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Tricksters, Travelers, and Other Places in Gloria Naylor's *Mama Day* and Paule Marshall's *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People*

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Abstract

This article explores the narrative representations of traveling, crossing, and identity formation in Gloria Naylor's *Mama Day* and Paule Marshall's *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People*. Informed by Henry Louis Gates' analysis of the trickster archetype, the article casts a closer look at the role played by this symbolic figure in the two novels. Significant rites of passage require significant places, such as the "other place" in *Mama Day* or the "chosen place" in *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People*, which are the realm of the trickster. Deeply anchored in their island communities, these characters easily move between the supernatural and the mundane and facilitate access to cultural memory and personal identity. By juxtaposing these two works, the article argues that rites of passage, performed by bridge-like characters in culturally significant places, are essential for validating the characters' inner and spatial journeys, ultimately assisting them in finding a sense of collective belonging and personal identity.

Keywords: Black community, trickster, traveler, rites of passage, identity

> *People are for people.*
>
> —Arabic proverb
>
> *Tout récit est un récit de voyage.*.
>
> —Michel de Certeau, *L'invention du quotidien*

Traveling, crossing boundaries, and identity formation are central themes in African American and Caribbean-American literature. The two novels analyzed in this paper explore these subjects of predilection through the use of trickster figures who mediate

between symbolic places, the island community, and other characters, mostly travelers or "professional wanderers"[1] in search of identity and social belonging. Both novels are set on an island that can be located on Gilroy's map of the Black Atlantic: Naylor's Willow Springs, a sea island in the vicinity of the American East Coast near Georgia and South Carolina, and Marshall's fictional Bourne Island in the easternmost part of the Caribbean archipelago. These island communities display firm connections to their African ancestral past, preserving their cultural identity through rites of passage and commemorations orchestrated by redoubtable characters. Drawing on Gates' analysis of the trickster in African and African American cultural traditions, this article examines the crucial role these protagonists play, not only within their community but also in validating other characters' inner and spatial journeys, ultimately assisting them in finding a sense of collective belonging and personal identity. It is important to note that this analysis primarily focuses on the mediating role of the trickster, omitting a number of Esu's valences, which Gates highlights in his seminal work.

Significantly, the life and work of the two writers reflect a clear affiliation with the Black diaspora and its central themes of migration, identity, memory, and ancestry. Not unlike their characters, the two writers themselves are displaced; they have traveled and crossed borders and boundaries. They occupy an intermediary place, similar to Gates's trickster figure, the mediator, which is a privileged stance that allows them to scrutinize and contest both home and place of exile. Critics are in agreement that Black Diaspora women writers are border crossers, "[c]ontinually negotiating, crossing, and recrossing the borders between the personal and the political, between racial, national, and social identities" (Billingslea-Brown, 1999, p. 5). While Naylor displays a predilection for magical realism to emphasize the interaction between the supernatural and the mundane in shaping cultural memory and personal identity, Marshall's novel focuses on travel and displacement to critique the colonial legacy and the search for self.

Mama Day (1989) presents a proud, democratic community isolated from the influences of the mainland, which Christol (1997) describes as an exemplary site for a definition of 'free territory' inhabited exclusively by Black people. Despite its proximity to the American continent, the island community displays an overt reticence towards outside influences, maintaining not only its isolation but, most importantly, its identity as direct descendants of African slaves. In contrast, Marshall's remote Caribbean island is inhabited by a divided

[1] Saul Amron, one of the main protagonists in Marshall's *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People*, identifies himself as "a professional wanderer" (Marshall, 1969, p. 321). By introducing Saul, a Jewish American anthropologist, Marshall draws a significant parallel between the African Diaspora and the Jewish Diaspora, emphasizing their shared experiences of displacement and search for identity.

community that, for the most part, has adopted the image of the former colonizer[2]. Only Bournehills, the chosen place, the poor eastern[3] part of the island, maintains its collective past alive, while the wealthier western region is marked by collective amnesia.

The two novels interrogate notions of identity and belonging, articulated through movement to highly significant places that serve as sites of memory[4] for their respective communities. In *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People* (1969), the "chosen place," with its oppressive cane fields and former barracoons transformed into rum shops, speaks of the violent and alienating history of the island. In contrast, such places do not exist in *Mama Day*, as slavery and colonialism are not part of the collective memory of Willow Springs. There is, however, an intriguing locale, the "other place," a multifunctional yet cryptic setting that functions as a nucleus of *lieux de mémoire*, encompassing crucial landmarks in the Days family history, such as the graveyard, the garden, and the house.

These sacred places are the realm of the trickster, and both novels revolve around powerful characters, such as Miranda and Dr. Buzzard in *Mama Day* or Merle and Delbert in *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People*, who closely resemble the Esu figure in Yoruba mythology. In his seminal work, *The Signifying Monkey*, Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (1988) argues that the African trickster is deeply embedded in Black diasporic tradition, often associated with subversion, ambiguity, and rhetorical mastery. Usually portrayed as a "divine linguist" and interpreter, Esu functions as a sign of the disrupted wholeness of an African system of meaning and belief that black slaves recreated from memory, preserved by oral narration, improvised upon in ritual—especially in the rituals of the repeated oral narrative—and willed to their own subsequent generations, as hermetically sealed and encoded charts of cultural descent. (p. 5)

Furthermore, Gates (1988) explains that the trickster, as a fundamental figure of mediation, connects "truth with understanding, the sacred with the profane, text with interpretation" (p. 6), features that will be emphasized in this paper when analyzing the four prominent protagonists in the primary sources.

[2] A distinction should be drawn here, although it will not be addressed in detail in the present article: Marshall's island is a postcolonial setting, while Naylor's Willow Springs is a Sea Island that, according to the narrative, was never subject to colonialism. However, the figure of Bascombe Wade, the pseudo-master, is mentioned in the novel as an intrinsic part of the Days' family history, which Mama Day attempts to unveil.

[3] Symbolically situated closer or facing Africa, the mother land.

[4] For Nora (1989), the *lieux de mémoire* are significant places "where memory crystallizes and secretes itself" (p. 7) invested with meaning over time and through repeated practices (commemorations, pilgrimages).

These trickster-like characters are highly mobile, transcending space, time, and logic with ease; they are connectors and veritable *bridges*. Primarily, they are the catalysts for their communities and the custodians of tradition; respected members of the community, they are direct descendants of their African ancestors. Moreover, they have unhindered access to sacred ancestral places and assist other characters, mostly travelers, in discovering these significant locales. Such symbolic sites, the 'other place' in *Mama Day* and Bournehills, the chosen place, are endowed with tremendous cultural significance in the novels. Additionally, these bridge-like characters play numerous other roles within their social groups. Mama Day is the matriarch of Willow Springs and a medicine woman, while Dr. Buzzard is the hoodoo doctor and the sprite of the communal porch, the only islander who crosses the actual bridge between the mainland and the island. In *The Chosen Place, the Timeless People*, the most evocative image of the trickster is Merle, the restless and noisy central protagonist, alongside Delbert, the local rumshop owner and the leader of the Bournehills carnival band.

By assigning the metaphorical attribute of the "bridge" to these characters, this analysis suggests that they belong to and share in two worlds. Their mediating role symbolically parallels the features of the chronotope of the road[5], as Benítez-Rojo (1996) contends in his comparison between two mythological characters, the Greek god Hermes and Yoruba Esu, who are:

> lords of the threshold […] both protect crossroads, highways, and commerce, and both can show themselves in the figure of a man with a cane who rests his body's weight on one foot alone. Both sponsor the start of any activity, make transactions smooth, and are the only ones to pass through the terrible spaces that mediate the Supreme Being and the gods, the gods and the dead, the living and the dead. Both […] are the "givers of discourse" and they preside over the word, over mysteries, transformations, processes and changes; they are the alpha and omega of things. (p. 16)

In contrast to traditional male representations of Esu, the two novels stage imposing female protagonists who have transcended the taxonomy of the diaspora woman and now assume the role of the Esu god. The most notable figures, Mama Day (Miranda[6]) and Merle,

[5] The chronotope, literally "time-space," is a concept that has been used by Mikhail Bakhtin (1981) in his essay "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel". Numerous times, Bakhtin emphasizes that time is inseparable from space and considers that "every entry into the sphere of meaning is accomplished only through the gates of the chronotope" (p. 258).

[6] In Latin, Miranda means "worker of wonders." Moreover, the name Miranda is suggestive, especially in the light of the reversal of characters that Naylor performs with regard to Shakespeare's *The Tempest*.

are integral to the island and they preserve, adapt, and transmit the fundamental values of the community. They maintain a direct connection to African traditions, which is one of the narrative strategies to re-write and usurp the conditions of patriarchy and colonialism[7]. In Naylor's novel, the island of Willow Springs is dominated by the matriarch Mama Day while Marshall's central protagonist, Merle, is the embodiment of her native Bournehills, the memory-bearer and spokesperson for her small community. Highly respected figures in their communities, both female protagonists act as physical, cultural, historical, spiritual, and linguistic bridges: when "Mama Day say no. Everybody say no" (Naylor, 1989, p. 6) while Merle herself is as "big as life" (Marshall, 1969, p. 442).

Despite her limping and making use of her father's cane, Mama Day is by far the most mobile character in the novel: she constantly moves between different places[8] on the island and interacts with the other members of the community who would otherwise be invisible in the book. The island holds no secrets for the matriarch, who can walk through the woods "stone blind," with "memory guid[ing] her tired feet home" (Naylor, 1989, p. 88) after her duties as midwife and healer. Mama Day has a predilection for walking by night, the darkness with its familiar sounds helping her to summon up and sort out memories: "the tap, tapping of the stick on up the gravel road. Make no kinda sense, them memories" (p. 89). Tucker (1995) astutely highlights the extent to which Mama Day approaches the image of the trickster and the multifarious role she plays in the island community:

Miranda has inherited the mantle of tricksterism, as we can see by her constant movement along the roads, by her connection to "the other place," and also by her ability to read signs of the elements. She has also served as the mediating figure of the community, the bridge between the everyday world and the sacred world of her African foremother. We see her mediating qualities especially clearly in her relationship with George—who, as an outsider, has temporarily "crossed over. (p. 192)

Interestingly, Miranda lives in a trailer, which indicates a provisional dwelling—essentially, a way station. The trailer can also be regarded as a moving entity and reflects the matriarch's role as the catalyst for her small community and the link to its cultural heritage. However, her true home lies in 'the other place,' described as "just an old house with a rocking chair on the porch," "the only house with three stories and a full veranda" (Naylor, 1989, p. 224)

[7] A thorough examination of the disporic island as a feminine place requires considerably more space, which goes beyond the scope of the present analysis.

[8] Interestingly, the two female protagonists are associated with the imagery of the road; they are in constant movement, always on the road, and they do so more than their male counterparts analyzed in this paper.

on Willow Springs. There is a note of mystery about this part of the west woods, as the omniscient voice is careful to inform the reader: "Nobody, drunk or sober, would come this far into the west woods at night. […] And even in broad daylight, they not gonna make it much past the graveyard" (p. 117).

The ambivalence of the place is maintained as all further explanations are suspended; "[i]t's too near the other place" (Naylor, 1989, p. 117) is the only detail provided. Therefore, the supernatural qualities of the Days' graveyard in "the other place" remain open to interpretation and speculation. The suspense is further amplified by the immediate negation of the place as otherworldly: "Where do folks get things in their head? It's an old house with a big garden, that's all" (p. 117). The use of the free indirect discourse intensifies the ambiguity of these divergent opinions, culminating with an eloquent reinstatement of the previously negated assertion: "But then again there *was* the other place" (p. 118).

Even the name of this location connotes alterity and singularity. Supernatural events take place here (the voices that speak of past and future) as well as rituals, for example, the fertility ritual[9] that the matriarch performs on Bernice or George's rite of initiation. To reach the house in the other place, one has to pass through the family graveyard which signifies "walking through time": "They near the graveyard within the circle of live oaks and *move down into time*. A bit of hanging moss to cushion each foot and *they're among the beginning of the Days*" (Naylor, 1989, p. 150). In the "other place" where the maternal house lies, every corner and every object has a story: the garden with its well, the porch with its rocking chair, or the attic with the hidden ledger, to mention a few. First and foremost, the house is a chronotope, a temporal and spatial breach from the profane dimension of time and space, and a solid link with the past: "There was nothing to stop that house from sitting right in the beginning of the nineteenth century except a fresh coat of paint" (p. 224). This is the sacred place where Mama Day prepares her potions, the place where she connects with her family's past and the voices from the past; it is the place that eventually reveals the truth about Sapphira and Bascombe's love. Bachelard's statement of the importance of the house comes to consolidate this brief evaluation of Miranda's dwelling in the 'other place':

> the house is one of the greatest powers of integration for the thoughts, memories and dreams of mankind. […] In the life of a man, the house thrusts aside contingencies, its councils of continuity are unceasing. Without it, man would be a dispersed being. […] It is body and soul. It is the human being's first world. (Bachelard, 2014, p. 6)

[9] The parthenogenesis can only occur in such a sacred place "where flowers can be made to sing and trees to fly" (Naylor, 1989, p. 139).

For Mama Day, the "other place" is *fons et origo*, the axis mundi. In this house, she performs her rites of initiation and magic, seeks repose or shelter during the hurricane, and explores the partly obliterated history of her family and the island. Any return to this house represents a personal miniature "eternal return," which she performs yearly in an effort to decode her family history.

The Candle Walk, a Willow Springs tradition observed on December 22nd, commemorates the ancestor Sapphira and her departure to Africa. At the end of the ritualistic pilgrimage, the clairvoyant Mama Day repeatedly endeavors to unveil the real truth behind the foundational myth of the island. Eckard (1995) posits that Mama Day's quest in the novel is for "truth, understanding, and connections regarding her own past. Miranda does not engage in this search for strictly self-serving reasons, but because she knows that memory will unleash the power she needs to save Cocoa from Ruby's psychological and physical poisons" (p. 131).

Mama Day's effort of "re-memory" is as somatic as it is spiritual and takes place in the house of memories in "the other place," replete with significant artifacts. The rocking chair, in particular, is a powerful symbol of repetitive mediation, an important tool that helps Mama Day connect the present with the past, even allowing her to transcend time and memory: "Miranda rocks and thinks […] Miranda is staring past her dried herbs, past the birth of Hope and Grace, past the mother who ended her life in the Sound, on to the Mother who began the Days" (Naylor, 1989, p. 262). The porch of the house, with its rocking chair, becomes a sacred threshold, a consecrated space where Mama Day bridges the profane world with the sacred realm. For Donlon (2001), the threshold of the house in "the other place" is a privileged locale as well as a distinct cultural territory "that is more magical than real, more African than American, more symbolic than literal. By using the home of the slave-owning ancestor to practice her ancient, secret rituals, Mama Day transforms the "place" into her own creolized "space," where the powers of her African ancestors can give life" (p. 79).

