, secret texts, texts appropriated, abridged, translated, anthologized, and plagiarized; letters, reports, survival tales, civic description, navigational narrative, monsters and marvels, medicinal treatises, academic polemics, old myths replayed and reversed—the La Condamine corpus illustrates the varied profile of travel related writing on the frontiers of European expansion at mid-eighteenth century. (*Imperial Eyes* 23)

With natural history and cartography as scientific motifs, the proliferation of imperial writings contributed to the repositioning of Europeans on the planet and the "understanding" of this new place. At the same time, the journey of "natural knowledge" naturalized the bourgeois presence in expeditions in a non-interventionist but curious way, marking the beginning of "anti-conquest" narratives (Pratt, *Olhos do Império* 61) constructed through the assertion of scientific innocence. Pratt defines Mungo Park's account through this model. The Scottish explorer would have insisted on a logic of African reciprocity, with his naive narrative, in light of the dilemmas Conrad leaves open. Although there is African banditry, of which Park was a victim, there is also the possibility of reciprocity and, therefore, self-criticism. The significance of *Heart of Darkness*, obtained even through its dynamic combination of approaching horror and delaying its encounter, in no way resembles the sense of presence in Park's account.

Park's book succeeded even before the explorer's arrival was announced. Combining drama and unpretentious narrative, Park's first editions were sold out and promptly published in other countries. The success demonstrates that it exemplifies a sentimental travel narrative on the imperial frontier (Pratt, *Olhos do Império* 137). For Pratt, it is not a scientific exploration account but a writing about oneself as a sentimental hero, an adventure after all. He is a protagonist who epically faces challenges. It is a book without landscapes and full of human dramas, alone or with the people he meets or travels with. In Park, unlike scientific travel reports, events are relevant for what they mean for the experiences of travel and survival. Pratt evaluates the sentimental experience as that of the bourgeoisie concerned with private and subjective life, such as desire or spirituality, rather than the result of an agenda of investigation and classification. The explorers are supposedly impartial subjects for whom it is essential to submit and endure unpredictable events. They are human encounters that narrate alliances, conflicts, and misunderstandings. As is known, none of this appears in *Heart of Darkness*. The ideology of anti-conquest manifests itself in Park's text in a logic of reciprocity in which both parties observe, desire, hate, etc. Africans question the journey for knowledge, as they would not conceive of it as disinterested because they consider the European foolish, but at the same time, harmless. In these contradictions, Park's account thrived as a model in terms of verisimilitude. Combining misfortune and victimization in the sentimental plot, Park established a model that in Conrad will become irrelevant. By writing non-sentimental protagonists and ironizing the "idea" that legitimized exploration, Conrad constructs a Marlow who can distinguish truths from the contact zone and the metropolis.

In 1896, Charles Henry Robinson published his *Hausaland or Fifteen Hundred Miles Through the Central Sudan*, a study on the Hausa people (in present-day Sudan), significant for the understanding of the conflicts in the region and for the severe treatment of the African condition. In the same vein as Conrad's novel, he ironically mocks the total ignorance of the continent in an anecdote. Robinson criticized the reports of Henry M. Stanley, a journalist working for the *New York Herald*: "'Africa,' wrote a modern schoolboy, when asked to say what he knew of the Dark Continent, 'is a large country chiefly composed of sand and elephants, the centre of which was uninhabited until that wicked man Stanley filled it up with towns and villages'" (Robinson 1).

The "Stanley model," as we argue in this article, encompasses journalistic narrative, the use of the first person, and although it appeals to the needs of cartographic research, it has a sense of travel doubly guided by business and the necessity of force. It was such a vigorous model, bringing a certain American "youthfulness" to European colonialism in Africa, that it was implanted in the screenplay for Jules Verne's book. In *Five Weeks in a Balloon* (1962, directed by Irwin Allen), a reporter in the style of Henry Stanley and a native are introduced into the screenplay, sexualizing the adventure with the "African" woman (played by actress Barbara Eden, later famous as "Jeannie" in the sitcom *I Dream of Jeannie*). The "Stanley model" primarily concerns what surfaces in the epigraph of this study, namely, the idea that going to Africa has the primary function of leading to a book in the first-person singular. Here lies the central difference with Mungo Park's "anti-conquest." Stanley literally traveled to write, so much so that there is, simultaneously, a lowering and a mystification of the diary, a genre so practiced by Livingstone. In *Into Africa* (2004), Martin Dugard presents the fraud hypothesis regarding the most commercial catchphrase of nineteenth-century exploration literature, "Dr. Livingstone, I presume?" Stanley always claimed the question's existence, but the diary page containing it was mysteriously lost. Dugard highlighted that many biographers of Joseph Conrad read Stanley's search for Livingstone as the inspiration for *Heart of Darkness*: "Stanley is Marlow and Livingstone is Kurtz" (397). We would like to point out this paradox: Stanley also embodied Kurtz, and it was with this negative fame that he spent his later life in England. By becoming a mercenary for Leopold II, he took on the horror of colonialism and the association with slavery, living with this stain without retraction until the end of his life.

Stanley's book *How I Found Livingstone: Travels, Adventures, and Discoveries in Central Africa* was first published in 1872. Understanding the framework imposed on the text in Robert E. Speer's centennial

edition of Livingstone's work in 1913 is essential. Speer begins with a detailed description of Livingstone's death, naturally stating that he died in the act of prayer, "commending Africa, his own dear Africa,—with all her woes and sins and wrongs,—to the Avenger of the oppressed and the Redeemer of the lost" (xviii). In other words, he proposes that the explorer's death humanized future colonial relations with Africa, for example, regarding the slave trade. To further sanctify the historical figure, Speer quotes from an unpublished letter that Stanley wrote after leaving Livingstone, which was said to have been found by Stanley's wife. It is, we can say, another kind of mystique of the lost letter, the reverse of the torn-out page from Stanley's diary. In the letter, Stanley writes that all investigations should be guided by the "true David Livingstone spirit" (xxi).

The preface to Stanley's text also begins the relativization of colonialism. It suggests that colonialism brought about few changes on the continent for the benefit of Africans. However, at the same time, without colonialism Africans would have been incapable of any political order. Livingstone is also credited with contributing significantly to achieving what many European treaties could not: the end of the slave trade (another African and Muslim "incapacity" in the European understanding). Once again, a letter from 1871 is cited, in which Livingstone asserts that more than discovering the sources of the Nile, his goal was to end the slave trade. In another letter, in 1872, Livingstone writes that the fight against the slave trade was a divine order. Thus, European occupation in Africa paradoxically made the continent "free." In the end, the preface emphasizes the economic success of the endeavor, the only item without contradictions in the discourse, and points to the continuity of missionary work, a charismatic counterpoint necessary for the rationalized operation of exploration.

In Stanley's 1872 "Introduction," synthesis and narrative capability come into play. Stanley masters journalistic narrative and constructs his book in a narrative rather than as a diary. He mentions avoiding the criticisms of repetition that travel diaries face. Beyond the quick dialogues and highly concentrated action, the significance of the beginning of the introduction lies in the sense of professional mission: reporters go wherever they are sent. They do not seek the divine revelation of Livingstone or the anti-conquest sense of Mungo Park, but rather respond to dollars and the boss's orders: Stanley must find Livingstone at all costs; it is as simple as that. Ultimately, publication matters: "I mean that it shall publish whatever news will be interesting to the world at no matter what cost" (xvii). The mission would be more complex, as Stanley, as an employee, was expected to deliver

other results, such as travel guides and journalistic coverage of Suez, Constantinople, India, and other places. Livingstone would be merely the end of a gigantic geographical journey.

Stanley briefly presents his grand trajectory and commits to addressing in the book only the search for Livingstone, beginning the narrative in Zanzibar. For him, the project would even lead him beyond journalism itself: "It is an Icarian flight of journalism, I confess; some even have called it Quixotic; but this is a word I can now refute, as will be seen before the reader arrives at the Finis" (xxii). Another passage worth noting is the one in which Stanley combines the discussion of the narrative voice used in his book with his subordinate condition in the class hierarchy. Stanley writes:

> I have also used the personal pronoun first person singular, "I," oftener, perhaps, than real modesty would admit. But it must be remembered that I am writing a narrative of my own adventures and travels, and that until I meet Livingstone, I presume the greatest interest is attached to myself, my marches, my troubles, my thoughts, and my impressions. Yet though I may sometimes write, "my expedition," or "my caravan," it by no means follows that I arrogate to myself this right. For it must be distinctly understood that it is the *New York Herald Expedition*, and that I am only charged with its command by Mr. James Gordon Bennett, the proprietor of the *New York Herald*, as a salaried employé of that gentleman. (xlii)

Elevation and demotion in the same rhythm insist on the ethics of paid work (rather than the missionary, hence free, model) and discursive subjectivization as a necessary counterpoint. Like Marlow, Stanley is a mercenary.

Let us now discuss how Conrad's narrative will relate to those models that precede him in representing the exploration of those supposed African blank spaces. According to Edward Said, the exploitation of ivory is the heart of *Heart of Darkness*. For Chinua Achebe, Conrad's narrative is configured as an explicit document of racism. In this essay, we will approach the novella published in 1902 by considering how it manipulates ambiguously the relationship between voice and writing, and primarily, how it articulates the denunciation of colonial horror, which Marlow makes when telling the story on the boat, and the protection of the altruistic idea that functioned as an ideology compensating for that same horror. Our investigation began with a prior discussion, during which one of us—Ricardo Luiz

Pedrosa Alves—explored the narrative dynamics that gradually reveal the horror in Conrad's book while stripping away its adventurous essence. That is, the horror is narrated more than shown. Furthermore, extending Franco Moretti's reflection (*Signos e estilos da modernidade*) regarding narratives of monsters (Dracula or Frankenstein's creature), he writes: "Como Drácula ou Frankenstein, a concentração do horror na figura de Kurtz seria uma forma narrativa de deslocar o horror real do colonialism" ("Like Dracula or Frankenstein, the concentration of horror in the figure of Kurtz would be a narrative form of displacing the real horror of colonialism"; Alves 84). Let us see how Marlow articulates his first contact with one of the two central documents of the plot:

> There remained a rude table—a plank on two posts; a heap of rubbish reposed in a dark corner, and by the door I picked up a book. It had lost its covers, and the pages had been thumbed into a state of extremely dirty softness; but the back had been lovingly stitched afresh with white cotton thread, which looked clean yet. It was an extraordinary find. Its title was, *An Inquiry into some Points of Seamanship*, by a man Towser, Towson—some such name—Master in his Majesty's Navy. The matter looked dreary reading enough, with illustrative diagrams and repulsive tables of figures, and the copy was sixty years old. I handled this amazing antiquity with the greatest possible tenderness, lest it should dissolve in my hands. (Conrad 66)

The manual, focused on the technical study of things, functions almost like a language apart from the world, and precisely because of this, it can act as a counterpoint to the following document, which will reveal—more than Kurtz's final sentence—the true horror of colonialism. More than with determination and utilitarian engagement, Marlow is excited by the presence of the human and the enigmatic in the navigation book he finds:

> Such a book being there was wonderful enough; but still more astounding were the notes pencilled in the margin, and plainly referring to the text. I couldn't believe my eyes! They were in cipher! Yes, it looked like a cipher. Fancy a man lugging with him a book of that description into this nowhere and studying it—and making notes—in cipher at that! It was an extravagant mystery. (66)

This book is the necessary counterpart (a Marlow to Kurtz) to another central text, one attributed to Kurtz. It is the report written by

him at the behest of the "International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs": "It was eloquent, vibrating with eloquence, but too high-strung, I think. Seventeen pages of close writing he had found time for!" (90). Suspecting that the manuscript had been written before Kurtz's madness, Marlow allows himself to be guided by the moral purpose of Africa's construction by European whites, "Immensity ruled by an august Benevolence" (91). Unlike the restrained study of maritime navigation, Marlow's manuscript needed more practical order. It is just a grandiloquent discourse. However, there was a postscript, a footnote "in an unsteady hand" (91). The tight handwriting is replaced by the trembling one in the only practical suggestion: "Exterminate all the brutes!" (91).

Marlow could not grasp the image of Kurtz despite all that was said to him about the missing man. He was "a voice." Later in the narration, he also finds it difficult to form the image of Kurtz, for when he finds Kurtz, he is presented as dying and is buried shortly afterward as a shapeless mass: "But I am of course aware that next day the pilgrims buried something in a muddy hole" (130). Marlow glimpses Kurtz when the "idea" is juxtaposed with the glare of that method of colonial exploration. As for Kurtz's papers, kept by Marlow, the central question was their destination. Marlow delivers the report but removes the method of exploration suggested in the postscript "Exterminate all the brutes!" (81) The same happens with the delivery of the text to a journalist and finally with the letters to Kurtz's beloved. Upon delivery, Marlow makes the last mockery in the name of Kurtz's memory, that is, the memory of horror. He refuses to confess Kurtz's last words ("the horror, the horror") and claims that he spoke the name of his beloved. According to James Clifford, there are truths of the metropolis (those that Marlow tells the fiancée, the journalist, and the Company's emissary) and truths of the frontier. Marlow, like Conrad, ultimately locates horror within the African setting, which supports Achebe's label of Conrad's fiction as racist.

For a materialist analysis, however, the central question that arises for the reader is to what extent the author endorses Marlow's position, squeezed between a narrative situation (that of the boat on which he travels with fellow sailors) in which he can freely denounce both changes in his perspective on colonialism and make a denunciation of colonial horror. Marlow critically exposes the "truths of the frontier," and accepts the role of guardian of Kurtz's documented public memory and the "altruistic" idea of Europeans by restricting the truth in the public realm, but also, as a sentimental hero, in the private realm. In other words, he tells the truth in an everyday travel situation, but refuses the truth regarding documents when assuming the role as a tool of the

ruling classes. A comparison could clarify this further. When Marlow reads the note "Exterminate all the brutes!" for the first time, he refers to the "method" proposed by Kurtz in this way: "It was very simple, and at the end of that moving appeal to every altruistic sentiment it blazed at you, luminous and terrifying, like a flash of lightning in a serene sky" (92). Conrad highlights what Walter Benjamin, in "On the Concept of History," proposes regarding the articulation of the past in a condition of remembrance (*Erinnerung*) that presents itself unexpectedly, as it appears as a flash of lightning in a moment of danger (Benjamin 11).

The literature of travel to Africa was built on the mystique of the many explorers who died on the continent, including Mungo Park. This victim model reached its peak of publicity when Stanley's narrative model for journalism appropriated the "anti-conquest" model, transforming it from a matter of form into substance. What Conrad does with that mystique is to amplify suspense, the detective-like search, emptying the adventure, not only in the dynamics of the book but also in Marlow's conscious treatment of the public image of colonialism. In *Heart of Darkness*, the adventure is constantly postponed, and when it occurs, it is a flash that quickly fades. The successive approaches to Kurtz also contribute to diluting the adventure and mainly presenting it indirectly through the reports heard by Marlow along the way. In this sense, it is possible to approach Conrad's literary operation from the discussion made by Franco Moretti in *A cultura do romance* regarding the seriousness of the novel constructed in the nineteenth century. Conrad's text, especially when compared to Jules Verne's narrative, which is full of twists and turns, makes adventure fiction serious. He empties the adventure through a series of fillings in which little or nothing happens. The narrative also becomes severe to the extent that it touches on the same themes as its predecessors but under the shadow of doubt and the regime of ambiguity.

Luiz Costa Lima, in *O redemoinho do horror*, based on one of Conrad's biographers, suggests that the author's African experience would have been fundamental to establishing Conrad as a writer. However, he did not enjoy it and returned earlier than planned, which triggered nervous breakdowns. What is particularly of interest is Lima's proposition regarding the relationship between intentionality and intensionality in Conrad's text: from a conservative position (but also "non-imperialist," as Said suggests) and not having liked the African experience, Conrad's intention does not coincide with the tension of the work, whose ambiguity is materially configured in the disposition that Marlow confers on the truths of the forest and his condition as a mercenary in the central African stage of expropriation operations in that context. At this point, an approximation between Conrad and

Marlow is fundamental. Both are paid, even in Conrad's writing, for a task that borders on genocidal horror.

Furthermore, if Marlow's final decisions regarding the documents suggest a conservative position, his narration to the companions on the Nellie boat points to a self-criticism accompanied by what he equivocates about, such as his condition as a mercenary who unwittingly colludes with his task. The written word colludes with the violence of colonial exploitation from the contract signed by Marlow, as he begins to feel complicit in "some conspiracy" (Conrad 20). At this point, Marlow, as a character, is close to the "model" Stanley. The narrative structure, however, is of another nature, ironizing the truths of the character by unmasking his way of playing with circumstances.

Notes

1. *Heart of Darkness* translates as *Coração das trevas* in Portuguese and is cited as such in the works cited.

2. All translations throughout the article are our own.

3. *Youth* translates as *Juventude* in Portuguese and is cited as such in the works cited.

4. All maps cited in this study are available at alabamamaps.ua.edu/historicalmaps/africa/.

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Is there a Portuguese Female Conrad? An Analysis of "Imperial Attitude" and Narrative Voice in Guilhermina de Azeredo's *Brancos e Negros*

Sandra Sousa

To those familiar with the debate around Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899), two critical positions are inescapable. On one hand, there is the tempting proposal put forward by Edward Said in which he considers that Conrad should be seen, simultaneously and contradictorily, as an imperialist and anti-imperialist writer. To justify the imperialistic content of Conrad's novel, Said uses the historical context, i.e., the general experience of imperialism itself, which, arguably, is a part of the universal human experience. He goes on to argue in *Culture and Imperialism* that "Conrad could probably never have used Marlow to present anything other than an imperialist world-view, given what was available for either Conrad or Marlow to see of the non-European at the time. [. . .] True, Conrad scrupulously recorded the differences between the disgraces of Belgian and British colonial attitudes, but he could only imagine the world carved up into one or another Western sphere of domination" (24). Nonetheless, Said claims, Conrad was also semi-peripheral in the imperialist world due to his place of birth. In the critic's words:

> But because Conrad also had an extraordinarily persistent residual sense of his own exilic marginality, he quite carefully (some would say maddeningly) qualified Marlow's narrative with the provisionality that came from standing at the very juncture of this world with another, unspecified but different. [. . .] Never the wholly incorporated and fully acculturated Englishman, Conrad therefore preserved an ironic distance in each of his works. (24-25)

Said's reading of the ambiguities in Conrad's work certainly resonates with those who study Lusophone Africa. They are basically the same arguments used by Boaventura de Sousa Santos to explain the marginality of Portuguese colonial endeavors in comparison with

those of the British, or what he calls, the "Portuguese transit between Prospero and Caliban." In Santos's words: "The Portuguese, ever in transit between Prospero and Caliban (hence, frozen in such transit), were both racist—often violent and corrupt, more prone to pillage than to development—and born miscegenators, literally the forefathers of racial democracy, of what it reveals and conceals" (24).

On the opposite end of the spectrum, Chinua Achebe has no doubts in classifying *Heart of Darkness* as an unambiguously racist book in which its author presents Africa and its inhabitants in a negative opposition to Europe. According to Achebe, Conrad's novel displays "better than any other work that I know [. . .] that Western desire and need" that we encounter "in Western psychology to set Africa up as a foil to Europe, as a place of negations at once remote and vaguely familiar, in comparison with which Europe's own state of spiritual grace will be manifest" (14-15). He goes on to state that "*Heart of Darkness* projects the image of Africa as 'the other world,' the antithesis of Europe and therefore of civilization, a place where man's vaunted intelligence and refinement are finally mocked by triumphant bestiality" (15). Not without reason, the Nigerian writer's indignation is tempered somewhat with empathy toward a novel that is still seen today as one of the first anti-colonial novels. If Said, in a certain way, relativizes that position, his argument, however, does not take a definitive stand in charging Conrad for his racist view of the continent and its inhabitants. Thus, Achebe's words and outrage leave no room for doubt:

> Africa as setting and backdrop which eliminates the African as human factor. Africa as a metaphysical battlefield devoid of all recognizable humanity, into which the wandering European enters at his peril. Can nobody see the preposterous and perverse arrogance in thus reducing Africa to the role of props for the break-up of one petty European mind? But that is not even the point. The real question is the dehumanization of Africa and Africans which this age-long attitude has fostered and continues to foster in the world. (21)

Even if it is hard to disagree with the argument that *Heart of Darkness* is "remarkable with regard to formal cohesion, to effects of ambiguity [. . .], to the harmonious alliance between the fragmentation of the narrative voice and the unity of narrated content, to the creation of an unusual hero and territory, and to the threshold of indistinctness created around direct, indirect and free indirect discourse [. . .]" (Can and Chaves 18), Conrad beyond question has a racist worldview, placing Africans as barbarians, savages, and uncivilized people in a continent

defined by its darkness. I would go even further by stating that in his novel characters are mainly just part of the background, a minor element that is confused and mixed with the harshness of nature, without a voice and devoid of any attempt to construct or project valid personality.

One issue that, in my point of view, needs to be taken into account and has not been given the consideration that it deserves is the role of women in the colonial enterprise. In his discussion of *Heart of Darkness*, Said never mentions women, whether on the Western side of the equation or on the "dark" side. Nevertheless, one of the very few descriptions of the Africans that Conrad devotes his attention to is an African woman, and in that description all elements of his thought come together—barbarism, savagery, racism, sexism, exotism, paternalism—all packed in the figure of a woman as a representation of his imperial mindset. From the steamer, and as his story in and about Africa is reaching the end, Marlow sees at the shore "a wild and gorgeous apparition of a woman" (55). Her description undoubtedly reveals a Western mind enveloped in wonder and confronting with certainty a world that needs to be tamed and civilized:

> She walked with measured steps, draped in striped and fringed cloths, treading the earth proudly, with a slight jingle and flash of barbarous ornaments. She carried her head high; her hair was done in the shape of a helmet; she had brass leggings to the knee, brass wire gauntlets to the elbow, a crimson spot on her tawny cheek, innumerable necklaces of glass beads on her neck; bizarre things, charms, gifts of witch men, that hung about her, glittered and trembled at every step. She must have had the value of several elephant tusks upon her. She was savage and superb, wild-eyed and magnificent [. . .]. And in the hush that had fallen suddenly upon the whole sorrowful land, the immense wilderness, the colossal body of the fecund and mysterious life seemed to look at her, pensive, as though it had been looking at the image of its own tenebrous and passionate soul. (55-56)

Just like nature, which seems to Marlow to be indistinct from the humans, the woman appeals to the exotic gaze of the Europeans yet also to their fear of the unknown. The character described as man of patches, Harlequin, in the story confirms it: "If she had offered to come aboard, I really think I would have tried to shoot her" (56). As Francisco Noa reminds us, colonial literature makes visible in the descriptions of African women "their remission to a double condition of inferiority:

sexual and racial" (280). In other words, "It is a biological reductionism, and for that very reason animalistic, to the condition of female or beast" (Noa 280). Conrad's novel, much like the colonial ones of his time and after him, shows us that "We are facing the paradox triggered by the dialectic of desire introduced by colonization and which leaves the European divided between fascination (of what is different) and repulsion (of what is not and should not be the same)" (Noa 280). In those two words "shoot her" lies the foundation of imperialism, a forceful clash involving established systems of authority that did not develop naturally according to their own path, but rather emerged as a disorderly and opportunistic disruption to existing power structures in Africa. For colonized women imperialism had a double impact, leading Anne McClintock to draw the conclusion that colonized women had to navigate not just the unequal dynamics in their interactions with their own male counterparts, but also the intricate and aggressive system of hierarchical rules and limitations that shaped their new interactions with men and women from the imperial power.

Within the framework of power and control established through imperialism and colonization, it remains crucial to bear in mind that the novels of Conrad and similar writers also prompt an inquiry into the intricate interplay between literature and domination. Even though, as Francisco Topa argues, Portuguese colonial literature did not yield authors on the scale of Joseph Conrad, E.M. Forster, or even Rudyard Kipling, during the Estado Novo era in Portugal, there was a concerted effort to promote and invigorate literary endeavors. The encouragement of literary production centered around colonial themes should be viewed within the context of numerous propaganda and information campaigns by the colonial regime, particularly prevalent in the 1930s and 1940s. During this period, diverse institutions such as the Lisbon Geography Society, the General Agency of the Colonies, and the Lisbon Academy of Sciences, organized events of varying natures, all driven by the shared goal of ingraining an "imperial culture" within Portuguese society. The terms "imperial thought" and "mentality" were also commonly used during that time in the sociocultural context to articulate this aspiration. Spearheaded by Armindo Monteiro, who served as the Minister of Colonies from 1931 to 1935 and was a key proponent of the renewed "imperial mystique" (Léonard 30), the Estado Novo regime initiated an ideological campaign focused on the empire. This campaign encompassed exhibitions, congresses, conferences, "colony weeks," fairs, and exhibitions, along with educational trips to "Portuguese Africa" and commemorations that referenced episodes and figures from Portuguese exploration and colonization history. For example, Armindo Monteiro's goal for Porto's First Colonial Exhibition

was to provide "the first lesson of colonization given to the Portuguese people, with enough imagination to reach all the hearts and minds, with sufficient elements to teach the less instructed and the more ignorant" (qtd. in Léonard 27).

Beginning in 1926, the Colonial Literature Contest, introduced by the General Agency of Colonies, stood as a pivotal component within a broader colonial propaganda strategy that extended across multiple decades. The first call for book submissions is featured in the Agency Bulletin's January edition of that same year. In it we read about the Portuguese lack of familiarity with their colonies—"the abundant heritage they should take pride in" (169). It expresses is a necessity to capture a broader audience, particularly the younger generation and those with a proclivity for reading and an inquisitiveness to learn, to help them to grasp the significance and potential inherent in their colonies. One of the most powerful tools to invigorate the spirit of the Portuguese populace undoubtedly involves literature in the form of novels, short stories, and other genres dealing with colonial affairs and portraying overseas adventures. It was with this objective in view that the General Agency for the Colonies, unwavering in its commitment to propagating the narrative of overseas Portugal, took the initiative to institute a Colonial Literature Contest ("Concurso de Literatura Colonial" 169). The Colonial Literature Contest, alongside other introductory statements in the Bulletin of the General Agency of the Colonies, strives to underscore the existence of an empire that warrants both understanding and appreciation. Hence, the flourishing of Portuguese colonial literature during the following decades was substantially propelled by the renewed national fascination with foreign territories, a sentiment legislatively articulated in the Colonial Act of 1930. The recurrent, often noteworthy endeavors of promoting and popularizing the colonies not only fostered but also validated the production of literature centered around these territories. In the realm of Portuguese imperialism and a literary landscape predominantly governed by male voices, six women received the Colonial Literature Contest Prize: Propércia C. Afonso, with the book *A Mulher na Índia Portuguesa*, in 1933; Guilhermina de Azeredo, awarded twice, in 1935, with the work *Feitiços* and, in 1955, with *Brancos e Negros*; in 1951, Márcia Ramos Ivens Ferraz with *Sòzinha no Mato*; in 1965, Maria Benedita Aires de Almeida Araújo, for the work *A Expansão Portuguesa e o Sentimento Religioso*; Glória de Sant'Ana, in 1962, with *Livro de Água*; and, finally, in 1966, Maria Teresa Galveias, with *Uevu* (*Oiçam*).

In the remainder of this discussion, I will be using Guilhermina de Azeredo's work, *Brancos e Negros* (1956), in order to show that even without the same level of sophistication or aesthetic quality as Conrad's

Heart of Darkness, colonial female authorship surpasses on other levels the dimensions of complexity and incipient anti-imperial critique that have been attributed to the Polish-British writer. Borrowing once more from the work of McClintock, we have learned that colonial women occupied a complex and ambiguous position within the colonial world. Excluded from the formal seats of power, their encounters with the benefits and societal conflicts of imperialism varied distinctly from those of colonial men. On one side, "colonial women made none of the direct economic or military decisions of empire and very few reaped its vast profits," but on the other, "the rationed privileges of race all too often put white women in positions of decided—if borrowed—power, not only over colonized women but also over colonized men" (McClintock 6). As McClintock concludes, "white women were not the hapless onlookers of empire but were ambiguously complicit both as colonizers and colonized, privileged and restricted, acted upon and acting" (6). Beyond question, we can place Guilhermina de Azeredo in the place of "ambiguous complicity" as I will demonstrate in my analysis of her book of short stories. As Topa writes, Azeredo

> constitutes a unique case in the landscape of Portuguese literature focused on the African colonial space, given the circumstance of being a woman and addressing a space and time that are not well represented in the literature in question: roughly the first quarter of the last century and the central part of Angola, in an area stretching from Benguela inland towards Huambo, in the sub-plateau and plateau region. (155)

Born Maria Guilhermina de Aguiã de Azeredo, she came into the world in São Mamede de Infesta in 1894. She was the daughter of Baltazar de Araújo Brito Rocha Aguiã from his first marriage. Her pursuit of higher education in Switzerland was halted by the eruption of World War I, prompting her to trade Switzerland for Benguela in 1915. There, she joined her father, who was already established as the town's mayor. In 1920, she married the writer António Maria de Azeredo. Eight years down the line, health issues concerning their son caused Guilhermina to return to Portugal. Before long, António also reunited with the family, bringing their colonial chapter in Benguela to a close. In the Portuguese metropolis, they settled on a family estate in Lamego, where they engaged in agricultural activities. Decades later, they would move to the city of Porto. Both were active contributors to the press. Throughout the 1930s, Guilhermina contributed to magazines like *Eva*, *Portugal Feminino*, *Magazine Bertrand*, among others. In the 1940s, her contributions extended to *O Mundo Português* and the

Luso-Brazilian publication *Atlântico*. She authored three books, all centering around the backdrop of Angola: *Feitiços* in 1935, *Brancos e Negros* in 1956, and *O Mato*, self-published in 1972. At the time of her passing in 1976, Guilhermina left an incomplete African-themed novel titled *Mulata*, and a compilation of tales set for publication, *Escravos do Calço* (*Douro Tales*).

Guilhermina lived on the periphery of intellectual and literary circles. One can argue that her work escaped the critical eye and, until recently, rested on the margins of literary and intellectual scholarship. One of her few critics, Luiz Fernando de França, analyzes how a book of colonial literature (*Brancos e Negros*) formally "praises" the work of the colonists, subordinates the Africans, and, by extension, constitutes itself as an evident instrument of "propaganda" of the colonizing action itself (249). Her cooperation with the regime is also notable in her contribution during the 1930s, together with her husband, to the newspaper *Acção: semanário português para portugueses*, a publication with a clear political stance aligned with the New State regime implemented by António de Oliveira Salazar. Nonetheless, here we can apply the same argument regarding her books, and specifically *Brancos e Negros*, that Said made about the complexity of Conrad's novel. Let us be reminded of his words when he explained that

> They [Marlow and Kurtz] (and of course Conrad) are ahead of their time in understanding that what they call "the darkness" has an autonomy of its own, and can reinvade and reclaim what imperialism has taken for *its* own. But Marlow and Kurtz are also creatures of their time and cannot take the next step, which would be to recognize that what they saw, disablingly and disparagingly, as a non-European "darkness" was in fact a non-European world *resisting* imperialism so as one day to regain sovereignty and independence, and not, as Conrad reductively says, to reestablish the darkness. (30)

According to Said, Conrad grapples with a "tragic limitation," as he fails to arrive at the realization that imperialism should come to an end. This shortcoming is justified by Conrad being "a creature of his time," so that even though he fiercely critiques the impact of enslavement in the context of imperialism, he cannot fully advocate for the freedom of the natives. In my analysis, I contend that something similar can be seen in Guilhermina de Azeredo's stories—she was as well a creature of her time who wrote books that were more than "colonial housekeeping manuals" (Stoler 17). Nevertheless, I hold the view that her colonial writings in *Brancos e Negros* surpass, on some level, the critiques of

empire that Conrad's exploration in *Heart of Darkness* was able to achieve. As the recipient of the 1955 Colonial Literature Contest, a vehicle designed in support of the Portuguese imperial endeavor, *Brancos e Negros* undisputedly aligns with the colonial agenda. I will show in each reading that follows how a particular narrative meets the parameters of colonial literature. The book is composed of ten short stories: "Saudade (Pórtico)", "Tudo é Chipurulo," "Mãe e filho," "A velha do açude," "Chiraué," "Cafuso," "Colonos," "Turião," "Soldado nº 7 da 10ª companhia," and "Chica." Except for "Tudo é Chipurulo," each narrative within the collection is recounted through a feminine voice, which often blurs the lines between the narrator and the author, imbuing the stories with a semi-autobiographical essence.