Dr. Buzzard[10], another significant character, fulfills a similar mediating role but as the omnipresent trickster on the communal porch in Willow Springs, and as the "expert in medicine or magic, a doctor of various sorts" (Gates, 1988, p. 18). His multifaceted role has been previously analyzed at length; suffice it to say that he mostly portrays the mischievous,

[10] The stories, referred to as "lies" in Gullah folklore, include animal trickster tales about Brer Buzzard, Brer Rabbit, and Brer Fox, and impart entertainment and moral teaching to the audience. Brer Buzzard, often portrayed as lazy and cunning, employs wit and intelligence to trick the other animals.

yet benevolent traits of Esu. As the main entertainer and the subject of the porch talk, he acts as a gregarious disruptor, and a Dionysian prototype—notorious for brewing moonshine in the island's south woods and selling it on the communal porch.

Dr. Buzzard serves as a bridge between the island and the mainland, in charge of bringing Cocoa home from the airport during her visits. George, the outsider, seems rather baffled by the man:

> you waited until the plane had landed to tell me that the man who would be waiting for us at the gate was a little strange. […] your "little strange" turned out to be chicken feathers in his hat, a string of white bones around his neck, and a name like Dr. Buzzard. (Naylor, 1989, pp. 174–5)

Despite his "professional rivalry" with Mama Day, he does not hesitate to act as an intermediary between a skeptical George and the matriarch's magic. When the hurricane brings the destruction of the actual "shaky wooden bridge," the unimaginable happens to George: "I was marooned on an island in the middle of the twentieth century" (Naylor, 1989, p. 256). Dr. Buzzard's invitation, "come on […] we got us a bridge to build" (p. 269), is a statement charged with meaning, implying the need for the literal bridge, and more importantly, the spiritual bridge to save Cocoa from Ruby's malefic spells.

The inhabitants of Willow Springs present an organic connection to their history, meaning that they are localized both in space and in time. Such an ideal situation is the result of several factors: the complete isolation of the island, the absence of a history of colonialism, and the presence of the centenarian Mama Day, who creates a temporal link between past and present,[11] ensuring her community's permanence and survival.

In contrast, *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People* is steeped in colonialism and its aftermath, a stance that drastically impacts the characters and their identity formation. The place Marshall depicts in the novel is an island divided against itself.[12] It is a landscape of economic and political dispossession: part in decay, part a replica of the imperial power. The colonizing figures are not just the Sir Johns, the absentee landlords, but also the rich

[11] In Naylor's quartet, Miranda serves as the link between two novels, *Linden Hills* (1985) and *Mama Day* (1989), while George connects *Mama Day* and *Bailey's Café* (1992). Worth mentioning is Cocoa and George's predilection for bridges which are vital for developing a broader perspective of the landscape and, by extrapolation, much more: "Any schoolkid knows that Manhattan is an island, but you have to stand in the middle of the George Washington Bridge on a clear day to really understand. […] Standing there under and over all that incredible space, I saw how small and cramped my life had been" (Naylor, 1989, p. 98), or "the closer to a bridge the better, right?" (p. 65).

[12] Personified, it resembles W.E.B. Du Bois' "double-consciousness" of the Black self which we discuss later in relation to the central female protagonist.

layer of the indigenous population, that perpetuates the former white master's oppression. "We're much too British" (Marshall, 1969, p. 61) they contend with mockery and contempt, a claim that could be extended to describe the collective amnesia of the entire western part of the island.

The colonial control was not abolished; it merely metamorphosed and created new internal boundaries that emphasize division rather than connection. Not surprisingly, the chronotope of the road is the structuring element of the novel which opens and closes with the image of the unreliable road segment that links the western and the eastern parts of the island:

> The lower section of the road the woman was traveling, the winding stretch that lay at the very bottom of the old, soaring cathedral of a hill, had washed away as usual in the heavy, unseasonable rain that had fallen the night before. (Marshall, 1969, p. 3)

The inaccessible, damaged road symbolizes the inability that Merle, the main character, faces not only when confronted with a natural phenomenon such as an "unseasonable rain" but also with the societal dissension on this postcolonial island. Much like the "shaky wooden bridge" in Naylor's work, the road represents the only access route to Bournehills.

By strategically employing the chronotope of the road, Marshall places all her protagonists in the posture of travelers and emphasizes the need for a reliable connection between the two discrepant regions. Such a mediating role is Merle's defining trait; very mobile, she has free access to the rich community while still being the representative of her people, as her description proves—the same deep piercing look and a face that mirrors all the faces on the island, containing them all (Marshall, 1969, p. 259). Moreover, she is the spokes-person of her native Bournehills and evocatively assumes the role of the historian for the region, as she proudly asserts: "I've had to pay with my sanity for the right to speak my mind so you know I must talk" (p. 11). Always in motion, she has unhindered access to divergent milieus of Bourne Island, both rich and poor, as well as to different places and temporal coordinates. According to Hayden White (1978), the historian's task is to mediate between past and present and to connect "two modes of comprehending the world that would normally be unalterably separated" (p. 27), functions that Merle attempts to fulfill in the text.

In order to understand the island and its people, one must first comprehend Merle, who is "a damn research project herself" (Marshall, 1969, p. 118) and is undeniably tied to the poor region and its people. On one occasion, Saul, the anthropologist, reads Merle as "the way" to understand the region's complex nature:

> [h]e didn't see her simply as Merle […] For the moment she was more than she appeared. And it suddenly occurred to him that perhaps he would have to come to know and understand her, really know her, before he could hope to come to know and understand Bournehills; that she was, in the old Biblical sense, the way. (p. 260)

She is a catalyst for her community and a trickster figure, reminiscent of Esu, the translator, who connects the two dyadic sides of the island. Merle is partially introduced in the opening pages, on the road, simultaneously with the region's presentation. Similar to the island, her persona is characterized by diversity and disunity, features that become more prominent as the story unfolds. The adjectives used to describe her appearance convey a sense of deterioration and decay and are also employed with respect to Bournehills. Her face is sketched with the help of elements taken from nature and becomes the mirror of the surrounding landscape. A face sculpted by a "bold and liberal Bantu hand" (Marshall, 1969, p. 5), full-mouthed with "a shallow cleft like a valley above the upper lip" is now, in its downfall towards middle age, described as "despoiled" (p. 5), echoing the degradation of the region. In the novel's opening, there is a notable insistence, even abuse of the epithet "despoiled," as if the omni-scient narrator tried to instill this first poignant impression of the place and its people.

Only at the end of the first chapter does Merle introduce herself in a manner that becomes a constant throughout the novel: her strident, abrupt manner always accompanied by the discomforting loud dangling of her bracelets "like a monk's beads or a captive's chains" (Marshall, 1969, p. 5). Paradoxically, she is both: a savior and defender of her community and a prisoner of her troubled past and the island's history. With a very colorful, almost carnivalesque presence, Merle seems to channel two rather incongruous traditions within her persona: African and European. Her high-heeled shoes and dresses with vivid African patterns, contrast with her European pendant silver earrings and noisy traditional bracelets. These bracelets, typically worn by Bournehills women during carnival, symbolize the chains of slavery; yet, Merle wears them year-round, indicating her deep connection with the painful legacy of slavery.

Moreover, the oxymoronic image of her earrings, shaped like European saints and "trembling anxiously" in concert with her rage, metaphorically ties her to the past, both racial (Black West Indian) and personal (her exilic experience in England). A contradictory protagonist, with her "scarcely suppressed hysteria" (Marshall, 1969, p. 65), Merle has not entirely escaped the sugar-cane related "disease" that has plundered the island since the times of slavery. Yet she is fully aware of this affliction, proudly declaring, "I'm a damn diabetic" (p. 85). As a bridge-like character, she not only mediates between the two dissonant parts of her Caribbean island but she also connects the characters (foreign visitors and locals alike)

with an ancestral past. Moreover, she strives to bridge and reconcile the oppositions that inhabit her personal history: the loss of her daughter and husband, as a direct consequence of her past life in London, and the defeat of her social-radical ideals that could have brought a change for her people. Like the divided island, Merle epitomizes Du Bois' (1903) description of the internal conflict inherent in the African American experience, characterized by "double-consciousness."[13]

Delbert, the Bournehills rumshop owner, is another key protagonist in *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People* who appears in a mediating posture as the refiguration of the trickster. His shop is the point of confluence and subsistence for Bournehills, where the community gets the abject supply of food and the "elixir"—rum. He is the "chief presiding over the nightly palaver in the men's house" (Marshall, 1969, p. 123) and the one who makes libations to "the ancestral gods." Linked to the idea of ritual, Delbert's broken right leg, now in plaster, is depicted as "part of a column to some great temple that had fallen" (p. 123). Initially portrayed as partially immobile, propped up on make-shift beds and enthroned on various crates, Delbert later assumes a more dynamic role during the carnival, "trudging[14] heavily in the lead" (p. 282) of the Bournehills band.

During the pageant, Delbert sounds a conch shell to punctuate the stages of the carnival performance of the Bournehills group, which relentlessly dramatizes Cuffee Ned's insurrection every year, to the great contempt shown by tourists and by the rest of Bourne Island population. Reminiscent of Esu's whistle, the conch shell metaphorically reminds the carnival revelers of the angry mourning sound of the Bournehills sea[15] and connects

[13] "One ever feels his twoness—an American, a Negro; two warring souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder" (Du Bois, 1910, p. 3). The 'double consciousness' is a problem of identity and presents the danger of modulating this identity according to others' perception. The two metaphors of "double consciousness" and "the veil" employed by Du Bois with relation to the duality of the African American could be easily applicable to the Anglophone Caribbean soul, or to any location of the Black Atlantic for that matter, by simply substituting, if need be, the appropriate imperial power.

[14] Gates (1988) also identifies the trickster as limping, a consequence of his mediating function: "His legs are of different lengths because he keeps one anchored in the realm of the gods while the other rests in this, our human world" (p. 6). This feature echoes in Mama Day's description as limping, emphasizing her mediating role between the supernatural and the mundane. Similarly, Delbert is also a recurring character in Marshall's work. In *Praisesong for the Widow* (1983), another limping Delbert leads Avey on the path towards the rediscovery of her long-forgotten roots, emphasizing the connection between physical limping and spiritual crossing or mediation in these texts.

[15] The conch shell, considered the musical instrument of the spirits of the sea, implies a water connection and hints at African origins (Gates, 1988, p. 17). Suggestively, Saul identifies Merle in a similar light: "she looked like some dark, squat attendant spirit of the sea" (Marshall, 1969, p. 202). The conch shell is also an important part of Hindu religious symbolism, associated with Vishnu, the God of Preservation. Merle herself crosses these cultural boundaries: "And what do you think I'm doing when I disappear for days at a time in my room? […] Practicing a little Buddhism, that's what. Trying to achieve that peace which they say passes all understanding. And I'm as good a Hindu as any" (Marshall, 1969, p. 318). This parallel to a different spiritual set of beliefs perfectly emulates Esu's mediating traits. As Gates (1988) notes, Esu carries a satchel and a whistle indicating his role as a messenger and interpreter between gods and people.

them with a forgotten part of their history. The carnival is indeed the moment when the communal past emerges from Bournehills into the present and overwhelms the entire island.

In non-carnival time, Delbert's rumshop is the scene for incessant debates.[16] The place is not so much an arena of contestation as it is a stage upon which the great deeds of the local hero are repeated and rehearsed daily: "their voices, grappling like wrestlers back and forth across the room, sent the dust moiling, and threatened, with each outburst, to bring the flimsy walls tumbling down" (Marshall, 1969, p. 121). They are still discussing the latest "news" in the place where "it hasn't been any real news since Cuffee burned down the hill" (p. 129), centuries before. The discussion is not necessarily founded on divergent opinions—the argument is only the generator of the dialogue. Due to its repetitive nature, the verbal exchange is potentially ritualizing as well as re-actualizing, firmly grounding the community in shared historical and cultural memory.

The regular patrons are minutely described with the help of metaphors drawn from their surrounding environment: "faces, with the pronounced cheekbones rising out of them like hills and the hollows beneath like dark valleys, […] some spectacularly rugged terrain not unlike Bournehills itself" (Marshall, 1969, p. 124). Their portrait reinforces the existence of the community as a set of firm connections between people, place, and the history of the place. The rumshop owner not only imparts the "elixir of life in Bournehills" (p. 318) but he is also the bearer of a piece of brutal history "cutting deep into the flesh" (p. 124). The events of his life and "of a time that long antedated his life" (p. 124) are "scribbled over" his eyes, "recorded like a story on microfilm" (p. 124).

Part of this collective memory is Stinger, another regular of the rumshop, who compensates for Delbert's immobility with his exuberant performance. His attachment to the land is such that he never parts from his sharp billhook, which he uses to punctuate his statements in conversation. This ambivalent tool[17] used for cutting canes acquires a linguistic role in his "work-swollen hand." By its prolonged use in the field, the knife has become an extension of his hand:

> He held a hone billhook […] in one hand and, occasionally, to emphasize a point, he would bring it sweeping down in a short chopping arc close to the floor. The long single-edged knife which curved out slightly at the end seemed almost part of the man's hand the way

[16] The noise comes in stark contrast with the nearby church and the half-asleep murmuring women, whose "prophetic Delphic voices" (Marshall, 1969, p. 135) suggest that they too may be such mediators or messengers.

[17] For Edouard Glissant (1989) "le coutelas est un outil animé" (pp. 175-6). It is an ambivalent tool since it is first an imposed colonial mark which acquires in the hand of the slave a function that subverts the institution of slavery.

> he held it, something either grafted on or that he'd been born with: an extra limb nature had bestowed upon him to equip him for his world. (Marshall, 1969, p. 121)

Complementing the nightly banter about Cuffee Ned's exploits, the pigsticking ritual held behind Delbert's shop occupies a heralding mid-position in the novel: it extends and fulfills the anticipatory experience of carnival. The description of the "great white sow," once a "thief and aggressor" draws a pungent analogy to colonial oppression. Its sacrifice reflects the Bournehills people's resistance to colonial domination, with Delbert ominously predicting, "All I know this one is not going to die easy" (Marshall, 1969, p. 253). Reminiscent of Cuffee Ned's revolt, the pig's sacrifice and the ensuing carnival suggest a different type of temporality: one of permanence and survival, that is, timelessness, "there had been beneath the violence of the act an affirmation of something age-old, a sense of renewal" (p. 259), along with communion and revival.

By bringing together displaced characters who are struggling to assign meaning to time, space, and self, Marshall underlines the mediating role of the island and its community. There is a positive note of salvation for those who are trying to find their way with the help of Esu-like protagonists who *are* "the way." Likewise, Cuffee Ned, is another transgressor of borders, another version of Esu: "for Cuffee had been that also, both seer and shaman to the people, the *intermediary* between them and the ancient gods" (Marshall, 1969, p. 284, emphasis added). Long after his death, Cuffee Ned continues to mediate the two divergent parts of the island, and brings the western part closer to their ancestors' homeland: "Cuffee had died content, […] For he had seen his life and deeds as pointing *the way* to what must be. An obeah man that he was, a true believer" (p. 288, emphasis added). The African perception of time as cyclical relies on the hope of a return, as illustrated by the belief of the Bournehills people for whom cyclical time is the "certainty of salvation" (p. 119).

In both novels, the island and its sacred sites are suitable soil for epiphanies and potentially redemptive moments, all conducive to a restoration of self and identity. As a record of the past, 'the other place' in *Mama Day* encapsulates the island's entire history since it "got spit out of the mouth of God" (Naylor, 1989, p. 35). Conversely, Bournehills is a living mausoleum that bears inscribed in its very landscape the merciless history of colonialism. Characters such as Mama Day, Merle, Dr. Buzzard, and Delbert are an extension of the places they preside over, assisting crossing, remembering, and reconnecting other characters with their ancestral values. Invested with an aura of mediating between disparate worlds, these bridge-like protagonists facilitate the passage between present and past, logic and magic, self and community, as well as remembrance and forgetfulness.

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The Spice Melange as a Catalyst to the Discovery of the Mind[1]

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Abstract

Melange, or spice as it is also known, is an ingredient in Frank Herbert's novel *Dune*. It symbolizes the infinite possibilities of the human mind, as it is a source of knowledge and power. Both addictive and mind-altering, for the people of Arrakis, its source place, the spice is the basis of their lives and the cornerstone of their daily rituals. Due to its effect, the traditional lifespan is extended three times, but at the same time, its consumption causes a strong addiction. It is the basis of the rites of passage. The spice is a consciousness-expanding narcotic produced during the natural life cycle of sandworms, which has been the core of technological development and commerce since its discovery. Moreover, the formation of the cultural memory of the Fremen is made possible by the Water of Life, a substance transformed from poison and heavily saturated with spice. In tribal society, constant contact with the spice also manifests in physical changes, as the natural layer of their eyes turns otherworldly blue due to consumption. In my study, I address the following questions: can spice as a drug fully enhance the capabilities of the human mind? What is its role in the rites, and how does it enable the cultural memory of the tribe? What do various interest groups in the galaxy use it for? The core of my topic is the relationship between the spice and the individual through different social strata, ritual ceremonies, and the question of foresight.

Keywords: spice, people, sublime, navigators, cultural memory

The Presence of Mind Modifiers in Philosophy

> [W]ith a blessed company—we following in the train of Zeus, and others in that of some other god—… saw the blessed sight and vision and were initiated into that which is rightly called the most blessed of mysteries, which we celebrated in a state of perfection …

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> being permitted as initiates to the sight of perfect and simple and calm and happy apparitions, which we saw in the pure light, being ourselves pure and not entombed in this which we carry about with us and call the body, in which we are imprisoned like an oyster in its shell. (Plato, 1925, 250/b–c.)

According to the latest research, the relationship between philosophy and mind-altering drugs goes back to the ancient Greeks, thus to the foundations of Western philosophy. In the dialogues of the Athenian philosopher Plato, the role of the so-called "pharmakon" is examined, which identifies the written text with a multifaceted substance that can heal, poison, or kill. There are several theories about Plato's encounter with the world of narcotic drinks, one of which is about the psychoactive mushroom mixed into the drink during his initiation into the Eleusinian Mysteries, and the other is that certain substances with narcotic properties were used during the preparation of Athenian wine. It will probably never be clear exactly what happened, but it likely played a role in Plato's philosophy about ideas and the body. As can be seen from the quote above, the body is a kind of prison through which ideas cannot be experienced. "Blessed sight and mysteries" suggest an out-of-body experience that made it possible to step into the "clear light," glimpse ideas, or recall them. A state similar to initiation is expressed several times around the metaphor of vision, light and sun are symbols of knowledge in all of Plato's works.

> This pharmakon, this 'medicine,' this philter, which acts as both remedy and poison, already introduces itself into the body of the discourse with all its ambivalence. This charm, this spellbinding virtue, this power of fascination, can be—alternately or simultaneously—beneficent or maleficent. The pharmakon would be a substance—with all that that word can connote in terms of matter with occult virtues, cryptic depths refusing to submit their ambivalence to analysis, already paving the way for alchemy—if we didn't have eventually to come to recognize it as antisubstance itself: that which resists any philosopheme, indefinitely exceeding its bounds as nonidentity, nonessence, nonsubstance; granting philosophy by that very fact the inexhaustible adversity of what funds it and the infinite absence of what founds it. (Derrida, 1981, p. 70)

In *Plato's Pharmacy*, Derrida analyzes the phenomenon of the "pharmakon," which—as seen from the quote above—is an indefinable substance. Its duality is manifested during its use: it is both a medicine and a poison and can be beneficial as well as a malicious agent. Based on its nature, it bears the traits of mythical narrative, enchantment and occultism, and ritual mysticism. It leaves the ordinary, the natural, in favor of a mysterious depth, which we now intend to approach through the first volume of Frank Herbert's *Dune* series of novels.

The Importance of Spice in the Novel

Melange, or spice as it is also known, is the most important ingredient in Frank Herbert's novel *Dune*, where the planet Arrakis is the sole source of it. In Herbert's work, the spice symbolizes the infinite possibilities of the human mind, a source of knowledge and power, and it represents the inexhaustibility and dangers of conscious functioning. At the same time, the spice can be considered a drug that expands sensory perceptions, a consciousness modifier that increases mental alertness, a poison that tears away the veil of benevolent appearances covering the world, and a medicine that prolongs life.

> 'Can you remember your first taste of spice?'
>
> 'It tasted like cinnamon.'
>
> 'But never twice the same,' he said. 'It's like life—it presents a different face each time you take it. Some hold that the spice produces a learned-flavor reaction. The body, learning a thing is good for it, interprets the flavor as pleasurable—slightly euphoric. And, like life, never to be truly synthesized.' (Herbert, 1999, p. 74)

In the quoted passage, the flavor of the spice is compared to cinnamon, which is an ingredient of the holy anointment used during consecration in Christian ceremonies, essentially a mediator of divine blessing, and at the same time, a symbol of wisdom (Diós I. & Viczián J., 1997, p. 469). Spice is not just a symbol; it is life itself, as its regular consumption can extend the traditional lifespan three times. It is clear from the text that despite its variety, the spice is created naturally—it cannot be produced artificially—it is a gift of nature over which man can never truly have power. Its consumption causes a feeling of euphoria during certain chemical reactions in the body, and in this heightened state of consciousness, an intense feeling of happiness can be experienced. In his book, *The Doors of Perception*, Huxley records his own experiences after consuming mescaline controlled by scientists and describes the altered perception of reality as a similar experience.

> As Mind at Large seeps past the no longer watertight valve, all kinds of biologically useless things start to happen. In some cases there may be extra-sensory perceptions. Other persons discover a world of visionary beauty. To others again is revealed the glory, the infinite value and meaningfulness of naked existence, of the given, unconceptualized event. In the final stage of egolessness there is an 'obscure knowledge' that All is in all—that All is actually each. This is as near, I take it, as a finite mind can ever come to 'perceiving everything that is happening everywhere in the universe.' (Huxley, 1954, p. 7)

From the quote, it is important to highlight the perception beyond the senses, which appears in the novel mainly in the form of experienced visions of the future. At the same time,

the experience of mystical wisdom plays a prominent role, as well, since, under the influence of the spice, Paul Atreides is able to discover the past, present, and future at the same time, as well as to awaken both female and male genetic memory and spiritual union with his ancestors.

Spice is a consciousness-expanding narcotic produced during the natural life cycle of sandworms, which has been the core of technological development and commerce since its discovery. The discovery of the spice led to the exploitation of Arrakis; the Great Houses of the Empire, and the power of the emperor were inevitably tied to the extraction of the spice. However, this is constantly made difficult by the wild and territorial sandworms and the indigenous Fremen, who are culturally and biologically connected to the drug. Their guerilla tactics make the already hazardous extraction even more difficult since the spice can only be found in large quantities in the deep desert, so the noise made by the machines always attracts the sandworms. It is important to note that before the discovery of the spice, the planet did not receive special attention in the galaxy, it was just a remote, poor, desert planet that only captured the imagination of ecologists. The Imperial Experimental Stations established here represented the great dream of the Fremen, the possibility of a green planet, but this was soon forgotten when the countless possibilities hidden by the spice were discovered in the universe.

In the economic sense, spice is the rarest and most valuable commodity in the empire, the price of one deka of spice on the open market is six hundred and twenty thousand solari[2], which can be used to buy a comfortable, luxurious life on a safe planet. Among the Great Houses, those whose leaders could afford to consume the spice on a regular basis are considered rich, but its accumulation involved serious danger, as the Padishah Emperor, the Bene Gesserit, and the rival Great Houses see the gathering of larger stocks as a potential threat. It is no coincidence, that after Paul Atreides became the emperor, he maintained his power by collecting and distributing the spice in a controlled manner.

It also plays an important role in travel and cultural development, allowing navigators to safely control ships in space. Spice is the basis of the culture of the Fremen, the formation of their cultural memory is made possible by the Water of Life, a substance transformed from poison and heavily saturated with spice. In tribal society, constant contact with the spice manifests itself in physical changes, as the natural layer of their eyes turns otherworldly blue because of consumption. As a result of the spice, the main character, Paul Atreides, will experience possible life paths and visions that flash the future, his consciousness will expand almost infinitely, and he will meld the mind of his predecessors with his own personality.

[2] "Official monetary unit of the Imperium, its purchasing power set at quatricentennial negotiations between the Guild, the Landsraad, and the Emperor." (Herbert, 1999, p. 560–61).

The following paragraphs consider the issue of drugs, medicine, and magical panaceas from the point of view of philosophy. How is cultural memory related to the spice and what effect did it have on the culture of the Fremen? A higher state of consciousness or a simple drug, what can spice really do? Can we see spice as an embodiment of the Kantian experience of the sublime, which almost infinitely expands consciousness and enables cultural memory?

The Building Blocks of Discovering the Universe

> And he thought then about the Guild—the force that had specialized for so long that it had become a parasite, unable to exist independently of the life upon which it fed. They had never dared grasp the sword... and now they could not grasp it. They might have taken Arrakis when they realized the error of specializing on the melange awareness-spectrum narcotic for their navigators. They could have done this, lived their glorious day and died. Instead, they'd existed from moment to moment, hoping the seas in which they swam might produce a new host when the old one died. The Guild navigators, gifted with limited prescience, had made the fatal decision: they'd chosen always the clear, safe course that leads ever downward into stagnation. (Herbert, 1999, p. 503)

The Space League is one of the three pillars of the known universe, the organization responsible for trade and space travel. The quoted excerpt mentions the Navigators, who play a prominent role within the League, essentially functioning as supercomputers, thus calculating the complicated trajectories required for space travel. In the second volume of the novel series, *Dune Messiah*, we can observe their physical appearance, usually surrounded by the greatest secrecy. For example, during interstellar travel, passengers cannot leave their own ships in the hold. All League members are characterized by the so-called eyes of Ibad, namely, the iris that turns otherworldly blue due to consuming a large amount of spice. At the same time, Navigators are exposed to more severe influences. Essentially, they live in a large container constantly filled with spice concentrate, so their shape is wreathed in orange spice gas. Due to extreme and long-term exposure, their bodies are deformed and mutated, their limbs are elongated, and their appearance is often described as "human-like fish" due to their finned legs and webbed hands.

Just like Paul Atreides, they see the future, but due to their intellectual limitations, they use the logical side of their brains, so they are unable to set up a complex vision of the future; they only see a thin path, which they use in a highly mathematical way. For the League, spice is an invaluable economic asset that ensures that humans do not become isolated groups in the universe. Since there are no computers or artificial

intelligence in the world of *Dune*, spice has become the basis for exploring the cosmos. The effect of the spice can be seen here as a consciousness-expanding narcotic, which is capable of reaching a higher level of thinking and a kind of "foresight," which makes it possible to experience future slices of time.

> Predicting, fortune-telling, and prophesying are distinguished as follows: the *first* is foresight according to laws of experience (therefore natural); the *second* is contrary to the familiar laws of experience (contrary to nature); but the *third* is, or is considered to be, inspiration from a cause that is distinct from nature (supernatural). Because this third capacity seems to result from the influence of a god, it is also properly called the *faculty of divination* (since every shrewd guess about the future is also improperly called divination). (Kant, 2006, p. 80–81)

Kant, in his anthropological didactics, discusses the forms of divination and foresight, which he relates to the modes of sensual experience. In his later work, The *Critique of Pure Reason*, the a priori forms of perception are the basis of cognition; they can be derived from reason, as opposed to sensual experiences, which originate from the world (Kant, 2013). In our case, the examination of Kant's *a priori* synthetic judgment will be interesting since it is possible mainly in mathematical thinking (see Navigators). In search of the conditions for cognition, he tries to map the deep structure before reason, which precedes all discoveries. Kant examines space and time in the section on transcendental aesthetics and interprets them as the a priori basis of our sensory perception. Based on the Kantian interpretation, seeing into the future can only be considered a supernatural act, in other words, a divine intervention. In the novel, the spice dulls the sensory perceptions, but the layers of consciousness that experience space and time are strengthened, which enables the creation of a highly developed cultural memory and the ability to predict.

> Partaking of intoxicating food and drink is a physical means to excite or soothe the power of imagination. Some of these, as poisons, *weaken* the vital force (certain mushrooms, wild rosemary, wild hogweed, the Chicha of the Peruvians, the Ava of the South Sea Indians, opium); others *strengthen* it or at least elevate its feeling (like fermented beverages, wine and beer, or the spirits extracted from them, such as brandy); but all of them are contrary to nature and artificial. He who takes them in such excess that he is for a time incapable of ordering his sense representations according to laws of experience is said to be *drunk* or *intoxicated*; and putting oneself in this condition voluntarily or intentionally is called *getting drunk*. (Kant, 2006, p. 62–63)

Kant analyzes the use of mind-altering drugs in connection with the strengthening and weakening of the imagination, which, according to him, is associated with a confusion

of sensory perceptions and a weakness of the will. In Kantian philosophy, states of intoxication and ecstasy are morally reprehensible since, in this state, the Self is unable to use reason and judgment properly. It is important to highlight from the quote above "contrary to nature" and "artificial," which refer to the fact that man creates a substance in opposition to the order of nature, which enhances his imagination. The state of the Self under the influence of the drug is shameful: it endangers its cognitive abilities due to carelessness, and its happiness is only naivety, through which it escapes from the responsibility of human existence. Among the stages caused by the imagination, Kant only exempts sleep as a biological necessity that the body needs. In the novel, however, the spice is a naturally occurring substance that, in addition to ecstasy, often results in spiritual awareness. During its consumption, waking dreams and visions appear in the mind, the processing of which requires a high level of intellectual preparation.