Similar to other pieces within the corpus of Portuguese colonial literature, *Brancos e Negros* can be situated within what Noa coined as the "exotic phase," a period that spans from the 1930s until the mid-1950s. In this instance, we are dealing with an aesthetic exoticism that is expressed through the narrator's fascinated and meditative approach, portraying scenes of landscapes or individuals infused with a reverence for the unknown and unfamiliar. A significant factor that contributes to this sense of exoticism is the chosen setting for the narratives, which primarily take place within the wilderness. There exists a symbolic connection between Africa and this wilderness, which colonial literature extensively delves into (Noa). Having never resided herself in the capital of Angola, Azeredo situates her stories in the untamed wilderness, a well-recognized locale, described in ways that exhibit her fascination with the landscape. I will explore three of the stories to examine the civilizing mission and the colonial ethos, the female and the native voice, and the racism embedded in colonial vocabulary in comparative terms with Conrad's text.

In the first short story of the collection, "Saudade (Pórtico)," presented as a letter to a "friend" with whom the female narrator had once shared the aspirations and fantasies of colonial existence, the reader is immediately confronted with the narrator's profound attraction to the expansiveness of the land, the need to possess it, and reverence for the unknown:

> Quanto sonhámos naquela varanda! Que de projectos, que de ficções, que de mundos criados e erguidos num momento por cima da 'garrancharia' imensa! Fomos para ali fascinados pela selva e em plena selva erguemos a nossa choupana.
>
> How much we dreamed on that balcony! So many plans, so many fictions, so many worlds conceived and built in an

> instant above the vast *garrancharia* (vegetation)! We went there enchanted by the jungle, and in the midst of the jungle, we erected our hut. (Azeredo 9)
>
> Tu querias ser um patriarca, senhor de vastos territórios e manadas lustrosas. Atraía-te a vastidão do mato sem limites, a liberdade e a grandeza da floresta.
>
> You wanted to be a patriarch, a lord of vast territories and glossy herds. The boundless expanse of the untamed wilderness attracted you, the freedom, and the grandeur of the forest. (Azeredo 10)
>
> Fora a floresta que nos prendera assim? Que força ignota nos impelia? É o segredo que o mato guarda avaramente, mas ela atrai, atrai como um íman e prende e arrasta e entusiasma.
>
> Had it been the forest that bound us in such a way? What unknown force compelled us? It's the secret that the wilderness jealously guards, yet it beckons, beckons like a magnet, and captures and pulls and excites. (Azeredo 11)
>
> Que maravilha para nós, tudo aquilo! As mais pequeninas coisas nos pareciam prodígios, justamente porque nunca as havíamos visto; fomos levados pela nossa fantasia como as crianças a quem se mostra de longe um paraíso de fadas.
>
> What a marvel it all was for us! The tiniest things seemed like wonders, precisely because we had never seen them before; we were carried away by our imagination like children who are shown a distant fairyland. (Azeredo 11)[1]

In the context of this story, we must consider that this letter is written from a temporal distance that implies a mature perspective on the writer's past actions and behaviors. This suggests a shift in how imperialism is now viewed, that it is seen from a different angle. However, the sentiment of "saudade" ("E eu tenho tantas saudades, tenho tantas saudades!"; "And I miss it so much, I miss it so much!"; 16) at the end does not imply the conviction that the land should not still be inhabited by white colonials. Indeed, the luso-tropicalist[2] and nostalgic tone prevails in this story, such that in the conclusion the narrator asserts: "Dizem que todo o colono, ao beber pela primeira vez água africana, toma o feitiço do continente [. . .]. Afirmam-no a rir,

mas toda a gente acredita nisso [. . .]" ("They say that every colonist, upon drinking African water for the first time, becomes enchanted by the continent [. . .]. They say it with a laugh, but everyone believes it [. . .]"; 15). In fact, the narrative encapsulates the entire colonial ethos, encompassing the notion of a mission in Africa, predominantly a civilizing endeavor, and the relinquishing of one's former life in the civilized world (10), along with all the challenges endured to bring the mission to fruition: "Foste como aquele pioneiro que, a golpes rudes, abriu caminho à civilização; foste o mártir da selva e a ela tudo deste: a tua persistência, o teu scarifício, o teu trabalho e o teu sangue, combatendo o próprio sentimento e o próprio desânimo" ("You were like that pioneer who, with rough blows, cleared the path for civilization; you were the martyr of the jungle and to it you gave everything: your persistence, your sacrifice, your labor, and your blood, fighting against your very own feelings and discouragement"; 13). It is noticeable that Azeredo draws on emotion to justify the colonial project by evoking a mix of admiration and respect for the colonial pioneers, ultimately aiming to garner support and understanding for their efforts. The description of giving "everything" to the jungle, from persistence and sacrifice to labor and blood, taps into emotions of awe and reverence. These sacrifices, fought against inner turmoil and discouragement, evoke empathy and an emotional connection. The notion of sacrificing one's comfort and even shedding blood to achieve this mission triggers a sense of heroism and valor, further intensifying the reader's positive emotional response. By appealing to readers' emotions and portraying the colonialists as dedicated individuals committed to a noble cause, the text seeks to justify imperialism as a necessary endeavor to bring progress, civilization, and development to previously untamed regions. Hence, the viewpoint presented here effectively obliterates the African perspective, rendering their way of life invisible, while the fictional world that emerges is devoid of any semblance of communication between the colonizers and the colonized. Furthermore, the narrator does not recognize the painful realities of colonization that her "friend" has brought with him—dispossession, exploitation, cultural suppression, and violence—and the letter only contemplates and values the effort to "turn the jungle into a tiny Portuguese homeland and to magnify the Homeland" (14-15).

Emerging fifty-seven years later and distanced from the artistic sophistication of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, the inaugural story within the compilation *Brancos e Negros* hints at the dominator's belief system that imposes significance on locations and entities. Without the white man's gaze, all would lack validation, which would prompt Achebe's profound discontent. According to Topa it is not certain that

Guilhermina de Azeredo shared the fundamental values of imperialist nationalism, at least not in their totality (157). Topa's doubt arises from the fact that one of the newspapers for which Azeredo wrote placed significant emphasis in one of its editorials on maintaining a clear division between the political and the artistic (157). The story "Tudo é Chipurulo," a phrase that proves challenging to translate—yet encapsulates an intricate amalgamation of ambition, greed, and envy—is the exception in the collection in terms of narrative voice. In it, we hear the perspective of the friend addressed by the female narrator in "Saudade (Pórtico)." The story begins with an introduction by the female voice in the form of a prologue. Amidst the moments that draw attention to the contradictions inherent in colonial literature, and specifically in the context of Azeredo's work, we read the following statement:

> Dessa vez, porém, o meu amigo deixou-se ficar horas seguidas a meu lado [. . .].
> Narrou-me coisas espantosas dos seus primeiros anos de sertanejo; falou-me da dedicação do nativo como colaborador, da sua alma simples e humilde, do seu espírito de justiça e do seu coração cheio de humanidade e grande filosofia [. . .]. As suas palavras calmas fizeram-me ver coisas que nunca tinha visto e reconhecer virtudes onde só observara manha e estupidez. Tudo se tornou mais claro e compreensível à minha volta [. . .], homens, usos, costumes [. . .]
>
> However, this time, my friend remained by my side for hours on end [. . .].
> He narrated astonishing stories from his early years in the backcountry; he spoke to me about the native people's dedication as collaborators, their simple and humble souls, their sense of justice, and their hearts filled with humanity and profound philosophy [. . .]. His calm words unveiled things I had never seen before and led me to acknowledge virtues where I had only noticed cunning and foolishness. Everything around me became clearer and more comprehensible [. . .], men, customs, traditions [. . .]. (19)

It would be difficult not to interpret the above statement as an exploration of perspective transformation and the revelation of hidden dimensions within the colonial context. The passage appears to depict a pivotal moment of the female narrator's enlightenment, facilitated by the discourse of the friend who shares insights from his early years

as a resident in the wilderness. This transformation can be interpreted as a reflection of the complex dynamics of colonial literature, where preconceived notions of the colonized are replaced with a more nuanced understanding. It could also be read as a commentary on the multifaceted nature of colonial relationships and the potential for colonizers' views to evolve when confronted with alternative perspectives. Even so, this can also be taken into account a posteriori since "Tudo é Chipurulo" employs the trope of recurrent conflicts to depict a dignified representation of the colonists, grounded in their industriousness and unwavering determination. Furthermore, it uses the familiar racist lexicon directed at Africans that is customary in colonial literature. Africans are characterized by their larger physical proportions, and they are compared to animals ("Eu só via os seus ombros largos e aquela manápula de gorila, baloiçando"; "I could only see his broad shoulders and that gorilla-like bunch of muscles swinging"; 28), and perceived as savages ("Porém, eu sentia-me à mercê dum selvagem matreiro com bons músculos e pé leve [. . .]"; "Yet, I felt at the mercy of a cunning savage with strong muscles and nimble feet [. . .]"; 50).

To complement the gaze of the Africans who view the white European in their village as "the strong man" and "the one with the color of a lion," (20), the narration gives voice to the colonized. In addition to detailing the efforts of resistance upon the colonists' arrival, the story amplifies the African perspective within that depiction by giving them a voice:

> À medida que descarregávamos sobre o cais do caminho de ferro caixotões misteriosos, maiores que troncos de tacula, e os içávamos para os carros boeres, a pulso ou com a ajuda de alavancas, o espanto subia de grau. – Que é isto? – perguntavam uns e outros. – Que vêm eles cá fazer? A terra é nossa, só nossa, toda nossa!
>
> As we unloaded mysterious crates onto the railway dock, larger than *tacula* tree trunks, and hoisted them onto the Boer wagons, either manually or with the help of levers, the amazement grew. "What is this?" some asked, while others inquired, "What are they coming here to do? The land is ours, only ours, entirely ours!" (Azeredo 20)

This visual detail of the passage sets the stage for the theme of colonial intrusion and exploitation, symbolizing the imposition of foreign elements onto the African environment. The reaction of the local people, characterized by questioning and incredulity, reflects their

sense of disorientation and vulnerability. The above scene encapsulates the broader power dynamics at play in select colonial literature, where the colonizers' actions disrupt the imagined harmony and equilibrium of the indigenous environment.

At this juncture, my contention is that by adhering to Said's logic, Azeredo can be paralleled with Conrad. But she goes further in the so-called "anti-colonialism" by giving voice to the African characters,[3] when Conrad does not. Within this narrative, the "soba" (chief) deftly reverses the colonial lexicon, addressing her friend as "criança" (child): "—Tu és ainda criança, branco!—sentenciou, com aquele seu ar de troça. —Olho de leão pode mais que olho de gente! [. . .]" ("—You're still a child, white man!—he declared, with that mocking glint in his eyes.—A lion's gaze holds more power than a human's! [. . .]"; 27). He also imparts advice to the white man:

> —Oh, branco! Para que te matas com trabalho? Envenenas o teu coração e ninguém to agradece. Tudo é 'chipurulo' nesta vida, branco! Olha, Caindumbo: Deus deu-te boa casa e boa roupa, mulher e filhos! Comida não te falta, nem dinheiro, nem sambos cheios de bois, nem campos cheios de milho. Que mais queres? Nada podem contra ti os feitiços grandes [. . .]. Descansa na tua cubata e sê feliz como eu [. . .]
>
> —Oh, white man! Why do you exhaust yourself with toil? You poison your heart, and no one appreciates it. Everything is *chipurulo* in this life, white man! Look, Caindumbo: God has given you a good home and fine clothing, a wife and children! You lack neither food, nor money, nor huts filled with cattle, nor fields brimming with corn. What more do you desire? Great spells hold no power over you [. . .]. Rest in your hut and be happy as I am [. . .] (34-35)

In fact, it is the white man who gains insight in this narrative and finds gratitude for the assistance provided by the natives: "Sem dúvida alguma, ficámos a dever a nossa felicidade, e ainda hoje a devemos, ao meu velho servidor. Que grande filosofia" ("Without a doubt, we owe our happiness to my old servant, and even today we owe it to him. What a profound philosophy"; 34). Thus, the African values and philosophy are assimilated by the colonists, and the story concludes with Azeredo's words confirming that they were indeed correct in their life perspective. The narrative ultimately depicts an encounter in which exchange and communication take place. Obviously, as Henry Schwarz has argued, this is an "unequal exchange" (178), one that shows "the

impossibility of fully knowing the consciousness of the Other" and, as such, "the distance between these two perspectives can never be reconciled, but rather it must be acknowledged that the 'distortion is parametric'" (198).

Guilhermina de Azeredo also distinguishes herself from Conrad in another significant manner, i.e., by giving the African characters voice and agency. As an example, we consider the third short story in the compilation, titled "Mãe e Filho" ("Mother and Son"). In this narrative, the focus shifts to the Africans, who take center stage as the author recounts the tale of a mother's arrival in a village that is foreign to her. The story delves into the dynamics of relationships between diverse ethnic groups and also into the intricacies of polygamy. In a sense, we could argue that Azeredo undertakes a form of anthropological exploration in the terms conveyed by James Clifford, that the primary trope of ethnographic writing is a redemptive Western allegory, a "salvage paradigm." According to Clifford this approach involves evaluating other cultures using Western-derived standards of authenticity, subsequently relegating them to a historical past or a mysterious realm that exists almost outside of time, often within the context of Western developmental history (1988). Throughout various stories, Azeredo details the customs, traditions, and ways of life of the Africans, effectively granting them agency by letting their voices and narratives take center stage. As Topa shrewdly observes, Azeredo stands as an exceptional writer due to her adeptness in observing and depicting the intricate and challenging lives of both Africans and colonizers, including the complications arising from their interactions during the colonization era. Her mastery of narrative techniques, the concise and intense quality of her short stories, the unpretentious nature of her writing style, and her adept use of a diverse array of Angolan terms drawn from various origins within her vocabulary also contribute to her distinct literary prowess (155).

Undoubtedly, Azeredo aligns herself with an imperial worldview, echoing Conrad in a similar vein. However, within her writings, a certain level of communication between these disparate worlds emerges. The title of the compilation, *Brancos e Negros*, reinforces this notion. Placing these two terms side by side in the title implies an intention to depict the interaction between them. Naturally, Azeredo was a product of her era, marked by a prevailing imperialistic mindset. Much like Conrad, she refrains from explicitly advocating for the cessation of imperialism, but within her work, subtle murmurs of dissent and resistance against the occupation surface, even if relegated to the background.

Casting a critical eye on writers like Conrad and Azeredo confirms the importance of studying colonial literature as a valuable lens through which we can understand the complexities of historical, cultural, and power dynamics that shaped the interactions between colonizers and the colonized. This body of literature offers insights into the motives, attitudes, and impact of colonialism, as well as the ways in which it affected individuals and societies on both sides. By analyzing colonial texts, we gain a deeper comprehension of the varying perspectives, experiences, and narratives that contributed to the formation of colonial identities, ideologies, and resistance movements. These texts are essential artifacts that allow us to critically examine the legacy of colonization, its influence on contemporary societies, and its role in shaping present-day discourses on identity, post-colonialism, and decolonization. In conclusion, the study of colonial literature helps us unravel the intricate tapestry of a pivotal period in human history, shedding light on its nuances and complexities that continue to reverberate in our globalized and capitalized world.

Notes

1. All translations throughout the article are my own.

2. Theory advocated by the Brazilian sociologist Gilberto Freyre that promotes a "special" way of Portuguese colonization, based on miscegenation and the interpenetration of cultures. Freyre's Lusotropicalist theses will have a greater impact on colonial literature in the 1950s and 1960s. See, for example, Sousa, *Ficções do Outro: Império, Raça e Subjectividade do Moçambique Colonial*.

3. In *Heart of Darkness*, Conrad exclusively portrays the woman from the male gaze as in the following example: "And from right to left along the lighted shore moved a wild and gorgeous apparition of a woman. She walked with measured steps, draped in striped and fringed cloths, treated the earth proudly, with a slight jingle and flash of barbarous ornaments. She carried her head high; her hair was done in the shape of a helmet" (55-56).

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Postcolonial Otherness and Angst in Liberata Masoliver's *Efún* (1955)

Lisa Nalbone

Catalan writer Liberata Masoliver (1911-2004) published sixteen novels during a career that spanned from the mid-1950s to the end of the 1970s. Though most of her novels are set in Spain, three take place in Africa: two in present-day Equatorial Guinea, *Efún* (1955) and *La mujer del colonial* (1962), as well as one in Absynnia, today Ethiopia, *Selva negra, selva verde* (1959).[1] Despite scant critical studies on Masoliver's life and life's writings, she is often included in literary bibliographies that highlight Spanish women writers of the twentieth century. The three novels set in Sub-Saharan Africa, in which the European colonial experience is fraught with racial and racialized tensions, highlight the continental divide as characters negotiate economic and sociocultural power constructs.[2]

Reading Masoliver's *Efún* through the lens of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899) frames the novel's interpretation as testimony to the angst surrounding the notion of postcolonial otherness. This essay draws parallels between Masoliver's and Conrad's creative works by examining how the mid-twentieth century novel, set on a Spanish-owned timber plantation and environs in Guinea Española, portrays the relationship between the Spanish entrepreneurs and the local people from the standpoint of efforts toward cultural integration in the imperial context. Chinua Achebe's acerbic critique of Conrad's novel aids in contextualizing and interpreting the Other that is central to postcolonial discourse. Key points of discussion include the concept of colonized/colonizer, wherein Masoliver's narrator establishes the dichotomy between the Spanish plantation overseer and the locals, offset by another Spaniard who has, so to speak, "gone native." The character dynamics underscore and interpret two of the colonial characters in the vein of outcasts both in terms of the exclusion of European characters from mainland Spanish society and the perceived commodification of the plantation workers.

Guinea Española's European colonial history began with Spanish occupation of the region in 1778, though economic exploitation began in 1844, with the formation of the first plantations: cacao, coffee, and timber. The formal boundaries of the region then known as Spanish

Guinea were established beginning in 1885 and finalized with the signing of the Treaty of Paris in 1900. Through the ensuing decades, the imperial enterprise sought economic development while also intending to transpose a civilizing message asserting European domination. Decolonization efforts across Africa began to take hold at a time that coincided with the second half of the Francisco Franco dictatorship, including in Spanish Guinea, which resulted in the renaming of the region as Equatorial Guinea in 1963, followed by its independence in 1968.

In this essay, I propose a rereading of Masoliver's *Efún* not as a love story of a young Spanish woman in a foreign, exotic land in the vein of a *novela rosa* (romance novel), but as a testimony to the image—both conceptions and misconceptions—of the region's people and way of life in a manner that diverges from Conrad's portrayal of local populations in his novel. The story is focalized through the protagonists, Carlos and Ana, within the framework of post-colonial literature, as active participants in the sum of narrative action, unlike Marlow's framed narration focalized primarily on Kurtz as the outsider. Indeed, the reading of the novel as a love story would have been essential for it to gain approval for publication under Spain's strict censorship legislation during the Franco dictatorship, but the ways intersecting gender, race, and class subtextually contest existing normativity point to alternative models of subjectivity, both masculine and feminine, by situating these models outside the homeland. Though Masoliver was ideologically conservative, her disillusionment with her country in the post-Civil War period—after a war that consumed the country from 1936-1939—may have contributed to her crafting a narrative of escape. However, despite the geographic distance she achieves by setting the novel in Spanish Guinea, the love story, on the surface, conforms to normative representations of gender, race, and class to highlight dichotomies between the colonizer and colonized in terms of male versus female, bourgeoisie and upper class versus lower class, European white versus African black.

The varying social strata that comprise the successful operation of the timber plantation, whose name gives way to the novel's title, paint a vivid portrait of the gender-race-class intersection and the dichotomies of a cultural imaginary far removed from the author's experience; yet these portrayals suggest a keen awareness of such nuanced cultural differences between Spain and Spanish Guinea in terms of local language, cultural practices, as well as flora and fauna. Although Masoliver never traveled to this country, her narrative contains compelling and authentic descriptions of what daily life would be like in this foreign land, but strictly from the lens of the privileged colonial presence. For

her plot centered on the timber plantation, Masoliver follows in the footsteps of 1940s Catalan writers who highlight "the entrepreneurial spirit of the 'Catalan bourgeoisie,'" which is viewed as "endangered by the rumble of foreign ideologies and demands of ungrateful workers" (Pope 139). Then, during the 1950s, the rise of the documentary-like novel saw the emergence of the "well-meaning anthropological reporting in a situation of internal colonialism, but the lack of questioning about the place of the observer seems outdated today" (Pope 142).[3] While it is true that Masoliver's characters and narrator elide the critical reflection on the state of relations between Spanish and Guinean populations, her representation of events depicts a believable story that aligns with the neorealist literary tendency in vogue in Spain at the time of her writing.

The novel's third-person narrator presents, in essence, two story lines. The first involves Carlos Isart, a physician from Barcelona, who has lived in Spanish Guinea for the past ten years and successfully runs the Efún plantation. The second involves Ana Ribera, the fiancée of Carlos's second in command, Juan Esteve. She has arrived in Guinea to marry Juan, only to find that he is currently on an inland expedition in the company of an American ornithologist and a French entomologist. Both story lines play out in tandem as Carlos accompanies Ana on journeys both to the interior of Spanish Guinea to find Juan and then back to Bata, the coastal city that serves as the gateway to and from Spain. Ana's journey is twofold, first to Spanish Guinea, then through the interior of the country, and then in the reverse. During her journey inland, Carlos serves as protective guide to Ana, the devoted fiancée who ensures a respectable physical and emotional distance from her guide. The return journey to Bata is fraught with unease upon Ana's estrangement from Juan when she learns of his relationship with the locally born woman, Obama, and the three children they share. During the return to the plantation, however, Ana pivots her affection to Carlos, in a gradual revealing of mutual attraction that culminates with their plan to reunite in Spain after the few weeks it should take Carlos to leave the plantation in competent hands. Weeks become months, and he fails to execute his plan to return to Spain due to multiple, unavoidable complications. After receiving Ana's letter ending their relationship, the novel concludes with the suggestive scene of Carlos in bed with Obama.

Cécile Stephanie Stehrenberger views the novel as a work written from within characteristics "del discurso colonial franquista" ("of Francoist colonial discourse"; 62) and explains that through this discourse emerge "características en relación con la articulación de una 'female complaint.' Es decir, un discurso que afirma la existencia de una

'women's culture' compartida por todas las mujeres y que deplora la opresión partiarcal, pero que al mismo tiempo comprueba que no se puede acabar con ella" ("characteristics in relation to the articulation of a 'female complaint.' That is, a discourse that affirms the existence of a 'women's culture' shared by all women and that deplores partisan oppression, but at the same time proves that it cannot be ended"; 62). Stehrenberger's postcolonial reading, informed by Homi Bhabha, is fundamental for contextualizing Masoliver's racialized discourse within the larger frame of the civilizing European in the presence of the racialized Other for its presentation of the feminine subject, amidst the masculinized entrepreneurial endeavor that Carlos embodies. The relationship between genders reflects Anne McClintock's views on the imperial endeavor: "Within this long and conflictual engagement, the gendered dynamics of colonized cultures were contorted in such ways as to alter, in turn, the irregular shapes that imperialism took in various parts of the world" (6).

As a colonial figure, Carlos demonstrates paternalistic qualities toward the local population, yet definitively from within his position of imperial power: he watches over the plantation community and is charged with multiple culturally and economically oriented responsibilities. He oversees all aspects of the work of about 300 local plantation workers. He provides their medical care and carries out justice. The authority of Carlos's colonial presence on the timber plantation is significant in terms of the economic gain it represents in the imperial endeavor designed for entrepreneurs seeking to increase their fortune. The logging industry typically employed the largest percentage of workers in the country, with one study in the Rio Benito identifying 44.2 % of the workforce as forestry workers and sawyers (Ballano Gonzalo 457). With timber production at its height in the 1950s, representing along with cacao production a value of about 90% of exportations (Rondo Igambo 97),[4] overseers such as Carlos were faced with the increasing demands of finding and keeping workers, having to negotiate the conditions of the work environment with the pay scale to avoid a shortage of workers, who were likely to leave employment if they were mistreated and were motivated to remain through a system of bonuses for honoring an agreed upon contract (Ballano Gonzalo 457). Further, according to Enrique Martino, "Some recruiters also operated illegal rackets to import alcohol and rifles, essential items needed by all the recruiters entering into negotiations with the local chiefs" (48).

The exploitation of timber growth in Spanish Guinea had the benefit of government-supported field studies regarding the types of wood that commonly and abundantly grew in the virgin lands, the density and locations of its growth, and cost analyses of its production, which

also included the need to create an infrastructure to support the finished product's transport from the farming locations to the coast for export. Fernando Nájera y Angulo, a mountain engineer who published in 1948 *El abastecimiento del mercado nacional de madera* (The Supply of the National Wood Market)—under the auspices of the government-funded Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (Spanish National Research Council)—sets forth an overview of how to best capitalize on the logging industry, including efforts aimed at reforestation (96-99). He explains that the wood from Spanish Guinea that was exported to Spain filled two vital purposes. It allowed the country to meet the supply and demand ratio for products such as plywood panels (the primary use), railway rolling stock, cabinetry and fine carpentry, packaging, and compressed wood panels, while at the same time it promoted the preservation of forestry density on the peninsula (Nájera y Angulo 64, 68). As Juan Carlos Guerra Velasco and Henar Pascual Ruiz-Valdepeñas synthesize when commenting on Nájera y Angulo's conclusions on his decades of work dedicated to understanding the region's economic potential, "Es el aprovechamiento integral de la selva y la traducción monetaria de éste" ("It is the comprehensive capitalizing of the jungle and the monetary translation of this"; 12) that motivates the colonial presence as vital to the peninsula's economy. In this context the financial benefits of the imperial endeavor rely on the power dynamics in the relationship between citizens of both countries.

There is a clear dichotomy between the colonizer and colonized populations in Masoliver's novel that can be interpreted through Edward Said's views on imperialism, which involved "the practice, the theory and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan centre ruling a distant territory," whereas colonialism refers to the "implanting of settlements on a distant territory" (Said 9). Along these lines, Robert Young explains that "colonialism involved an empire that was developed for settlement or for commercial purposes, while imperialism operated from the centre, was a state policy, and was developed for ideological as well as financial reasons" (qtd. in Gilmartin 116). Thus, Gilmartin summarizes that Young views imperialism as a concept, and colonialism as a practice (116). While the economic impetus behind Mr. Kurtz's presence along the river in Conrad's novel plays an unquestionably significant role, Masoliver moves from the shorelines to interior land to create a functional community in which European and African cultures interact with one another.

The narrative voice reconfigures the Spanish homeland in an exotic setting by situating the action in a remarkably uncivilized atmosphere in which the Spanish-born characters' attitudes toward cultural mores of the *madre patria* manifest as privileged in the context of the afore-

mentioned dichotomies, characterized by the privileged-oppressed dialectic. Culturally acceptable as well as transgressive behaviors on the plantation and surrounding areas, framed as such in terms of the homeland, make meaning of Masoliver's discourse of marginalization in which, according to Stehrenberger, "La fijación de la jerarquía 'racial' facilita transgresiones de jerarquías de clase y de género para los sujetos europeos que viven en la colonia" ("The establishment of the 'racial' hierarchy facilitates transgressions of class and gender hierarchies for European subjects living in the colony"; 74).[5] The narrative focalization from the point of view of the civilizing European in the presence of the racialized Other underscores the discourse of a peaceful coexistence—that arguably was not successfully attained—between the two groups only when the Other conforms to the conditions imposed by the Spanish outsiders.

The novel's hierarchical sociocultural framework was supported by Francoist society in which in June 1945, the Instituto de Estudios Africanos (IDEA) was created to foster awareness of Africana studies in fields such as ethnology, archaeology, geology, art, medicine, linguistics, history, among others, and to this end sponsored conferences as well as publications of lectures, books and two journals.[6]

For the purposes of this discussion that centers on plantation society in Spanish Guinea, Sergio Suárez Blanco's views assist in understanding the economic impact of the imperial endeavor and underscore the importance of shedding light on it:

> Este pensamiento africanista tuvo asimismo un componente economicista destinado a establecer cuál era la riqueza (agrícola, minera, forestal, pesquera, etc.) de las posesiones africanas y si era viable su explotación tanto en términos de eficacia técnica como económica. Con toda seguridad, es éste (el del uso económico que se les deparó a las colonias africanas) el aspecto peor tratado, cualitativa y cuantitativamente, de la presencia española en África.
>
> This Africanist thought also had an economic component aimed at establishing the wealth (agricultural, mining, forestry, fishing, etc.) of African possessions and whether their exploitation was viable both in terms of technical and economic efficiency. Without a doubt, this (the economic use that was given to the African colonies) is the least researched aspect, qualitatively and quantitatively, of the Spanish presence in Africa. (322)

The examination of literary production by Spanish authors set in Spanish Guinea affords a unique perspective, to explore through fiction the relationship between the Spanish *peninsulares* in this region and the local population, such as the example of *Efún* and Masoliver's other two novels set in Africa. Not coincidentally, the year 1944 was a turning point in the land distribution practices and the recognition of land ownership under the leadership of Juan María Bonelli Rubio, named governor in that year. At this time, the set of rules on concessions granted to the Spaniards for the cultivation and exploitation of forestry was restructured, taking into consideration the existing rules and curtailing the ones that allowed for land exploitation. Legislation also established that leadership positions in land-owned business ventures such as presidents, managers, and directors could only be held by Spaniards (Ndongo-Bidyogo 60).

Thus, the Spanish state perpetuated a narrative of racial distinction, the discussion of which necessarily addresses the consistently prejudicial and pejorative references in Masoliver's novel to the local Guineans as inferior to the Spaniards who live there as part of a financial endeavor under the umbrella of colonial imposition. Here we draw parallels with Chinua Achebe's rebuke of Conrad's novel. Though Masoliver creates the illusion of distance between herself and the third-person narrator, as sources indicated she never actually travelled to Spanish Guinea, she does not provide, as Achebe has pointed out in his critique of *Heart of Darkness*, an alternative frame from within which she neutralizes the racialized discourse (19). This racialized discourse supports what Montserrat Alás-Brun classifies as a contradiction of "apparent benevolence and lack of prejudices of the Spanish colonizers, a myth that the official discourse of Franco's government tried to perpetuate in the last period of the African colony" (165). The Francoist African discourse that on the one hand advocated for the integration of cultures as demonstrated, for example, by the visits by groups of women who put on dance performances sponsored by the *Sección Femenina* (*Female Section*)[7] and pictures in the media of integrated schools, with Spanish expatriates living congenially with the local populations, contrasts with the image of separation and abhorrent treatment of the local population. The deconstructing of Masoliver's racist portrayal of the local Spanish Guinean population challenges the Francoist discourse of harmonious enculturation. The colonized subjects display what the homeland perceives as undesirable qualities: they practice cannibalism, polygamy, and ritualistic dancing; men are described as savages in their appearance and actions; sexualized women dress and behave immodestly. Absent is the narrative of integration and the seemingly contented coexistence between the two groups.