Effects of the Melange Intake

> 'The spice,' he said. 'It's in everything here—the air, the soil, the food. The geriatric spice. It's like the Truthsayer drug. It's a poison!' She stiffened. His voice lowered and he repeated: 'A poison—so subtle, so insidious ... so irreversible. It won't even kill you unless you stop taking it. We can't leave Arrakis unless we take part of Arrakis with us.' The terrifying presence of his voice brooked no dispute. 'You and the spice,' Paul said. 'The spice changes anyone who gets this much of it, but thanks to you, I could bring the change to consciousness. I don't get to leave it in the unconscious where its disturbance can be blanked out. I can see it.' (Herbert, 1999, p. 213)

Paul Atreides, the protagonist of the novel, is constantly exposed to the spice after arriving on Arrakis, he is the only character who, thanks to his Mentat and Bene Gesserit training, can become aware of the change on a higher spiritual level when he is exposed to the raw spice itself in the deep desert. In the excerpt cited, he first compares it to the medicine of the Truthsayers, which will be explored later, and then refers to the spice as a poison. In this scene as well, several effects appear that the user can experience while consuming the spice. First of all, it is an addictive substance whose effect is close to that of a drug. Even when consumed in small quantities, it becomes indispensable for the body, its absence leading to a slow and painful death. Moreover, it is characterized by three adjectives: *subtle, insidious,* and *irreversible*, which can be linked to the world of narcotics and poisons. Thus, the spice is an essentially indefinable substance. But perhaps its most important effect in the text is the change, which results in a kind of super-sensible spiritual awareness, where sense experiences, time, and space are blurred.

This ability is called foresight in the novel, and several characters possess spice-induced predictions but to varying levels and degrees. Guild Navigators can only use their abilities

to plan safe interstellar routes, while the Bene Gesserit have developed more complex techniques but mainly use their foresight when crossing bloodlines. Paul Atreides' ability is the most advanced in the known universe, and because of that, he experienced a whole range of possible life paths as a result of spice consumption. However, it is only after his son-Leto the Second-becomes an adult that the true power of foresight indicated by the drug is truly revealed, as he follows the so-called Golden Path and ensures the survival of humanity by further developing his own body through evolution for this purpose. Of course, the condition caused by the spice also has its limitations. For example, the possessors of the ability cannot see each other in the flash visions of the future; seeing their own death places a constant psychological burden on them, and, in order to maintain the visions, the consumption of an ever-increasing amount of spice is necessary.

In the novel, the latter is often described as a state similar to drunkenness, and its liberating power brings the experience closer to Nietzsche's Dionysian worldview.

> There are two powers above all else that elevate the naive men of nature to the self-forgetting of intoxication: the drive of springtime and narcotic drink. Their workings are symbolized in the figure of Dionysus. In both states, the *principium individuation* is sundered and the subjective disappears entirely before the erupting force of the generally human, indeed, the common-to-all, the natural. (Nietzsche, 2013, p. 31)

The consumption of spice is a euphoric experience, an experience of intoxication and spiritual liberation, just as the world turns upside down for those participating in the cult of Dionysus. The place of the moderately reasonable Apollo is taken by the rampaging, veil-removing Dionysus. Paul Atreides often describes the spice experience as if the veil covering the world has been torn[3], the naked truth is revealed, the images of the future and the past merge. The boundaries of the Self are blurred: the user of the drug can contact the personalities of his predecessors, which he has stored at the cellular level. The resulting cultural memory makes the past alive-the personality seems lost under the imprint of other consciousnesses.

Water of Life

> 'The drug's dangerous, she said, but it gives insight. When a Truthsayer's gifted by the drug, she can look many places in her memory—in her body's memory. We look down so many avenues of the past... but only feminine avenues.' Her voice took on a note of sadness.

[3] "He fell silent as memory of that seeing filled him. No prescient dream, no experience of his life had quite prepared him for the totality with which the veils had been ripped away to reveal naked time" (Herbert, 1999, p. 214).

> 'Yet, there's a place where no Truthsayer can see. We are repelled by it, terrorized. It is said a man will come one day and find in the gift of the drug his inward eye. He will look where we cannot—into both feminine and masculine pasts.' (Herbert, 1999, p. 19)

The Water of Life is a spice-infused form of a highly toxic liquid created by drowning younger sandworms. The Fremen and Bene Gesserit use it to elevate their female priestesses to a higher spiritual level, allowing candidates to contact their feminine ancestors or perish in excruciating agony if they cannot synthesize the poison. The Bene Gesserit schools were designed to explore the physical and mental potential of women. The Bene Gesserit can control every muscle and nerve in their body on a biological level, down to the individual fibers, and are capable of voluntarily induced catalepsy (a state of feigned death) in an emergency. At the same time, they are able to break down poisons by regulating their internal chemistry, perceive the truth to varying degrees, and use the Voice, which is a very advanced behavior manipulation technique. The Water of Life is a substance used during the initiation of the Sayyadina and Reverend Mothers, which allows the cultural memory to be dissolved within the Self, but only on the female side. A deadly poison for the unprepared.

> And the memory-mind encapsulated within her opened itself to Jessica, permitting a view down a wide corridor to other Reverend Mothers until there seemed no end to them. Jessica recoiled, fearing she would become lost in an ocean of oneness. Still, the corridor remained, revealing to Jessica that the Fremen culture was far older than she had suspected. (Herbert, 1999, p. 384)

As can be seen from the excerpt, the Self that synthesizes the Water of Life from poison into a narcotic drink seems to be lost in its own genetic memory, and its personality is suddenly filled with unknown, familiar consciousnesses that it must assimilate. This revelatory experience is the most intense and dangerous way to experience the spice, and, at the same time, it is a fundamental moment of experiencing Fremen cultural memory.

> The fear, as I analyze it in retrospect, was of being overwhelmed, of disintegrating under a pressure of reality greater than a mind, accustomed to living most of the time in a cosy world of symbols, could possibly bear. The literature of religious experience abounds in references to the pains and terrors overwhelming those who have come, too suddenly, face to face with some manifestation of the Mysterium tremendum. (Huxley, 1954, p. 17)

Through the experience of religious mysticism, Jessica experiences the fear that can be associated with the loss of her Self as we can also read in Huxley's text. Under the influence of the spice, his genetic memory is awakened, which experience can be described

with the concept of *mysterium tremendum.* During the encounter with the sacred, in the religious rite, the ego is overcome with existential tremors and elemental fear, due to its own diminishing nature, in addition to the cultural memory accumulated over the centuries.

Paul Atreides was the first man to successfully transmute the Water of Life without dying. Despite consuming only a drop of water, he fell into a coma so deep for three weeks that many thought he was dead. Finally, he successfully synthesized the material and acquired almost perfect foresight, which included not only the past and the future but also the present.

Spice Orgy

> He felt carnival excitement in the air. He knew what would happen if he drank this spice drug with its quintessence of the substance that brought the change onto him. He would return to the vision of pure time, of time-become-space. It would perch him on the dizzying summit and defy him to understand. (Herbert, 1999, p. 386)

The narcotic drink created from the Water of Life forms the basis of the Fremen's spice orgy. The transformed spice liquid was consumed by all members of the sietch, which resulted in a kind of spiritual connection and helped to maintain the cultural memory of the tribe. Although the Fremen also experienced a small form of "foresight" during the spice orgies, it was recorded as a fear-inducing, culturally suppressed phenomenon. The sacred encounter with the divine is often identified with the feeling of fear, which is beyond human to such an extent that it is impossible for consciousness to fully absorb it.

During the spice orgies, the Fremen's strict way of life is dissolved, and the members of the tribe celebrate freedom from social burdens with dance and an unrestricted experience of sexuality. Dionysian exuberance is evoked by the spice orgy, which results in the disappearance of individuality in the community consciousness.

> Most men and women lead lives at the worst so painful, at the best so monotonous, poor and limited that the urge to escape, the longing to transcend themselves if only for a few moments, is and has always been one of the principal appetites of the soul. Art and religion, carnivals and saturnalia, dancing and listening to oratory-all these have served, in H. G. Wells's phrase, as Doors in the Wall. And for private, for everyday use there have always been chemical intoxicants. All the vegetable sedatives and narcotics, all the euphorics that grow on trees, the hallucinogens that ripen in berries or can be squeezed from roots-all, without exception, have been known and systematically used by human beings from time immemorial. (Huxley, 1954, p. 19)

The strict way of life and puritanism of the Fremen are manifested in water discipline and in the lack of traditional forms of cultural entertainment. In order to survive, the order of the tribal society inculcates in the Fremen from early childhood that a drop of water can decide life or death. In Fremen society, the spice orgy provides a gateway to exit this form of lifestyle that does not tolerate contradiction, from the desert way of life that revolves around survival. The consumption of narcotic substances during mythical, religious rites is as old as humanity, it can be observed in primitive society as well as in higher forms of culture. Their effect can be observed mainly in the encounter with holiness and during initiation ceremonies, which are often recorded as a state of euphoria or ecstasy.

> Pharmakon is also a word for perfume. A perfume without essence, as we earlier called it a drug without substance. It transforms order into ornament, the cosmos, into a cosmetic. Death, masks, makeup, all are part of the festival that subverts the order of the city, its smooth regulation by the dialectician and the science of being. Plato, as we shall see, is not long in identifying writing with festivity. And play. A certain festival, a certain game. (Derrida, 1981, p. 142)

As a conclusion, I would like to refer to the beginning of the text, *Plato's Pharmacy*, by Derrida, as there is also a more communal interpretation of "pharmakon," evoking saturnalia. The concept of play becomes important here: social constraints are dissolved, the individual experiences the unity of nature, the sacred bond between people through the holiday. The Greek festival cycle associated with Dionysus is initially a music and dance party, a revelry, which later turns into a tragedy under the influence of Apollo. Society reenacts the Dionysian repeatedly so that its body can be purified through catharsis. Similarly, the Fremen can continue the disciplined order of their daily lives by introducing momentary chaos and revelry, which they sanctify with ritual mysticism.

Conclusion

> The mythical significance of vision-inducing psychoactive plants runs deep in human history. Their role was not only limited to forming the basis of ritual ceremonies and expanding the boundaries of human consciousness but also helped in the processing of various traumas, and metaphysical or transcendent fulfillment, so in addition to their complex psychological effect, they also influenced philosophy. The soma of the Vedic religion, the hemp used in Asia and Africa, the Mexican cactus known as the magic mushroom, the sacred drinks of the Indian tribes, and the various concoctions of the medieval mystical movements all show the presence of psychedelic drugs and their ritual, magical and religious use in culture. (Grof, 1980)

In Frank Herbert's novel *Dune*, the spice plays a prominent role. We can see it as a narcotic, a medicine, and a panacea used in various religious rituals. Its effect is complex: it not only sharpens cellular memory but also leads to a certain out-of-body experience, insight into the future, and a transcendent unity with the universe. Its experience is strongly associated with the death-rebirth symbols found in certain cultures, such as water, caves, monster figures, the pervasive blue color, and the act of strangulation and poisoning. Consumers of the spice often feel a universal connection with their fellow human beings, with nature, or with some kind of ultimate principle. In the case of Paul Atreides, the gesture of death and rebirth is actually realized when he takes in the Water of Life, his biological functions are reduced to a minimum. He maintains his existence in a state of willing death without consuming food or drink, while his spirit participates in a metaphysical journey into his own past and visions of a possible future.

> In a great majority of sessions there is an overall tendency toward perceptual changes in various sensory areas. Consciousness is usually qualitatively changed and has a dream-like character. The access to unconscious material is typically facilitated and psychological defenses are lowered. Emotional reactivity is almost always greatly enhanced and affective factors play an important role as determinants of the LSD reaction. A rather striking aspect of the LSD effect is a marked intensification of mental processes and neural processes in general; this involves phenomena of differing nature and origin. (Grof, 1980, p. 51)

As the above quote shows, the effects of the spice often resemble the physiological effects experienced during LSD treatments. Brian Herbert, the author's son, recounts in the afterword of Dune that his father experienced ritual narcotics used in various ceremonies during his travels to Mexico in the 1950s. The spice was born from the fusion of similar psychedelic experiences from different cultures, thus incorporating common human cultural symbols that are related to religion and some kind of universal primordial unity. The phenomenon of extrasensory perception, which can be examined through the spice, allows the characters to confront themselves existentially.

The novel *Dune* addresses complex philosophical and social issues with religious and existential metaphors that are understandable to a contemporary audience, bringing the ancient questions of humanity's philosophy within reach. Spice is both a means of conveying cultural memory and a symbol of cultural heritage, a naturally occurring substance that enables a religious, ritualistic view of the functioning of human consciousness.

In the future, it may be worthwhile to further expand the study with a philosophical examination of other psychedelic phenomena found in the novel, such as the ability called Voice, which shows parallels with the verbal use of *logos* without instruments and its effect on the *pharmakon*. In addition to Huxley's thesis, it may be worth placing greater emphasis on the work of Derrida and Stanislav Grof and further examining the appearance of rituals and experiences related to the spice in the novel.

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The Relationship Between Reader and Writer in Contemporary Haiku Poems

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to look at the relationship of communication and readers' participation in contemporary haiku poems. The poems selected for exemplification in this paper will be from *Haiku Canada Members' Anthology 2024. No Two Alike*. The way in which readers work their way through meaning will be underlined, through free associations and use of universal symbols, and also based on common life experiences. A reader response approach will be adopted, since it has in view the way readers react to any text. Textual analysis will be combined with the readers' emotional reactions and interpretations based on personal life experiences and cultural background. We can speak of communities of readers, in this case made up by the Western culture writers of an originally Japanese poem, the haiku. It is adapted and also compatible with other cultural mindsets. The way readers are engaged in the haiku poetry experience further leads to haiku being used in therapy, to encourage patients to express themselves, and become aware of their emotions, without thinking about the rules of this type of poem.

Keywords: reader response, mindfulness, present, free associations, dialogue

Introduction

The haiku poem poses, to readers, a challenge. This challenge is about the way in which reality is presented, from a completely surprising perspective, differing radically from how we perceive it in everyday life, as well as to how the writers communicate their message. The challenge appears since Western culture members have the occasion to enter the mindset of Japanese culture, where the haiku poem originates.

According to the theory of defamiliarization (Shklovsky, 1917), an object can be called art once it offers a completely different and unexpected angle, marking a break with everyday routine. The haiku poem marks a break with the common perception of poetry using figurative language, such as nature's personification. The haiku offers a poetic experience by juxtaposition, or by the combination of the two parts, which use everyday language. Still, the language is indirect, asking for interpretation of its elements according to the context and based on common free associations. Contact with another culture, even if not direct, not involving travelling and establishing relationships with its members, can itself be a source of defamiliarization (Shklovsky, 1917). We discover another way of writing, reading and interpreting literary works. The indirect communication in Japanese culture resonates with a particular feature of the haiku poem: it needs decoding based on clues, allusions, context, and visual language. Contact with another culture, therefore, is an occasion to challenge our previous expectations, as we see reality from a completely different perspective.

This paper focuses on the communication between writer and reader in the haiku poem, as practised in our times by Western culture members. A selection of the poems in the anthology published by Haiku Canada Association in 2024, entitled *Haiku Canada Members' Anthology 2024. No Two Alike* will be analyzed to exemplify this different communication between author and reader, together with the new perspective on everyday life experience haiku poems can prompt.

Literature Review

The haiku challenges Western culture members' stereotypes and usual expectations about poetry. The haiku is very short, made of visual images only (Hiraga, 1996; Hiraga, 1999; Hitsuwari & Nomura, 2022), and, traditionally, does not contain the figurative language we are used to. Its language is not a stereotypical, lyrical one, but everyday, colloquial language (Kern, 2021; Ueda, 1963). The haiku poem does not contain abstract ideas either. The haiku is, originally, from Japan, but we do not need to include elements from the Japanese culture in it. Additionally, while we expect visual poems to be descriptive, the haiku, through the combination of its two parts, manages to go, from literal, concrete meaning towards figurative meaning. The traditional haiku has been adapted to the mindset of Western culture members. What is more, for Western culture members, this type of poem is not only an occasion to view the world and life experiences from a completely different perspective, but also to experiment with literature.

The haiku is not, nowadays, as it has not been in the past, either, grounded in rules. We can never give a precise, applicable to all haiku poems, definition, or give a set of rules that can

guarantee that we write genuine haiku poems at all times. Even the definition based on its fixed form, three lines, 5-7-5 syllables (McCarty, 2008), can and has been challenged ever since the free form haiku movement (Kimura, 2022) led by Ogiwara Seisensui (1884–1976), and practiced by one of his best-known students, Taneda Santoka (1882–1940). This free haiku movement did not only allow freedom with the syllable pattern and even number of lines, but also with using or not a seasonal reference, *kigo*. Nowadays, writers and readers of haiku poems side either with the traditional form or with the free form, yet Western culture members believe that the traditional haiku is the genuine Japanese spirit, while the free form is a Western culture innovation.

> Even the idea of the haiku poem being about nature can and has been challenged and proved wrong. We can write haiku poems by focusing on contemporary life, on life in the city, and even challenge the borders between haiku and senryu, the latter being about the human world. Nowadays, however, the American senryu can include a seasonal reference while referring to the human world, resulting, thus, a combination of haiku and senryu (Lynch, 1989).

What remains specifically Japanese to the haiku poem is its indirect communication. We may expect this in poems, where readers are used to decoding the meaning, yet the haiku poem uses everyday language. Japanese culture is an indirect communication culture (Ciubancan, 2015), or a high context communication culture (Noma, 2009). The Japanese rely on mutual knowledge of the context in the case of a dialogue. They rely on body language, facial expressions, and various allusions and clues as to what they actually mean when they have moments of silence or hesitation in their speech. The Japanese wish to maintain the harmony of the relationship, which is why they do not wish to offend their interlocutor by refusing them directly, even if it is not something personal, but a simple object that can be fixed. The Japanese do not say that the object is broken and needs fixing, or that a certain part of a project could be improved. They may say that everything is fine, in the sense that they want to continue the relationship, either as a friendship or as work collaborators. An outsider may not understand the right message and believe that, indeed, they do not need to fix or improve anything. The division between direct and indirect communication cultures is one that roughly draws Western and Eastern worlds apart. Direct communication cultures, with the exception of some indirect polite requests, are known for their members saying exactly what they mean. They do not rely as much on body language so that the meaning of the message depends on decoding them, even if body language may say something else than what is being said directly (e.g., that the interlocutor is not honest, but just polite, since they have an interest in the other person helping them out).

Materials and Methods

The haiku poems can be seen as examples of indirect communication, through visual images and words whose meaning depends on the combination of the two parts or on the readers' free associations (Schachter, 2018), like in psychoanalysis. Freud encouraged his patients to speak freely about whatever came to their mind during their sessions, then highlighted for the patient certain recurring elements or elements which he asked for the patient to develop. We can do the same as readers in our understanding of a word, image, or series of images in haiku. We can tie them to our own emotional response and life experience. This reminds us of the reader-response approach to literary works. In fact, readers have a reaction to any text they read (Mart, 2019). They can have an emotional reaction to the text, or they may be prompted by the text to interpret it based on their personal educational background and life experience. The haiku poem does prompt further abstract reflections on life experience, which can reach philosophical levels. Therefore, apparently small and simple, mere descriptive poems, the haiku poems lead readers to offer an elaborate response to the author by engaging with the text they encounter.

With haiku poems, the dialogue may continue further with other readers, sharing their opinion, as well as with the authors themselves, if they are all part of online social media communities. Such communities belong to organized groups and associations from all over the world. Haiku Canada communicates with its members via email and via website. The selectors for submissions offer advice to their members about certain changes they may do to the selected haiku poems in view of publication.

The first noticeable haiku poem is, in the anthology *No Two Alike*, the one chosen for the fourth cover, and also present inside the anthology, namely:

> no two alike
> ordinary beach stones
> shimmer at my feet (Anne Marie Madziak, in kjmunro & St-Laurent, 2024, p. 31).

The author breaks the known traditional rules, since there is no cutting line after the first line of the poem, relying on the reader to separate the two parts. This can create a mutual understanding between author and reader, as if allowing them to look for clues in a conversation with an interlocutor from an indirect communication culture. The use of the personal pronoun "my" may be considered by traditional haiku purists as against the rules, since it challenges the idea of objectivity associated with traditional haiku poems. "My" brings in a touch of subjectivity according to this mindset. However, even so, the emotion is not directly mentioned in words. The readers can deduce that the apparently

"ordinary beach stones" are actually an unexpectedly beautiful sight. Moreover, each stone is unique, which we understand when we read the first line, "no two alike." Readers can construct a further, figurative meaning by moving beyond the concrete reality, reflecting on how not only every stone, but every person is unique, or even every experience, or perspective on life, once we are careful about the details. Additionally, the poem can be about the fleeting or ephemeral moment, to which we pay attention as we are told by Zen Buddhism to live in the present (Simpkins & Simpkins, 2016). No two similar moments will ever be, in fact, the same. The haiku poem grounds us in the here and now, increasing our awareness of what is currently going on. If we look carefully, we can see how no stone or moment resembles another one.

The following haiku shows us the uniqueness of a moment in time:

> father's shirt
> the scent of sunrise
> freshly ironed (Jo Balistreru, in kjmunro & St-Laurent, 2024, p. 4)

This poem shows readers the same importance of a moment in time, a time when beauty is visible. We are also aware that this is all only a fleeting moment. Together with this moment, a glimpse into inner reality is offered: every moment looks magical, for those that are free, especially. The sunrise is described as having a "scent," when readers know that this is, first of all, a spectacular, visual moment. This special moment is translated as a special one of emotional connection with the father, suggested indirectly through his shirt that is "freshly ironed," yet the "freshly ironed" is attributed to the sunrise and to its scent.

The poem below features some "red," and, not only "red," but "forgotten apples":

> bare branches –
> the red
> of forgotten apples (Munira Judith Avinger, in kjmunro & St-Laurent, 2024, p. 3)

In the poem above, what matters is not what is described, which is a late autumn scene, as we readers infer, but how it is described. The attribute "forgotten" of the apples and their redness are striking, especially when combined with "bare branches." Definitely, "forgotten" and "bare" are very close, yet the "red" of the apples is situated in contrast, as it seems to be the opposite of "forgotten" and "bare branches." Once we forget about the apples, they can get ripe and fall, leaving the branches bare. The ephemerality of the scene is clear. Once we do not seize the moment, the apples are gone or, to extend the concrete meaning to a figurative one, the joy is gone. Red can be suggestive of joy, of liveliness,

once we consider a parallel with red cheeks, suggesting energy, good health, vitality and happiness. Another interpretation could be that, with the apples, the color red, standing for life and vitality, is not there anymore. All life has disappeared. Even the memory of the red apples is no longer there.

Another haiku poem present in this anthology which may strike our attention is the one below:

> night walk
> a choice of sky
> or forest (Joana Ashwell, in kjmunro & St-Laurent, 2024, p. 3)

In the above poem readers witness a selection of elements that matter. A haiku poem is characterized by economic style, where no single word is chosen randomly. Any word present in a haiku is carefully selected, as it has its own load of free associations and emotional connotations. The word "choice" shows us the freedom of imagination offered by the sky and by the forest, since we are free to think of unlimited spaces. The walk during night-time is, thus, an element suggesting dreaming, or fantasizing, about various possibilities. The possibilities could be related to our own future and, at the same time, the presence of "night walk" may bring about to readers free associations related to a romantic date. Night-time has a Romantic connotation, especially when associated with the word "walk."

The poem below has a clear emotional charge, although, if we readers come to think about it, the emotion is only suggested indirectly through images and through gestures:

> lines down her face –
> after kissing her father
> through prison bars (Brian Bartless, in kjmunro & St-Laurent, 2024, p. 4)

The lines on the daughter's face may be a simple reflection of the prison bars, but, at the same time, they may suggest, through body language, the way the daughter worries about her father. These lines, since they are "down" the daughter's face, can also suggest the tears falling. The sadness is felt when the daughter wants to remain close to her father, while the prison bars are an obstacle.

The following poem shows the slide from concrete meaning to figurative meaning:

> in seniors' home
> time passes
> searching for new batteries (Frances Mary Bishop, in kjmunro & St-Laurent, 2024, p. 7)

This poem can suggest the slow pace of life in a seniors' home. With the passage of time, as we age, we feel that time moves on slower. We are no longer waiting eagerly for something exciting to happen to us. Even the most common task takes more time to accomplish as we age and as we move slower and with more difficulty. Even looking for new batteries can become a difficult task. At the same time, this scenario can be raised to figurative level. The batteries may be associated with life, as we frequently hear the expression the "life of a battery." The battery may become a symbol for a person's life or lifetime. How much more we have left can be related, in comparison, to the extent to which a battery is charged or consumed. Definitely, the seniors' home suggests the end of life, and the new batteries they are searching for show their wish to still have more time to live. Once they are well cared for in a home, they may still hope to live some more time, to see their loved ones during a visit one last time. This is another example where, like in the previous one, the readers may imagine an entire scenario, or story, starting from only three lines and a few powerful words that can generate detailed free associations.

We human beings always react to the changes in nature. In addition, the environment, of which weather conditions are part, always makes us react emotionally in one way or another, according to environmental psychology (Kals & Müller, 2012). The following haiku poem shows the poetic persona attempting to create a comfortable environment for him/herself, indoors:

> blizzard forecast –
> ensuring an adequate supply
> of chocolate (Alanna B. Burke, in kjmunro & St-Laurent, 2024, p. 9)

We are all familiar with the concept of food for comfort and, in popular psychology articles circulating on the Internet, chocolate is frequently presented as a source of happiness. Readers may reach another meaning of the above poem, namely that our happiness does not necessarily depend on external circumstances. We can change our lives for the best with our own actions. Small gestures such as having chocolate can sweeten our lives during hard times, the latter being suggested by the perspective of the blizzard. We are able to detach ourselves from what is going on externally and focus on our inner world, suggested by the interior of the home where the poetic persona is sheltered from the blizzard. The chocolate helps ensure the creation of a cozy atmosphere, in complete contrast with the blizzard outside.

Nature can offer us moments when we see reality from different perspectives, such as the moment presented in the poem below:

> draining my saké –
> the full moon
> emerges (Pamela Cooper, in kjmunro & St-Laurent, 2024, p. 14)

We can call this a moment of enlightenment, when the poetic persona is extremely connected with the here and now. When such a connection occurs, we can take the time to witness apparently fantasy-like moments which are, in fact, as real as they can be. All we need to do is to take the time to notice them. We do not need to imagine another reality, which, according to the Zen Buddhist mindset, applied to haiku poems would distort reality. We need to allow ourselves the time, through Zen Buddhist meditation, to see every element of nature for what it is in itself, and not to project on it human emotions, or, at least, not by expressing them directly, but by using juxtaposition (Blasko & Merski, 1998; Gilli, 2001), so that the reader can make the parallels him/herself. In the above poem, everything is an optical illusion. The poetic persona ignores common knowledge about the large distance between the earth, ourselves and the moon. The poetic persona sips *saké* from his or her glass, and, afterwards, the moon becomes visible, apparently, in the emptied glass. We readers can interpret this as a daydream, or as a result of the state anyone can go through after drinking alcoholic beverages. Fantasies and illusions may be the result of alcohol, together with defying the usual laws of reality. Drinking alcohol can also help get us into a trance, which can have a spiritual side. Then we can see visions and can connect with another perspective on life, which can be similar to a meditative state. In both states we may experience visions and moments of enlightenment that can translate in moments of deep and sudden understanding of meanings until then hidden. We can also connect the state given by alcohol to the inspiration some poets believed they could get when drinking it, e.g. the Romantics.

Defying what is common knowledge, such as distance between us and the planets, can lead, as in the haiku above, to a fresh, surprising perspective which is included in the experience described by Shklovsky's (1917) theory of defamiliarization, referring to art. Zen Buddhist meditation can become, while it is part of writing haiku poems, very close to artistic perception.

While emotions are not expressed directly in haiku, they are suggested in an indirect manner through the combination of two parts like in the poem below:

> homeward bound
> the scent of sea
> in my shoes (Elehna de Sousa, in kjmunro & St-Laurent, 2024, p. 16)

The present moment shows the poetic persona on his or her way back home from, we infer, the summer holidays, as our free associations—like in psychoanalytic session or like in self-analysis—for the sea lead us to the summer holidays and the time spent relaxing at the beach. The shoes carry on still "the scent of sea," which makes readers believe that the memories of the trip are very fresh in the mind of the poetic persona. The poetic persona is not yet home and has just left the seaside. The "scent" is a word with very strong connotations for the senses, which anchors us, together with the author, in the present moment. While, apparently, the first part contains a reference to the present, and the second part a reference to the past time spent at the seaside, the poem refers to a present time which, however, is strongly connected to the past. The author feels nostalgia about the time spent at the seaside, while he or she looks forwards to being home. Therefore, this is an attitude divided emotionally between home and the seaside, connected by the road. Concrete, visual images, and images related to other senses such as the sense of smell are used to suggest, indirectly, an emotional state.