Masoliver translocates race representation from Spain to Spanish Guinea through the nuanced negotiation of colonizer and colonized enculturation. Radically racial otherness also evinces the backwards messaging encoded in the transfer of cultural values not from the imperial figure to the colonized, but the other way around as the two men, Carlos and Juan, immerse themselves in the local traditions by remaining in the colony and pursuing their relationship with Obama, leaving Ana alienated from both men. Thus, the land-owner/land-working dichotomy makes social coalescence tenable only when casting off the homeland, despite Francoist messaging to the contrary.

Because of the blurred lines of social and labor relations in the plantation community, class distinction becomes a moot point considering that local cultural traditions largely prevail and that the class representation of the *peninsulares* portrays them through the plantation operation's labor hierarchy as racially homogenous. Lastly, gender-encoded underpinnings in the novel neutralize the power of masculinity and place it in the hands of the two women, Ana and Obama, who succeed in kindling a newly-defined space of femininity. In this newly-defined space, Ana sheds the trappings of a prim and proper upbringing as her experience in Spanish Guinea unfolds, culminating in her rejection of marriage to an unsuitable potential husband—Juan, for his relationship with Obama—and the relationship that never materialized with Carlos, who ultimately enters into a relationship with that same woman after Juan's untimely death. Ana's portrayal as emancipated from the patriarchal hold, based on her transformation abroad, lays the foundation for her ultimate rejection of Carlos, who fails to reunite with her in Spain a few weeks after she departs from Bata. He is unable to surmount the obstacles to leaving the plantation in optimal working order and therefore remains in Africa, unable to resist the temptation to embrace the locals. Juan's death as a result of an accident at the hands of a fellow *peninsular* is a just outcome for a displaced foreigner who rejects prescribed behaviors of masculinity.

Further, Spain's imperial ideology permeates the portrayal of the relationship between the Spanish and the Spanish Guineans. On the plantation, the upper-class hovers over much of the narrative action. Within the population stratification, a fixed hierarchy positions the *peninsulares* above the *emancipados* (who do not figure in the novel) and the *individuos de color*.[8] Carlos is not only the plantation owner but the local doctor who also carries out the justice practices prescribed by Spanish law. Despite his privileged upbringing, he demonstrates compassion toward his patients and is quick to diagnose maladies and implement the appropriate treatment.[9] In the characterizations of those outside the plantation, the divisions also identify their

social status, whether in describing Ana on her visit to the plantation, the scientists and big game hunters who travel inland, or visitors from neighboring plantations. The social structure favors the privileged class as they live in the homes with the most comforts and enjoy the consumable commodities from the homeland. These consumables, in turn, become a social currency to be used as rewards or compensation in exchange for services. As Benita Sampedro Vizcaya observes in Masoliver's characters:

> The centrality afforded in her novels to the white man, or white woman [. . .], presented within the frame of the romantic adventure novel, should not deviate the reader's attention from the reality of Guinean colonial history: one of servitude, exploitation, extortion of property, forced labor, forced resettlement and deportations, alteration of family, clan and local structures, and paternalism in every case. (347)

During the Spanish occupation of present-day Equatorial Guinea, the region experienced colonialism by dominance, unlike Morocco's colonialism by conquest (Carrasco González 7). According to Antonio Carrasco González, "se van a suplantar todas las costumbres locales imponiendo una nuevas importadas, en las que el negro no tiene otro papel que el de servidor" ("all local customs are supplanted by imposing new imported ones, in which the black population has no other role than to serve"; 7). He notes the prevailing perspective that the lack of ideological conflict combined with a privileged positioning of the *peninsulares* located the colonized as inferior beings who lived in an exotic place that stood to gain in civilization as a result of the Spanish rule (221).

In the novel, Carlos understands the correlation between upholding class order and the successful operation of his plantation. He concerns himself with ensuring that his peninsular overseers execute their functions so that the plantation workers in turn perform their tasks in the most economically viable way possible. He also carries out swift and severe punishments, from withholding wages, to brutal lashings and other forms of corporal punishment, to capital punishment, for the sake of securing his position of authority as an extension of colonial rule. Despite the obvious power he wields, and the success of the business he runs, he often battles the frustration of turnover with his peninsular managers, and he fails to eradicate the local customs his workers practice. However, Carlos's inability to convert the local population on his plantation to Spanish customs, including the conversion to Catholicism, points to Spain's imminent colonial failure associated

with a cultural mission that intended to impose from above a restructured form of existence. The value of economic prosperity to Spain in the form of the timber industry and the imposition of a linguistic shift combined with the lack of a political infrastructure underscore the importance of maintaining class distinctions and transferring class boundaries to Guinea.

In addition to the social stratification on the plantation, gender played a key role in the colonizing efforts. Relationships between men and women exist on four planes in the novel, listed in the order of narrative space they occupy: the first, between peninsular men and women; the second between the white men and the Guinean women; the third between Ana and the Guinean men; and the last between Guinean men and women. Carlos is the gracious host to his employee Juan's fiancée and treats her with utmost respect, transferring gender-encoded behavior from his homeland to his foreign location, even after a decade of living there. Juan Esteve, however, rejects prescribed behaviors of masculinity and enters a Catholically unsanctioned relationship with Obama, the local Spanish Guinean woman who bears him three children and lives on Isart's property. To note, interracial marriage was forbidden (Ndongo-Bidyogo 47). Juan's location in the region's interior throughout most of the narrative underscores his separation and marginalization from his homeland.

On the surface, Ana's portrayal aligns with the regime's ideal of the twentieth-century equivalent of the ángel del hogar, the "angel of the home" whose image rests upon the idealized role of the bourgeois wife and mother who is central to the successful functioning of the home: she comes from a pure and honest upbringing, thanks to her aunt who assured her benevolent upbringing after the young girl was orphaned due to the devastating effects of the Spanish Civil War. Ana's journey to the distant land, however, topples this concept on multiple levels. Although she projects a polished and delicate appearance upon her arrival, she is positioned as an outsider, and she gradually sheds the peninsular exterior constraints that inhibit her comfort in the tropical climate. The transformation takes place as she ventures further into the jungle, a metaphoric distancing from Spain. The blue coveralls (*mono azul*) replace her white dress; she becomes increasingly more comfortable when the Guinean men carry her on and off the boats to and from the coastline to preserve her pristine appearance. She gives away her jewelry, as well as the red umbrella, a gift from Juan that becomes a *leitmotif* of her freedom, a visual representation of her attachment to—and then detachment from—Juan. However, although she barely notices the discomforts of the humidity and high temperatures at the beginning of her trip, her disillusionment with Juan correlates

with a hypersensitivity to these conditions that then subsides as she begins to develop an attachment to Carlos, when descriptions abound of the exuberant beauty of the Guinean terrain.

As portrayed in the novel, the relationship between Juan and Obama transgresses normativity for Ana, not because of race but because of her marital status, since polygamy was an acceptable practice in the region. Obama, although estranged from her husband from an arranged marriage, has entered a years-long relationship with Juan. For Rachel Jean-Baptiste, commenting on French Guinea with remarks that also apply to Spanish Guinea's local population, "Marriage and motherhood redeemed women's sexual indiscretions and anchored métis children in African societies" (573). If Obama has redeeming qualities beyond the role of motherhood, they do not appear in the text. She is portrayed as a ruthless and untrustworthy woman, whose place in the plantation, while firmly subservient, affords her access to some of the comforts of the plantation owner's home. The significance of her positioning on the plantation is underscored in the closing paragraphs of the novel, which subvert the balance of cultural superiority of the imperial presence over the local population: Ana has returned to Spain and life continues for Carlos on the plantation. For Kathleen Connolly, "The novel's (for the time period) shocking conclusion, presents the colonial project as a descent into degeneration and hopelessness. While Spain's presence in Guinea is represented as a necessary, modernizing presence in the colony, the narrative suggests that permanent residence would provoke dire consequences" (37). At the novel's conclusion, Carlos finds Obama in his bed, refuses her, and goes to sleep, after which "se acerca sin ruido al camastro y acurruca junto al hombre dormido. Obama, como todos los nativos, 'no tiene ruido.' Así permanecen hasta las cuatro de la madrugada en que Obama despierta sobresaltada [. . .]. El 'massa' está besando desesperadamente, ávidamente su hombro desnudo [. . .]" ("She quietly approaches the cot and snuggles next to the sleeping man. Obama, like all natives, 'has no noise.' They remain like that until four in the morning when Obama wakes up with a start [. . .]. The 'massa' is desperately, hungrily kissing her bare shoulder [. . .]"; 248).[10] Following his choice to remain on the plantation rather than joining Ana after she returns to Spain, Carlos not only fails to transfer his homeland's cultural values beyond its borders but joins the local population in what are by Spain's standards of the time considered transgressive behaviors. Obama as the racialized Other subverts the power structure on each of the levels of race, class, and gender through her seduction of the Spanish plantation owner.

Masoliver's novel eschews the detached cultural division that focuses on the narratorial distance of the observer storyteller embodied by

Marlow, which focalizes on the elusiveness of Mr. Kurtz by creating an environment of co-existence that unfolds in the novel itself. Characters in *Efún* navigate life within a community of imperial design that relies on the entrepreneurial endeavor as a model of Spain's messaging of integration. Yet by novel's end, Esteve has suffered an accidental death and Carlos enters into a relationship with Obama, while Ana distances herself from the potential life abroad by returning to Spain. Each of these points to the failure of the European state to secure a space of power in the colony. Masoliver's character dynamics subvert the schema that Mary Louise Pratt identifies in colonial love stories: "the lovers are separated, the European is reabsorbed by Europe, and the non-European dies an early death (95). In *Efún*, while Ana's initial romantic interest in Juan is then transferred to Carlos, in the end both relationships fail, and she is reabsorbed by Spain. Masoliver's novel invites reflection on attitudes toward her country's imperial presence in Spanish Guinea. By locating the action outside of Spain and featuring characters from differing, albeit opposing, cultural communities, Masoliver's explicit portrayal of Otherness problematizes the notion of peaceful coexistence, a prescient notion given the turn of political events about a dozen years after the novel's publication. When read through the lens of Achebe's assertion "that white racism against Africa is such a normal way of thinking that its manifestations go completely unremarked" (21), Masoliver's novel invites reflection on attitudes toward race in Spain during the time of its publication, since *Efún*'s discourse of racialized Otherness as a normative relies on the dichotomous portrayal of communities that privilege the civilized European.

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Notes

1. Literature written in Spanish by authors from the peninsula set in Spanish Guinea remains critically understudied. Literary production first took the form of travel books during the second half of the nineteenth century and continued to the first half of the twentieth, with titles such as *Aventuras de un piloto*

en el Golfo de Guinea by Donacuige (pseudonym, 1886), and *En el país de los bubis* by José Más (1921, prologued in its second edition in 1931 by Miguel de Unamuno). Buenaventura Vidal and Eladio Antonio Rebollo also wrote about the Spanish Guinean experience during the 1920s and 1930s. Further, in June 1945, the Instituto de Estudios Africanos (IDEA) was created to foster awareness of Africana studies in fields such as ethnology, archaeology, geology, art, medicine, linguistics, history, among others, and to this end sponsored conferences as well as publications of books and two journals: *Archivos del Instituto de Estudios Africanos* and *África: Revista de estudios hispano-africanos*, both of which included sections dedicated to creative writing in Spanish. These avenues afford the opportunity to explore the relationship between the Spanish *peninsulares* and the indigenous population.

2. Other than writers associated with exile, such as Carmen Mieza, Masoliver belongs to a group of very few women writers in Spain during the 1950s and 1960s who stray from the model of setting their stories in their home country. Carmen de Icaza's *Talia* (1951) takes place in Germany. Isabel Calvo de Aguilar set her crime novels *Doce sarcófagos de oro* (1951) in China and *La danzarina inmóvil* (1954) in Paris and New York. The primary geography of Antonia Guinduláin's medical novel *A punta de lanza* (1962) is the island of Guadalupe, while the setting of Carmen García Belver's *La sangre inútil* (1966) includes Germany, France, and Switzerland.

3. Among novels Pope places in this category are Jesús López Pacheco's *Central eléctrica* (1958) and Antonio Ferres's *La piqueta* (1959), to which may be added Ángeles Villarta's *Yo he sido estraperlista (1950), Mi vida en el manicomio* (1953) and *Mi vida en la basura* (1955). These novels take on an objective point of view often associated with media reporting.

4. As a point of reference, exports from Spanish Guinea to Spain in 1948 consisted of 94,000 tons of wood, 14,665 tons of cacao, and 6,000,000 kilograms of coffee, this last figure up from 1,084,000 in 1936 (Ndongo-Bidyogo 62).

5. All translations are my own.

6. The *Archivo del Instituto del Estudios Africanos* was the group's flagship journal publication, with issues published quarterly between 1947 and 1966 on topics ranging from the cultural to the scientific. For further reading, see for example "Pasado, presente y porvenir de la sanidad en Guinea" by Valentín Matilla, "La importancia de la plantación en el África tropical" by German tropical agronomist Ernst Fickendey, "Caza menor y mayor en Guinea" by Ramón Tatay, and "Los insectos en la economía forestal de Guinea" by Eduardo Zarco Segalerva. Further, the Instituto de Estudios Políticos published *Cuadernos de estudios africanos* between 1946 and 1957. See for example, "Consideraciones en torno al concepto de colonia" by Pedro Salvador de Vicente and "Notas de tipología cultural: La casa y el poblado 'Fang' (Guinea Española)" by Augusto Panyella.

7. The Sección Femenina was founded in 1934 as a movement within the Spanish Falange that existed until 1977. Its goals were to promote the image of ideal womanhood by creating programming that extended women's role from

the private to public space: "su discurso estaba dirigido a exaltar el papel de las mujeres como esposas y madres y a garantizar la aplicación de la política natalista del régimen" ("Its discourse was aimed at exalting the role of women as wives and mothers and to ensure the application of the regime's natalist policy"; Folguera 185) under the guiding principles of sacrifice, abnegation, silence. By the 1950s its focus shifted to social welfare programming.

8. For a discussion on the social distinction among the *peninsulares*, the emancipated, and the individuals of color, see Celeste Muñoz Martínez's "Emancipar para dominar. La segregación jurídica en la Guinea Española y sus claves interpretativas."

9. See Stehrenberger's essay "Medicina colonial y literatura franquista" for insight into the colonial agenda in Spanish Guinea as it relates to medical practices.

10. These are the closing lines of the novel, which allude to the Catholically unsanctioned relationship between Carlos and Obama. The use of ellipsis was a common rhetorical feature Spanish authors used during the dictatorship to insinuate suggestive material that the Censorship Board would have deemed threatening to moral values of the Francoist regime. Masoliver avoided censorial stricture through the use of ellipses in order to gain authorization to publish.

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Liberatory Necropolitics: Grammars of Sovereignty in *Two Thousand Seasons* by Ayi Kwei Armah

Kevin Meehan and Abdul-Karim Mustapha

Published in 1973, Ayi Kwei Armah's fourth novel, *Two Thousand Seasons*, represented a pivotal effort to blend the African novel with oral tradition epic, thereby transforming the capacity of both genres to articulate post-independence disillusionment and ongoing hopes for social transformation beyond neocolonial patterns. During the first three decades of its public life, critical appraisals of *Two Thousand Seasons* were frequent and fell into three large frameworks. Genre-based reception has typically analyzed how novelistic and epic discourses mutually transform each other in Armah's work.[1] A second strand of scholarship overlaps somewhat with genre but is focused more explicitly on language, meaning the language debate and language politics broadly construed (Armah then and now writes in English), but also questions of narratology raised by the distinctive first-person plural narrator.[2] Finally, Armah's polemical confrontation with colonial and pre-colonial history, and his vision of how to prepare for and execute liberatory social struggles—including violent struggles—have led to this and other of his novels being read through the lens of revolutionary theory.[3]

In contrast to these rich decades of critical engagement, the reception of *Two Thousand Seasons* has been comparatively quiet in the new century, a period during which Armah has been immersed in "seed time" as one critic put it, developing a publishing operation and creative writing workshop in Popinguine, Senegal.[4] Even so, recent events in African and global intellectual history suggest the need for an updated assessment of *Two Thousand Seasons*. In particular, the work of marine archeologist George Cook on a shipwreck off the coast of Elmina Castle, the popularization of philosopher Achille Mbembe's concept of necropolitics, and ongoing disputes over reparations for the Atlantic slave trade, all point in different ways to the continued relevance of *Two Thousand Seasons*. It is, we argue, a text that is rooted in a material and collective history of West African freedom struggle. Moreover, Armah's narrative conjugates sovereignty in its unique grammatical inscrip-

tions that allow us to engage and transform Edward Said's now-classic analysis of formal and linguistic hesitations regarding empire and "imperial attitude" in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. Armah may share an intertextual relationship with the European novel, but unlike works that evince the kind of hesitation and ambiguity of *Heart of Darkness*, and even Armah's own first three novels, *Two Thousand Seasons* "steels itself against its ambiguities" (Wilson-Tagoe, "Politics of History and the Vernacular" 95) and offers "a new, aggressive, forthright and affirmative narration in which despair, isolation, and madness are re-assessed and critiqued" (Wilson-Tagoe, "Narrative, History, Novel" 157). Indeed, in its linguistic rupture with Conrad and post-Conradian novel forms, *Two Thousand Seasons* illuminates the capacity of popular anti-colonial history for "structuring experience into narrative" in ways that can oppose the latest waves of neocolonial rhetoric like British royal apologist Hilary Fordwich's comments rejecting the call for reparations (Wilson-Tagoe, "Narrative, History, Novel" 160).[5]

Roughly half-way through Armah's novel, the narrator presents an iconic scene from West African history. Koranche, the dynastic king of an unnamed African group known simply as "the people of the way," has received white merchants from the coast at his inland palace for the first time. After three days of private meetings, the king commands his *okyeama* or spokesman, Isanusi, to convey to the assembled people a summary of "the white men's wishes"; the king also lets Isanusi know he, the king, "is of a mind to grant them" (82).[6] Isanusi is revered among the people as a *fundi*, a master of eloquence. He is someone of whom it is said "truth was his food" (81). Though he is loath to speak at this point, Isanusi complies with the king's command and at length arrives at the following summary statement:

> Hear now the end. The white men wish to destroy our mountains, leaving ourselves wastes of barren sands. The white men wish us to wipe out our animals, leaving ourselves carcasses rotting into white skeletons. The white men want us to take human beings, our sisters and our sons, and turn them into laboring things. The white men want us to take human beings, our daughters and our brothers, and turn them into slaves. The white men want us to obliterate our remembrance of our way, the way, and in its place follow their road, road of destruction, road of a stupid, childish god. (83-84)

Isanusi is immediately fired after this speech and replaced by another mouthpiece the narrator describes as a "flatterer." Isanusi eventually has to go into hiding though he returns to participate in events we will

summarize a bit later. This quote is a good place to start a discussion of Armah's novel because it presents with extraordinary clarity the threat posed by imperialist political economy, not only in terms of resource extraction and the demand for slave labor, but also in terms of ethnocide—the erasure of existing cultural, spiritual, and ethical norms: "The white men want us to obliterate our remembrance" and "follow their road" instead.[7]

Against this backdrop of predatory imperialism, what does sovereignty mean? What would it mean to reclaim sovereignty, and how might such a reclaimed sovereignty differ from the scenario enacted by Koranche the decadent king and his white slave trading allies? Further, how might we link the struggle to reclaim and defend sovereignty with literary production, and vice versa, how does literary production affect our understanding of and our engagement with questions of sovereignty? In the comparatively brief space of this essay, we want to suggest that Armah's novel engages such questions by generating a *grammar of sovereignty* in two ways: first, through its first person plural narrator, which speaks from beginning to end in a "we voice"; and second, through a skillful and nuanced manipulation of verb tense in a crucial scene later in the novel when the "collective narrative agent" (as the narratologist Uri Margolin would characterize the "we voice"), has been incarcerated in the hold of a slave ship.[8]

Before looking more closely at the "we" narrator, though, we want to offer a brief genealogical map for the concept of sovereignty. One thread on sovereignty—one *not* found in *Two Thousand Seasons*—comes from political science and the subdiscipline of International Relations. In our view, this is a positivist trend in political theory that concentrates on how various social entities are able to direct policies of many different sorts. Poli-sci scholars offer a common-sense idea of what sovereignty is, what it means, and how you can tell if you are or are not sovereign. Are you in control of tax policy, judicial process, property laws, collective bargaining in labor markets, environmental and consumer protections, etc.? When the answer is "yes," you are experiencing "self-determination" and the extent and limits of such power is what poli-sci and IR scholars of sovereignty are studying. Traditionally, the agents of this type of sovereignty are states, but in recent decades researchers have also recognized the impact of NGOs empowered by states, supranational multi-lateral entities such as the United Nations or African Union, and multinational corporations.[9]

The poli-sci notion of sovereignty is fine, as far as it goes, but our efforts to flesh out a genealogical map and further ground the concept of sovereignty as it operates in *Two Thousand Seasons* quickly revealed a whole separate trend in critical theory that takes a much more nega-

tive view of things. That negativity is also perfectly fine, as far as it goes. It provides a corrective to IR positivism through the power of negative thinking that probes methodologies and epistemologies to reveal blind spots and limits. In theories of sovereignty, this negative thread is expressed by thinkers such as Hannah Arendt, Georges Bataille, Michel Foucault, and, most recently, Giorgio Agamben. We call this thread "negative thinking" not only because of the tendency to use dialectical, autocritical methodologies, but because, for these thinkers, sovereignty means not self-determination (as it does for policy-makers and the scholars who study them), but rather the power to kill with impunity, what Foucault calls "that old sovereign right of death" (*Il faut défender la societé* 228, qtd. in Mbembe, *Necropolitics* 71). Those who can kill at will are the most sovereign. Another facet of negative thinking in this thread is the sense that, for many of these folks, sovereignty is most evident and most clearly understood when it is absent, which is why we see a focus on concentration camps and prisons in the work of Arendt, Foucault, and Agamben.[10] Foucault systematized this negative approach most persuasively with his concepts of biopower and biopolitics—which mean "dividing people into those who must live and those who must die" (Mbembe, "Necropolitics" 16-17)—and Agamben applied these concepts to develop the notion of "bare life" (15) which is what we are reduced to when sovereignty is denied.

This thread of negative dialectics becomes directly relevant to Armah and *Two Thousand Seasons* through the work of African philosopher Achille Mbembe, who has provocatively re-articulated Foucauldian-Agambenian "biopolitics" as "necropolitics."[11] It is an apt reformulation given the emphasis the negative dialecticians place on killing and death as the key measures of sovereignty.[12] We found this entire line of thinking counterintuitive and, frankly, depressing and disempowering, but when we went back to *Two Thousand Seasons*, the negative dialectical sovereignty framework made a lot of sense as a lens for reading the plot and narrative politics of the novel. Armah charts a grammar of sovereignty that precedes but is congruent with necropolitics though Armah's version expresses a difference that is, arguably, more hopeful than what we find in Mbembe and the other negative dialecticians.

To return to the novel, then, *Two Thousand Seasons* charts an epic narrative of collective decay and possible regeneration. Ranging back over uncountable thousands of seasons of history that are compared to the number of stars in the sky and grains of sand on the beach, the novel recounts how the "people of the way" (206) were infiltrated first by Islamic "predators" (203) and after that by white "destroyers" from the Christian West (203). Rather than a simple story of victimization by marauding outsiders, though, Armah's collective narrator decries how

the people themselves departed from the values of the way, which are reciprocity and creativity, and thereby left themselves open to a long period of domination and enslavement (the two thousand seasons of the title). The narrative voice in the novel labels its own utterance across a prologue and seven chapters as a "remembrance" that stages several things: a statement of "the way"; a periodization of the long history and migrations of the people of the way; a call for resistance against the regimes that have usurped the way; a primer of techniques for effecting that resistance; and a genealogy of the collective narrative agent whose "vocation" it is to articulate a remembrance that can inspire the people to return to the way and, in the process, begin reclaiming their lost sovereignty. The makeup of Armah's collective narrative agent is specified on the first page of the Prologue as, "hearers, seers, imaginers, thinkers, rememberers, you prophets called to communicate the truths of the living way to a people fascinated unto death" (xi).

While the first several chapters trace the long history of the larger group, eventually more details are revealed about the "we" who are narrating as their personal stories begin to surface in the people's timeline. At this point in the remembrance, the people as a whole have just settled into Anoa, a new landscape of forest, mountains, and rivers, after migrating with some difficulty from a Sahelian space of dryer grasslands in the periphery of the Sahara Desert where they had dwelled for many generations. The successful re-rooting in this new location results in a bumper crop of young people who have completed a series of coming-of-age initiations into a spectrum of vocations, including protection (security), farming, hunting, fishing and rowing, building, carving, working leather, turning metal, molding clay, weaving cloth, and the healing arts. Twenty initiates have chosen to bypass deeper immersion in any of these vocational tracks, opting instead to undergo an "initiation beyond initiations" (88). Trained in a secret forest grove by Isanusi (the master of eloquence who was previously fired by king Koranche from the job of royal mouthpiece), they learn the arts of eloquence and "float to the knowledge of a craftsmanship of the soul, the vocation of those who used to be the soulguide of our people, the rememberers of the way" (88). On a contrasting negative note, a public ceremony known as the Dance of Love is organized to mark their emergence as a new cohort of *fundis*, but during the ceremony the group is betrayed into slavery by Koranche and eventually find themselves chained into the hold of a slave ship. The cohort survives this ordeal first by organizing a slave revolt on the ship before it can embark on the Middle Passage and later by returning to land and staging a series of successful maroon or rebel slave fights in which they reclaim a coastal

slave fort, defeat a slave coffle and set the captives free, and finally reclaim Anoa from Koranche.

To move our reading of this storyline back to the issue of how Armah remixes—premixes, really—the necropolitical sovereignty explored by Mbembe and other negative dialecticians, we turn now to focus more closely on the scene in the slave ship. This is the moment of greatest abjection in the novel when the group of Anoan initiates have been chained in the hold of the ship while the crew and captives wait for the wind to change so that the trans-Atlantic voyage may begin. As the narrator pauses the remembrance plot to reflect on the threat of "unconnected consciousness" (128), and the stakes of fragmentation among the collective narrative agent are made painfully clear, the writing shifts from simple past and perfect past sentences into a more elaborate verb tense—conditional perfect—with hints of conditional perfect progressive. Together, these tenses announce to readers that ethnocide, although threatened, has not necessarily occurred, nor has the collective narrative agent disappeared.

> And then in that thorough death the single freedom of Sobo to roam the ship imprisoning us night-time and daytime would have been nothing but the useless, fortuitous license of the individual lopped off from our common destiny. Then in that saturating destruction Sobo's individual motion would have been cut off, unconnected with the larger purpose of the whole immobilized. His mind would have been nothing but the shrunken individual mind, with only enough capacity to think of the hustling salvation of the single zombie body, ignorant and caring nothing of the only worthwhile liberation, the rediscovery of our way. (129)

In this passage, Armah switches to the conditional perfect tense, creating a string of Type 3 conditional sentences. Type 3 conditionals express "situations that are untrue or imaginary" (Swan, Section 257.1, 234). The entry for conditional perfect tense on My English Pages, a grammar reference website, explains that this tense "describes what one would have done differently or how something could have occurred differently if the events had been different." Salted throughout this passage are participial phrases and modifiers—imprisoning, saturating, hustling, and caring—which add a progressive aspect to the governing conditional perfect tense. Education First, a language school website with an extensive grammar reference resource section, has this to say about the perfect continuous conditional tense: "It refers to the unfulfilled result of the action in the if-clause, and expresses this result

as an unfinished or continuous action." In the passage above, Armah's use of the conditional perfect would signal to alert readers that the feared ethnocide and fragmentation of the collective narrative agent has not in fact occurred. It is, in the words of the grammarian websites, "untrue or imaginary," an "unfulfilled result" that *would have occurred if* the dissolution of collective consciousness had been successful. In fact, "connectedness" endures within the abject conditions of the slave ship hold, such that, when the African security guard, Sobo, sets charges to powder kegs elsewhere on the ship and blows a hole in the ship's hull, people know what it means and what to do in order to prosecute a successful slave revolt.

The necropolitics of liberation—figured thematically in physical confrontations such as the slave ship revolt and successful battles against the slave forts that follow, and linguistically through the near-destruction but ultimate survival of the collective narrative agent—are crucial to how Armah envisions the challenges of reclaiming sovereignty in *Two Thousand Seasons*. By preserving "connectedness" as a core aspect of the way, Armah's narrator has already opened up a space of sovereignty even within the abjection of the slave ship hold, but we can go further by reflecting on what purposes are served by this communication in the hold. In practical terms, "connectedness" allows the captives to coordinate an alliance of interests that leads to their physical liberation and subsequent victories on land. The fact that the grammar of sovereignty employed by the narrator is linked to revolutionary violence, lethal force brought to bear on those who are brutalizing and killing them, puts us as readers squarely in the field of necropolitics. The sovereign lethality of the collective narrative agent, though, is very different from the death dealing analyzed by Mbembe, Foucault, Agamben, Bataille, and Arendt. Where the negative dialecticians write about a type of sovereignty grounded in absolute and excessive violence, something akin to the orgiastic wholesale slaughter unleashed by the predators, destroyers, African kings, and zombie warriors in *Two Thousand Seasons*, lethal violence among people of the way is limited to "destruction's destruction" (39).

Yet this version of sovereign lethality is a new ethical norm and practice that is added into the we-narrator's notion of "the way" as articulated in the ongoing remembrance. To understand this insertion and articulation more fully, we can consider the following quote from Abdul JanMohamed:

> Because a nonhegemonic group is still coming to terms with its relatively insecure position, because it is as concerned with defining and clarifying its values and priorities as with 'sub-

> verting' the ascendancy of the dominating group, the primary ideological function of its texts as acts and objects is to bring to consciousness the deep contradictions afflicting the subjugated group and thereby to 'solve' these contradictions by making them available to conscious, discursive analysis. (267)

While the explicit content of *Two Thousand Seasons* embarks on a "remembrance" that has as one of its principal aims the process described by JanMohamed—namely, "to bring to consciousness the deep contradictions afflicting the subjugated group"—Armah's unique narrative technique serves, even more than the explicit content, as a means of "defining and clarifying [the] values and priorities" associated with the way, namely creativity, reciprocity, and the newly-evolved capacity to destroy destruction. By conjugating these problems and their solutions, the narrative voice of *Two Thousand Seasons* becomes a grammar of sovereignty capable of reversing the dominant system of slave trading and dynastic necropolitics and displacing it with a necropolitics of liberation that "destroys destruction" and expresses—in its very verb conjugations and tenses—the values and priorities that need to be defined and clarified. Here we can see a profound transformation of both the imperial ambivalence Said detects in Conrad,[13] and the Manichean reversals JanMohamed finds in anti-colonial African writing.[14]

The break with "imperial attitude"—typified by Conrad according to Said—is not only political and epistemic, but linguistic as well, particularly when the focus is on literary production. We have tried to shed light on several ways in which Armah's narrator generates a grammar of sovereignty in *Two Thousand Seasons*. These techniques are important to take stock of not least because Armah has always chosen to write in English. For six decades, modern African literature across the continent has been defined to a significant extent by what's known as the language debate. Many writers prefer to write in African languages—Gikuyu and Swahili, Fante and Wolof, and more—as a way of breaking decisively with the cultural politics of imperialism. For those who continue to work in European languages, what strategies are available to transform the imperial language in a way that works toward the liberation, the cultural and political sovereignty of African people? Armah's use of the first-person plural narrator, and his shift to the conditional perfect tense in the crucial passage quoted from earlier, are two examples of how he has developed a decolonizing practice *in English*. As Neil Lazarus himself suggests, an analysis of the speech genres that are most prominent in *Two Thousand Seasons* shows that Armah has "embraced orature" by focusing on forms that are tradition-

al to West Africa, including praisesong, epic, and prophetic utterance, among others.