The haiku poem below is based on a play upon words:

> white lies
> she pins the laundry
> in the sun (C. Jean Downer, in kjmunro & St-Laurent, 2024, p. 18)

The expression "white lies" refers to innocent lies. In the poem above there is a play between figurative meaning and concrete images. The "white" of the lies can slide towards the color of the laundry, and readers may perceive the laundry as white even though this detail is not mentioned. In the second part, pinning the laundry "in the sun" can be interpreted as an optical illusion, as for a moment we ignore knowledge about the distance between us and the sun. This optical illusion can also be interpreted as a fantasy, as a daydream, or even as a story, which can all be called "white lies." Any work of the imagination can be considered a white lie, since it is created for the purpose of entertainment, art, education or comfort of the readers. This is the meaning created by readers, moving beyond the literal, visual scene. The poem above generates for readers philosophical reflections on the nature of fiction and reality.

The following poem shows us an example of seeing reality from a fresh perspective, similarly to the defamiliarization theory of Shklovsky (1917):

> drought
> the vegetable garden
> now a mosaic (Huguette Ducharme, in kjmunro & St-Laurent, 2024, p. 19)

The drought's consequences on the ground can be likened, by readers, to a mosaic, since it dries the earth and creates a pattern which is deliberately made by human beings when building a mosaic. We can find works of nature that can be similar to those of the artists. Knowledgeable readers can also rely on their background of knowledge about the Japanese culture and the way they believe that gardens should be left as natural as possible, with as little intervention from the gardener as possible. In the poem above we see how we can find, effortlessly, beauty in nature.

The poem below presents readers with an unexpected twist, since we expect the word "fluency" to refer either to speech or to the way rivers flow:

> summer
> the fluency of
> moonlight (David Kawika Eyre, in kjmunro & St-Laurent, 2024, p. 20)

Instead, here it is combined with the word "moonlight," bringing about a fresh perception on reality. We usually do not feel that the moonlight is flowing, but, through meditation practice, the poetic persona has managed to perceive reality in a completely different way, leaving behind what he or she has been taught about the world and the usual use of words. The author, through meditation, has taken a distance from preconceived notions and decided to look at reality from a fresh point of view, like a child, seeing the world for the first time. The fluency can also be related to the summer season, when, due to the heat, the moonlight is, apparently, melting, uniting sky with earth. We can also consider that the summer sky is very clear, which leads to the image of moonlight being clear and flawless.

The poem below, through the contrasting images in the two parts, is able to prompt reflections from readers about the way they behave towards their pets:

> lovingly placed
> by the open window
> the caged canary (Marco Franticelli, in kjmunro & St-Laurent, 2024, p. 22)

The contrast between the open window and the cage is the same as the contrast between a sense of freedom and imprisonment. We readers can think about how we love our pets, yet our home and the way we can keep them may not be what they are used to in their natural environment. Even if we place the canary "by the open window," it is still in a cage. Likely, the canary longs for freedom, and does not feel comfortable in the cage. Additionally, we can consider another level of meaning: we human beings can feel constrained by

society's rules and conventions, or by the possibilities offered by our lifestyle. We can feel as if we were in a cage. The open window becomes a symbol of various possibilities we can look forward to, as we do when we hope, and start taking actions in view of our future, related to our personal and professional lives. We human beings long for freedom in the same way as the canary does. Therefore, the open window and the caged canary placed by it can be interpreted both literally—and create reflections on the way we treat our pets—and figuratively, as we can consider these images to make allusions to our human condition, in fact. Philosophers have written on the question of freedom in society throughout time, and the theme of personal freedom preoccupies us personally as well. There are ages when we dream and feel optimistic, such as during childhood and adolescence, about our future, and about what we are going to do with our lives as adults. Afterwards, as adults, we look back on those dreams and realize that we do not have that freedom or have never had it. Life includes plenty of constraints, under the form of social rules, as well as under the form of obligations to family and to our workplace.

The haiku poem below is based on a play upon words, which leads us to consider further meanings:

> english-french military text
> 300,000 men lost
> in translation (R.A. Garber, in kjmunro & St-Laurent, 2024, p. 22)

Firstly, we can consider that there was an error in the translation, and that the figures were not understood correctly. There are different systems of writing even the number 300,000. This is the form it appears in the poem, but Romanians may use the format 300.000 or simply 300 000 with or without a space. We can also refer to the title of the film, *Lost in Translation*, from 2003, directed by Sophia Coppola, where the issue is that of experiencing a lack of connection with others. Its pretext is a lack of adaptation to another culture. Translations also deal with cultural aspects, and we can interpret the loss in translation as the loss of a touch of the original meaning. The loss can also be interpreted as being preserved in the translation, so the expression is not used with the meaning of actual loss. The loss refers only to the lives lost. Moreover, we could also consider the meaning related to the way in which the military text omits from the start these lost lives, since the count was not complete by the time the text had to be written. Going back to the film *Lost in Translation*, we could consider that the men that were lost did not necessarily die, but had lost all connection with the cause, and no longer feel any meaning in their actions and in the war itself.

The following poem shows us how we could interpret it differently, function of how we separate the two parts:

> sign
> for the city limits
> crickets (Gary Hotham, in kjmunro & St-Laurent, 2024, p. 26)

We can place the cutting line or break after "sign," or after "for the city limits." In the first case, we see a sign meant to stop the crickets, as the city has limits for their actions. In the second case, an actual sign shows us that we are at the periphery of the city, and that is the area where, if it is a big city, nature can be experienced and, therefore, we can hear crickets and not the sound of traffic. There is also a third meaning if we place the *kireji* after "limits": the artificiality of the city, and the human action to build it, has its limits, since nature is present even in the city. We are still aware of the change of seasons, of weather conditions, and we can even find crickets in some green areas in the city. A fourth meaning includes sign as a verb, which can refer to a petition in order to stop the city expanding and preserving nature or the crickets.

The poem below can be translated into English as: "sunset/ in a far corner of the orange orchard/ one more fruit" (my translation):

> coucher du soleil –
> au fond de l'oranger
> un fruit de plus (Louise Martin, in kjmunro & St-Laurent, 2024, p. 32)

Here we notice another example of perceiving reality from a fresh perspective and ignoring what we know about the planets. The sun setting looks like an orange, we infer as readers, and is placed conveniently, at least from our spot, in the tree's branches. Since the sun setting means the time of going to bed, we can interpret this image as one from a dream. We already start dreaming, even while still awake, thinking of the night to come.

The following poem can be interpreted as referring to a coincidence:

> thrift store
> in a coat pocket
> to-do list (Joanne Morcom, in kjmunro & St-Laurent, 2024, p. 35)

The to-do list may be our own, which we take with us while shopping, and, on our way, we stop by a thrift store and try on a coat where there is also a to-do list. The poem can

also suggest that the person who had worn the coat previously, and which is now in the thrift store, has some things to do left unfinished. Maybe they fell ill or had an accident, and the to-do list has remained in the pocket of a coat at home. Maybe the poem suggests how the coat once worn by someone has its history, and the buyer wonders who the person was. We can also consider that the to-do list suggests the past, and the way we forget, ironically, a to-do list in a coat we had once worn and given away. This poem has the potential for readers to create plenty of scenarios.

The same situation, which can be interpreted in various ways, is at work in the poem below:

> empty bookshelves
> downsizing
> my expectations (Wilda Morris, in kjmunro & St-Laurent, 2024, p. 36)

The poetic persona may be moving and giving away some of his or her books. The expectations that are downsized may refer to no longer needing some of the books, as he or she is no longer hoping to have enough time to read them. The poetic persona may also be very old and wishing to give away some of the books to others who may have a longer time ahead of them to use them. The empty bookshelves may also refer to a disappointment someone feels when going to the bookshop or to the library and seeing all the books taken by someone else.

A playful spirit is created in the poem below through the play with the words' meaning:

> tripping over
> exposed roots
> family tree (Pamela Jeanne, in kjmunro & St-Laurent, 2024, p. 40)

The tree can be both a plant and a family tree. The first part of the poem can be interpreted as showing us the image of someone tripping over the roots of some trees in nature, while the second part, "family tree," baffles the readers' expectations and can make them smile. However, another interpretation could be related to a figurative one of stumbling over some unknown facts about someone's family roots. Secrets of the family's past, either real or imagined, can influence the present-day generation's perception of the respective family.

The poem below can show us an emotion of feeling enthusiastic about the beginning of the summer holidays, when we can relax as much as we want:

> summer days
> the wild grass in the garden
> neverending (Michele Rule, in kjmunro & St-Laurent, 2024, p. 46)

The word "wild" in the phrase "wild grass" can suggest enthusiasm and joy for the summer days and also the neverending scenarios imaginable about places we can visit. We can even relax at home, as can be inferred from the wild grass in our garden neverending, as we know the garden is a limited space. We can think about games of childhood when we imagined we were exploring in our grandparents' gardens.

The poem below is about the practice of meditation and, since we are reading a haiku, we assume that it is about Zen Buddhist meditation:

> meditation…
> the space
> between pines (Zoanne Schnell, in kjmunro & St-Laurent, 2024, p. 47)

To knowledgeable readers, in Japanese culture, the empty space does not have a negative connotation, but a positive one, since it allows room for creativity (Rozhin, 2013). From the combination of the two parts of the poem we notice a figurative meaning: the meditation practice is a moment of silence or pause, in this case from walking in nature. Meditation can also be interpreted as a moment when the poetic persona becomes one with nature, detaching him or herself from reality, moving towards another space, an experience which is stopped by the pines, representing concrete, palpable reality.

The following poem shows baffled expectations and the creation of a moment of surprise:

> river walk…
> the endless flow
> of our conversation (Michael Dylan Welch, in kjmunro & St-Laurent, 2024, p. 54)

After reading the first two lines, we expect to continue reading about the waters of the river. Yet, the flow is that of a conversation. We witness the switch from the natural world to the human world, from focus on the surroundings to focus on the interaction among human beings.

The reader response approach is suitable for understanding haiku poems, and the examples of readings given in this research were those of the author of the present paper. She has been part of online and offline haiku communities in Romania and abroad since 2014. She has observed and taken part in the activities proposed by these communities, including writing and commenting, as well as improving haiku poems in online workshops.

The relevance of these haiku poems goes far beyond the field of literature and that of the Japanese culture mindset. Writing, reading and understanding haiku poems can become a part of our everyday life practice, the same way as mindfulness techniques

are part of our personal and professional lives nowadays. Writing haiku is a way of practicing mindfulness, or a strong awareness of and focus on what we are doing at the present moment, whom we are with and our relationship with the respective person(s), as well as of the surroundings and of their effects on our emotions. Mindfulness is a type of meditation derived from Zen Buddhist meditation, which allows us to feel in touch with ourselves, with our own feelings and with those of the others. Focusing on the present moment in our activity and in dealing with various relationships can benefit our understanding of others and our work performance, as well as our own well-being.

Results

The poems chosen for analysis for the *2024 Haiku Canada Members' Anthology* show the relevance and practice of the haiku poem nowadays by Western culture members. We realize that the haiku is universal, and by no means tied to a certain historical age and even culture. We do not even need to practice meditation consciously. All we need is to get into the spirit of such a poem.

The analysis carried out in this paper shows that haiku poems present everyday life reality from special or unexpected angles, as well as from usual feelings we can all relate to and experiences that are familiar to us all. Haiku poems have, as a specific feature, the indirect communication of feelings and ideas. Readers are put to work like in Modernist, Postmodernist and After-Postmodernist fiction where an active participation of the reader (Ravaux, 1979) is called for. From all the examples provided before, it becomes obvious that, although an old form of poetry, the haiku is so relevant to our Western mindset today. We all notice our surroundings, we are all reacting emotionally to our environment, more or less intensely, be it nature, the indoors of our home, or our workplace, as well as our city. All the examples provided in the analysis make it clear that the haiku poems are very concise, and no word or element is randomly chosen. These words have the power to generate free associations and interpretations, as well as carrying forward the story or reflections based on the concrete, visual elements by the readers. We understood how readers can develop and reflect on these small poems a long time after reading them, and generating new stories, various scenarios, and reflections.

Haiku poems encourage us to be aware of the present moment, and to reflect further after expressing ourselves. They are a useful tool in therapy. Their short and concise form allows us to sum up what we need to express, without going through long writing and speaking as in Freud's free associations method. Haikus offer a concise form of Freud's free associations in therapy and self-analysis. However, haiku therapy is by no means a replacement for Freud's curing of neuroses.

Discussion and Conclusion

The involvement of the readers in haiku poems and in the creation of their meaning is very clear and very pronounced. The relationship of communication between haiku author and reader is very productive, to the point where readers are prompted to be creative and create a text of their own in response to the three lines of the poem. This paper started from understanding the relationship between author and reader as a relationship of communication. The written text, like any message that is communicated, needs to be formulated by the sender, in this case, by the writer, and afterwards decoded by the interlocutor, who is the reader. A different way of communication function of cultures can be visible not only in direct contact with people belonging to a different culture, but also in the way readers and writers communicate through the literary text.

The haiku poem is proof that literature can be a very down-to-earth activity, connecting us to the highest possible level with what is going on around us at the present moment. Such a poem does not make us escape reality; on the contrary, we get into touch with it at a very intense level. In order to write haiku, we go through practicing mindfulness and meditating without even realizing it. We simply notice what is going on around us, and we use the images to suggest emotions, various story scenarios, as well as to prompt readers' development of life philosophies and various reflections. The dialogue established between haiku writer and reader is visible in the intensity of the reader's response, shown in the reflections, imagining missing details, recreating the scene, as well as various scenarios and simply resonating with the emotions in the poem.

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Romanian Pandemic-Themed Memes on Facebook and Their Contribution to the Climate of Fear

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Abstract

This paper examines the role of pandemic-themed memes (PTMs) on Facebook in shaping public perception and contributing to a climate of fear during the COVID-19 pandemic in Romania. Focusing on a selection of popular Romanian meme pages (MPs), such as *Junimea*, *Omu Paiangăn*, *Ion Creangă*, and *2Meme*, this research employs a systematic quantitative and qualitative analysis of the content shared between early March and mid-May 2020 (covering the local onset and peak of pandemic-related restrictions). The findings reveal that PTMs accounted for up to 65.79% of the total content on these pages, which highlights the dual role of memes as both coping mechanisms and amplifiers of fear during crises and provides insights into how digital humor influences public discourse and how social media platforms contribute to shaping collective experiences during global events.