Even while celebrating thematic and formal innovations in *Two Thousand Seasons*, both Lazarus and, more recently, Nana Wilson-Tagoe have criticized Armah's novel for its alleged intellectualism and for being abstracted from real life. In part, these thematic queries are about where and with whom social agency is located. Lazarus argues that *Two Thousand Seasons* projects a revolutionary theory that is "irreducibly intellectualist" (*Resistance* 184), and flawed ultimately by vanguard elitism that Lazarus calls "Partyism" (221). Also, the narrative point of view is "insufficiently attentive to the materiality of life as it is lived at the level of the everyday" and thus insufficiently aware of how people at the mass level resist their own exploitation on a daily basis (232). Similarly, in Wilson-Tagoe's reading, the vatic utterance of the collective seers is, despite its prophetic force, limited by a fundamental idealism. "In *Two Thousand Seasons*," she writes, "vision is not part of lived experience as such but postulated as a series of ideals defined rather by reference to consciousness and perception than to the day to day lives of a community" ("Politics of History and the Vernacular" 99). A close reading of moments of revolutionary violence in the slave ship and before that against the regime of Islamic "predators" locates agency in places other than the seer/intelligentsia, and arguably frees Armah from charges of intellectualism.[15]

Meanwhile, recent work in marine archeology by Gregory Cook on a seventeenth-century shipwreck off the coast of Elmina, Ghana, suggests there is a material trace for the events narrativized in *Two Thousand Seasons*. Cook and his team identified the Elmina Wreck as a Dutch ship that dates to the mid-1600s. In excavating it, Cook discovered that the hull of the ship had a hole in it consistent with an explosion that led to the sinking of the Dutch West Indies ship *Groeningen* in 1647. While Cook's analysis of the archeological data concludes that it is impossible to be certain if the ship was a slave ship or rather was used to transport non-human "commodity cargo," the length of the vessel falls within the range of slave ships, which typically were larger than ships used to transport metals, spices, textiles, weapons, and other objects of trade (253-59).[16] The important point here, for reading Armah, is that events in the novel fall within the realm of historical possibility as revealed by material culture. Rather than representing intellectualist wish fulfillment, the slave ship revolt and subsequent inland campaigning are very much in the realm of the "materiality of life" (Lazarus), "lived experience" (Wilson-Tagoe) and "day to day lives of a community" (Wilson-Tagoe).[17]

Also interesting, for a reading of *Two Thousand Seasons*, are the passages in Cook's dissertation where he testifies to the importance of local knowledge, particularly from fisherman and canoeist Papa Kofi Ahrin, for navigating the sometimes treacherous cross-currents of Ghanaian coastal waters (iv, vii, 7, 130-31, 141, 254); this dynamic is echoed in the novel when Armah asserts the pivotal impact of seventeenth-century local knowledge in enabling European traders to pass through deadly breakwaters and penetrate the interior of Ghana (75-78). Besides offering another link between the novel and material life, the revolt and sinking of the slave ship in *Two Thousand Seasons* asserts a liberatory claim to the tangible and intangible underwater cultural heritage excavated and documented by Cook, further clarifying the scope of sovereignty in the novel as well as the novel's role in staking such a claim. Given Armah's thematic emphasis on coastal ecosystems and predatory access to interior landscapes and populations, it is worth noting that protected biocultural rights include sovereignty over coastal waters, marine ecosystems, predation of fishing stocks, and artisanal fishing livelihoods. To the extent that *Two Thousand Seasons* helps us to clearly see historical and ongoing violations of that sovereignty, it strengthens the case for reparations at time when, as we have seen in the 2022 Don Lemon-Hilary Fordwich debate, reparative claims are advancing and neocolonial resistance to reparative justice is mounting.[18]

Along with these kinds of thematic debates, Wilson-Tagoe also interrogates the formal, narratological limits of *Two Thousand Seasons* in two cogent essays that use intertextual analysis to situate the novel in relation to Ama Ata Aidoo's play, *Anowah*, as well as a range of early-to- late twentieth century Fante writing. While Armah's novel assimilates formal aspects of oral epic, he recasts epic narrative as something that recounts not "the heroic feats of a cultural hero" but rather "the tidal rhythms of a people's movement through time and their struggles to make and remake themselves" ("Narrative, History, Novel" 160). In Wilson-Tagoe's reading, Armah updates the epic and refashions it as a tool for expressing "the simultaneous projection of past and present time, the interrogation of the causes and effects of events, the internalization of lessons, warnings, and exhortations that link the past directly with the present" (161). This improves the capacity of the African novel to contribute to postcolonial cultural struggles, but Wilson-Tagoe points to several limiting factors in *Two Thousand Sea*sons. Armah's narrative is "monologic" in comparison to Aidoo's play (162-63), which Wilson-Tagoe elsewhere describes as exhibiting a "dialogical principle" and evoking social life at a particular historical moment (versus the ahistorical idealism that allegedly marks Armah's writing) ("Politics of History and the Vernacular" 98). If Cook's marine archeology findings

help reinsert Armah's narrative within "lived experience" thematically, the collective narrative agent and radical verb tense shifts in the slave ship scene arguably provide grounds for contesting some of Wilson-Tagoe's conclusions about *Two Thousand Seasons*. Whereas she sees the CNA as unable to support a transformative history because of its appeal to tradition, the reconsolidated version of the way is innovative and dynamic when it incorporates strategic necropolitics as part of the revised core values. Moreover, the inclusion of Sobo (the zombie overseer) within the CNA entity broadens its scope beyond the range of the visionary/intellectual seers. The verb tense shifts, meanwhile, unsettle the past, connecting historical narratives about colonization and the Atlantic slave trade with alternative trajectories that are literally buried under the sea. In this reading, *Two Thousand Seasons* would join the intertextual linkages with Aidoo and other Ghanaian writing as a more open narrative than allowed for by Wilson-Tagoe. In fact, Armah's novel might be seen as exemplifying "plural rather than linear movements in literary history" and "connections across periods and language" in literary production ("Politics of History and the Vernacular" 83). Though it would take us beyond the scope of the present article to further solidify this analysis of Armah's narratology, to follow it to its conclusion would show yet another level in which Armah has tried to indigenize the novel form and make it convey a revolutionary PanAfrican message in form and content.[19]

Two Thousand Seasons was published fifty years ago, and Armah has continued to revise his practice throughout that period. Though he still writes in English, we would cite two very important interventions that expand the decolonizing scope of his subsequent work. First, while never opting to write first in his native Fante in the way, for example, his East African peer Ngugi wa Thiong'o writes first in Gikuyu, Armah has become an advocate for learning Egyptian hieroglyphics as the foundational language of African literature, and he has even authored a series of how-to books for children and adult beginners. Second, and perhaps more importantly, he has founded and continues to operate his own printing press, Per Ankh Books. His books and other titles can be ordered directly from the Per Ankh website and the books are printed on demand through a partnership with Bonnie Kwan Books in San Francisco. Armah's choice to organize the production and distribution this way is based on decades of hard experience with Heinemann withholding royalties and committing other assorted editorial crimes against one of the most accomplished writers of his generation, leading Armah to dub them "pirates," "crooks," and "thieving European rascals preying on African intellectual property" in his very interesting and readable memoir, *The Eloquence of the Scribes* (307-38). Per Ankh

operations are also based on a clear analysis of neocolonial and neoliberal political economy in which Africa still serves as a scene of resource extraction for metropolitan companies and the local elites willing to serve up the wealth of African nations for exploitative removal. Also in *Eloquence of the Scribes*, Armah makes a strong case that what is true for oil and minerals is equally true for cultural products, including novels. Relocating the publishing operation to Africa is an important step toward repatriating cultural capital. In addition, Armah has developed an intriguing mechanism for democratizing literary cultural capital through a writing workshop he operates called Per Sesh, where participants are immersed in a comprehensive curriculum that covers the history of African literature from Pharonic scribes and oral tradition epics up through the contemporary novel, provides a full workshop on developing a novel manuscript from start to finish, and offers practical lessons on desktop publishing and distribution contracts like the one Armah has with Bonnie Kwan. Though this is taking us a long way from the intensely collective and cooperative values expressed through the collective narrative agent in *Two Thousand Seasons*, it should be possible to discern a continuous effort on Armah's part to define a literary praxis that clarifies and contributes to the ongoing struggle to decolonize African societies and reclaim popular sovereignty. If Kurtz's line in *Heart of Darkness*, "Exterminate all the brutes!" (58), might well stand as a literary anthem for Euromodernist sovereignty as analyzed by the negative dialecticians from Arendt down to Mbembe, Armah's call in *Two Thousand Seasons* to implement "destruction's destruction" combines with his subsequent writing and action to displace Euromodernist frameworks with liberatory necropolitics and a new grammar of sovereignty.

Notes

1. For a good sample of genre-based criticism focusing on Armah's mediation of novel and epic, see Okpewho, Fraser, Lindfors, and Wright. Though it is beyond the scope of this essay to analyze fully, we can also suggest another angle on genre criticism, which would be to situate *Two Thousand Seasons* vis-à-vis the neo-slave narrative novel. Just as African-born authors like Equiano and the writers anthologized in Allan D. Austin's *African Muslims in Antebellum America: A Sourcebook* helped create the slave narrative as a genre of Black Atlantic writing, Africans have also played a part in the genesis of the neo-slave narrative novel in recent decades. *Homegoing* by Yaa Gyasi (Ghana) won multiple awards and is arguably the most-prominent example, but Yvette

Christiansë (South Africa), Lubaina Himid (Zanzibar), Dannabang Kuwabong (Ghana), and Botlhale Tema (South Africa) have all contributed to the genre in the new millennium. Though not typically associated with the genre, *Two Thousand Seasons* is readily situated within the expanded scope for neo-slave narratives called for by Joan Anim-Addo and Maria Helena Lima in a recent special issue of *Callaloo* (3-5).

2. See Alber (219-20), Margolin (609-10), and Wilson-Tagoe ("Narrative, History, Novel" 157-63; "Politics of History and the Vernacular" 92-95, 98-99).

3. See especially Lazarus, *Resistance in Postcolonial African Fiction* (185-234).

4. See Adesokan (125-30).

5. For the recent exchange between television journalist Don Lemon and British royal apologist Hilary Fordwich regarding British reparations, see www.newsweek.com/don-lemons-talk-about-royal-reparations-blasted-conservatives-twitter-1744624.

6. For more on the *okyeama* figure in Armah's novel, see Johnson (63, 77-81), and for a broader social history, see Yankah.

7. The canonical definition of ethnocide comes from the UNESCO "Declaration of San José" (1981), which states, "Ethnocide means that an ethnic group is denied the right to enjoy, develop and transmit its own culture and its own language, whether collectively or individually," and further,

> An essential part of the cultural heritage of these people is their philosophy of life, and their experience, knowledge and achievements accumulated throughout history in the cultural, social, political, legal, scientific and technological sphere. They therefore have a right to access to and to use, dissemination and transmission of this entire heritage.

While articulated by and about indigenous populations in the Americas, cultural genocide has also been applied to the experience of Burundians, Palestinians, Magyars in Yugoslavia, and many more instances where the group cultural life of a people is endangered.

8. For more on the specific form of collective narrative agent formulated in *Two Thousand Seasons*, see Margolin (607).

9. Those interested in International Relations theories of sovereignty would do well to start with "The New Sovereignty," a pivotal essay published by David A. Lake in 2003. In Lake's retrospective account, states are assumed to be the locus of sovereign power from the origins of early-modern IR theory in de Vitoria and Grotius down through "classical" contemporary realist and neo-realist notions of sovereignty (e.g., Waltz, 1979), but he notes the impact of Wallerstein (1979) and dependency theory on the constructivist theories that emerged in the 1980s and 1990s. Krasner (1999) and other constructivists point out the limits of state actors and the importance of non-state entities like NGOs, multilateral governance organizations and multinational corporations, all of which contend with states for power in the international arena. This trend—

analyzing sovereignty as power and constraints on power, and broadening the list of non-state actors that may exercise levels of sovereign power—continues to the present and may be reviewed in recent publications by Koskimies (2021), who studies sovereignty and its limits in the International Criminal Court, and Kyris (2022), who traces "dynamic sovereignty" as state and non-state entities attempted to respond to public health emergencies during the worst months of the Covid-19 global pandemic. For those seeking to track down these references, Waltz, Wallerstein, and Krasner are all cited in Lake's article.

10. In addition to the works referenced here, see Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* 444.

11. See both the earlier essay by Mbembe, "Necropolitics" (2003), and his more recent book-length elaboration, *Necropolitics* (2019).

12. We note that Bataille's take on sovereignty, while still oriented toward death and dying like the other negative dialecticians, has a more upbeat and voluntaristic aspect emphasizing the sovereign subject as one who rejects the limits that death would impose. Sovereign subjects operate, according to Bataille, in "the world in which the limit of death is done away with. Death is present in it, its presence defines that world of violence, but while death is present it is always there only to be negated, never for anything else" (*The Bataille Reader* 319, qtd. in Mbembe, "Necropolitics" 16). This passage is quoted and analyzed at some length by Mbembe in his earlier essay, hinting at a similarly voluntaristic view of necropolitics and sovereignty. While this angle is a minor thread in Mbembe's conceptualizations, *Two Thousand Seasons* expresses a clearer and stronger representation of liberatory necropower in which "the sovereign is he who *is*, as if death were not" (*The Bataille Reader* 319, qtd. in Mbembe, "Necropolitics" 16, emphasis original).

13. Early in *Culture and Imperialism*, Said identifies the "self-consciously circular narrative forms" of *Heart of Darkness* and "odd discrepancies" that draw attention "to how ideas and values are constructed (and deconstructed) through dislocations in the narrator's language" as key elements of Conradian hesitation about alleged imperial supremacy (28-29).

14. JanMohamed raises the question of ideology and the need to attack imperialist exploitation at the level of culture and consciousness. The congruence of Armah's novel practice with these goals, which are echoed and even transformed into more deeply populist utterance in *Two Thousand Seasons*, arguably answer some of the critiques Neil Lazarus has leveled at the novel, as we discuss in more detail below.

15. Lazarus gives *Two Thousand Seasons* credit for transcending the defeatism and messianic individualism of Armah's earlier novels, arguing that "resistance as a shared activity" and the resituating of novelistic writing within a model based on the linguistic forms of orature make *Two Thousand Seasons* a "significant theoretical advance" over the earlier novels. As we have seen, though, he still wants to convict Armah of "intellectualism" and "Partyism" (*Resistance in Postcolonial African Fiction* 221-22). These are strong claims from an observant critic, but our reading of the plot details, both in the slave revolt scene and

in earlier moments of violent resistance, may offer a different perspective on Armah's understanding of freedom struggle. None of the episodes of armed revolt depicted in the novel are led by the vatic "creators." Instead, it is women held against their will as concubines by the Islamic "predators" who initiate the purgative violence that frees the people of the way from this earlier condition of abjection (chapter 2). Meanwhile, as we saw above, the slave ship revolt (chapter 6) is initiated not by the seers but by Sobo, the zombie lumpen overseer. This orientation and emplotment arguably neutralize attacks on Armah's supposed vanguardist distance from everyday people.

16. Regarding the possible function of the Elmina Wreck, Cook concludes: "While we may never know if the captain of the Elmina Wreck was intent upon purchasing slaves or commodities for his cargo, when considering the overall trends for the mid-seventeenth century it is probably more likely that the Elmina vessel was in the region for the commodity trade" (258). See also Cook (66-85) and Rediker (82-84) for more on slave ship dimensions and the larger context of sizes and shapes among sailing vessels used in European-African trade during the fifteenth through seventeenth centuries.

17. For more on armed resistance to Atlantic slave trade operations in West Africa, both on land and on board slave ships, see Richardson.

18. For more on tangible and intangible cultural heritage as a protected universal human right, see the UNESCO 2001 Convention on the Protection of Underwater Cultural Heritage, which includes definitions, model implementation law, and more, at en.unesco.org/underwater-heritage.

19. For classic statements on the language debate, see Ngugi, "The Language of African Literature" and Achebe, "The African Writer and the English Language." Lazarus, in his review of Barbara Harlow's *Resistance Literature*, champions Algerian novelist Abdel Kebir Khatibi vs. Achebe as a strong counterpoint to Ngugi's argument for writing in African languages, and suggests that Armah in *Two Thousand Seasons* is closer to Khatibi in revealing the radical potential of African writers working in a European language (318).

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The Crossing of Imani in *A Espada e a Azagaia* by Mia Couto: Translation in the Heart of the Empire

Maryllu de Oliveira Caixeta

I propose a reading of the second book in Mia Couto's trilogy, *As Areias do Imperador* (*The Sands of the Emperor*), entitled *A Espada e a Azagaia* (*The Sword and the Spear*) (2020). Particularly, I will analyze the character Imani who, as the main narrator and protagonist, progressively expresses the holistic worldview of her fellow VaChopi and neighboring peoples.[1] Imani also negotiates her role as a translator in a perpetual agonizing displacement between different temporalities at the heart of the Portuguese colonial empire in the years following the Berlin Conference (1884-1885). The refinement of the protagonist narrator's holistic worldview throughout the novel coincides with the circular sense of the book's frame, highlighted in the first and last chapters with their epigraphs and titles, in addition to the river journeys narrated by Imani in the introduction and conclusion.

The book begins and ends by highlighting proverbial forms about the cycles of life, while the narrator experiences two river journeys as rites of passage. In the first journey, the narrator transitions from adolescence to adulthood and experiences love. In the second journey, Imani deepens her holistic worldview after strengthening her spiritual bond with the priestess Bibliana. Imani's holistic worldview reaches its climax in an episode of the river voyage in the final chapter, when she is cleansed by the river right after her spear pendant is splattered with blood by a Portuguese soldier's sword. At this point, Imani herself becomes a living allegory of this holistic worldview, previously conveyed through short fables, epigraphs, dreams, and proverbial forms. While on the one hand the river journeys reinforce the image of the circularity of the narrative and the holistic worldview of the African characters, on the other hand, historically, these rivers served to facilitate the entry of colonizers into the heart of Africa. As we will see, the holistic worldview, combined with historical reflection, suggests the continuity of cycles beyond empires.

By emphasizing a river journey in the introduction of his novel, Couto alludes to Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, questioning its metaphysical horror, which is countered by presenting an unob-

structed conception of the circularity of life and the holistic worldview adopted by African characters. While the narration in the canonical English novel assumes a colonialist viewpoint, in Couto's novel, the translator Imani's narration of memories brings about a shift in perspective, highlighting the protagonist's progressive initiation into her people's holistic worldview. In other words, while steadfastly refusing to be dominated by the Portuguese language as a colonial tool of cultural assimilation, the translator deepens her knowledge of her culture. Imani communicates the learning of her people's holistic worldview in these memories narrated in the European language, thus circulating this wisdom in the heart of the Empire, which for centuries had kept at bay the horror of the inevitable impermanence of its dominion, faced with the vastness of life in the cosmos.

The translator ultimately manages to make Portuguese the language of arrival for a flourishing wisdom in languages and cultures of her land. I will make some observations about the fact that the West has pursued the holistic worldview of ancient peoples since the beginning of Christendom—with its book burnings and witch hunts—and has made this struggle even more effective through the modern/colonialist institution of rationalist and Cartesian models of truth, plausibility, and more or less suitable forms of narrating reality.[2] In this respect, I consider that narrative forms developed in literature from peripheral countries end up being classified as representations of dysfunctional realities, that is, exotic (magical, marvelous, animistic) in terms of the standards of plausibility suitable to Western aesthetics.

Imani's memoir narration intertwines with an exchange of letters between two military men: Sergeant Germano de Melo and Lieutenant Ayres de Ornelas. The main narrator is Imani, as her memoir chapters are longer and more significant regarding the motivations and limits of the characters, in a novel with an intimate tone prevailing over the historical backdrop of a war fought in a context of scarcity. The prevalence of Imani's narration and the passionate nature of Sergeant Melo's letters sustain the intimate tone of the novel, even when it does not concern the love between the two. As for Lieutenant Ornelas, his epic imagination contrasts with the images provided in the novel of a miserable and cowardly war, representing the author's response to the colonialist bravado of the 1960s regarding the defeat of Emperor Ngungunyane. Simultaneously, the novel also responds to the fact that the King of Gaza became a symbol of national unity in post-independence Mozambique, despite fighting the Portuguese and being widely hated even in his own land.

By positioning Imani as well as other secondary characters—Swiss doctor Liengme and Goan priest Rudolfo Fernandes—as rare transla-

tors of African languages into Portuguese, Couto explores the unique nature of Portuguese colonization, regarding a racism that supersedes the ethnic intolerance manifested in the resolute ignorance of the languages of the colonized. Portuguese resistance to enter the territory and culture of the colonized peoples was overcome by external pressures that precipitated the wars fought in the novel. Further, I will remark upon historical events that motivated the military conflicts around which the destinies in the novel are divided.

The Circularity of Rivers: A Regressive Threat in Conrad, a Holistic Worldview in Couto

The trilogy *As Areias do Imperador* (*The Sands of the Emperor*) narrates the resistance to Portuguese colonial occupation by the ethnic groups living in the territory now known as Mozambique. The first edition of the trilogy was published in the Portuguese language almost concurrently in Portugal by the publisher Caminho, between 2015 and 2017, and in Brazil by Companhia das Letras, between 2015 and 2018.

The second volume has a similar title in the Portuguese edition, *A Espada e a Azagaia*, and in the literal translation to the English language by David Brookshaw, *The Sword and the Spear*. It mentions the sword, which was part of a plurality of ancient warrior cultures, dating back to the Bronze Age, and which has been refined over the ages, gradually losing practical function in modern armies, where it has nevertheless remained an icon of authority as firearms were perfected from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century. On the other hand, the spear is an iconic weapon of the African continent, used in hunting and warfare. The reference to these two weapons allegorizes the clash between warrior cultures.

The allegory present in the book's title also appears in Imani's recurring dreams, in which she gives birth to weapons and treats them as her children (Couto 176, 299-300). The blending of two warrior cultures takes place within Imani's womb, drawing a continuity between her body and the events that the narrator's perspective allegorizes, reflecting her holistic worldview about her integration into the world.

In addition to the frame of the book, which I will discuss further in this essay, Imani herself allegorizes the circularity of life on several levels: the cycles of birth/beginning and death/end; the transit between ethnic boundaries through miscegenation; the articulation of different symbolic worlds through translation; her diasporic experience that presupposes the possibility, question, or desire for return; and the holistic worldview of people who perceive the world as a living

allegory, with all integrated symbolic dimensions, radically exterior to the dualistic and Cartesian schemes of Western episteme (culture vs. nature; civilized world vs. primitive world; symbolic representation vs. raw reality; interiority/subjectivity vs. exteriority/collectivity; literature vs. oral tradition; familiar vs. uncanny; modern history vs. mythic phase of humanity; West vs. Other cultures; etc.).[3] The holistic worldview connects a movement of vital energy, a cosmic beauty (áisthesis), which liberates the body from the disconnection perpetuated by the aesthetic and epistemological patterns of colonialism (Vallega, "The Felt Thought" 223-56).[4]

The Brazilian edition changed the title of the second volume to *Sombras da* Água (2016), which in English can be translated as *Water Shadows*. The choice of this title reinforces a fundamental intertextuality with Conrad's novel. As I have suggested before, the second volume of Couto's trilogy presents a response to *Heart of Darkness* as it offers an anti-colonialist image of circularity between distinct and contiguous worlds, also suggested in the title of the Portuguese edition, *A Espada e a Azagaia* (*The Sword and the Spear*).

In a very different way, Conrad became famous for fixing in the Western imagination the image of a vast distance, spatial and temporal (in terms of civilizational stages), between the civilized and the primitive worlds. On the other hand, the title of the Brazilian edition, *Sombras da* água (*Water Shadows*), refers to the initial and final images of Couto's book, which narrate decisive and agonizing journeys along the river. The image of the journey through the river represents the colonial enterprise itself and its entry into an unknown territory, highlighting the intertextuality of the novel with *Heart of Darkness*, which also begins with a journey along a great river, into the heart of a still untamed Africa.

Conrad's novel may have been the most widely disseminated and critically studied text dealing with the invention of the Other by the West, having had a tremendous impact on readers and writers since its release (Can and Chaves 18). Couto offers a compelling response to this canonical work of colonial literature, and this certainly helps us to understand the success of the trilogy, quickly translated into French, Spanish, German, and English.[5]

The events narrated both in Couto's trilogy and in *Heart of Darkness* are set in the context of the partition of Africa. In the last fifteen years of the nineteenth century, European colonization in Africa expanded, putting pressure on Portuguese rulers to extend their dominion into territories that, until then, were nominally under their control but not occupied or explored. The European colonization model was primarily English, as described and criticized by Conrad in his best-known work.

Heart of Darkness begins with the narration of Marlow, who addresses fellow travelers aboard a ship anchored on the Thames River, along whose banks a civilization built with the surplus of colonization stands. The boredom of waiting awakens in the narrator the memory of a previous adventure, on another river, possibly the Congo, where he transported ivory as the captain of a steamboat while working for the colonial enterprise of a Belgian company.

Chinua Achebe highlights the fact that Marlow praises the Thames River for the good services rendered to his civilized/colonial race and proposes, as an antithesis, this narration of the adventure of entering a primitive world through an ominous river (14). The primitive river within the civilized, in Conrad's novel, also alludes to an idea of circularity, but from a very different perspective than the response offered by Couto's novel.

Conrad places the narration about a river of primitive races within the narration set on the river of the civilized race, a model of colonial conquest. In *Heart of Darkness*, circularity functions as a warning about the need to rectify the corruption of the colonial enterprise to achieve effective civilizing action and to prevent the splendor of the Thames itself from reverting to its dark, primitive past before the Colonial Era. In other words, Conrad denounced the expenditure and excess of violence in the colonial enterprise because he knew that these practices compromised its sustainability.

If, in Couto, circularity defines the framework of the book as well as the holistic worldview of Imani and her compatriots, in Conrad's famous novel, circularity is envisioned as the risk of an undesirable return to the rougher stages of a race, serving as a warning about the need to master the horror of atavisms so that the history of civilization could follow its path in a one-way and linear direction, toward human progress. *Heart of Darkness* represents the colonialist dualism between the history of civilized culture and the horror of a supposed stage of ahistorical nature, confused with the mythical, circular, holistic worldview of other peoples.

Marlow's narration adopts the perspective of English colonialism, which presumed to redeem Africa by calling on men capable of facing a world of horror associated with the hostilities of African nature with its primitive races, and also due to the corruptions of colonial rule (Said 19). This horror had the dimension of a civilized metaphysics, which also arose from Cartesian dualisms. This way of thinking erected an insurmountable barrier between Europe and Black Africa, which Rita Chaves and Nazir Can summarize in the image of a "racial split" capable of producing the "earthquake of the other" (2022). Conrad's perspective, through the lens of his character Marlow, on the need for a

civilizing dominion over primitive races, which had to overcome the corruption of the colonial enterprise, was liberal and widely accepted by educated English citizens, though this perspective completely sidesteps the fundamental question of equality between whites and blacks, Europeans and Africans (Achebe 19).

The Translation of the Languages of the Other as a Threat

Couto declared to the French radio RFI that he came up with the idea for the title of the trilogy because of an episode negotiated starting in 1983 and formally executed in 1985, during the celebrations of the tenth anniversary of Mozambique's independence (Meira 127-28). In those years, President Samora Machel asked the Portuguese government for the restitution of the mortal remains of Ngungunyane, who was the last emperor of the Empire of Gaza and the last monarch of the Jamine dynasty. When independent Mozambique claimed the mortal remains of the emperor, who died on the island of Anchiava, Portugal could not find them. So, Mozambican artists Malangatana Valente and Paulo Come reached an agreement to conduct the funeral using an urn filled with soil from the Azorean cemetery Angra do Heroísmo (Garcia quoted in Meira 128). For ten years, Ngungunyane reigned in the region that is now the country of Mozambique before he was captured. Ngungunyane was captured in the Chaimite region and sentenced to exile in Portugal on December 28, 1895. A decade earlier, the Berlin Conference coincided with Ngungunyane's ascension to the throne of Gaza, during which he decided to break the vassalage agreement of the previous king with Portugal and strengthen relations with the English (Wermelinger 4-5). If Machel claimed Ngungunyane as a myth of indigenous antagonism towards Portugal, the trilogy highlights the tyranny of a king plagued by multilateral threats of betrayal, coming from within his own kingdom, from neighboring ones, or even from Portuguese soldiers maimed but armed with firearms.

From an epic, dynastic history claimed by Machel as the founding myth of Mozambique's sovereignty, only the sands of the emperor and the need to create a memory remained. Instead of celebrating the war and the rule of Ngungunyane, the trilogy dissolves in the air everything that seems solid, pompous, and heroic in this history of empires. In three volumes of fiction, Couto narrates the story of the war between the threatened Portuguese colonial project and the Empire of Gaza, ruled by Ngungunyane, in the late nineteenth century in Mozambique (1894-1896). The author intervenes in the epic pattern of this war nar-

rative, transformed into a myth of the greatness of Portuguese colonialism from the 1960s, a myth that later gained the opposite sense of the foundation of national unity, from the perspective of the independence movement and the Mozambican state government. Contrary to an epic perspective, his trilogy blends two intimate types of narration: the temporal form of the memories of the translator Imani, who undergoes an agonizing transit between the worlds of African ethnicities and the Portuguese, and the spatial form of entering the location of the other, mediated by river navigations, including postal services, enabling a relatively fast communication system through letters.

In *The Sword and the Spear*, although the letters are exchanged between Sergeant Melo, exiled in Africa, and Lieutenant Ornelas in Portugal, their content does not lean toward the official, as the exiled military officer prioritizes political insubordination, his passion for Imani, and a progressive empathy with the space that surrounds him: "In a land crossed by great rivers, each letter is a dugout crossing distances" (Couto 39). The rivers and letters as privileged modes of transit demonstrate that Portuguese colonization in Africa faced enormous difficulty establishing itself in this territory because racism combined with the impoverishment of the military and settlers made any identification with the colonized risky, starting with the colonizers' refusal to learn the local languages. In a letter to Lieutenant Ornelas, Sergeant Melo contradicts his superior by confessing his admiration for an enemy of Portuguese colonization, Doctor Liengme, a Swiss doctor and missionary who had great familiarity with Africa, its languages, and its people.

> Why do we Portuguese suffer from this age-old laziness when it comes to learning these languages? Why is it that we only want to learn the languages of those people we consider superior? I listened to the stories of Georges Liengme, and they weren't tales of lion hunters. [. . .] And they confirmed a bitter truth: whether inside or outside the Garrison, we Portuguese live surrounded by walls, afraid of everything that we are unable to recognize. (247)

The Sergeant Melo's significant inadequacy in his military post highlights his incompatibility with the image of a war hero, although this was the initial justification for the Lieutenant's correspondence with this sergeant, whose primary focus is his love for the young woman Imani. The Lieutenant's interest in the letters of the Sergeant is justified by the fact that the young woman knows several African languages and expresses herself perfectly in Portuguese. However, Ngungunyane

was quicker to claim Imani as his wife, having heard advice from his closest advisor: "This girl knows the language of the Portuguese, the VaChopi, the Mabinguela, and our own. And the door is open for her to enter the territory of our enemies" (Couto 254). The rarity and usefulness of this translator not only made her coveted by Ngungunyane and later by the Portuguese military but from the outset also made her the object of suspicion among her compatriots, who repeatedly warned her that her gift was, in fact, a curse. Imani undergoes an ethnic displacement because she was initiated into the culture and language of the Portuguese. Further, she intuits with precision the nature of her experience of an ontological negativity produced by colonialist racism, according to which the civility of the values learned by the young woman would have whitened her. Imani complains to the priest who initiated her into the Portuguese language and culture:

> "I want to be a black woman, Father."
> "Are you crazy?"
> [. . .] I wanted to be initiated into my traditions. I wanted to be reborn into my language, my beliefs. I wanted to be protected by my ancestors, to speak to my dead, my mother and my brothers. I was tired of being different and of being viewed with a mixture of envy and disdain. (268-69)

The centuries-long ignorance of African cultures and languages was a fundamental symptom of the limited cultural infiltration of Portuguese colonization. The indigence of the colonists, on the other hand, created conditions for necessary coexistence and frequent mestizaje. The solution was to tolerate mestizaje but to keep a distance and proudly remain ignorant of the supposedly inferior culture of the other. Colonialist and racist discourses tolerated mestizaje but not "cafrealization," which means the adaptation of the Portuguese and their children to African cultures and languages (Santos 38).

Conversely, the assimilation of the Portuguese language and culture by Africans gave them certain advantages but at a high cost. This cost involved a profound displacement from local cultures and languages, resulting in an always imperfect performance of metropolitan culture. After all, translation, in the sense of transposing, implies a transcendental gesture toward both languages and cultures in contact, thus affecting assumptions of both in different proportions, due to power imbalances in relationships. As racism underpins this power imbalance, operating between cultures kept in close contact, Portuguese colonists identified their superiority as something inherited by their mixed lineage: not pure race, but the soul of the race, namely, the language of

the race. Since the illusion of racial purity was out of the question, they valued the illusion of ethnic (cultural, linguistic) purity, which they could even transfer to assimilated blacks. This ethnic-racial transfiguration could be upward, whitening, as seen when the so-called "primitive" is assimilated into civilization and the evolutionary sense of their history. Alternatively, it could be regressive, as in the case of "cafrealization." Both of these combined factors in Couto's novel present the historical foundation of a complex and conflicting image of the Mozambican articulation between local languages and the language brought by the colonizers.

The hostility experienced by the translator Imani in the colonial context is a paradigmatic image of future identity conflicts that shape post-independence Mozambican literate society, as studied by Basto ("Rereading Mozambican Literature from the 80s"). This image also expresses what Nazir Can calls "insilience" (an exile within themselves) of Mozambican writers in Portuguese-language literature (*The Mozambican Literary Field*). Invented as a character for a love story that unifies the narrative line of a historically rooted novel, the translator Imani communicates the lasting constitution of insurmountable conflicts in Mozambican literate society, its literature, and an ongoing national formation.

Couto lends the density of these conflicts to different characters in *The Sword and the Spear*. For example, the author portrays the horror of the colonizers toward the culture of the other in the behavior of the doctor Rodrigues Braga, whose curiosity and repudiation of the people of Gaza contrast with the affinity between the village and the Swiss doctor (248). Portuguese soldiers and settlers found themselves immersed in personal conflicts rooted in daily coexistence with the other while defending an unconvincing image of the empire. This empire, unsuccessful in mastering the language of the other and trading with them, imposed itself almost solely through the cowardly use of force.

The Precariousness of a Monolingual and Coastal Colonial Empire

For centuries, Portugal asserted its image of empire, although maintaining a precarious and monolingual colonial administration on the fringes of African territories. The trilogy *As areias do imperador* narrates conflicts that occurred about ten years after the Berlin Conference when tensions were progressively increasing among the major European colonial powers, especially England, regarding the Portuguese mode of colonization. In this conference, the main European powers gathered

to negotiate the terms of the colonization of Africa, dividing the territories of the region among themselves. The increased tensions became evident in the 1890 British Ultimatum given to Portugal in the form of a memorandum, with demands regarding the occupation and exploitation of its African colonies. Indeed, the partition of Africa refined the colonial project and multiplied profits. After the Berlin Conference and the Ultimatum, the Portuguese lost underutilized territories, and they received loans to exploit natural resources, and to enslave and traffic people.

In the last decades of the nineteenth century, the traditional imbalance between Portuguese colonialism and the actual situation of the country became increasingly unsustainable. Portugal insisted on asserting its tradition of power, which was in decline, and had failed to advance in the exploration of the vast regions further away from the coast. Kept on the periphery of capitalism by the pressures of English credit policies and disadvantageous international treaties, Portugal faced challenges (Santos 25). Capitalist colonial empires such as England and France considered Portuguese colonization inefficient, with few and modest administrative and military centers on the coast. At various points in the novel, Couto addresses this precariousness, such as when faced with the humiliating situation of the Portuguese military and the barracks, Captain Santiago da Mata complains to Imani: "I'm sick of this bloody charade, of soldiers who aren't soldiers, of garrisons that are stores. I'm sick of wars that politicians plan back in Lisbon" (148).

The Berlin Conference and the Ultimatum were successful and promoted an extraordinary expansion of profits for European colonial companies, enabling the advent of industrial capitalism. Financed and soon indebted, Portugal's precarious situation barely concealed its effort to embody the European image of the empire in Africa. The downfall of Ngungunyane was the major accomplishment of this supposed Portuguese Empire, which captured the king for propagandistic purposes, to exhibit his exoticism in Portugal. The precariousness of Portuguese colonization is highlighted throughout the novel, and this historical capture only occurs in the last chapter, which eschews a single note of heroism.

An Allegory of Imani's Cycles and the Impermanence of Empires

The undisciplined Sergeant Melo was sent to Africa as a punishment for his involvement in a republican protest in Porto during the re-

bellion of January 31, 1891 against the Portuguese crown, which had yielded to the British Ultimatum. His place of exile was the African village of Nkokolani, the dwelling place of the VaChopi, an ethnic group that had allied with the Portuguese against Ngungunyane's empire in Gaza. There, Germano met the even younger Imani. Sergeant Melo did not know African languages and relied upon the help of the translator VaChopi Imani, for whom he developed a desperate love. These events are distributed in retrospectives throughout the novel. The first chapter begins with Imani narrating when she left her land on a canoe journey, with Germano severely wounded, in search of help.

The cohesion of the novel *The Sword and the Spear* concerns the story of encounters and disconnections of this couple, each in the context of their displacement from family and cultural, social, and political origin. The historical background novel interweaves three narrators: the longer chapters consist of classic narratives, retrospective observations from the memories of the protagonist Imani. In between, there are exchanged letters between Sergeant Melo (interested in returning to Portugal with Imani) and Lieutenant Ornelas (supposedly interested in Melo's espionage services and in his image as a war hero, but mainly aware of the value of a translator like VaChopi Imani).

The brief love story of Imani and Germano, their separation, and the tension surrounding a possible reunion lend cohesion to the novel, whose escalating conflicts characterize the transition from an era of Colonial Empires to another of Capitalist Empires. The allegory of transience relative to historical time permeates Imani's cyclical narration, which is structured within the framework of the book in the travel situations along the river narrated by her in the first and last chapters.

The Sword and the Spear begins with a chapter titled "Murky Waters," narrated by Imani. Like the other chapters, the first one has an epigraph:

> I shall not say
> Silence stifles and muzzles me apace
>
> Silent I am, silent I shall remain
> For the language I speak is of another race
> - José Saramago, "Poem with Mouth Shut"

The title of the chapter refers to the dark waters of the river (a long-term life cycle), and the epigraph addresses the policies of silencing or ontological denial that the modern/colonialist era applied to the languages of races deemed inferior, while rewarding the mastery of civilized languages. In this context of Imani's compatriots' encounter with

the language of the colonizer, speaking or translating the language of the other race implies an epistemological confrontation of irreducible discrepancies. This confrontation demands constant positioning on power relations between the worlds in question, especially those power relations related to race.

The colonialist attribution of whitening powers to a proficient use of the colonizer's language produced an infrastructural type of racism internal to the way of reasoning, expressing oneself, and socially organizing (Fanon 85-87). The colonized constantly take a stance regarding themselves and the language of the civilized nation. The degree of proficiency in this language increases their level of whiteness and improves their chances of social advancement, thereby freeing them from what Fanon referred to as "blackness" and "bush"/nature (34).

The structure of the book itself alludes to a mythical, circular temporality, as the first chapter and the last one are interconnected in several aspects. Imani's holistic worldview coincides with the circular sense of the book's frame, and it evolves throughout the narrative, becoming more profound through the maternal connection of the narrator's pregnancy with the comfort offered by the priestess, Bibliana.

Synthesized in various epigraphs and episodes throughout the novel, the holistic worldview of Imani's people becomes more profound in the allegorical relationship she has with the world, which is evidenced in the last chapter and suggested in the first. At the end of the book, Imani is pregnant by the man she loves, Sergeant Melo, who was detained in Africa while defending African people during the turmoil generated by the episode of Ngungunyane's arrest, followed by the emperor's exile to Portugal. Imani is forced to join the ship's crew, captured as a translator and one of the emperor's wives, and enter the diasporic experience, which begins with the Limpopo River, known locally as "the pregnant river" (Couto 315). She wears a necklace with a spear-shaped pendant, given to her by the mother of Emperor Ngungunyane shortly before they boarded the ship. At the start of the journey, a few herons were balancing on the driftwood scattered along the wide and turbulent river when suddenly a Portuguese soldier decapitated one of them with his sword, splashing blood onto Imani's chest and the spear pendant, and then a wave splashed over the deck, washing her from head to toe. Cleansed of the innocent blood spilled by the Portuguese sword, and still with her belly soaked, Imani felt that within her a river was born, while outside of her, the last of the rivers flowed. Her pregnant belly seemed to her the border between the inner river (her mixed-race child) and the outer river (that of the colonizer's entry into Africa).

As I have suggested, the river metaphor engages in intertextuality with the colonial canon, challenging its dualistic perspective on the history of nature dominated by culture, of inferior races by superior ones. It also challenges the horror suffered by Western metaphysics in the face of a cosmos irreducible to human domination: that is, in the face of the integrated totality of nature, life cycles, and the impermanence of any empire.

The Allegory of a Holistic Worldview as a Challenge to Western Parameters of the Unusual

Seeking to control the holistic cosmology of life cycles, colonialist thought in the nineteenth century, notably social Darwinism, hierarchized ethnicities into races, idealizing a biological genesis for modern/colonialist history with its stages of civilization. It identified certain races as being in a stage of nature inferior to that of European civilizations, relying on ostensibly secular arguments but grounded in the metaphysical horror of Christendom and clinging to the assurances provided by Cartesian dualisms in modern/colonialist thought.[6]

Furthermore, so-called modern rationalism translated into philosophical language the concerns of religious debates in the early centuries of the modern/colonialist era regarding which peoples did or did not have a soul (Grosfoguel, "A estrutura do conhecimento" 36-37). Philosophy and later the sciences secularized the terrifying worldview of Christendom, denying the ways of being of another culture identified with avatars of evil such as nature, the primitive, superstition, the feminine, crime, madness, etc.

Therefore, this worldview remains concealed, and the West takes Cartesian rationalism as the reference for plausible models of reality, considering itself superior in the art of invention, aesthetics, and literature. Rebellion is associated with works that flirt with the unusual/*insolite*, and authors from peripheral countries are assigned the role of reporting supposed social dysfunctions due to the poor assimilation of Cartesian models, expressed in styles such as magical realism, marvelous realism, animistic realism.

Introducing a deviation from Western models of reality, the "unusual" creates tension around them, at times temporarily suspending them, only to reinforce them with hypotheses more sophisticated than the initial ones. Silva identifies, in Couto's narratives, a hybridism of the "logical" world with an "unusual" one whose meaning the narrative ultimately confirms (9). It seems well-observed that the author's narratives support events that the scholar refers to as unusual. However, it is

crucial to note that the use of categories like "unusual" and "fantastic" presupposes a moment of doubt, a temporary suspension of belief in a Westernized perspective on the world with its rationalist and Cartesian parameters of plausibility.

This suspension explores the limits of understanding within this Westernized perspective, expanding it. Yet, this critical key remains within the bounds of Westernized plausibility, albeit expanded. I emphasize that a narration like Imani's, though articulated in the Portuguese language and culture, maintains a VaChopi perspective of the world, communicating a holistic, integrative cosmology distinct from the characterization of a "startling unusual" due to its deviation from "logical" assumptions of modern/colonialist rationalism.

In the first chapter of the novel, a canoe takes a group, which includes the wounded Germano supported by Imani, to the island of Sana Benene, where the brief love story of this couple unfolds. The couple spends their days together during Germano's treatment by an African priestess. Germano is healed thanks to the care of Bibliana, whose extraordinary gifts, identified by Europeans as witchcraft, include certain rituals, traditional medicine, and the ability to intuit deep emotional conflicts and induce hallucinations.

Imani's cosmological and holistic perspective remains calmly within its own familiarity, implying that Bibliana does not evoke the astonishment associated with encountering the unusual/*insolite*. In other words, if there is no astonishment, there is also no necessity of creating tension within Western parameters of plausibility. The unusual is not a phenomenon in itself, so it begs the question: unusual for whom? From Imani's narrative perspective, Bibliana's actions manifest the reality of the priestess's holistic worldview.The perspective of the unusual could be attributed to the narrations of Sergeant Melo, who also interacted with the priestess. But regarding Bibliana, the Sergeant expresses himself with discretion, some ambiguity, and little understanding, in the letters to his superior.

Couto's trilogy endorses the holistic worldview of his African characters, who perceive their worlds as living allegories, composed of dreamlike images depicting the cosmic connection between the most minimal and everyday events of each individual's life.[7] This connection goes beyond not only Cartesian dualisms but also the intransitivity between the dead and the living, between the past and the present.

Among the holistic worldviews presented in *The Sword and the Spear*, Bibliana's stands out for her extraordinary ability to comprehend and navigate the world as a living allegory, confirmed by the hypnotic reach of her psychic suggestions. We come to understand Bibliana through Imani's narration since Germano's perspective on her is lim-

ited. Their first encounter was unfriendly and occurred on the island of Sana Benene, where Imani ended up with a group trying to save the wounded Germano. The first book of the trilogy had concluded with Imani shooting Germano's hands, perhaps accidentally, while trying to protect her brother from a mob of rebels heading toward the barracks where they were sheltered. The second book of the trilogy, *The Sword and the Spear*, continues this event.

The novel begins with Imani narrating the canoe journey that was supposed to take the group to the nearest hospital, but they are unable to complete the trip. Essentially, the first half of the book revolves around the events triggered on the island of Sana Benene, where the protagonists fall in love. The island has a church inhabited by a couple of religious figures embodying two different connections with the cosmos. The Goan priest Fernandes, who introduced Imani to the Portuguese language and culture, becomes increasingly skeptical over time but ends up seduced and surrendered to Bibliana's suggestive power. After her village was destroyed, the priestess Bibliana adopted this name when she was taken in by Protestant missionaries from Transvaal. In catechesis, she became convinced that she was the mother of God because her life was written in the holy book (101-03).

Gradually, Imani makes us realize that Bibliana propels the imagination of all her antagonists into delirium, accomplishing extraordinary feats such as convincing Emperor Ngungunyane to face the Tsonga people's fear of the sea or confounding the impulsive Captain Santiago da Mata (142-43, 301-02). The strength of this holistic worldview, exceptionally represented by Bibliana, reinforces the circular frame of the book and suggests the transitivity of everything, including empires.

The Sword and the Spear has a circular frame created by the coincidence of Imani's first and last sentences, and by the fact that it begins and ends with the journey of the main narrator along the river. Imani opens and closes her memories with a kind of proverb about the cycles of life: "Everything always begins with a farewell" (25). The book starts with Imani bidding farewell to her village and adolescence, in a canoe with family members (her father and brother), Germano, and a friend of his. The book ends with the pregnant Imani aboard a ship bidding farewell to Africa as she heads into exile, aware that something new is beginning at that moment.

Despite her isolation, Imani does not feel alone because she is pregnant, and also because after having her belly comforted by Bibliana on the eve of Ngungunyane's arrest, she heard the priestess say the following words: "There are no farewells, I shall always dwell within you" (302). From then on, Imani will always carry within her the holistic worldview of her people, perfected in the priestess's profound wisdom.

Therefore, she understands life as an allegory in which farewells close cycles so that all things may begin anew.

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Notes

1. Holism was defined by South African Prime Minister Jan Smuts in his 1926 work *Holism and Evolution*. The concept questioned the fragmentation and dualisms of nineteenth-century scientific thought, highlighting the importance of Einstein's General Theory of Relativity for the evolution of a thought capable of understanding the integrated co-production between the whole of nature and human actions (Lima 3-8). The concept intrigued pan-Africanists due to its similarity to the Xhosa and Zulu meaning of the term *ubuntu*, which translates into various African languages, among which I highlight the Tsonga and Shona conception of *bunhu*, because they are Mozambican languages (Silva 3526).

2. Speaking of Christendom, I have in mind events such as the burning of witches and libraries, among other actions perpetrated by "a theology of domination that was created in the fourth century by the Roman Emperor Constantine as part of the struggle against the early Christians, who have a holistic and non-dualistic view in cosmological terms" (Grosfoguel, "We Must Decolonize" 4).

3. Cartesian rationalism served to distance the civilized European from races deemed supposedly non-rational, which it ontologically considered inferior, as if they had not reached a stage of culture but remained in a primitive, untamed/uncivilized nature. By denying the humanity of the other, their ontological dimension, this utilitarian rationalism was particularly abusive in terms of objectification, extraction of surplus value, and enslavement (Vallega, "Freedom and History" 66-67).

4. The liberation of thought limited by colonialism depends on another subsequent liberation, of sensibility, memory, affections, of a body that experiences a way of living-dying in connection with a cyclical space-time movement (Vallega, "The Felt Thought" 234). One of Vallega's starting points is the philosophy of Fabbien Eboussi Abulaga, in *The Crisis of the Muntu*, ac-

cording to which the vital rhythm of alternation, the periodicity of things, escapes Cartesian rationalism (237). The Quechua and Aymara have developed a thought connected to the cyclical movement of space-time. Rodolfo Kusch's studies on these Andean peoples, gathered in *Indigenous Popular Thought in America*, are another starting point for Vallega's reflections on the liberating force provided by this holistic worldview, whose integration effects result from the experience of a feeling-thinking, of a body (sensibility, memory, affections) that thinks (238-39).

5. In France, the trilogy was translated by Métailié editions in 2020, compiled into a single volume, and won the Jan Michalski Prize for Literature. In the German translation, Karin von Schweder-Schreiner emphasizes the character Imani and the cycles experienced by her. The Swiss publisher Unionsverlag preferred to combine the volumes into the duology *Der Imani-Zyklus*. The first volume is titled *Imani* (2017), and the second brings together the last two books of the original trilogy under the title *Asche und Sand* (2021). In 2023, the English-language publication of the trilogy appeared, confirming the increased international recognition of Couto, whose name has already become an indispensable reference in the studies of African literatures, particularly in Portuguese-language literature. David Brookshaw translated the trilogy *Sands of the Emperor*, which was published in three volumes by Farrar, Straus and Giroux in New York: *Woman of the Ashes* (2018), *The Sword and the Spear* (2020), and *The Drinker of Horizons* (2023). In addition to contributing to the author's esteemed place in world literature, the English translation highlights the significant international interest in issues related to the meaning of colonial history, with a focus on a perspective of transformation or decolonization.

6. In an interview, Couto (2019) referred to the need to listen to the voice of things, animals, the world. Modern/colonialist thought discredited this perspective.

7. I am referring to an ancient understanding of allegory that the modern/colonialist era fought against in the name of a supposed transparency of the symbol. Irreducible to modern categorizations of space-time, allegory is a fundamental resource in the Old Testament, as well as in epic poems of the Greco-Roman and medieval periods. The ancients used allegory as a sustained metaphor, capable of offering images and personifications of concepts because an abstract signification A and a concretizing designation B maintained a virtually open correlation to new meanings (Hansen 7-14).

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Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899) in the Genesis of *¿Qué mató al joven Abdoulaye Cissé?* (2023) by Donato Ndongo

Juan Miguel Zarandona

Introduction: Mythical Rivers, Symbolic Rivers

It is a very well-known fact that all ancient civilizations were fascinated by rivers and waters. Perhaps the most elaborate and powerful mythical creation in this regard was the five rivers of Ancient Greek religion that flowed through the Hades or Underworld—where god Hades (same name) was King and Ruler—namely, the rivers Styx (Hatred), Lethe (Oblivion), Acheron (Misery), Phlegethon (Fire), and Cocytus (Wailing) (Gill online; Robin 108-25). If we go down a step, and we move from *myth* to *symbol*, few geographical entities have enjoyed a greater symbolic weight throughout the millennia of history than rivers. According to Juan Eduardo Cirlot (391), rivers are ambivalent symbols that, on the one hand, are associated with the creative drive of nature and time, and the fertility of the land, but on the other hand, the sad and irreversible advance of life, abandonment, and forgetfulness. In other words, both "life" and "death" united.

The Nile, the Congo, and the Niger are the three longest rivers in Africa—4,132, 2,900, and 2,600 miles, respectively (6,650, 4,700, and 4,200 km each). The collective imagination of mankind has deeply engraved in its ethereal reality a complete repertoire of myths and symbols associated with the Nile, such as the Ancient Egypt god Hapi, the mythical provider of the annual flooding and the symbol of fertility. Joseph Conrad (1857-1924) turned the Congo River into a most powerful symbol of the travel from life and civilization to oblivion, wildness, destruction, and death (a new river of the Hades) with his celebrated *Heart of Darkness* (1899, 1902). It is also a bitter critique of the European enlightened myths of civilization and progress.[1] What can be said about the Niger River in this respect? This river hosted those old African empires and kingdoms—Ghana, Mali, Songhay, Benin, etc.—

in its basin, as well as the legendary cities of the Sahel (Timbuktu, Gao, etc.) that flourished politically and culturally during the Middle Ages and later, without European rule and much before contemporary colonial times (see García-Moral). Consequently, the Niger River symbolizes present-day African pride.[2] A recent novel by Donato Ndongo-Bidyogo (1950-), *¿Qué mató al joven Abdoulaye Cissé?* (*What Killed Young Abdoulaye Cissé?*) (2023),[3] benefits greatly from the complex network of symbols associated with the Niger River or Black River or river of the Black peoples.

Comparison for Comparison's Sake as a Method

The previous section mentions two novels: *Heart of Darkness* and *¿Qué mató al joven Abdoulaye Cissé?* My purpose here will be to establish a comparison between them. The disciplines of Comparative Literature[4] and Comparative Cultural Studies, and the research methods based on "comparison," benefit from an instinct of human beings to decide and choose after comparing among the various realities and possibilities that the physical world offers them. Comparative Literature studies two literatures, or instances associated with a given literature, in comparison; comparative research compares two or more things. Both seek to discover something previously unknown.

As far as literature is concerned, the question should be posed as follows: is it possible to compare any two entities? Probably not, or at least not in a profitable way. When you compare two things, they also must not be identical to make comparison possible. They must not be totally different either, without any common ground at all, which makes comparison impossible too. There must be at least one common quality to make it possible or, more wisely, a set of similarities and differences.

This common ground can be worded as the "third part of the comparison," literally, the well-known term *tertium comparationis*, conceived and disseminated in Latin. In other words, a choice of variables that will make comparison feasible. So, do *Heart of Darkness* (T1) and *¿Qué mató al joven Abdoulaye Cissé?* (T2) share a sufficient number of variables to make comparison not only possible but sensible? From my point of view, they do. This could be the *tertium comparationis* that will allow a sound comparison between them and, consequently, some kind of truth resulting from a research project. Text one was written and published at the end of the nineteenth century, when the plot of the story also happened, whereas text two belongs to the early twenty-first century thematically and chronologically, despite its many flashbacks. But they share their seminal nature and the same key role in

the founding and consolidation of African postcolonial literature in different European languages.[5] Text one was written by a white Polish-British man of letters who belongs to the great canon of English literature; text two by an exiled Equatoguinean who still does not enjoy full recognition and popularity among greater audiences of readers.[6]

Both texts are set in two continents, chronologically, Europe and Africa for the first one, and Africa and Europe for the second one. Both texts benefit from the classic motifs related to "voyages of exploration," more specifically, the exploration of dark inner Africa by Europeans (outward journey), and the migration endured by Africans into Europe (return journey). The first text by Conrad still suffers from eurocentrism as defined by Steven (203), although with a very critical tone,[7] whereas the second text represents a total vindication of Black African culture. Both texts are dramatic novels that end in death.

Conrad's text is a short novel. On the contrary, Ndongo's one is a long *roman-fleuve*, never better said, that flows incessantly like the untamed waters of the Niger River. However, despite these differences, and due to these similarities, I believe that it is quite possible to compare them.

The Conrad-Ndongo Connection

African postcolonial writers who publish in English, but also in other indigenized European languages, cannot avoid writing under the powerful influence of two seminal texts, the plots of which are both set in late nineteenth-century Africa, the already mentioned *Heart of Darkness*, and *Things Fall Apart* (1958), by Nigerian Chinua Achebe (1930-2013).[8] Joseph Conrad, the first of the two, definitively closed African colonial literature as it had been practiced until then and opened a new era (see Juneja and Loomba), making him not only the last colonial writer, but the first with a postcolonial mentality. *Things Fall Apart* is the cornerstone of postcolonial African literature, as volume number one in the legendary African Writers Series that opened African fiction to the world and a bestseller from its beginning to this day in many different languages thanks to translation.[9]

Consequently, it is inconceivable to believe that Donato Ndongo did not read, study attentively, or struggle to avoid the magical influence of these two masterpieces on his personal development, creative literary talent, and fictional works--and not only Conrad's text itself, but also the enormous wealth of corresponding intertextualities that it has generated since it was published. As far as *Heart of Darkness* is concerned, are there testimonies from the Spanish-language writer to

prove it without doubt? In other words, can the Conrad-Ndongo connection be proved?

In 2002, two Spanish scholars, Jorge Luis Marzo and Marc Roig, edited and published a monograph entitled: *Planeta Kurtz: Cien años de* El corazón de las tinieblas *de Joseph Conrad* (*Planet Kurtz: A Hundred Years of* Heart of Darkness *by Joseph Conrad*[10]), including an introduction and ten chapters by different writers, intellectuals, and scholars, all of them showing very different and enriching viewpoints. The book celebrated the first centenary of the publication of *Heart of Darkness* in book format in 1902. Previously, the editors also curated the Institut de Cultura Palau de la Virreina's exhibition titled: *El cor de les tenebres: Heart of Darkness. Exposició*, sponsored by the Barcelona City Hall, between June 27 and September 1, 2002.

Donato Ndongo contributed to this project with a chapter entitled: "Los herederos del señor Kurtz" ("Mr. Kurtz's Heirs," 123-40). The Equatoguinean writer not only compiles a complete collection of laudatory expressions to honor Conrad and *Heart of Darkness*: "enduring writer," "does not lose its relevance with the course of time," or "depth and sincerity" (124), but he also shares with us the following autobiographical testimony:

> The opportunity given to me to participate in this collective book allows me to meet again with Conrad. I read *Heart of Darkness* more than a quarter of a century ago; and I remember from that first reading a diffuse feeling of rage, which is the most natural and sincere feeling that Marlow's memories can arouse in a young black man forced to live in Europe because of the tyranny that prevailed in his country after independence. (127)

The Conrad-Ndongo connection, if there was a need to do so, has been proved. But this volume has something else to offer. The editors had the idea to include a chapter authored by Achebe himself: "Una imagen de África: racismo en *El corazón de las tinieblas*, de Conrad" (39-56). It is a translation of the famous presentation given by the Nigerian master at the Second Chancellor's Lecture at the University of Massachusetts (Amherst), in February 1975, "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*," published in 1978. It is no secret that Achebe accuses Conrad of being a "bloody racist" (9), of having a "problem" (10) with the Blacks, and that these claims of his aroused a vivid academic debate in postcolonial literary circles that has not yet been extinguished (Watts 196-209).

There is nothing like that in Ndongo's chapter. He realizes that Conrad's text displays many different deep readings––Achebe's one included––that it must also be understood within the parameters of its time of writing, and that what really counts is the following:

> But a century later, we are in a position to make it possible for blacks to count for something more than a grain of sand in the desert, and for the Kurtz––the Europeans and their African imitators––to stop being those "supernatural beings clothed with the powers of a deity," and to recover their humanity so that we are not only obliged to listen to them, but that they also listen to us, to those peoples of all the continents who have so many things to say. (140)

The "Journey into Darkness" These Days

In the introduction to their volume, Jorge Luis Marzo and Marc Roig wonder whether Conrad's travel into darkness retains any significance,[11] meaning, or lesson for our contemporary circumstances:

> What is darkness for Africa? What is the "journey into darkness" of our times? Is it not that of the Europe-bound boat full of migrants who have travelled five thousand kilometres in the most arduous conditions to end up in the middle of the miserable jungle of the first world? Yes, *Heart of Darkness* seems to be still alive a hundred years after it was written. (13-14)

The possibility of equating and drawing inspiration from Conrad's journeys into African darkness, according to his short novel, and of applying its symbolism to the reverse journeys of Africans into twenty-first century Europe, or comparing the inhospitable and deadly African jungle of the Congo River at the end of the nineteenth century with the equally inhospitable and deadly environment of twenty-first century European cities, is obvious and understandable.

And Donato Ndongo has taken, and takes frequently, advantage of this possibility when writing his fiction. He started his literary career with a short story entitled: "El sueño" ("The Dream") in 1973. This text was republished in 2017 in a volume compiling his short stories: *El sueño y otros relatos* (*The Dream and Other Narratives*). As early as the 1970s, he had the insight and vision to understand the social and narrative interest of recounting the ill-fated illegal journeys of Africans

fleeing their continent lured by the false mirage of the decolonizing European metropolises. Years later, in 2007, Ndongo published his third novel, *El metro* (*The Tube*), where he focuses his creative inspiration on the ordinary lives, dire straits, and plights endured by those African men who managed to make their dream come true and settled down in the capital European city of Madrid. The city's underground metropolitan trains, the *metro*, i.e., the network that crosses the entire city from top to bottom, from left to right, becomes the best symbol of this new jungle with its corresponding descent into darkness.[12]

Ndongo returns to his favourite literary subject matter with his impressive fourth novel,[13] *¿Qué mató al joven Abdoulaye Cissé?* (2023), where he develops, in all its potentiality, the theme of the journeys of young Africans toward the impenetrable darkness of the new European urban jungles, revisiting Madrid, where everything ends in tragedy.

This essay endeavours to illustrate the ways in which Ndongo's fourth novel bears the imprint of Conrad's text in one way or another, so it is essential to study and compare the materiality of both texts (words, phrases, motifs, etc.) to prove this assertion or, at least, make it plausible.

Mali, My Mali!