Keywords: COVID-19 memes, social media, Internet humor, pandemic fear, meme culture

Introduction

The COVID-19 outbreak has been the biggest challenge the world has faced since WW2. After the WHO declared a pandemic on March 11, 2020, governments around the world gradually granted more decision-making power to Public Health Systems. In parallel with medical campaigns aimed at preventing the spread of the virus, awareness campaigns have been implemented and promoted. The constant evolution of the situation has also been subjected to intense mass media coverage (Anwar et al., 2020; Rovetta & Castaldo, 2021; Spulber, 2020; Zakout et al., 2020). Images documenting the consequences (of COVID-19) went viral, and the idea and fear of the virus soon set foot in every household in the country (Delicado & Rowland, 2021; Hagedoorn et al., 2023; Sonnevend, 2020; Ungureanu, 2022a).

During this period, face-to-face activities were reduced or even eliminated (Cohen-Mansfield et al., 2021; Khan et al., 2021; Mali & Lim, 2021; Silva et al., 2021), and online services were rapidly promoted (De et al., 2020; Poon & Tung, 2022), which inevitably increased the Internet use.

As of March 2020, there has been reported an upsurge in the frequency of social media platforms due to the pandemic (Perez, 2020). During the same year, a significant number of academic studies analyzed and debated the phenomenon (Aggarwal et al., 2022; Hovestadt et al., 2021; Kemp, 2020; Paschke et al., 2021). A study conducted in Cyprus revealed that a significant majority of students used the Internet daily, with many being connected for over four hours each day (Tezer, 2020, pp. 6–7). Kaya (2020) concluded that during the pandemic, the use of social media shifted strikingly compared to normal times, as the extraordinary circumstances created a shared lifestyle for most people: living in isolation, trying to protect themselves, and working to prevent the spread of the virus (pp. 4–5). In China, there was a reported increase in Internet dependence, with people spending more time online and experiencing severe Internet addiction during the pandemic (Sun et al., 2020, p. 2). A study in Indonesia indicated that platforms such as WhatsApp, Line, and Facebook were regarded as the most useful for finding information related to the health crisis, and there was an obvious rise in their daily use (Saud et al., 2020, pp. 3–4). In Romania, a study found that nearly half of the respondents felt that the pandemic had a major impact on their lives, while over a third said it affected them significantly (Rus et al., 2020, p. 81). Another study highlighted that during the pandemic, platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, and Instagram saw notable increases in daily use, with Facebook seeing the highest growth (Barbu, 2020, pp. 185–190).

Meme Culture

Despite their seemingly innocuous nature, memes play strong activist and ideological roles, with remarkable influence on social values and political discourse (Carpio-Jiménez et al., 2020; Denisova, 2019; Kaur, 2020; Milner, 2013; Mina, 2019; Wiggins & Bowers, 2014). The 90s introduced memes in online discussions with "Godwin's Law" relating to Nazi comparisons (Godwin, 1994), while Davison (2012) defined them as cultural units gaining online influence. Shifman (2014), Goodman (2021), and Leiser (2022) will later emphasize the dynamic and evolving nature through user participation. Additionally, Milner (2016) and Wiggins (2019) highlighted the intertextual, interdiscursive, and multimodal aspects. In Romania, meme research has progressed with *Țăran* (2014) analyzing meme websites, Berekmeri (2015) exploring content quality, and Soare (2019)

comparing memes and caricatures in political contexts. Recent studies by Hubbes (2020), Sălcudean & Motoroiu-Ștefan (2020), and Ungureanu (2024) have examined meme structure and discursive capacities. Asavei (2020) focused on Romanian cultural specificity, while Mohor-Ivan and Mohor-Ivan (2021) investigated gender stereotypes in memes.

The pandemic increased Internet and social media use for communication, payments, entertainment, and information, which led to a rise in memes as a cultural phenomenon (Priyadarshini et al., 2021; Wasike, 2021). In India, for example, COVID-19 memes have offered humor, information, and updates (Choursia & Sachdeva Suri, 2020). During the lockdown in Colombia, memes were more common than medical content (Garcés-Prettel et al., 2021), while the Polish memes encouraged preventive behavior and critiqued the government (Norstrom & Sarna, 2021). Spanish memes served as emotional outlets during the pandemic (Cancelas-Ouviña, 2021), and in Italy, memes helped people cope with lockdown boredom (Bischetti et al., 2021). In Romania, memes evolved from humorous critiques of online schooling to political engagement and the creation of digital memories of lockdowns (Ungureanu, 2022a, 2022b). They became tools for political expression on social media (Buraga & Pavelea, 2021), reflected polarized discourse and clicktivism (Cotoc & Radu, 2022), and helped map the digital response to isolation (Stoicescu, 2022). Overall, the pandemic has led to increased meme consumption worldwide.

The Culture of Fear

Fear is a fundamental emotion exploited by those in power throughout history (Bourke, 2003; Robin, 2006). Historically, fear has been linked to natural events, witch hunts of the 16th and 17th centuries (Goodare, 2016), diseases like the plague, cholera, and immunodeficiency syndrome (Altheide, 2010, 2016). As Bauman (2006) argues: "fear is more frightening when it is diffuse, scattered, unclear, detached, unanchored, floating freely, without a clear address or cause, when the threat we are supposed to fear can be glimpsed everywhere but seen nowhere" (p. 2). Fear is used to justify social control, framing uncertainty and risk as inherent aspects of everyday life (Altheide, 2006, p. 94). During World War II, the culture of fear was shaped by concerns of invasion, bombings, and the persecution of minorities, including Japanese Americans (Duss et al., 2015; Primoratz, 2010; pp. 76–81; Robin, 2006, pp. 111–113). In modern times, the culture of fear has expanded to include anxieties about epidemics, crime, drugs, communism, and terrorism (Furedi, 2002, p. 172; Lupton, 1994, pp. 49–50; Massumi, 1993, pp. vii–viii, 11–12;

Paulauskas, 2015, pp. 125–126; Zulaika & Douglass, 1996, p. 14). Governments and corporations use fear as a tool to control populations, justify repressive laws, expand military operations, and suspend civil liberties (Altheide, 2010; Corradi et al., 1992; Persily et al., 2008; Robin, 2006; Ungar, 1990; Wodak, 2015). The rise of the Internet and social media has intensified fears of cybercrime, identity theft, and online radicalization (Pearson, 2015; Roberts et al., 2013; Wall, 2008).

Significant consequences can be observed in social policy, public perceptions of social problems, and citizens who become increasingly cautious, paranoid, and perhaps even [more] armed (Altheide, 2003; Kemshall & Wood, 2009). Ultimately, as Furedi (2002) outstandingly remarks: the (culture of) fear undermines trust and social cohesion and amplifies anxiety and paranoia across society. In visual culture, fear has become a powerful instrument of persuasion. Advertising campaigns, mass media, and entertainment industries rely on the manipulation of emotions, including fear, to shape desires, opinions, and beliefs. Through visual culture, fear is, therefore, used to perpetuate stereotypes, demonize certain groups, and foster exclusion (Altheide, 2016; Bleiker, 2018; Furedi, 2018; Huang, 2011, pp. 43–71; Stapleton & Byers, 2015).

Methodology

This research mainly probed how memes contribute to the *pandemic imaginary* and the culture of fear during the COVID-19 pandemic, with a focus on the implicit and explicit expressions of fear. The analysis seeks to answer three core questions: (RQ1) How do memes contribute to the pandemic imaginary? (RQ2) Do memes amplify or reduce the culture of fear? (RQ3) How does humor influence public discourse during the pandemic? To answer these questions, the study used visual content analysis influenced by the culture of fear and media theories of visual culture. Altheide's (1997, 2002), Furedi's (2018), and Bauman's (2003, 2006) perspectives on the manipulation and diffusion of fear provide a framework for understanding how memes operate at both explicit (direct warnings or anxiety) and implicit levels (subtle or ironic jokes). The various media theories and studies of visual culture (Shifman, 2014; Milner, 2013, 2016; Wiggins & Bowers, 2015) offer insights into how visual elements in memes shape and manipulate emotions and align with the study's goal of understanding how fear and humor coexist in digital representations of the pandemic. This study is therefore grounded in literature's emphasis on visual culture's role in perpetuating fear (see Altheide, 2016; Wodak, 2015). Bauman's (2006) view of diffuse fear is also aligned with this study, as memes often convey implicit fear through humor and irony rather than overt alertness.

Timeframe & Platform

This study focused on the period from early March to mid-May 2020 when Romania faced the beginning and peak of the COVID-19 pandemic and related restrictions. This includes the first two months of the national state of emergency. In March, the government imposed major restrictions, including a night curfew (17) and a full lockdown (24). Until May 15, further regulations, such as self-declarations for leaving home and movement limits for the elderly, deepened isolation and boosted social media's role in staying informed and connected.

Reports from the CEU Center for Media, Data, and Society (Holdiș & Dragomir, 2019) and Statista (Sava, 2020; Sava, 2021) were used to select Facebook for monitoring. Holdiș and Dragomir's report maps influential Romanian media and highlights that Romania is a "Facebook country," a claim supported by Sava's findings. In 2019, 90% of Romanians had a Facebook account. Meme pages (MPs) were selected by follower count, with Junimea (1.2 million), Ion Creangă (233K), Omu Paiangăn (234K), and 2Meme (210K) leading the list.

Data Analysis

The research employed a quantitative method using primary data from the social media analytics tool Popsters, which enabled the statistical analysis. Posts were categorized into two groups: pandemic-themed and non-pandemic-themed posts. This approach allowed for analysis of the volume and type of content shared by MPs: pandemic-themed (with direct or indirect references to the COVID-19 pandemic, including topics such as protective measures, lockdowns, social distancing, online schooling, working from home, and other related themes) and non-pandemic-themed (which did not reference, in any way, the virus, the state of emergency, the national lockdown, etc.). For qualitative analysis, two PTMs were analyzed per page (8 in total). All PTMs illustrated have at least 1K likes and reactions. Limiting the analysis to pandemic-related content ensures that the study directly addresses how memes contribute to the pandemic imaginary and culture of fear. At the same time, analyzing two memes per page allows for a manageable, focused comparison across pages without overwhelming the analysis.

To accurately label and assess whether a meme contributed to a climate of fear, it was categorized as "explicit" if it directly referenced fear-related themes (images of virus outbreaks, government restrictions, or health crises). "Implicit" memes, on the other hand, involve more subtle messaging or humor that conveys underlying anxieties or fears

without directly referencing specific pandemic-related issues. Furthermore, the emotional tone of each meme was assessed by categorizing it based on specific fear-related emotions, such as anxiety, dread, and panic. This analysis will include an examination of the use of language and imagery that contribute to these emotions (e.g., key emotional triggers and visual elements that amplify fear or anxiety).

Results

During the mentioned timeframe, Junimea and Omu Paiangăn posted each 304, 2Meme 281, and Ion Creangă 404 times. In all MPs, 1,004 images, 236 text posts, 51 videos, and only two links were found. Ion Creangă posted the most images (311) and videos (18), while 2Meme posted the most text posts (127) and the only links (2). Junimea garnered the most likes (487K), followed by Ion Creangă at 365K, 2Meme at 174K, and Omu Paiangăn at 103K. Junimea also led user comments with 42K, while Omu Paiangăn received the fewest (8K). Ion Creangă's content was the most shared (99K), with 2Meme following closely (74K) despite having fewer followers. Omu Paiangăn had the lowest number of shares (42K). During the specified period, pandemic-themed posts constituted 65.79% on Junimea, 60.2% on Omu Paiangăn, 57.43% on Ion Creangă, and 21% on 2Meme (see Table 1).

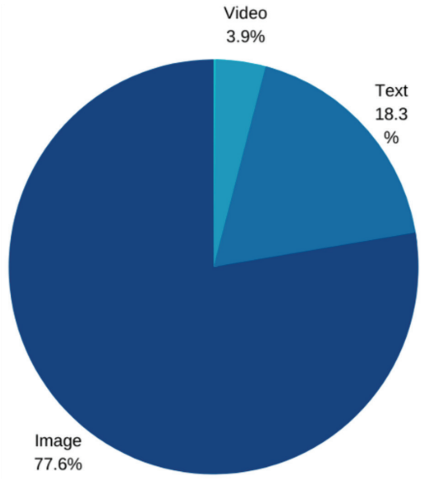
Table 1

MPs' posts from March 10 to May 15, 2020

March 10–May 15, 2020	Junimea	Omu Paiangăn	Ion Creangă	2Meme
Posts	304	304	404	281
Likes	487K	103K	365K	174K
Comments	42K	8K	27K	9K
Shares	66K	42K	99K	74K
Image posts	280	277	311	136
Text posts	10	24	75	127
Video posts	14	3	18	16
Link posts	0	0	0	2
Pandemic-themed posts (PTMs)	**200**	**183**	**232**	**59**
Percentage of the total	**65.79**	**60.2**	**57.43**	**21**
Non-pandemic posts	104	121	172	222
Percentage of the total	34.21	39.8	42.57	79

Figure 1

Post types



Pandemic vs non-pandemic posts

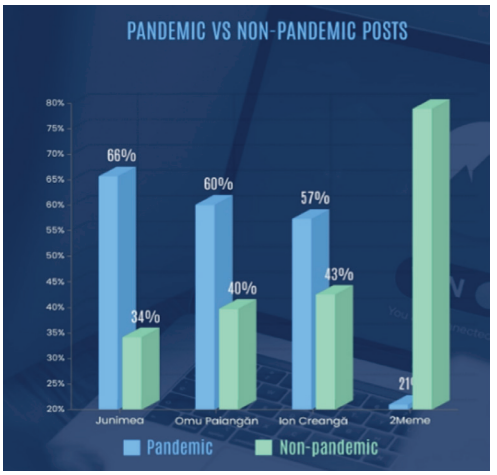


Figure 2

(a) *SpongeBob PTM 1*

Source: Junimea, M.N.

(b) *Naruto Run PTM*

Source: Junimea, G.P.

Figure 2 (a) features three characters from the popular American animated television series *SpongeBob SquarePants*: Squidward (a gray character with a large head and tentacles), SpongeBob (a yellow sponge), and Patrick (a pink starfish). Squidward is inside a building, looking out through a window with horizontal bar-like blinds. His body is turned to the side, and his posture appears neutral or slightly subdued. The window serves as a boundary, separating Squidward from the two characters outside. In the background, SpongeBob and

Patrick are seen outdoors through the window. Both characters are smiling, and their body language suggests that they are jumping, running, or celebrating. SpongeBob is dressed in his usual outfit, a white shirt, tie, and brown square pants, while Patrick wears his green and purple swim trunks. The outdoor environment appears brighter and more vibrant than the interior where Squidward stands. Text overlays clarify the context of the meme: one labels Squidward ("You, following COVID-19 guidelines") and the other for SpongeBob and Patrick ("People 80+").