The history of contemporary Mali, the Republic of Mali, is one of those sad stories of colonial and postcolonial independent Africa. Today it has attained the unenviable status of one of the poorest countries in the world and one of the most unstable (coups d'état, political turmoil, social unrest, riots, guerrillas, armed insurrections, killings of innocent civilians, famine, hardship, etc.) (Heath 1236-41). In short, a failed state. Despite these facts, it symbolizes the past glories of sub-Saharan Africa like no other of its neighbours. Within its national territory, three of the greatest empires of antiquity and the Middle Ages of the Sahel and West Africa flourished: The Ghana Empire (second through tenth centuries), the Songhai Empire (fifteenth through sixteenth centuries), and the Mali Empire (thirteenth through seventeenth centuries) (Nave 1241-42).[14]

Among the painful stones on the path of the difficult contemporary trajectory of the colony of Mali and the independent Republic of Mali, milestones such as the following can be listed: the Berlin Conference, also considered the "Scramble for Africa," handed the present-day territory of Mali to the colonial power of France, which finally seized control of it by 1905 and renamed it the colony of French Sudan. However, the peoples of the Niger River did not surrender easily, and, as early

as 1915, the first anti-French uprising took place.[15] The repression of the French troops was terribly destructive. Years later, Mali became an independent nation on June 29, 1960, but the new era would not be a happy one. Two ruthless dictatorships followed one after the other. Firstly, President Modibo Keita took over, imposing a new socialist, one-party regime and the catastrophic nationalization of the economy. After a bloody coup, General Moussa Traoré seized power, became President, and inaugurated a new epoch marked by unrest, repression, and poverty. Three coups attempted to overthrow his government, and a revolution, the March Revolution of 1991, was led by Lieutenant Colonel Amadou Toumani Touré who finally succeeded and compelled the people of Mali to approve a new democratic Constitution.

For several years, Mali enjoyed a period of calm, but this bonanza did not last long. In January 2012 the Tuareg Rebellion broke out in Northern Mali, urged by the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA), a violent organization that declared the independence of a new country, Azawad. Soon Islamist groups belonging to Al-Qaeda in the Islamist Maghreb (AQIM) took control and imposed the Sharia. All this brought horror and all kinds of atrocities to the Northern regions (Timbuktu)[16] and the River Niger cities of Goa and Bamako, the capital. In 2013, the French Armed Forces intervened, and most of the north territory was retaken, but soon, in 2015, a new conflict arose in Central Mali between agricultural communities and pastoral ones because of their age-long struggle for land and water, but this time with the help of bloody Islamist militias supporting both sides. Massacres and accusations of genocide were the daily routine. In 2018 there were new elections, but new coups happened in 2020 and 2021, followed by military rule and disruption from the extremists of the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara. French troops had to evacuate the country and the Mali-France relations deteriorated totally. Russia was the new foreign power to exercise control in the area. A new constitution, approved by referendum in 2023, declared that French was no longer the official language of the country. To sum up, a *cataclysm* according to Ndongo's terminology (¿*Qué mató* 18).

This is the backdrop of Donato Ndongo's novel. And these are the circumstances that destroyed the life of his protagonist, a twenty-first century Malian named Abdoulaye Cissé: a young man who must witness the death of his entire family, the total ruin of his way of life, the impossibility of studying as he had planned, and the destruction of his nation. But above all, he convinces himself that his whole world has crumbled, that there is no other way out for him but to flee from this darkness and emigrate, however he can, to Europe. Finally, he manages

to settle down in Madrid, Spain, but is it worth it? The truth is that he cannot escape his tragic destiny.

Analysis and Discussion: The "Great Trek" Versus the "Small Trek"

The main narrative thread of the novel *¿Qué mató al joven Abdoulaye Cissé?* is organized as a long journey. The long-life trek of its young protagonist winds and meanders from his home city of Goa, through Bamako, up to his last chapter in Madrid, where the action begins and will eventually end. From that city and the point in time near his death, the readers encounter a continuous game of flashbacks that take them back in time, to the remote past, the recent past, or the present of an African nation, namely Mali. This unstoppable travel in time, forwards and backwards, has the advantage of allowing us to assimilate the whole experience of this unfortunate country through all the people who in some ways have been part of Abdoulaye's life: parents, sisters and brothers, other relatives; neighbours and members of the same lineage; friends and fellow students; teachers; politicians and other relevant figures of Malian public society. The result is a complete fresco of the Malian reality that gives consistency to the whole story and unravels the keys that explain and justify the general sinking into the maw of "darkness" and its dangers (abuse, violence, and death). And everything happens near the banks of the Niger River.

From my viewpoint, this is clearly a *journey into the darkness of our times*, exactly what Marzo and Roig questioned and warned us of in their introduction (13-14). And, if we take as a reference the journey into darkness born from Conrad's pen, it may be a journey in the opposite direction, but a journey in Conrad's way, nonetheless. Ndongo's artistic admiration for Conrad and his novel; the symbolic connections between those two great African rivers, the Niger and the Congo; the dramatism of both plots; the presence of Death, both Kurtz's and Abdoulaye's; the subjugating call of Africa, the *mal d'Afrique*, an incurable disease; their shared historical, creative, and ideological post-colonialism: these details confirm that Ndongo's novel bears the imprint of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*.

But something else can be noted. Next to the "great trek" that covers the whole novel, there is a "small trek." Abdoulaye Cissé was not the first pilgrim in the family. Abdoulaye's grandfather, *abuelo* Makan Cissé, experienced his own trip to Europe and his own fall into darkness many years before. He was really the first to do such a thing. Ndongo's novel contains within itself an independent piece of metatext that can be

read in its own right (18-55). It is a kind of short novel within the main novel that features *abuelo* Makan's fateful wanderings in alien lands. For the purposes of this article, I intend to study the materiality of both texts (words, phrases, motifs, etc.) to support my claim that comparative connections exist between Ndongo's and Conrad's novels.

Makan Cissé's Travel

Abuelo Makan, then a young man, became involved in the Second World War in 1940, when the Allied powers attacked the French West African harbor of Dakar, what was controlled at that time by the collaborationist French Government of Vichy, led by Marshall Pétain. After that, the legendary commander Philippe Leclerc (1902-1947) started a campaign in French West African overseas territories to recruit soldiers for Free France and General De Gaulle. He wanted young, healthy, strong men to kill "bad whites in an alien war in a distant land" (Ndongo 19). Many young black men took the bait, Makan Cissé included, although they knew somehow that "white men, when they need you, they flatter you and promise you everything" (19). This was when his travel started: a pilgrimage into darkness that consisted of the following stages, as if they were the stations that Marlow visited while he sailed up the Congo River:

1. The campaign in Lybia against the Italian fascists, after crossing 700 kilometres of desert. The African soldiers still feel enthusiastic and enjoy spending their time thinking about Paris and the appealing *cocottes*, without realizing that they were walking to their death (20).
2. The conquest of the cities of Tripoli and Tunisia against the troops of Marshall Rommel, the Desert Fox.
3. Then, a leap into Italy, via Sicily, where *abuelo* Makan gets to know what the fierceness of the Nazis was like, as well as experiencing the freezing air and the view of corpses on the snow. African troops are "always sent to the front line of battle" (22).
4. The Battle of Monte Cassino against the German forces, where Makan Cissé is injured and is sent to the hospital, where white, angelical, Italian nurses take good care of him, and where he learns about terrible diseases that he had never heard of before: leprosy and the plague.
5. The Dragoon Operation to liberate the Provence and Southeast France starting in August 1944, exactly when

the Allies were staging the Normandy Operation in northwestern France. Makan gains an understanding of what "Gestapo," "SS," and "Wehrmacht" mean.

6. "Although every captured Negro was killed by the Germans" (31), when Makan Cissé is imprisoned, they take him to a concentration camp located in the Vosges Mountains, Alsace.
7. Then, Makan's travel reaches its "heart of darkness," described as the absence of all rights and civilization; anguish and degradation; slavery and forced labor; coexistence with rats, lice, and mosquitoes; institutionalized racism against what the text identifies as infrahumans, such as Black Africans or mulattos from the French West Indies.
8. Strurmführer Gunnar Klein commanded the place, but the worst was left for his subordinate Axel Ebersbach, born to kill, a sadistic and methodical assassin. He was responsible of the sterilization of blacks and other pseudo-medical experiments performed on them as if they were laboratory guinea pigs. Also, he oversaw the taking away of those considered useless to a barrack from which nobody returned, and from which came instead a disgusting smell of burning flesh.

Makan Cissé and some of his companions were liberated on November 23, 1944. After a long wait of several weeks, he was back among his people near the River Niger, without any of the initially promised medals of honour or words of gratitude for the services rendered.[17] He keeps silent for years and never really discusses what had happened to him, after knowing "the most sordid and tenebrous abyss of humankind" (53). Tenebrous or *tenebroso* in Spanish is the adjective most closely associated with the noun *tinieblas* or darkness, notably the more evocative term employed in the Spanish translation of *Heart of Darkness* as *El corazón de las tinieblas*, rather than the literal translation of *oscuridad*. It is true that he himself did not die—as Kurtz did—but his fateful destiny is only delayed, to be fulfilled in his grandson, Adboulaye Cissé, who also dared to travel into a white people country.[18]

Intertextuality Games

In *Heart of Darkness*, one of the fundamental rhetorical and literary devices involves the deliberate repetition of key words. These repeti-

tions carry and emphasize significant messages, aiding in their interpretation. For example, using *The Project Gutenberg* version of *Heart of Darkness* to search, I counted thirty-three instances of "pilgrim(s)" and one "pilgrimage"; sixty-seven instances of "river"; and twenty-six instances of "darkness," twenty-five instances of "dark," three instances of "darkly," and another three of "darker." To sum up, I posit that the travel up the River Congo is a pilgrimage that ends in darkness.

¿Qué mató al joven Abdoulayé Cissé? also makes use of and benefits from this network of lexical units and the same semantic fields, as the following examples testify:

> no entendí bien cómo es esa enfermedad pero creo que es como la lepra de los blancos porque su cuerpo se llena de llagas y pus cuando les ataca, y san Roque la hace desaparecer y también protege a los *peregrinos*.
>
> I did not understand well what this disease is but I think it is like the leprosy of the white people because their body fills with sores and pus when it attacks them, and St. Roch makes it disappear and also protects the *pilgrims*. (Ndongo 27-28; emphasis added)

> El hermano de Fiona no había ido de *peregrino* a Etiopía o Somalia sino a la guerra porque Il Duche Mussolini había declarado una *yihad* contra los infieles etíopes y somalíes, por eso ella estaba segura de que lo protegería.
>
> Fiona's brother had not gone on *pilgrimage* to Ethiopia or Somalia but to war because Il Duche Mussolini had declared a *jihad* against the Ethiopian and Somali infidels, so she was sure he would protect him. (emphasis added to *peregrino* 28)

> y cuando desperté en la noche y vi la blanca silueta de la pequeña tórtola macho, desplegadas sus alas sobre el *Río de Ríos*, supe que rondó muy cerca de la Muerte
>
> and when I awoke in the night and saw the white silhouette of the little male turtledove, his wings spread over the River of Rivers, I knew that he hovered very close to death (24, emphasis added)

> en la tarde, antes del ocaso, se sumergía horas y horas hasta la barbilla en el frescor de las aguas del *río*, quieto, sin nadar ni moverse apenas.
>
> in the evening, before sunset, he would immerse himself for hours and hours up to his chin in the cool waters of the river, still, without swimming or hardly moving. (emphasis added 51)

> quizás algo pesimista y desconfiado al haber penetrado hasta la más sórdida y *tenebrosa* sima del alma humana
>
> perhaps somewhat pessimistic and distrustful having penetrated to the most sordid and darkest depths of the human soul (emphasis added 52)

The intertextualities between both texts, Conrad's and Ndongo's, is very clear. Different travels, different African rivers, and different darknesses, but the same horror and desperation.[19] Apart from all this, other possible coincidences, intentional or unintentional, are still possible. In Conrad's short novel there are two main characters, Marlow, the one who travels into darkness, and Kurtz, the one who rules over the Kingdom of Darkness. Ndongo's short novel within the long novel has a main character-traveler, young African soldier Makan Cissé, but who rules over the total darkness that dominates his final destiny, i.e., the concentration camp? The high-ranking SS official *Sturmführer* Gunnan Klein does. Marlow and Makan's names start with the letter M; Kurtz and Klein's with the letter K. A simple coincidence or an intentional wink from the author, Ndongo?

Conclusion

In this article I aimed to investigate the influence of a novel as powerful as *Heart of Darkness* on the latest novel by African postcolonial writer Donato Ndongo, through the lens of comparative studies. My position was in favour of claiming that this relationship clearly existed. Abdoulaye Cissé is an heir to Mr. Kurtz and Mr. Marlow. This analysis has shown that a relationship did exist. This is not a great finding, considering the popularity of Conrad's novels, in general, and of *Heart of Darkness*, in particular. However, as an old Spanish saying claims, "the truth is hidden in the details," and here we have gone into the details

that link the two novels. Conrad's concept of "darkness" still explains and can be applied to other African contexts and predicaments, Mali and the Niger River, for example. Consequently, readers come to share the same conclusion: all African rivers are well endowed with powerful symbolism.

Moreover, thanks to Conrad, readers understood that colonial voyages by Europeans into Africa were not very fortunate. And thanks to Ndongo, many years later, they can learn that travels/pilgrimages in the opposite direction, from Africa to Europe, may end in tragedy and should be discouraged. In other words, Joseph Conrad's vision and his *Heart of Darkness* still resonate in our twenty-first century and will continue to do so in the future.

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Notes

1. Following Conrad's path, among others, the establishment of progress as a myth in Western societies, as well as its excesses of rationality, has been studied in increasing detail (see Maina-Waisman 136-67).

2 Some contemporary African republics recovered and adopted some of those glorious names—Mali, Ghana, Benin, etc.—during the era of their independence from colonial rule.

3. Donato Ndongo is the best known African postcolonial Spanish-language author and the one who has produced the most prolific body of literary and academic writing. Born in the former Spanish colony of Equatorial Guinea, he has become a multifaceted humanist ––anthologist, historian, literary critic, fiction writer (novels and short stories), editor, essayist, journalist–– and an activist committed to the defense of Africa and its cultures and literatures (Zarandona "Donato Ndongo," "Equatorial Guinea").

4. Comparative literature was born, consolidated, and gained academic recognition as a discipline during the last fifteen years of the nineteenth century and the first years of the twentieth century (1885-1905) (Vega and Carbonell 13). Conrad's novel and the appearance of this new field of learning are simultaneous events.

5. Susan Bassnett stated in the 1990s that the arrival of the term "post-colonial" on the critical scene must surely be one of the most significant developments in comparative literature in the twentieth century (76). Since then, both disciplines, Comparative Literature and Postcolonial Studies, have come closely associated as Comparative Postcolonial Studies (90-91).

6. According to the admired scholar in African literatures, Alfred S. Gérard, over the centuries, sub-Saharan Africa has generated an impressive amount of creative writing. Much of it is couched in the three colonial languages: English, French, and Portuguese, but imaginative works have also been produced in some fifty African languages. The world is not fully aware yet of this emergence and of the amazing growth and diversity of creative writing on the black continent in the last few decades, which is an intriguing challenge both for scholars, critics, and historians, and, on the other hand, the readers (Gérard 15, 19). The peripheries have not yet conquered the center as much as they could have done.

7. Although Conrad published his *Heart of Darkness* in 1899 for the first time, and it is regarded as the landmark or starting point of a new era in African literature, outdated fiction written by Europeans with a full colonial mentality continued to be published. One of the most paradigmatic examples is that of Joyce Cary (1888-1957) and his novel *Mister Johnson* (1939). According to Prasad, "When Achebe happened to read Joyce Cary's *Mister Johnson*, which dished out the white man's superficial contorted account of the country and of the Nigerian character, he realized deep down in his heart his own moral obligation and cultural responsibility to demonstrate an insider's viewpoint, debunking the myth of the white man's cultural supremacy and affirming the indigenous culture" (82). This resulted in *Things Fall Apart*.

8. *Things Fall Apart* is set in the village of Iguedo, where some members of the Umuofia clan live, a place very similar to Achebe's home village of Ogidi. Both the fictional village and the real one were near the bank of the Niger River, inside the Igbo land in present-day Nigeria (Ojiaku). The Niger and its symbolic overtones mentioned above––African pride, glorious past–– can be regarded as a strong link that unites Achebe and Ndongo's texts.

9. To understand the characteristics of African postcolonial writing and the fundamental role that translation has played in its genesis and diffusion, see Bandia.

10. All translations of titles or quotations, etc., from Spanish into English are my own.

11. Indeed, Conrad was not the first to identify Africa or the Congo River with "darkness." A previous explorer of the river, the journalist Henry Morton Stanley (1841-1904) published two key books entitled: *Through the Dark Continent* (1878) and *In Darkest Africa* (1890), years before *Heart of Darkness* (Hampson xvii). The writer owes much to the explorer, not only in the title, but also as a source of inspiration for devising one of his main characters, Marlow.

12. *El metro* has never been translated into English. On the contrary, the short story "El sueño" has at least one translation into English (Zarandona, "The Dream" 247-52).

13. Donato Ndongo is the author of another two novels. Firstly, *Las tinieblas de tu memoria negra* (1987), translated into English as *Shadows of your Black Memory* (2007). The word *tinieblas* is not a neutral term as *Heart of Darkness* has normally been translated as *El corazón de las tinieblas* (Conrad 1974, 1976, 2002, 2004) in Spanish, and *El cor de les tenebres* (2008) in Catalan. Ndongo's second novel is *Los poderes de la tempestad* (*The Powers of the Tempest*; 1997), which has yet to be translated into English.

14. Museums specializing in black African art take pride in and hold in the highest esteem their artistic pieces from the so-called "cultures from Niger River Basin" (Senegal, Niger, Ghana, Benin, Ivory Coast, Nigeria, etc.), produced by these empires and many other minor kingdoms (see Bassari). Among others, it is worth mentioning The Smithsonian National Museum of African Art, Washington, D.C.; the Musée du Quai Branly, Paris; or the African collections of the British Museum, London and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City, among many others. In Spain, the leading African art museum is the Museo de Arte Africano, located in Valladolid and under the patronage and management of the University of Valladolid in collaboration with the Fundación Arellano Alonso. For further consultation, see: www.fundacionjimenezarellano.com/.

15. They had not forgotten the past glories of the Mali Empire or the fact that it had been one of the wealthiest and more culturally empowered nations of the world, during the Middle Ages, when it controlled the trans-Saharan routes of trade. The city of Timbuktu, for example, founded one of the world's oldest universities in the 1400s, and it is still today renowned as a city of learning. Sankore University of Timbuktu continues this tradition.

16. During all these conflict years, the national treasure of Mali and a much-appreciated UNESCO World Cultural Heritage, the Timbuktu Manuscripts, were in great peril. The most bizarre stories are told about how they were hidden or moved to safer areas. These unique manuscripts collect and preserve the wisdom of hundreds of years of the Sahel region and the Niger River Basin cultures––poetry, scientific texts, copies of the Quran, etc.––that took root mainly in this city.

17. However, Makan Cissé acknowledges one benefit derived from his journey: "he has lost his fear of the white man" (53).

18. Makan Cissé managed to raise such a large family that it numbered hundreds of members. But the descendants of this African patriarch could not avoid the fatal fate of darkness. All his lineage disappeared from the face of the earth during the twenty-first century Mali Wars. Only *Tantine* Kadiatu and young Abdulaye Cissé survived (Ndongo 54). And we know what happened to Abdulaye soon after he ended his life pilgrimage in Madrid.

19. We do not know what Spanish translation of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* Ndongo read, for the first time or more recently. We only know that he confessed that he had read it a quarter of a century ago in 2002 (Ndongo 127). So, he read it *ca.* 1975, when a translation by Sergio Pitol (Conrad 1974) and a second translation by Araceli García Ríos and Isabel Sánchez Araujo (Conrad 1975) were the ones available. The fact is that this short novel has known more than twenty different editions—annotated or popular—and translations made by a long list of translators, and many reprints of them all. Among all of them, the following ones, translated by Alberto Laurent (Conrad 2002) and Eduardo Jordá Forteza (Conrad 2004), can be singled out in case Ndongo reread the classic in a different translation during the writing process of his *¿Qué mató al joven Abdoulaye Cissé?* A curious fact to note is that the successful title, *El corazón de las tinieblas*, has never changed, no matter who the translator may be.

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Shattering Silence: Unmasking Violence Through Art in *Olha Pra Elas*

Sandra Sousa

Brazil is a country often associated with widespread violations of fundamental rights for its citizens. This fact is not surprising to those who are familiar with the nation's history and closely follow recent developments. However, despite the disheartening reality, there are individuals within Brazilian society who are driven by hope and a profound social consciousness. They refuse to surrender in their pursuit of a better Brazil, recognizing that this endeavor also contributes to the betterment of the world at large. In a manner reminiscent of characters in *Heart of Darkness*, individuals within Brazilian society display a sense of determination and social consciousness. In Conrad's novel, characters such as Marlow navigate the darkness of colonial Africa, confronting the brutal realities of exploitation and imperialism. Similarly, in Brazil, individuals grapple with the harsh realities of rights violations and societal injustices. However, just as Marlow refuses to succumb to the darkness around him, these individuals in Brazil are driven by hope and a desire for change. They recognize that their efforts to improve Brazil contribute not only to their nation but also to a larger global pursuit of justice and equality. Like Marlow's journey up the Congo River, their journey towards a better Brazil is fraught with challenges, but they persist, believing in the possibility of a brighter future for their country and the world.

During an informal screening of the documentary *Olha Pra Elas* (*Look at Them*) at BêDois, a restaurant in the neighborhood of Santos, Lisbon, Luca Alverdi expressed the sentiment that this particular work of art serves as a powerful tool in the service of society. Alverdi, together with Renato Dornelles, worked as the screenwriters for the documentary, which was skillfully directed by Tatiana Sager. Released in 2020, the film was produced by Falange Produções, a civic association comprised of media and cinema professionals. Falange Produções, founded in 2019 in Porto Alegre/RS (Brazil), is dedicated to the development of documentary projects that focus on public safety and human rights. Their aim is to disseminate these projects within the public sphere and academic community, particularly among students and teachers in fields such as media, law, sociology, social work, and

others. Through their work, Falange Produções seeks to shed light on pressing issues and initiate meaningful discussions surrounding human rights violations and public safety concerns. By engaging with audiences in both public and academic settings, they aspire to foster greater awareness, understanding, and social change.

Olha Pra Elas is an emotionally gripping documentary that leaves no viewer untouched. Centered around the issue of women's incarceration, the film delves into the lives of five women who, in addition to facing unjust imprisonment, share the heart-wrenching reality of being separated from their children. Their stories, while not unique, highlight one of the most pressing and urgent issues that Brazil must address: the alarming rise in the number of women being imprisoned. Since the turn of the twenty-first century, female incarceration in Brazil has skyrocketed from a thousand to forty thousand women, representing a staggering 600% increase. Brazil now ranks third globally in terms of its female prison population, which is primarily comprised of impoverished black or brown women with limited education. These women find themselves caught in a complex and disheartening web of circumstances. Through the stories of Adelaide Teresinha Loiola, Naiane dos Santos, Roselaine Dorneles da Conceição, Catia Lopes da Silva, and Tatiane da Silva Santos, *Olha Pra Elas* immerses the spectator in a world composed of countless intimate and personal struggles—a world marked by lives lived in precarious conditions. These women face incarceration without proper representation, often for minor offenses stemming from extreme poverty. In this harsh reality, one witnesses the feminization of poverty in all its starkness, a poverty that erodes the very basic rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Two-thirds of the women in Brazilian prisons are mothers, with 57% having multiple children. Many of them are the sole breadwinners, responsible for supporting their families. The imprisonment of these women triggers the collapse of the family structure, as they are the pillars that hold everything together. Their children are left in the care of relatives or friends who, like them, lack the financial means to adequately provide for them. Alternatively, these children may find themselves fighting for survival on the streets. Tragically, the cycle becomes perpetual, as these children often resort to involvement in drug trafficking and crime in order to survive, eventually ending up in the same place as their mothers and grandmothers. One such example is Roselaine, a twenty-four year old woman who was born in prison and now finds herself in the same place where she came into the world, but with a cyclical role: she is pregnant and about to become a mother while incarcerated.

Olha Pra Elas powerfully portrays the devastating consequences of women's incarceration and the far-reaching impact it has on families and communities. It sheds light on the urgent need for comprehensive reforms that address the root causes of poverty, inequality, and social disenfranchisement. By giving voice to these women and their stories, the documentary serves as a poignant call to action, compelling us to confront the systemic issues that perpetuate these injustices and work towards a more just and compassionate society for all. The documentary unflinchingly exposes us to the harsh realities faced by these women—an interplay of poverty, drug abuse, limited access to education, and the pervasive violence perpetrated by patriarchal institutions such as marriage, law enforcement, and criminal gangs. Yet, the most heart-wrenching violence inflicted upon them is a decidedly feminized aggression: the separation from their children.

Olha Pra Elas compels us to confront the fear that permeates the professionals entrusted with the welfare of these women, including social workers, psychologists, and judges. Their reluctance to speak out and denounce the injustices faced by incarcerated women underscores a chilling reality. In stark contrast to incarcerated men, who often receive unwavering support and provisions from their loved ones, these women are left bereft of even the most basic hygiene necessities. They live in constant fear that speaking out could result in harm to their children, having themselves endured beatings and abuse, even leading to comatose states, both inside and outside prison walls.

In a country deeply entrenched in the legacy of slavery, a profound question echoes through the centuries. Who holds the power to judge and be judged? The answer remains unchanged: the white, privileged, and educated elite continue to wield authority, passing judgment and making decisions that shape the lives of poor, uneducated, black, and mixed-race individuals. All of this occurs under the watchful gaze of the State, which, while fully aware of the injustices inflicted upon its population, chooses to maintain the facade of peace, racial equality, and democracy.

In 2020, *Olha Pra Elas* received accolades at the Florianópolis Audiovisual do Mercosul (FAM) as the "best work in progress film." The documentary also won Spain's Human Rights Award for Journalism that same year. It was selected for the "Mostra Filmes da Lusofonia" at the 27th edition of the Festival "Caminhos do Cinema Português" and for the "Cinema Negro em Ação Festival" in Brazil in 2022. Four years have passed since the documentary premiered, and little has changed. When discussions surrounding the documentary arise in Brazil, the State dispatches representatives who claim that measures are being

taken to address the issue. Yet, these reassurances are nothing more than deceptive strategies aimed at maintaining the status quo.

To bring about meaningful change for these women within the prison system, an entire societal structure would need to be overhauled. However, even in the face of this bleak reality, hope should never perish. Art, serving as its conduit, forces us to meet the gaze of these women and enter into a pact with them. Each of us is called upon to take even the smallest step toward eradicating systemic gender violence from all lives. By acknowledging the resilience and strength of these women through art, we can raise awareness, challenge the existing power dynamics, and strive for a society that values and upholds the inherent rights and dignity of all individuals, irrespective of their gender, race, or socioeconomic background.

"Where Two Souls Meet and Do Nothing but Breathe": O'Hara, Levinas, and the Poet(h)ics of Breath

Sriya Chakraborty

Since his tragic death in a freak accident in 1966, Frank O'Hara's reputation has traversed an unpredictably sinuous course—from "also a poet" in *The New York Times* obituary, to a "poet among painters" in the title of Marjorie Perloff's book, to the quintessential "poet of chitchat and affability, of innocent, affluent joy" (Friedlander 140) around the turn of the millennium, to finally the "prophet of the internet" (Ciabattari) in the twenty-first century. The simplicity and relatability of his "I do this, I do that" poems have rapidly gained traction on social media, where "quotable" O'Hara lines are rampantly decontextualized, and extrapolated to personal experiences.[1] In an essay on queer relationality, Brian Glavey notes that the "viral" O'Hara of the Twitter Age is "not the author that microblogs and timestamps the daily meanderings of his lunch hour or the poet that fills his works with injokes and the names of his personal friends but rather the author of an appealing form of romanticism, the author who effuses movingly about Warren" (1001). On the internet, the confrontational queerness of "O'Hara Nude with Boots" gets sublimated into a docile image of a brooding lyric poet, who uncannily anticipates the crises of millennial heterosexual romance. At the risk of sounding snobbish, I must admit that I feel O'Hara's ubiquitous online presence offers a blinkered perception of his poetry—diluting its seriousness, ignoring its intra-communal and cross-cultural influences, and more relevantly, overlooking its ethical objectives that subliminally negotiate a space for alterity.

Today, any discussion about an ethical concern for the other[2] immediately brings to mind the French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas, but this was certainly not the case in America during the 1950s and 60s. To quote Simon Critchley from his introduction to *The Cambridge Companion to Levinas*:

> The (Anglo-American) reception (of Levinas) begins in the Catholic universities in the USA, many of which enjoyed strong connections with the Dutch and Belgium Catholic academic

> milieux such as Duquesne University and Loyola University Chicago. But Levinas was also being read from the early 1970s onwards in Continental philosophy circles in non-Catholic universities such as Northwestern, Pennsylvania State and the State University of New York (Stonybrook), which produced Levinas scholars such as Richard A. Cohen. The first book-length study of Levinas in English was by Edith Wyschogrod from 1974, although it was published by Nijhoff in Holland. (4)

Thus, even though O'Hara and Levinas were contemporaries, thinking and writing parallelly about similar issues in the 1950s, the latter remained relatively unknown in America due to several reasons outlined by Critchley in his introduction[3] Nonetheless, throughout O'Hara's poetic career, his attitude toward the other was distinctly Levinasian—in fact, although Levinas outlived him by many years, and continued to expand and complicate his own ideas in subsequent books, many of these revisions are uncannily anticipated in O'Hara's poems written during the 1950s and 60s.

As O'Hara was entering his most prolific creative phase in the late 50s, the American avant-garde was also gearing up for its ethical turn, hastened by the political situation of the time:

> (C)oncern for ethics as a relation with the Other (was) fueled by myriad historical and cultural developments after World War II. Such events include the Holocaust, Hiroshima, and the beginning of the nuclear age; the revelations of horrors behind Stalinism, the subsequent resurgence of a New Left, the cold war and the not-so- cold wars against communism in Korea and Vietnam; the end of colonial imperialism and the rise of third world democracies; the civil rights and women's movements, revolutions in social and sexual relations, the evolution of mass media and popular culture, the emergence of homosexuality out of the proverbial closet; advancements in technology, such as the transistor and microprocessor that build on the modern inventions of the locomotive, electric lighting, the telephone, automobile, and airplane, which connected the world in an ever-shrinking network of movement, information, and language, and the potentially disastrous effects of that technology on the global ecosystem sustaining all life. (Jenkins 7-8)

Slowly, the poets of the San Francisco Renaissance (such as Robert Duncan, Jack Spicer, Robin Blaser, Madeline Gleason, and Kenneth

Rexroth), followed by Objectivist poets such as George Oppen, and Language poets such as Lyn Hejinian, Charles Bernstein, and Susan Howe, among others, assumed an ethical responsibility, shielding the other from ontological appropriation in the blurred semantics of their poetry[4] G. Matthew Jenkins—whose book gives an important insight into the development of ethical poetry in postwar America—traces this shift in poetic sensibility back to the 1960s, and adds that only a handful of poets and critics at that time seriously acknowledged that poetry might have something to say "about how human beings might better live together" (2-3). Jenkins's timeline indicates that Frank O'Hara's foundational contribution to the ethics of otherness in American avant-garde poetry remains entirely unexplored so far. My paper, therefore, tries to fill in this critical gap in the genealogy of ethical poetry, by bringing O'Hara into current debates surrounding "poetic obligation," and giving him the credit he deserves.

Before I begin to discuss what I call in my title, O'Hara's "poet(h)ics of breath," it is essential to offer a brief summary of Levinas's work, and mark out its deflections from the Western philosophical inheritance. At the heart of Levinasian ethics lies a transformative encounter with the other, who *faces* me directly (assuming I am the subject), accuses and shames me for my complacency, and calls me into "responsibility." As I reach out of my corporeal prison and respond to this call, I become beholden to the other, for they facilitate my becoming and rescue me from social determinations. The appeal of the other lies in their irreducible alterity that can neither be fully apprehended, nor reconstituted as per my stipulations. Prior to the ethical encounter—to being "elected" by the other—I am the sole epistemic custodian of *my* world that is ordered by *my* consciousness, and the other is an extension of *my* selfhood, commandeered at will, depending on *my* whims and fancies. Levinas categorically "denucleates" this egotistical "I" that represses the other, or tries to contain the chaotic syntax of their "infinity" in the syntagmatic and paradigmatic orders of language. The fissioning of the imagined core of selfhood is triggered by the overwhelming strangeness of the other's "face" that judges and commands, and brings the subject to account. In the ideal ethical relation, I cease to evaluate the other against an arbitrary checklist, and allow myself to be confronted by their staggering difference, which cannot be absorbed into my limited, narcissistic vision of the world. The encounter thus reveals to me my own ontological debt to the other, as my subjectivity derives from the severity of their indictment.

The exposure of the monadic "I" as an ideological hologram,[5] potentially manufactured by capitalist discourse, naturally ironizes lyric sanctimony, and calls for a holistic remodeling of its centripetal form.

Hereby, the other relieves the lyric subject from its embodied finitude, and unlocks its potential for diversity—as Lenart Škof puts it, "our ethical spaces are (always) in becoming and . . . our capacity of transforming ourselves in this process is indeed unlimited, or infinite" (173). The other extricates me from the worldliness of my being, and through the ethical detour, legitimizes and encourages the glorious indeterminacy of my exile.

Levinas not only restructures the subject's relationship with the other, but also claims this relationality to be an immanent condition of its embodied existence by introducing breath as an ethical unit in *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence* (1974). This means that I involuntarily open myself up to the other, as we both breathe the same air, and *inspire* each other.[6] Breath therefore symbolizes our inherent ethical potential in Levinas's philosophy. The subject and the other are reciprocally bound by their communal co-breathing, but the moment the "I" tries to seize upon the "you," they cease to be infinite, and slip back into the loop of social indexicality, from which there is no escape. This retraction immediately demotes the "you" to an "it" (in Martin Buber's taxonomy)[7]—a projection of my own consciousness that lacks a breath of its own—and forecloses the ethical possibilities of the encounter. In the absence of mutual inspiration, the subject and the other can be easily interpellated into hierarchized binaries (white/black, man/woman, heterosexual/homosexual, etc.), and manipulated into a scripted performance based on their normative roles in society.

The relevance of breath was largely overlooked in Western philosophy until Levinas traced back the origin of subjectivity to being for the other, fulfilled in the "cyclical exchange of interiority and exteriority through breath(ing)" (Škof 144). *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence* led to the publication of Luce Irigaray's *The Forgetting of Air in Martin Heidegger* in 1983, followed by *The Age of Breath* in 1999, which refocused attention on breath as a viable basis for the ethical experience, and on "gestures based on breath" as decisive factors in building "the future of humanity" (Škof 144-45). Interestingly, both Levinas and Irigaray published their treatises on breath several years after Frank O'Hara's death in 1966—yet, despite the lack of adequate precedents, O'Hara's poetry teems with references to co-breathing as a redemptive alternative in the face of violent politicization. The purpose of my paper is to map the place of breath as the "poetic ground(s)" of human sociality in O'Hara's works—to that end, I will close- read some of the poems on race and queer sexuality, and try to show how O'Hara anticipates Levinas's "ethical pneumatology of the other" (Škof 144) and Irigaray's "age of breath."

In the poems on race, which I will discuss in the first half of my paper, O'Hara adopts a color-blind approach to the racial other—here, terms such as "black" and "white" are used as deferentialized cultural signifiers that do not faithfully correspond to raced identities in society. Denuded of their "history," the terms lose the power to selectively privilege and vilify, inspire and stifle, respect and renounce. This brings O'Hara closer to the poets of the African diaspora in France, who sought to relieve the term "négre" of its pejorative connotations, and restore a sense of pride in "blackness," in order to "decolonize the mind" from the injustices of Western imperialism.

"Ode: Salute to the French Negro Poets" thus begins befittingly with a grand invocation to the Negritude poets, which functions as "an intimate form of textual identification . . . a poetic and fraternal consanguinity" (Gold 257), indicated later by the shared "blood . . . in (their) veins." At the very outset, O'Hara foregrounds his democratic impulse by drawing an implicit parallel between his cross-racial gesture and the Whitmanian culture politics of inclusiveness and equality—he appeals to "the *spirits* of other lands" (my emphasis) to breathe new life into "the terrible western world," and "to make fecund (his own) existence." This desire for a procreative homosexual encounter undeniably creates a baffling paradox in the poem. O'Hara's biological masculinity renders preposterous the call for impregnation, but the fantasized rupture between his embodied and desired identities nonetheless cracks open the fiction of watertight binaries and normalizes non-conformity. This is not an isolated instance of O'Hara defending his polymorphous identity. The espousal of an ad-hoc subjectivity in "In Memory of My Feelings," for example, gives O'Hara the freedom to be "infinite" in a Levinasian sense:

> I am a Hittite in love with a horse I don't know what blood's in me I feel like an African prince I am a girl walking downstairs in a red pleated dress with heels I am a champion taking a fall I am a jockey with a sprained ass-hole I am the light mist
>
> in which a face appears
>
> and it is another face of blonde I am a baboon eating a banana I am a dictator looking at his wife I am a doctor eating a child and the child's mother smiling I am a Chinaman climbing a mountain
>
> I am a child smelling his father's underwear I am an Indian sleeping on a scalp . . . (*SP* 106)

The poem begins with a "man," but the protean "I" rejects the comforts of a hegemonic masculine identity in favor of a fluid selfhood

that manifests "as variously as possible" and resists invasion and appropriation. A constant threat of violence looms in the backdrop of the poem—in aesthetic terms, it is the violence of knowledge, for to be known is to be reduced immediately to an object of analysis. The poet has to arm "himselves" with borrowed "pistols" to resist the contraction of the pluriform subject into a "bundle of loosely named qualities" that can be experienced and impoverished into pallid universals. In both the poems, therefore, the self is over-referentialized in order to depopulate the original reference, and turn it into an empty signifier—a flexible epistemic mouthpiece for severally enunciated self-representations. Consequently, "man" and "woman" (or "black" and "white," as we shall see later) feature in O'Hara's poems as emboldened markers of difference (or "otherness") that cannot be pinned down and exploited for discrimination.

Figuratively speaking, the desire to be made "fecund" may also signify the poet's yearning to be saturated with the "spirit" of the other. Every act of exhalation, or breathing out, is accompanied by ethical restlessness, as the subject *empties* itself to be replenished by the other. The cycle of breath fundamentally reconstitutes both parties in this reparative encounter, and breaks the stranglehold of totalizing cultural signifiers.

In this poem, the encounter with the racial other undoubtedly carries a libidinal charge, which harks back to the "masturbatory panorama of 'Zanzibar,' 'Nubian niggers,' and 'French sailors'" that Peter Stoneley tracks down in early O'Hara poems such as "The Poet in the Attic" (496). In his on "Frank O'Hara, Blackness and the Primitive," Stoneley observes that O'Hara hypersexualizes black male bodies in many of his poems, but this homoerotic surrender to the other's phallic authority displaces the repressive national-paternal figure as the "Absolute Subject,"[8] and "legitimate(s) him in an alternative or counter realm of power and value" (500). However, he adds that this progressive recalibration of racial dynamics is not a "real-world strategy" for O'Hara. Within the "make-believe" framework of this political masquerade, the figure of the black man "oscillates between being the powerful figure of white mythology, and being nothing more than a blow-job in a change booth"—both feared and exploited, revered and abused.

Although Stoneley argues his case persuasively, such acts of appropriation are ultimately incompatible with the ethical hermeneutic—his essay does not address the nagging unease that rumbles at the core of subjectivity, and *unconditionally* obligates the "I" to respond to the other. The masochistic supplication to "the spirits of other lands" in the opening lines of the "Ode" also signifies a concession of authority; but in my reading of the poem, it proceeds from a sincere acknowledg-

ment of the poet's indebtedness to the other, who draws him out of his ontic vulnerability into "the most difficult relationship," and makes him responsible. For Levinas, "escape" is a positive, dynamic need—in O'Hara's "Ode: Salute to the French Negro Poets,"[9] "it is the love we bear each other's *differences*" (my emphasis) that enables this optimistic leap beyond the corporeal.

Throughout the poem, O'Hara denounces a coherent lyric vision of the world. His distrust of the lyric "I"[10] that feels no "shame" for its complicity[11] in history's violence, and continues to ventriloquize the other from a moral height, leads to an ethical reformulation of lyric subjectivity in the concluding couplet of the poem: "the only truth is face to face, the poem whose words become your mouth / and dying in black and white we fight for what we love, not are" (*SP* 145). The "face to face" encounter with alterity is central to Levinasian ethics, but the face of the other is not necessarily a visual image that can be perceptually apprehended and exhausted in interpretation.In Levinas, "facing is being confronted with, turned towards, facing up to, being judged and called to by the other. Facing is the disruption of that free, autonomous self which through its reasoning and consciousness thinks it can construct the world out of itself, or know the world from itself" (Handelman 64). The naked and vulnerable face of the other[15] urges, "Thou shalt not kill!"—both a command and a plea—and irrevocably holds the subject hostage through guilt and responsibility. Subjectivity is therefore no longer an a priori condition of our being-in-the-world, but a by-product of an ethical relation with the other. To put it simply, I *am* for-the-other.

The last two lines of the "Ode" also revoke the "I" as a credible repository of truth-value within the poem, and stipulate the "face to face" relation as constitutive of subjectivity. The poem itself is anthropomorphized, its words becoming the other's "mouth," which commands the subject. The mouth is both the site of utterance and of breath, indicating that the linguistically "othered" poem *inspires* itself into being—the composition of the poem thus becomes a microcosmic reenactment of the ethical process, and the "shameful" recurrence of the personal pronoun stands vindicated as a dramatization of the subject's rebirth. In escaping the finitude of personal experience, and assuming responsibility for the stranger's difference, the subject is momentarily revived, not as a substantive entity, but as a "potential inherent in language," glimpsed through the (non-determining) lens of the other.

The final line of the poem confirms Levinas's claim that the self and the other retain their difference in the aftermath of the ethical encounter; however, that does not mean that they reconstellate into phenotypical clusters, such as "black" and "white." In fact, O'Hara reimagines

race as a cultural choice—"I consider myself to be black and you not even part," he writes in "Answer to Voznesensky and Evtushenko" (*SP* 236)—opting for an opaque, creolized identity that allows for "an interruption of the primacy of being in favor of the primacy of beings." O'Hara's "poetic ground" is "a labile nexus of irreducible relations, a holistic and dynamic tissue of interconnections that resists the reductive reflexes of idealism, abstraction, or universalism" (Gallagher 104)[12] and empowers all of us to "fight for what we love,[13] not are" (*SP* 145).

Composed less than a year after the "Ode," O'Hara's most popular poem, "The Day Lady Died" also grapples with similar issues of race and otherness, but they are less explicitly articulated, and instead, embedded into the subtext of the poem. On the surface, "The Day Lady Died" is disarmingly simple—it makes no grand effort to dazzle the reader with formal intricacies or obscure imagery, and for the most part, remains faithful to the subject of its choice. Perhaps this is an outrageous claim to make about a poem that has been studied so extensively for its circumlocutory maneuvers. After all, O'Hara does not "get to the point" until the very last stanza, and even when he does, the focus remains firmly centered upon the speaker, as opposed to the "loss-compensation model" (Toshiaki Komura) of the traditional elegy. However, our frustration at the end of the poem seems unjustified on closer analysis, as the title clearly alerts us in advance about the diaristic account that follows—O'Hara's poem is about *the day* Lady died, and not the momentous tragedy of her demise.[14]

In *City Poet: The Life and Times of Frank O'Hara*, Brad Gooch vouches for the accuracy of the general events recorded in the course of the poem:

> O'Hara had written his poem on his lunch hour. Later he caught the train with LeSueur to East Hampton where they were met by Mike Goldberg in the olive- drab Bugatti he had bought the year before when he and Southgate were in Italy on their honeymoon. Ready with a thermos of martinis and plastic cups, both a welcoming gesture and a self-protective ploy so that he could drink while waiting for the inevitably delayed train, Goldberg explained in the parking lot, "We're eating in, the dinner was called off." On the drive to the house Goldberg was renting that summer on Georgica Pond, the only topic of discussion was the tragedy of Billie Holiday's death at the young age of forty-four. "I've been playing her records all afternoon," said Goldberg. Arriving back at the house, Goldberg put a Billie Holiday record on the hi-fi while Patsy Southgate, having finished putting the two kids to bed, brought out a

> tray of hors d'oeuvres. O'Hara, who had been silent about the matter throughout the trip, pulled a poem out of his pocket that he announced he had just written that afternoon and read it straight down to its concluding stanza. (406)

However, one must always be wary of the biographical cul-de-sac. Reading the poem solely in terms of its fidelity to "real" occurrences detracts attention from a raft of issues that underlies the disarming "simplicity" of the content. If we try to chart the course of O'Hara's journey "realistically," we automatically veer towards facile generalizations about his relationship to the city of New York, or his"pleasure" in the ordinariness of everyday existence, and miss, for example, the absence of the vibrant and richly diverse New York scene that can be found in "A Step Away From Them." In this poem, the streets are "muggy," the NEW WORLD WRITING is "ugly," and the general mood is one of bleak "quandariness." As a result of syntactical ambiguity, the speaker also seems to have "beg(un) to sun" as he perambulates down the "muggy street," sweltering in the oppressive humidity, and getting a natural tan. He has his lunch (good ol' "hamburger and a malted"), and then picks up a literary magazine with a gaudy cover to keep himself apprised of the poetic developments in Ghana. Nothing startlingly out of the ordinary, perhaps, but this curiosity about an-"other" culture seems to be have been triggered on this particular day by an earlier thought regarding the subversion of hegemony, of which the Bastille (evoked in the opening lines of the poem) is a time-tested symbol.

O'Hara's next stop is at the bank, where the unusualness of his day is reinforced by the rare indifference of Miss Stillwagon,[15] who "doesn't even look up (his) balance for once in her life." Another poet might have spent a line or two to reflect on this unexpected deviation from routine, but as James Breslin rightly observes, O'Hara is concerned primarily with the "fleeting, ever changing experience of temporal process itself" (218)—the conjunction "and" features seventeen times in "The Day Lady Died," to artfully segue from one action to another, without pausing anywhere for languorous ruminations:

> I go on to the bank
> and Miss Stillwagon (first name Linda I once heard)
> doesn't even look up my balance for once in her life
> and in the GOLDEN GRIFFIN I get a little Verlaine
> for Patsy with drawings by Bonnard although I do
> think of Hesiod, trans. Richmond Lattimore or
> Brendan Behan's new play or *Le Balcon* or *Les Nègres*

of Genet, but I don't, I stick with Verlaine
after practically going to sleep with quandariness

O'Hara's closeness to Mike Goldberg and Patsy Southgate is amply substantiated by Gooch's biography,[16] so his fastidious care (and *attention*) in choosing a gift for Patsy does not perplex us as much as it would have otherwise.[17] Each of the gifts he considers has a personal relevance for O'Hara—be it Verlaine, Bonnard, or Jean Genet—but, in the context of this poem, I am more intrigued by the references to *Le Balcon* and *Les Nègres*, which thematically hark back to an earlier thought about "what the poets / in Ghana are doing these days." Both the plays metatheatrically rail at the establishment, and *Les Nègres*, in particular, puts up a strong resistance to the systemic marginalization of its eponymous black community by using the cultural countertrope of the "Whiteface" to expose racial stereotypes. The "Whiteface," donned by several actors to denounce the blatantly racist establishment, was a response to the "humorous" appropriation of black culture by non-black performers for ridicule and caricature. By looking back at Genet's critique with subtle admiration, O'Hara gives a political charge to his poem—albeit one that refrains from self-righteous moralizing, and evolves organically with the progression of his thought.

The third stanza of "The Day Lady Died" stumbles to a close with the oddly unwieldy "quandariness," which is a strange word to describe the confusion about picking a book for a friend. The image of the poet tossing in bed, riddled with anxiety and unable to make a choice, seems rather too dramatic for O'Hara—I am tempted to conclude that the agitation is misplaced, and therefore lends itself to frequent misinterpretation. Perhaps, O'Hara's "quandariness" can be better understood in the light of the stanzas that follow, where he is "suddenly" confronted with the stark reality of Lady's death ("a NEW YORK POST with her face on it"). Although it is generally assumed that O'Hara stumbles upon this particular edition of the *New York Post* by chance during his lunch break, the syntax suggests otherwise—"I . . . / casually ask for a carton of Gauloises and a carton / of Picayunes, and a NEW YORK POST with her *face* on it" (my emphasis). Had O'Hara already heard the news of Billie Holiday's death? Is that why he is plagued by "quandariness" (whether to "ask for" the *New York Post* or go "back to work"), which gets unconsciously transposed onto a different context? This is indeed the pivotal point of the poem, where the inner turmoil of the poet's mind is brilliantly condensed into a single punctuation mark—the pregnant comma between "a carton / of Picayunes" and "a NEW YORK POST" that bears testimony to the dilemma of this choice.

The reference to Gauloises in the penultimate stanza conflates the economic and the aesthetic,[18] while the Picayune cigarettes bring to mind, by associative logic, the popular song, "Picayune Butler's Coming to Town," which has its origins in blackface minstrelsy. "The Day Lady Died" is peppered with elliptical allusions to race and racial protests for the recognition of "black human and cultural resources" (Panish, *The Color of Jazz*), but these are so cleverly randomized that they do not come in the way of a simplistic reading. O'Hara's memory of Billie Holiday—whose "Strange Fruit," in the words of the legendary record producer, Ahmet Ertegun, was "a declaration of war . . . the beginning of the Civil Rights Movement"—is interwoven with acute racial awareness at a complex moment of desegregation on the one hand, and sustained exclusionary policies (embodied by the government-funded Levittown) on the other.

Immediately after O'Hara sees Lady Day's *face* on the front page of the *New York Post*, the simple present tense of his poem is replaced with the present continuous—the effect of this modulation is a cinematic zoom-in, whereby we can focus more closely (and more vividly!) on the speaker, "sweating a lot by now." The profuse perspiration at the sight of her face invites a Levinasian interpretation of psychological unrest, precipitated by the suddenness of the encounter—radically different, and enlarged for effect (see picture below), the face confronts, accuses, and shames O'Hara into responsibility for an other, who can neither pass into his care, nor reanimate his subjectivity.[19] However, John E. Drabinski's reading of a section from *Otherwise than Being*, in his book *Levinas and the Colonial*, opens up another avenue of interpreting O'Hara's reaction. Drabinski writes:

> Responsibility, which is described in *Otherwise Than Being* as the register of the affect of obligation in the experience of fractured subjectivity, makes me *uncomfortable in my skin*. I am accused in my skin and I also anxiously bear that responsibility as a fleshy being. In my skin, I become a subject: which is to say, I become creaturely as incarnate. The skin therefore functions as a sort of interstitial conceptual site, set as it is between the workings of consciousness/conscience and the Other who has already departed the scene. My sensibility is split, generating discomfort. (32-33)

The *departure* of the other (what a chilling pun!), in Drabinski's understanding, does not preempt the subject's becoming, but causes discomfort, which is manifested *bodily* in O'Hara's poem in the (involuntary) action of "sweating a lot."

The eternal present of the poem is momentarily suspended as the poet remembers a particular night at the Five Spot—a jazz bar on Fifth Street and Third Avenue at Cooper Square, where the artists gathered for refined entertainment—when Billie Holiday "showed up to visit with (Mal) Waldron" and was persuaded by the crowd to perform for them. In Gooch's biography, Kenneth Koch recalls the events of the night with unmistakable nostalgia:

> It was very close to the end of her life, with her voice almost gone, just like a whisper, just like the taste of very old wine, but full of spirit . . . Everybody wanted her to sing. Everybody was crazy about her. She sang some songs in this very whispery beautiful voice. The place was quite crowded. Frank was standing near the toilet door so he had a side view. And Mal Waldron was at the piano. She sang these songs and it was very moving. (406)

Characteristically precise, O'Hara's telescopes the entire experience into two lines—"she whispered a song along the keyboard / to Mal Waldron and everyone and I stopped breathing"— that brilliantly capture the enchantment of the night. I find the phrase "whispered a song" so poignantly evocative that I can almost *hear* the raspy texture of Lady Day's voice, but the words are also carefully chosen to prepare us for the breathtaking finale. The "whisper" hints at a private communication between O'Hara and Lady Day—as though they were the only two people *face-to-face* in the bar that night, privy to a special secret— which is why the "I" distances itself from "everyone" in the last line. Perhaps it is the secret of owning one's alterity and surviving with courage and dignity in a homogenizing narrative—who knows? But something surely changes between them with the "whisper"; by the end of the poem, O'Hara is indistinguishable from his "Lady"—both of them uncannily "stop breathing," together.

Let us stop here, and dwell for a moment on the significance of this morbid solidarity between the self and the other. O'Hara's painstaking documentation of the daily grind culminates in the aesthetic moment par excellence—a moment that arrests animation (physicalized by breath), quells cacophony, and commands full attention. To quote Škof, this moment of suspended breathing creates a "space of respect for the other, when in silence we dedicate our attention[20] to them, when we can listen to them for the first time, (and) place at their disposal all our breath, which is the greatest gift we can ever give someone" (147).

The suspension of breath also betokens a "successful" ethical relation, where the subject relinquishes its narcissistic ego, and cedes pri-

ority to the other, "saying that the life of another human being is more important than my own, that the death of the other is more important to me than my own death, that the Other comes before me, that the Other counts before I do, that the value of the Other is imposed before mine is" (Ettinger qtd. in Škof 142). In a rare moment of self-abnegation (*literally* enacted in the exaggerated gesture of solidarity for the deceased artist), O'Hara confronts the tragic despair of his own facticity—however, the zest for life triumphs in the end, as indicated by the opening stanza of "Post the Lake Poets Ballad," which I cannot help but read as a postscript to "The Day Lady Died":

> Moving slowly sweating a lot I
> am pushed by a gentle breeze
> outside the Paradise Bar on
> St. Mark's Place and I breathe (*SP* 170)

Clearly, the prolonged climax of the encounter helps the poet come to terms with his finitude, and infuses him with renewed appreciation for the breath (and life) of the other: ". . . in a sense we're all winning / we're alive" (*SP* 195).

Interestingly, the "other" is a variable category for O'Hara—while the terms of otherness are determined racially in poems like "Ode: Salute to the French Negro Poets" and "The Day Lady Died," the queer lyrics complicate this binary by positing the gay poet himself as the "other"[21] in a virulently homophobic society: "(Y)ou were made in the image of god / I was not / I was made in the image of a sissy truck-driver" (*SP* 172). Andrew Epstein, in *Beautiful Enemies*, historicizes the violent crackdown on homosexuals in the 1950s, which conflated their "moral depravity" with communist sympathies—both seen as organized threats to the "American way of life"—and even cited perverse sexual practices as justified grounds for homophobic discriminatory policies in the federal government[22] (40-45). The demonization of "communists and cocksuckers"[23] politically manufactured a culture of paranoia, as a result of which any form of "difference" came to be regarded with tremendous suspicion, and morally condemned as "un-American."

To counter this rhetorically constituted and politically perpetrated view of homosexuality, O'Hara transforms his "poetic ground" into a counter-discursive ethical space that respects the other, whose difference is the condition of the subject's very being. As we have seen earlier, the "words" of the poem become the "mouth" of the other (the poet, in this case), issuing inviolable commandments that decenter the reader's subjectivity and compel her into a response, without perceptually depleting the other's alterity.

Sriya Chakraborty

Brian Glavey's essay on Frank O'Hara's "Having a Coke with You" primarily addresses the problematics of relatability in a "smartphone-mediated world," but it can also serve as a crucial point of departure for a Levinasian reading of O'Hara's queerness, which, in turn, affirms his commitment to the sociability of art. The essay begins with a personal, but relevant anecdote about Glavey's undergraduate students at the University of South Carolina, who were so mesmerized by the disarming candor of the Coke poem that they insisted on responding to its campy zest for life, and its "relatable" vocabulary of fun. However, drawing on critics like Rebecca Mead and Laura Salisbury, Glavey calls into question the viability of "relatable" as an aesthetic category, as it pivots on hermeneutic presuppositions made by the reader, and occasions, at best, a superficial engagement with the text. The claim of relatability generally proceeds from a desire to annul the objective externality of a text, and lay hold on it, as it were, by dissolving the boundary between the self and the object. Relatability as a criterion for aesthetic gratification thus reinforces a solipsistic modality of reading that hierarchizes the relationship between the reader and the text, and subordinates the latter solely to the vagaries of personal experience. In other words, the self becomes the sole measure of the other's worth, and its "being-for-the-other" translates merely into an act of narcissistic self-affirmation.

Many critics have been quick to point out that O'Hara does not pledge his allegiance (at least as blatantly as Allen Ginsberg) to a fixed identity on either end of the sexual binary, or politicize his dissent by aligning with a gay male subculture, and thus he "universalizes" the feeling of being in love. While such claims indeed carry a positive valence in a world where "one specific love's traduced / by shame for what you love more generally" (*SP* 144), I strongly feel that they do not do justice to the delightful diversity of O'Hara's poem. Like Glavey observes, "Having a Coke with You" at once "tells us of a quotidian act that signifies a vast lifeworld of queer relationality, an encrypted sociality, and a utopian potentiality," and locates itself firmly in a "particular and immediately felt present: four o'clock on a Friday in the sculpture garden of the Museum of Modern Art" (999); it is a love poem that unapologetically celebrates the joys of the lover's company, and also a propagandist catalogue that glorifies American art and the American everyday. As the normative and the queer, the sincere and the propagandist, all compete for visibility, they recursively nullify each other, creating an open space that allows readers to insinuate themselves into the poem, but with one crucial caveat: "Art is not your life, it is someone else's" ("Art Chronicle" 6).

Thus, the non-specificity of O'Hara's language is not meant to ensconce homosexuality within an all-encompassing rhetoric of Love. Rather, "(i)n an atmosphere of McCarthyist paranoia, surveillance, and Manichean thinking, in which personal identities are pinned down for the purposes of persecution and in the interests of shoring up a unified, secure, monolithic national identity" (Epstein 17), the evasion of "anything as still / as solemn as unpleasantly definitive as statuary" is a resistance in itself, which creates an ethical opening in the poem. It also advances a new model of social relationality, where each party is free to "live as variously as possible" in an environment that is conducive to its becoming. O'Hara describes this "marvellous experience" through a surrealistic "spectacle" of co-breathing in nature—"we are drifting back and forth / between each other like a tree breathing through its spectacles."[24] The proximity of the lover's breath strips away the ethical charge from the static "faces" of "the portrait show," leaving the poet to "suddenly wonder why in the world anyone ever did them" (*SP* 194).

In her book, *Breath of Proximity: Intersubjectivity, Ethics and Peace*, Škof writes, "(t)he reintroduction of breath into philosophy . . . directs our attention back to the body, towards respect for others and towards nature" (199). The body—especially the nude body of the gay other, who represents a viable threat to the reproductive telos and family values of a heteronormative society—has a deeply political significance in O'Hara's queer poems: "all you have to do is take your clothes off" (*SP* 181). Nudity is likened to a form of unmasking[25] (and revealing the "face," which is not a literal concept for Levinas), whereby the poet literally lays himself bare before the reader, and obligates her to respond. As O'Hara stands before us, naked and vulnerable, denuded of the superficial signifiers of difference, we are forced to restore to him his deserved value as a person[26] and redeem our "goodness":

> The being that expresses itself imposes itself, but does so precisely by appealing to me with its destitution and nudity—its hunger—without my being able to be deaf to that appeal. Thus in expression the being that imposes itself does not limit but promotes my freedom, by arousing my goodness. The order of responsibility, where the gravity of ineluctable being freezes all laughter, is also the order where freedom is ineluctably invoked. It is thus the irremissible weight of being that gives rise to my freedom. (*TI* 200)

At this point, I must return momentarily to Stoneley's discussion of the "unclothed dark male bodies" on full display in American popular media, and clarify O'Hara's "sexual voyeurism" (496) in the context

of my present argument. As I have just discussed, the nakedness of the othered self in his queer lyrics, and of the racial other in the race poems, challenges the determining social gaze, and demands responsibility for their destitution. The unclothed bodies in all of O'Hara's poems "confound the Looking-Knowing relation" (Downing 52), and defy all forms of essentialization that derive from such knowledge.

The erotic caress too "consists in seizing upon nothing, in soliciting what ceaselessly escapes its form toward a future never future enough, in soliciting what slips away as though it were not yet. It searches, it forages. It is not an intentionality of disclosure but of search: a movement unto the invisible" (*TI* 257-8). In O'Hara's poem, "You Are Gorgeous and I'm Coming," a litany of active verbs—"refilling," "thundering," "shaking," "aggregating," "enriching," "filling," "rending," "becoming," "breathing," and so on—disconcerts a pornographic apprehension of the erotic spectacle, and invites paradoxically ethical modes of watching that do not aim to interpret or possess. The addressee of the poem's title remains frustratingly unspecified to prevent reductive fetishization of the queer body; instead, O'Hara tempts the beholder to submit to a syncretic combination of sensations—the "acceleration of nerves thundering and shaking," or the post-orgasmic hypoxia in "the stumbled quiet of breathing"—that aesthetically recreates both the figure of the lover, and the "ultimately local and intimate" experience of "I'm Coming" (*SP* 163).

Eros signifies neither a struggle for acquisition, nor a surrender of the self in the "tenderness" of the caress. In "Poem (A le recherché d' Gertrude Stein)," O'Hara writes:

> When I am feeling depressed and anxious sullen
> all you have to do is take your clothes off
> and all is wiped away revealing life's tenderness
> that we are flesh and breathe and are near us
> as you are really as you are I become as I
> really am alive and knowing vaguely what is
> and what is important to me above the intrusions
> of incident and accidental relationships
> which have nothing to do with my life (*SP* 181, emphases mine)

The "I" can "become as I" only when "you are really as you," implying that the relation ceases to be identity-affirming when the boundaries collapse between the self and the other. The pleasure of the erotic is not visual, but ethical, heightened by the emancipatory breath of the other. As the poet and his lover confront each other in stark nakedness—face to face, flesh to flesh—their breaths commingle with "the

infinite air," or the Cosmic Breath, that suffuses not only their individual selves, but also humanity as a whole. Precisely at the moment when the lovers recuperate their individual identities through the ethical relation, they are awakened to their social responsibility and the true meaning of being-for-the-other.

Thus, through the trope of breathing, O'Hara aesthetically intuits a political utopia in his poems. Time and again, he insists that the breath of the subject is characteristically indissociable from the breath of the other—"I breathe" may be a semantically adequate unit, but "its completion cannot be possible without (the) original, prepositional act of breathing for" (M. NourbeSe Philip qtd. in Tremblay 100). As we breathe prepositionally with (and for) O'Hara, and build an interconnected ethical space, we learn to care for the other without folding them back into the self and exhausting their radical alterity. In a way, O'Hara's call for ethical rehabilitation of a fractured society envisions "a culture of democracy, which is in its elemental form a respect and a care for life. Only later this elementary ethical layer of democracy is supplemented with various institutional, legal and other socio-political elements" (Škof 178).

Although we have come a long way since the government-backed persecution of minorities in postwar America, incidents like the cold-blooded murder of George Floyd, or the incessant online trolling of people who identify as "different," brutally remind us that our task is yet to be accomplished. In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic added a new and unforeseen challenge to the ethics of co-breathing. O'Hara's reparative breath transformed into the bearer of a deadly disease, targeting the lungs (Levinas's "ethical organ"), and threatening to annihilate the global community of its own creation. Fortunately, as our planet recovers from the immensity of despair and loss, we have the opportunity, once again, to unmask our faces and collaboratively rebuild a community grounded in love, care, compassion, and obligation to the other.

Notes

1. See "What Frank O'Hara poems reveal about post-internet brains" by Helen Charman: "Despite dying well before the invention of email, O'Hara's reputation as a "prophet of the internet" is growing, fed by thinkpieces that link his "I do this, I do that style of poetry to mundane Facebook updates, or Russell Crowe's Twitter feed. In 2015, performance artist and critic Felix Bernstein

compounded this image of O'Hara as a trailblazer of oversharing, taking a side-swipe at post-internet art and 'social media's Frank O'Hara-ization of us all.' So far, so familiar. But what about the Frank O'Hara-ization of social media? Searching his name on Tumblr, Pinterest or Instagram brings up post after post quoting his work, often illustrated by drawings of coffee cups, watercolour love hearts or a generic #inspirational sunrise."

2. I have deliberately chosen to de-capitalize the "Other," so that I do not miscommunicate a sense of unified identity where there is none.

3. "(F)or a variety of reasons—a certain reticence, even diffidence, on Levinas's part, his professional position outside the French university system until 1964, and his captivity in the Stalag between 1940 and 1945—Levinas's work made little impression prior to the publication of *Totality and Infinity* in 1961, and not much immediately after it. . . . As can be seen from his 1963 collection, *Difficult Freedom*, in the 1950s and after Levinas was much more influential in Jewish affairs in France than in philosophy" (Critchley 2).

4. When we come across an unknown word—that is, a word which does not correspond to any existing conceptual maps of our personal wordscape—an uneasy awareness of language as an incomprehensible unknown creeps in. In such cases, language ceases to be an internalized (yet inherently social) system of representation; instead, it itself becomes an alien absurd other with whom a new acquaintanceship has to be initiated. In fact, known words can also distill this unsettling otherness, when they undertake certain semantic obligations that are not part of the original intention of its use. Our relation with the poetic text is therefore inherently ethical.

5. See introduction to *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*: "Less than identical with itself, in deficit with regard to itself, unable to catch up with itself, unable to achieve presence and self-presence, the self cannot be conceived as an entity. It has dropped out of being, and out of being striving for manifestation, is disinterested. It is, in Levinas's telling expression, in exile in itself. That is, driven, from the outside, into itself, but not finding a home: a position, a rest in itself" (xxx).

6. In "The Foregetting of Air in Martin Heidegger" (1999), Luce Irigaray challenges the Cartesian cogito, and writes: "I breathe, therefore, I am" (qtd. in Skof 7).

7. The primary difference in Levinas's and Buber's philosophy is that the "I"-"thou" relation is willed by the subject in Buber, and involuntary for Levinas.

8. See "Frank O'Hara, Blackness, and the Primitive" by Peter Stoneley: "To offer a brief exploration in conceptual terms of the process of identification and counter-identification in which O'Hara becomes involved, we might turn to Althusser for a useful explanatory narrative. Althusser famously pictured the process of coming to social identity as that of someone being hailed by a policeman in the street. The someone turns around, recognizing a self that has been called into being by authority. The self achieves a distinct identity via

this moment of surrender to, recognition of, a superior authority, an "Absolute Subject" (497).

9. The word "salute" derives etymologically from Latin *salutare*, which means to "greet," or to "pay one's respects" to another.

10. In *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, Levinas directly quotes from Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*: "Each of us is guilty before everyone for everyone, and I more than the others" (146).

11. See "Culture Criticism and Society" (1949), published in *Prisms*: "To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric." According to Theodor Adorno, the poetic (or lyric) subject is willy-nilly implicated in the savage history of the Holocaust, and does not deserve celebration, even in the "privacy" of the page.

12. See "Ethics in the Absence of Reference: Levinas and the (Aesthetic) Value of Diversity," where Mary Gallagher makes this claim in the context of Edouard Glissant's poetics. She writes, "Glissant values the way that contemporary consciousness of multicultural complexity and intercultural crossings renders it impossible to label a human being in relation to just one culture, language, nation, place of origin, or 'race'" (96).

13. D.C. Schindler, in *Love and the Postmodern Predicament*, recalls Jonathan Franzen's commencement address at Kenyon College, published under the title, "Liking is for Cowards: Go for What Hurts," to distinguish between the allied verbs, "like" and "love." To "like" is to superficially approve of that which appeals to our immediate desire and is therefore a symbolic validation of our native narcissism. On the other hand, love is the "extremely difficult realization that something other than oneself is real," which calls for a commitment beyond the solipsistic modality of the self.

14. "The Day Lady Died" neither romanticizes the departed, nor culminates in a sublime moment of transcendence like the traditional elegy. Rather, O'Hara's creates what I would like to call a refractive elegy, where the poignancy of the poem is not object-centered, but dispersed evenly throughout New York, which parallels the topography of the poet's consciousness. The plethora of unnecessary details adds to the heightened intensity of the poem, as the poet walks us through his anxieties and dilemmas to reveal the workings of a beleaguered mind in motion.

15. It is ironic that a minor character like Miss Stillwagon has a name ("first name Linda I once heard"), whereas Billie Holiday is not mentioned even once throughout the poem.

16. "Goldberg satisfied O'Hara's need for a straight male painter with whom he could be affectionate without being overly committed. Southgate was as glamorous an artistic woman as any of those with whom he had been involved, and she was also able to serve as "den mother" for the group with her motherly skills of cooking and supporting" (Gooch 383).

17. Mike is relatively much easier to please—O'Hara genially pokes fun at Mike's love for alcohol by contrasting his "quandariness" about getting just the right gift for Patsy (which takes up almost an entire stanza) with the casualness of

the line, "and for Mike I just stroll into the PARK LANE / Liquor Store and ask for a bottle of Strega." Not only was O'Hara fond of both Verlaine and Bonnard as individual artists, their inter-art collaboration in Parallèlement must have also had some influence on his own collaborative project ("Stones") with Larry Rivers, which was either in progress, or recently concluded at the time of the poem's composition in 1959.

18. "The late 1960s saw Motherwell using Gauloises packets and cartons in many collages, including an extensive series with the packets surrounded by bright red acrylic paint, often with incised lines in the painted areas. In the introduction to his 2015 book Robert Motherwell, *The Making of an American Giant*, gallery owner Bernard Jacobson says, 'Motherwell smoked Lucky Strikes, but in his collage life he smokes Gauloises, around whose blue packets he now organizes one composition after another . . . And by incorporating Gauloises packets he makes deft and condensed allusion to . . . the Mediterranean and the palette of Matisse . . . to the smoke coiling up in a Cubist assemblage'" ("Gauloises" *Wikipedia*).

19. In *God, Death and Time*, published a little more than twenty-five years after O'Hara's death, Levinas writes, "We meet death in the face of the Other" (qtd. in Skof 134).

20. For more on "attention," see *Attention Equals Life*, where Andrew Epstein examines O'Hara's "idea that attention is such a crucial aesthetic, and human faculty that in some ways it is life itself, if only because it alone has the ability to provide proof and documentation of human existence" (2).

21. See Marjorie Perloff's revised introduction (1997) to *Frank O'Hara: Poet Among Painters*: "That he was a radical and 'different' poet was my premise, but I regarded that oppositionality . . . as a question of individual ethos rather than as, in any profound way, constructed by the poet's culture or sexual identification . . . In 1977, the age demanded a raison d'être for O'Hara's casual, improvisatory, nonmetrical and generally nonstanzaic 'I do this, I do that' pieces, pieces that hardly seemed to qualify as poems at all. Hence my attention to poetic lineage (from Williams, from Mayakovsky, from Apollinaire), generic placement (ode? elegy? occasional poem?), and technical device (especially the daring use of line-break). It was important, I felt, to expose an audience accustomed to the well-made ironic lyric of Richard Wilbur on the one hand and the oracular, densely allusive 'projective verse' of Olson on the other, to the very different 'aesthetic of attention' that is O'Hara's special signature. The impact of culture and sexuality on that aesthetic was undoubtedly underestimated" (xiii, my emphases).

22. The "Lavender Scare" refers to a period of moral panic in the mid-twentieth century, during which homosexual individuals in the United States government faced widespread persecution and dismissal from their jobs. This movement paralleled the anti-communist hysteria of McCarthyism and the Second Red Scare. At the time, it was believed that gay men and lesbians were national security risks and likely to be communist sympathizers, leading to a concerted effort to purge them from government employment. It was thought that their

sexual orientation made them more susceptible to blackmail and manipulation, thus endangering national security.

23. See Cuordileone's "Politics in an Age of Anxiety": "On one occasion, McCarthy went so far as to announce to reporters, 'If you want to be against McCarthy, boys, you've got to be either a Communist or a cocksucker'" (45).

24. Very interestingly, Levinas writes in the preface to *Totality and Infinity*, "(e)thics is an optics. But it is a 'vision' without image, bereft of the synoptic and totalizing objectifying virtues of vision, a relation or an intentionality of a wholly different type—which this work seeks to describe" (23).

25. See "Homosexuality": "So we are taking off our masks, are we . . ." (*SP* 61).

26. However, one must remain wary of locating in this person a sense of unified selfhood, since O'Hara describes himself in "In Memory of My Feelings" as an assemblage of many "naked selves," for whom, "to move is to love" (*SP* 106).

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Flores de arena

Rafael Felipe Rodríguez

Pétalos mudos

Hay viento en estos versos, cardos, licor, buganvilias,
Monumentos ebrios, muda historia, la del suelo que piso.
Un camino quejumbroso que hace mil pasados murió;
Azul, tibio, el cielo y los ocasos junto al conuco.

La sonrisa arrugada, la mirada negra, de ellos, raíces,
Filamentos de trópico y península, cansancio y hastío
Leyenda, fábula, verdad y cancionero de misa,
Antes de dormir ¡reza la salve! y un yo pecador

Al borde del Calvario, junto a las velas benditas.
Deja que las flores alebresten los grillos del final de la tarde,
Esos habitantes de la línea luminosa, infinita y rosada,

Que separa las románicas vísperas del ángelus místico,
Dejando sahumerios de venerandos aromas
Indómitos, deleznables, pétalos mudos lanzados al cielo.

Ventana infinita

Flores al fondo de este cuarto gris plateado:
Flamígeras amapolas que iluminando
Mi ventana infinita hasta aquí me trajeron
Llenando de geranios mis hondos bolsillos.

Resentido ciclamen que me miras pasar
E ir por veredas de anturios y begonias
Dejándote enjaulado, lívido, en el fatal
Y sepulcral pasillo de tibios olores.

¿Será que no entiendes la pasión del gladiolo,
El triste volar de libélulas celestes,
En estos jardines de dorados contornos

En estos surcos donde pasea la luna
Embriagada de olor y pasión nocturna
Al ver dos amantes cubiertos de rocío?

Noche y estío

En las trituradas luces de la lóbrega noche perece
el níveo estandarte del silencio que habito
Cual luciérnagas ciegas que recorren la muerte
Vuelvo a andar los pasos perdidos de este camino

Que recorro lento y fugaz, enlutado, lleno de ébanos
Que me circundan como cóndores, lluvia y Habana
Mientras trago el licor que en la garganta siento cual flamas
Y en el pecho ondea como bandera oculta y sagrada.

Me baño en los días esclavos, cañas, peonías
Magullando lenguajes de pretéritos tiempos
Y los aleteos fortuitos de mariposas azules

Ventaneando en los jardines tropicales de abejas,
Llenando de mieles los azules ojos del páramo
Endulzado, cataléptico, ante el inicio del acuciante verano.

Voz de trópico

I
Voz de trópico, aguda, vibrante,
Serenata diurna al final de febrero,
Bajo palios de seda te lleva un viandante
Con alma noble y coraje fiero.

II
Canto triste del África prieta
Un baile espeso, envuelto en tambor
La piel morena que inspira al poeta
En una danza te da su esplendor.

III
Caña y azúcar, miel y melaza
Machete en mano, sudor y rosas
Con tu mirada que al sol reemplaza,

Y a las resedas pone celosas.

IV
Amigo, hermano, ancestro olvidado
Aquel abuelo tenía tu semblante
Hoy tus parientes te han ocultado
Bajo lo blanco que tienen errante.

V
Y tú al silencio te has entregado
Disimulando tanto dolor
Pasan las nubes del día sagrado
En que moriste con tanto loor

VI
Para entregarnos con sangre y candela
La libertad con gallardo favor,
Con tu afilado machete y canela
Regando la tierra con cada clamor.

VII
La verde esperanza del gran continente
Trajiste anclada a tus párpados secos
Clavando indemne tu esencia latente
En este Caribe de magníficos ecos.

VIII
Un arcoíris llegó con tu risa
Y lo expandiste por toda esta tierra
Cantó la cigarra que llena la brisa
De dulce sonido al bajar de la sierra.

IX
Candelo, amigo, ¿cómo te llamas?
¿Cuál es la patria donde naciste?
Todas las cosas que tanto amas
Te ofrendaré como un tálamo triste:

X
Bajo la ceiba pondré el café,
El ron de caña, flores de pita,
Tres velas rojas, gran Cedifé
Y tu machete junto a mi cuita.

Flores de arena

Estos filamentos hidrópicos
Que se deslizan mientras se desvanecen
En los titilantes pigmentos de mi piel
Espejo del claro cielo nocturno
De olor a palma y juncos junto al río
Pino de Babel, ramas de peldaños,
Pájaros pasajeros al firmamento
Nubes caucásicas cargadas de negritud
¡Tormenta anunciada de esta tarde de mayo!
Quítate el antifaz de tabaco y tardes de España
Mezcla Caribe y País Vasco
Monogamia de amores infieles
De olores a cantos y nardos y yerbabuena
Piano, pintura, pared
Llanto que alegra un día
En el paraíso de esta carne pecadora
Súdame como la sed
Como cayena que adora al sol
Como lilas encendidas
Bajo la flama de este otoño que se aproxima
Déjame anclado a las patas de tu cama
Que un día he de volver del país de los muertos
Transfigurado,
Resucitado al undécimo día
De este valle profundo
De garganta quejumbrosa
Envuelto en flores de arena
Para deleitar tus ventanas
Sé que la lluvia de mayo
Aliviará estas inundaciones de piel y azucenas
Y coronará mis pies de emblemas apócrifos
En tanto desde el portal veré
Las hiedras peinar los ciclaminos
Dejando que las últimas lluvias
Anuncien la llegada del desierto

About the Author

Rafael Felipe Rodríguez has a master's degree in Spanish American Literature from New Mexico State University (2020), and currently is working on his Ph.D. in Spanish at Florida International University. In 2019 he received the second Prize of the VIII GIRALDA International Short Novel Contest (Seville) for his novel *Amapola*. He has published the following novels: *La cruz de nadie*, *Días verdes*, *Las moradas del diablo*, *Los pecados de la virgen*, and *Amapola*.

Hemingway's Earliest Heroes: Nick Adams and Jake Barnes, by Donald A. Daiker, Innovative Ink Publishing, 2024, xxiv + 321 pp. $29.99 (paper).

A powerful collection reflecting forty years of creative scholarship by Donald A. Daiker, *Hemingway's Earliest Heroes* offers its readers two books for the reasonable price of one. In the first half of the book, Daiker's essays build a perceptive portrait of Hemingway's character, Nick Adams, as his fictional alter ago. Thus, just as James Joyce developed Stephen Dedalus as a fictional alter ego in his *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Ulysses*, Hemingway composed stories charting Nick's growth from young boy ("Indian Camp"), to adolescent ("The End of Something" and "The Three-Day Blow"), adult war veteran ("Big Two-Hearted River" and "A Way You'll Never Be"), and father reminiscing about his own father ("Fathers and Sons"). In these stories, Hemingway portrays Nick, flaws and all, as a complex character—at times sensitive and sympathetic, at others confused, self-centered, delirious, and irascible.

In the second half of *Hemingway's Earliest Heroes*, Daiker focuses on Jake Barnes, the protagonist of Hemingway's novel, *The Sun Also Rises*. Jake is a writer, war veteran, traveler, and bullfighting *aficionado* with a vigorous and enduring moral code. Beginning with "The Affirmative Conclusion of *The Sun Also Rises*," an essay originally published in 1974-75 in *The McNeese Review*, and ending with a forthcoming essay on "Teaching Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* as Novel and Film," Daiker convincingly and repeatedly rebuts a cliché about the novel as a collective portrait of a "lost generation" of expatriate wastrels and drunkards.

And herein lie two reasons this book is so valuable to readers of Hemingway's stories and novels. First, the collection gathers together essays that today would be hard to find in back issues of the journals in which they were published. Second, collectively the essays are variations on a theme of defending Hemingway's Nick Adams and Jake Barnes as affirmative portraits of young men coping with physical and emotional wounds. As Daiker puts it in his introduction, Nick and Jake have developed "recuperative power, the resilience to bounce back from the edge of disaster" (xvii).

While making the case that Adams and Barnes are Hemingway's heroes, the chapters consistently present comprehensive summaries of previous scholarship—often presenting a consensus of views that Daiker thoughtfully challenges. For instance, in the book's first chapter, Daiker undertakes a defense of Nick's father, Dr. Henry Adams, in his

conduct during an emergency Cesarian section he performs in a remote area of upper Michigan without anesthesia and with improvised equipment—a jackknife and fishing line, or "gut leaders." The chapter begins with a survey of critics' indictments of Dr. Adams as a callous and insensitive father whose bedside manner with his patient and with his young son he has brought along can seem cold. Daiker then carefully and persuasively addresses such criticisms, particularly by setting Dr. Adams's conduct in historical context (a Cesarian section was virtually a new surgery at the time of the story's setting) and geographical setting. Daiker defends Dr. Adams's surgical technique as life-saving, both for the mother and for her unborn child. He defends Dr. Adams's explanation to his young son that the mother's "screams are not important," a statement that sounds strikingly different in tone from the caring, sensitive, and honest responses Dr. Adams gives when Nick asks tough questions about death at the end of the story. As Daiker argues, "Perhaps because of his father's understanding and gentle affection, an episode that begins with Nick's fear of dying ends with him at peace with himself and his future" (12).

Likewise, Daiker summarizes the case for the prosecution against Dr. Adams, and then presents a powerful case for the defense in his readings of subsequent Nick Adams stories, such as "The Doctor and the Doctor's Wife," "Ten Indians," and "Fathers and Sons." In his readings of these stories, Daiker emphasizes the warmth, tenderness, and reciprocal affection between Nick and his father. Likewise, he summarizes the views of scholars who criticize Nick's manner of breaking up with his girlfriend in "The End of Something." Then Daiker builds toward his conclusion that Hemingway portrays Nick as "a young man who had acted with tact and kindness in breaking up with a young woman he no longer loved but still cared about deeply" (84). Daiker also discusses stories, such as the posthumously published "Summer People," in which Hemingway portrays Nick as "self-assured and self-satisfied and self-centered" (116). Likewise, in his chapter on "Fathers and Sons," the final Nick Adams story to appear while Hemingway was alive, Daiker captures the complexity of the story's portrait of Nick as both son and father with remarkable acuity.

Arguably the finest chapter in the Nick Adams section of the book is Daiker's essay on the skiing story, "Cross-Country Snow." Here several virtues of Daiker's book stand out. First, he makes very good use of his research in Hemingway's papers at the John F. Kennedy Library to show how Hemingway revised earlier drafts. In so doing, Daiker develops his reading of "Snow" as "a story focusing on friendship and relationships" (128). Second, he challenges a majority of scholars who have neglected the story in their discussions of Hemingway's short fiction. He then

presents his own view: "My goal is to show that that story is an undisputed masterpiece—fully unified, brilliantly structured, highly significant, and one of Hemingway's best" (126). Third, out of his close reading of this fine story, Daiker summarizes Hemingway's "philosophy of life" as well as I have seen in any criticism.

The eleven chapters in the second half of *Hemingway's Earliest Heroes* are variations on a clear and central theme: despite an epigram about the "lost generation," a phrase quoted from Gertrude Stein, the novel is ultimately an affirmative narrative of Jake Barnes's growth into an independent, resolute individual. For instance, in "King Solomon, Gertrude Stein, and Hemingway's 'Lost Generation,'" Daiker surveys a variety of reviews from when Scribner's first published *The Sun Also Rises* on October 22, 1926. Many of the early reviewers latched onto Stein's phrase to praise or damn the novel's main characters as "disillusioned and aimless expatriates," as Conrad Aiken put it in his review (187). More recently Lesley Blume has perpetuated that stereotype of the novel as a "morass of sexual rivalry, gory spectacle, brutal hangovers, and fisticuffs" (188). Indeed, her book's title, *Everybody Behaves Badly*, seems to glamorize or sensationalize the novel's status as a *roman à clef*—an exposé whose characters are based on recognizable individuals such as Lady Duff Twysden, the model for Lady Brett Ashley.

Against such an apparent consensus, Daiker's eleven chapters develop a medley of recurrent arguments showing that Hemingway's quoting Gertrude Stein about a "lost generation" is highly ironic. First, by closely examining the movements from setting to setting in the novel—within Paris, from Paris to Spain, and between locations in Spain and France—Daiker demonstrates that "On the most basic geographical level, most of the characters are not wandering around aimlessly" (191). He develops that argument most fully in two chapters, "Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*: The Centrality of Jake's Paris" and "'I Hated to Leave France': The Geography and Terrain of *The Sun Also Rises*."

Second, in two central, complex interior monologues, Hemingway takes readers deep inside Jake's psyche to reveal a solid moral code. In his nocturnal meditations, while he confronts the pain of his war wound, Jake resolves not to let his own problems tarnish others' lives. Since Jake later recognizes that he essentially acted like a panderer, going against his own moral code, he acts on the obligation he has incurred when he set Brett up to have an affair with a much younger bullfighter. In one scintillating chapter, "One True Sentence," Daiker explores the importance of a single, simple sentence: "I went in to lunch." By focusing on the syntax, context, and tone of that sentence,

Daiker shows that Hemingway is representing "Jake's taking personal responsibility for Brett's trouble—and dealing with it" (288). Thus, Daiker concludes: "This is not a philosophy of futility, meaninglessness, or spiritual dissolution. It is an optimistic, even buoyant view of life that places responsibility for human happiness squarely in human hands" (196). Such is the central argument of *Hemingway's Earliest Heroes*—developed over the decades beginning with Daiker's essay "The Affirmative Conclusion of *The Sun Also Rises*" (published in the mid-1970s).

In collecting and organizing his essays, Daiker has chosen to preserve them in their original form. One effect of that decision is that readers will encounter similar arguments about certain key sentences and passages from *The Sun Also Rises* several times over the course of reading the second section of the book. To an extent, such repetition is welcome, as often the same arguments are developed in a different context from chapter to chapter. For instance, the final chapter, "Teaching Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* as Novel and Film," essentially serves as a conclusion to the section of the book devoted to the development of Jake Barnes as a moral actor. Another effect of Daiker's decision to preserve the essays in their original form is that two different versions of the novel are cited. In his earlier essays, such as "Affirmative Conclusion," Daiker cites the 1926 Scribner's edition of the novel. In chapters based on more recent essays, such as "King Solomon," he cites the 2014 Hemingway Library Edition of the novel, also published by Scribner's. Readers of Daiker's book should have copies of both editions on hand.

Both Daiker and the publisher of *Hemingway's Earliest Heroes* deserve high praise for the overall design of the book. On the front and back covers are photographs of a young Hemingway with broad smiles as he carries his fishing gear while standing on railroad tracks or while planting his skis in front of a snow-covered, forested mountain landscape. These photographs on the front and back cover serve as visual previews of the book's emphasis on the characters of Nick Adams and Jake Barnes as positive profiles not just of courage, but of resilience and endurance. Inside the book are carefully selected photographs that complement the discussion of Hemingway's texts. In short, Donald A. Daiker's gracefully designed *Hemingway's Earliest Heroes* is one of the finest collection of essays I have read on his short fiction and on *The Sun Also Rises*, his first masterpiece of a novel.

John Beall
John Beall taught at Collegiate School in New York City for three decades. An independent scholar and member of the editorial board of *The Hemingway Review*, he has published essays in that review, and in *The James Joyce Quarterly, MidAmerica,* and *Paideuma.* His book, *Hemingway's Art of Revision*, has been published in 2024 by LSU Press. His book of poems, *Self-Portraits*, was published in 2019 by Finishing Line Press. More recently, his poems have appeared in *Slant*, *The New Mexico Review*, *The Ekphrastic Review*, and in the collection, *Song Up Out of Spain,* published in 2023 by Clemson University Press. Email: Bealljohn1@gmail.com.

Who Wrote This? How AI and the Lure of Efficiency Threaten Human Writing, by Naomi S. Baron, Stanford University Press, 2023, ix-309 pp. $30 (hardcover).

In *Who Wrote This? How AI and the Lure of Efficiency Threaten Human Writing*, Naomi S. Baron relies on her expertise as a linguist to contribute to emerging discourse regarding the role of AI in our writing lives, and her opinion is invaluable. At its core, Baron's book sharply focuses on the relationship between humans and technology, recognizing that writing itself is a kind of technology, but one with distinctly personal and social implications that we would be remiss to relegate solely to machine-work. Through the book, Baron guides readers through a captivating journey, beginning first with a section called "Writing Lessons," which offers a historical exploration of the emergence of literacy, the development of writing, and the design of English Composition courses. From there, in a second section called "What if Machines Could Write?" Baron discusses the development of artificial intelligence, especially as it relates to language production and translation, distilling concepts such as "machine learning," "neural networks," and "natural language processing" to ensure that readers become literate in these possibly unfamiliar territories. In the third section, "When Computers Write," Baron cautiously paints a compelling vision of the future in which machines might play integral roles in writing domains, envisioning scenarios such as when "Machines Emerge as Authors" or "AI Comes for the Writing Professions." Baron focuses on the risks artificial intelligence poses to writing: she discusses copyright issues of AI-produced texts, along with the possibilities of AI compromising writing professions, such as those in journalism, editing, and law. She then considers how human creativity compares to AI-generated creative works, ultimately focusing on what is at stake in devaluing creative human efforts more broadly. Finally, Baron ends with a section called "When Humans Collaborate," which most deliberately forwards her thesis. Here, Baron suggests how writers may think of AI as "Jeeves,"

or as a kind of virtual assistant who supports efforts in correcting more technical aspects of writing, such as spelling and grammar. Baron then introduces the field of HCI, or "Human Computer Interactions." She suggests pathways for humans to continue improving AI technologies, ominously reinforcing her point that humans must "remain at the helm to have AI serve us and not vice versa" (190).

Baron's book begins with a warning: there is a very real possibility that AI could "render our human skills largely obsolete" (xii). To equip readers for making personal, informed decisions about the integration of AI in their writing processes, Baron expertly delves into the foundational elements of writing, going as far as to consider the potential losses that might result in relinquishing handwriting and cursive writing by pointing to studies that show that handwriting, or "embodied cognition," generates more ideas, produces more learning, and correlates with reading ability (202-204). Perhaps more compelling though, Baron dedicates chapters to the mental and philosophical facilities necessary to be a writer, emphasizing the transformation power of writing in several ways. One particularly persuasive section quotes writers on writing: Baron shares insight from contemporary novelist John Green, who says, "[Writing Fiction is] my attempt to keep that fragile strand of radical hope, to build a fire in the darkness" (25). Baron also cites Holocaust survivor, Elie Wiesel: "[F]or the survivor, writing is not a profession, but an occupation, a duty . . . [I write] to help the dead vanquish death" (24). In weaving together these profound perspectives, Baron eloquently reinforces her central thesis: "Writing clarifies thinking" (25). In contrast, Baron points out that computers have "no motivation for anything," and that while "AI programs might well produce writing that humans find meaningful, the programs themselves are indifferent" (26). Baron takes a turn here to suggest what AI software can offer writing, and that is editing, calling AI a "digital janitor" who can edit human writing to the point of altering our work to be "even more impressive" than if we had gone at it alone (28). Despite acknowledging the convenience of tools like Grammarly and spellcheck, Baron strikes a note of caution, drawing parallels with journalist Lindsay Crouse, who gave up using a smartwatch to track health metrics, arguing that the "device was replacing her own self-awareness" (28). In the same way, Baron cautions that dependency on "digital janitors," can "undermine motivation to rework, rethink, [and] rewrite" (29).

After detailing the purposes behind human writing, Baron delves into the broader genesis of artificial intelligence. Baron dedicates an illuminating chapter to this topic, titled "The Dream of Language Machines," which serves as a testament to the human ingenuity necessary for the evolution of AI technologies. Here, she traces the lineage

of contemporary AI from its nascent stages, beginning with the advent of computers and the groundbreaking "Enigma" machine in the 1920s, to Alan Turing's seminal contributions in the 1940s, culminating in the creation of the "universal Turing machine" or "the universal computing machine" (52). Baron's comprehensive perspective on the emergence of artificial intelligence, complemented by her "Layperson's AI Roadmap," offers invaluable guidance to those new to these technologies. By categorizing the current applications of AI into domains such as "Science," "Language," and "Games," she provides a roadmap for understanding its diverse contemporary uses. Baron's nuanced approach to describing the history of AI technologies not only helps novices comprehend the origins of AI but also aids readers in grasping its multifaceted integration across various domains.

While Baron holds a reverent view of writing, she also acknowledges the inevitable integration of AI writing tools into nearly all writing tasks in the future. Baron concludes the book with a thought-provoking section titled "When Humans Collaborate," where she astutely examines the areas where AI could contribute to the writing process without compromising the human endeavor altogether. Baron's book focuses on abilities, those found in humans and in artificially intelligent bots. While artificial intelligence seems to be on track to obtain the same abilities as human writers, even producing novels and art, this, for Baron, does not make writing skills or creativity obsolete. Rather, she underscores a fundamental truth familiar to writing instructors: that the transformative power of writing often lies in the process itself, transcending mere outcomes.Baron recognizes the value of using AI writing tools, but ultimately argues that we must be cautious so as not to lose the human-centered, deeply valuable psychological and social benefits acts of writing offer.

Additionally, Baron's candid examination of the challenges faced by composition teachers in contemporary academia struck a chord with me, a teacher primarily of first-year writing at the university level. Her acknowledgment of the disproportionate teaching loads and lower salaries compared to professors of literature is a salient reminder of the systemic inequities within the profession. Moreover, her endorsement of tools like Grammarly to address technical aspects of student writing, thus freeing instructors to focus on more conceptual and rewarding writing issues, resonates deeply with me and serves as sound advice in navigating the complexities of modern writing instruction. While Baron intriguingly explores the potential role of AI in alleviating grading burdens, she refrains from delving into the broader pedagogical questions that confront college writing professors today, such as

whether to incorporate AI into the curriculum, though her book certainly sets the stage to push these questions forward.

While this book is undeniably valuable for composition teachers, Baron's work should also attract a broader audience, spanning from those intrigued by AI to professionals in writing-intensive fields. It is also critical for administrators in educational settings to be reminded of how foundational writing is to learning. Indeed, Baron skillfully underscores the significance of preserving writing proficiency, making insights indispensable for anyone navigating these new and ever-changing technologies. Some may criticize the book for its lack of practical applications of AI tools in writing or for its omission of examples showcasing AI's role as our "digital janitor." Indeed, the absence of AI "voices" in the text may leave some readers wanting. But largely, even without these more tangible footholds—which do have the potential for becoming obsolete as technologies advance—Baron's profound, artistic perspective on the act of writing as a distinctly humanistic craft is necessary. Baron closes her book by reminding readers that our writing, even writing with "misspellings" or "awkward sentences" is important because it flows from our minds, and represents our lived experiences, and while AI might support these efforts, it is critical that they remain our own.

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