Generational focus is implied, with one younger individual contrasted against two elderly individuals. The meme does not directly depict viral outbreaks, deaths, or restrictive government policies but uses humor to comment on the anxiety of isolation, compliance with safety guidelines, and frustration with perceived contradictions in behavior during the pandemic. The contrast between "YOU" (the viewer following COVID-19 restrictions) and senior citizens (seemingly carefree, despite being in a high-risk group) taps into subtle social fears and frustrations. The humor, therefore, masks an underlying concern: fear of missing out (FOMO), fear of prolonged isolation, and perhaps a more existential fear that those most at risk seem less concerned about their own safety than others on their behalf. This meme, therefore, plays an implicit role in perpetuating the culture of fear. By focusing on humor it sidesteps explicit pandemic fear but still taps into underlying anxieties about isolation, adherence to public health guidelines, and the social dynamics of the pandemic. It indirectly raises concerns about whether individual and collective actions are justified, appropriate, or fair, feeding into a larger discourse on biopolitical control and the tensions between personal freedom and public responsibility during the pandemic.

The second meme, Figure 2 (b), is divided into four sections arranged in a grid, with two rows and two columns. In the top left section, there is an image of a person running. The figure is blurred, suggesting motion, and is dressed in dark pants and a deep blue top. The person is running toward the right side of the frame. The background appears to be an open area with a sandy or dirt-like surface and no distinguishable features. The top right section contains text that reads, "I'm quickly going to buy a juice." This section has no additional visuals besides the text. In the bottom left section, there is another image of the same person running toward the left side of the frame. The blurred motion and the background remain the same. The bottom right section contains only the text "21:59," representing a specific time.

The meme does not directly reference the pandemic, yet the message taps into the anxiety surrounding curfews or time restrictions. The rush to buy something shortly before the curfew (10 PM) suggests an underlying tension about limited freedom and the fear of being caught outside when restrictions begin. The humor comes from the exaggeration of the situation,

with the image of a person sprinting, specifically illustrating the "Naruto run," a distinct running style where the person leans forward with arms stretched out behind them. This iconic run, often associated with exaggerated speed and urgency in anime culture, heightens the humor by suggesting a near-desperate, almost comically exaggerated effort to beat the curfew. The "Naruto run" amplifies the frantic last-minute rush that many experienced due to curfews imposed during the pandemic, and it reflects fears of non-compliance or missing essential purchases due to time limits, making the meme implicitly linked to pandemic-related anxieties. In other words, the meme plays an implicit role in the culture of fear, tapping into the anxiety and stress of time-restricted lockdowns without directly referencing the pandemic or curfews.

Figure 3

(a) *Angry Pakistani Fan PTM*

Source: Ion Creangă, S.B.

(b) *SpongeBob PTM 2*

Source: Ion Creangă, S.B.

The image in Figure 3 (a) is a meme divided into two main sections: text at the top and image below. The top section contains two lines of text written in Romanian: "My horoscope for 2020: It will be a prosperous year, full of luck, extravagant trips, and much success in the sentimental realm" and "Me, sitting in quarantine." The bottom section features a photograph of a man in a public setting. He is standing with his arms on his hips, wearing a red and blue checkered shirt under a navy blue sleeveless jacket. His facial expression is serious, and he is bald. The background includes several people, some sitting and some standing, with one wearing a white shirt and another in a green shirt.

The setting appears to be an outdoor stadium or event with white chairs visible. Thus, the meme centers on a single primary character: the famous Sarim Akhtar, a Pakistani cricket fan visibly frustrated and annoyed with his hands on his hips and an expression of disbelief and disappointment. Akhtar's picture is widely recognized as a symbol of intense frustration and disappointment, and it vividly conveys boredom, irritation, and a lack of excitement.

Hence, the visual highlights one contrasting theme: the disparity between hopeful expectations and the mundane reality. Although it does not explicitly address the fear of the virus or government restrictions, the message hints at the sense of loss and anxiety that many felt as their plans and expectations were derailed by lockdowns, part of a collective experience across the globe. In a world where daily life, social interactions, and career opportunities are interrupted, humor has become a coping mechanism. By juxtaposing the optimistic horoscope with lockdown reality, the meme highlights how the pandemic rendered even basic personal goals impossible, thereby causal to the culture of fear through the prominence of the unpredictability and uncontrollability of life during the pandemic.

In Figure 3 (b) there is a meme consisting of two elements: a line of text at the top ("grandma starts coughing") and a scene from SpongeBob SquarePants at the bottom. The scene depicts two characters, SpongeBob and Patrick, inside a room with wooden floorboards, greenish-blue walls, and a dark ceiling. SpongeBob, on the left, is standing upright and smiling, with his left arm extended in a gesture. He is wearing his usual outfit of a white shirt, red tie, and brown pants. On the right, Patrick is behind an open, coffin-like black case lined with red fabric. He is also smiling and has his hands on the edges of the case, appearing to hold it open. In the lower-left corner of the image, a white subtitle on a black background reads, "Okay, get in." The line seems to be exclaimed by SpongeBob.

The text indirectly triggers anxiety about the spread of COVID-19, a virus known for its severe impact on older people. The phrase itself does not overtly mention the virus, but its association with coughing, one of the primary symptoms of COVID-19, instantly brings the pandemic to the fore. To put it another way, while the meme does not explicitly mention the virus, it reflects the implicit culture of fear that dominated much of public discourse during the pandemic. Basically, this is a morbid punchline with the insinuation that a grandmother's cough is a direct death sentence (as an exaggerated fatalism). The humor, nonetheless, helps anesthetize or reduce fear by presenting a grim scenario in an absurd, almost surreal way, with cartoon characters that soften the impact of what is essentially a fear of death. By doing so, the meme allows people to confront their anxieties about vulnerable loved ones through laughter.

Figure 4

(a) *Tom & Jerry PTM*

Source: Omu Paiangăn, L.A.

(b) *Flour trap PTM*

Source: Omu Paiangăn, A.I.

The first meme in Figure 4 employs a two-frame, side-by-side format featuring Tom (from the classic cartoon Tom & Jerry) as the recurring character in both frames: the top section contains text that reads, "When it's 3 PM, and you see old hags in the park on a bench"; the bottom one consists of two similar frames with Tom sitting on a wooden chair next to a cropped wooden table with a black rotary telephone on it. In both panels, Tom is wearing dark green-tinted glasses and appears to be holding the phone receiver. His facial expression and posture are determined and grave. In the left panel, Tom is holding the phone in one hand while using his other hand to dial the number. In the right panel, he is fully holding the receiver to his ear. Both panels include the number 112, the European emergency hotline, written in small white text over the phone. The background in both panels features a beige wall with greenish tones and stairs.

The text emphasizes a scenario where elderly women are perceived as violating the rules by being outside in public spaces, potentially jeopardizing themselves and others. The use of the term "old hags" introduces an informal, somewhat dismissive tone toward older individuals, framing them as central figures in the context of pandemic-related vigilance. This choice of wording reflects a mix of humor and social tension, as it taps into the implicit concern about COVID-19's impact on vulnerable demographics. While the humor appears casual (making the dynamics more palatable and less overtly alarming), it masks a more serious cultural shift during the pandemic: fear of the virus and concern for public health began to normalize surveillance and control, even over everyday behavior.

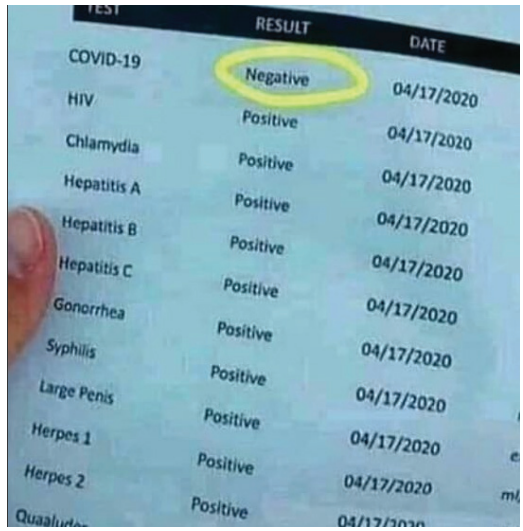
Figure 4 (b) is a repurposed digital illustration used here as a meme template. The scene depicts a cartoon man crouching beside a rudimentary wooden box trap, which is held up by a stick attached to a string. Inside the box, serving as bait, are several packages of flour labeled as "Făină," a staple product in Romania. The text at the top of the image reads, "How to catch a Romanian." The color palette is muted, aligning with the simplistic cartoon style, while the character's comical expression and eager stance further enhance the humorous tone. The setting is a simple room with a door and reddish carpet, but the background is otherwise unremarkable. Stylistically, the cartoon resembles Family Guy and American Dad with exaggerated features and clear, bold lines. The text and image together imply that Romanians can be "caught" using flour (a possible cultural joke). As such, this meme could reflect cultural values around food or perhaps allude to the increased importance of basic goods like flour during the pandemic when people had hoarded essential supplies. It taps into the idea that necessities, especially in times of scarcity, can influence or control people (flour, in particular, might symbolize food security, and the humor here lightens the mood while subtly nodding to the underlying anxieties about shortages or manipulation through basic needs).

Figure 5

(a) *Hazmat PTM*

Source: 2Meme, Ț.

(b) *Test results PTM*



Source: 2Meme.

The fear depicted in Figure 5 (a) is also implicit: a staged photograph featuring four individuals shopping in a supermarket while dressed in military-style rain ponchos and gas masks. These exaggerated protective outfits create an immediate sense of absurdity, especially in contrast with the mundane setting of a grocery store aisle. The individuals are holding blue shopping baskets and appear to be casually browsing, which adds an element of situational irony to the scene. Above the image the text reads, "When you skip school but run into your supervisory teacher in Profi (a supermarket chain)." The composition is balanced, with the four figures forming a clear focal point amid the aisle. The color palette is natural but emphasizes the green of the rain ponchos and the blue of the baskets. Exaggerated protective gear worn by shoppers reflects implicit fear surrounding the virus. Although it is an extreme portrayal, it speaks to widespread anxiety over personal safety and contamination, particularly in communal spaces like supermarkets.

The visual hyperbole juxtaposed with a lighthearted scenario (skipping school and running into an authority figure) serves to diminish the overt anxiety. However, it also illustrates the anesthetization or normalization of fear (being laughed at when presented in a familiar or humorous context). The reference to encountering a teacher during absenteeism subtly mirrors the culture of surveillance that emerged during the pandemic, where people became acutely aware of each other's movements and behaviors, and social judgment or repercussions (represented by the unseen figure of the authority) became ever-present. The humor of the meme allows for a collective release of tension that turns fear into a shared joke and illustrates how easily society can adapt to and internalize these extraordinary measures as part of daily life.

Lastly, 2Meme uses a close-up photograph of a printed medical test results sheet, which appears to be staged or digitally altered for comic effect. The document lists several medical conditions in a tabular format, including serious illnesses like human immunodeficiency virus, Chlamydia, and Hepatitis (A, B, and C), all marked as "Positive." Additionally, there are absurd and exaggerated entries such as "Large Penis" (also marked as "Positive"), blending the serious with the ridiculous to create humor. The text "COVID-19" is also listed, but unlike the other results, it is marked "Negative" and circled in yellow, making it the focal point of the composition.

The yellow highlight creates a visual hierarchy, drawing immediate attention to the irony of the situation. The font mimics the style of real medical documents, which lends an air of authenticity to the joke. The layout is realistic, with left-aligned text and clearly delineated columns for "Test," "Result," and "Date." The results are all dated April 17, 2020, further grounding the joke in the context of the early COVID-19 pandemic. The humor lies

in the disproportionate emphasis on the COVID-19 result, implying a sense of relief ("I'm so glad I don't have corona") despite the overwhelmingly bad news for the other conditions. The meme taps into the collective obsession with COVID-19 from 2020 onward: there was much focus on this one virus, sometimes to the detriment of other health concerns. Thus, the meme clearly engages with explicit fear related to COVID-19 with a witty use of satire to address the broader context of pandemic anxiety.

Conclusion

The research gap regarding PTMs and their contribution to the climate of fear, particularly in Romania, stems from the lack of focused studies that examine how these memes shape public perceptions of fear beyond mere entertainment. Though existing studies aim memes as tools of humor, coping mechanisms, and even political discourse during COVID-19 (Bischetti et al., 2021; Buraga & Pavelea, 2021; Cancelas-Ouviña, 2021; Choursia & Sachdeva Suri, 2020; Stoicescu, 2022), there has been minimal research on how PTMs may have contributed to a culture of fear. Specifically, the interplay between memes' humorous elements and their potential to exacerbate anxiety or fear, particularly in Romania, where memes have been used for activism and digital coping strategies (see Stoicescu, 2022, Ungureanu, 2022b, 2024), remains poorly understood. This gap is particularly important given the rise in Internet use and meme consumption during the pandemic and the simultaneous spread of fear-driven narratives in media (Bischetti et al., 2021; Cohen-Mansfield et al., 2021; De et al., 2020; Garcés-Prettel et al., 2021; Khan et al., 2021; Mali & Lim, 2021; Poon & Tung, 2022; Silva et al., 2021; Ungureanu, 2022a).

The quantitative analysis of Romanian MPs reveals that between March and May 2020, PTMs constituted a significant portion of the shared content. They accounted for up to 65.79%, which indicates the dominance of COVID-19-related content in online humor during this period (RQ1). These PTMs served as both emotional coping mechanisms and carriers of implicit or explicit messages of fear and anxiety. For example, memes like the "SpongeBob coughing meme" (Figure 3b) implicitly invoke the fear of death associated with COVID-19, while the "Hazmat shopping meme" (Figure 5a) exaggerates personal safety concerns by normalizing the extreme protective measures adopted during the pandemic (RQ2). Additionally, the study's findings suggest that humor was used to diffuse the emotional impact of fear and provided a collective space for social commentary on lockdowns, government policies, and public health guidelines (RQ3).

By blending humor with implicit and explicit fears, Romanian PTMs display a dual role. Unlike Indian memes, which focused on preventive behavior (Choursia & Sachdeva Suri, 2020), or Italian memes, which helped alleviate lockdown boredom (Bischetti et al., 2021),

the Romanian ones offer emotional support while potentially amplifying social anxieties. Memes like the SpongeBob PTM 1 (Figure 2a) indirectly address isolation and compliance fears, similar to Spanish memes that served as emotional outlets (Cancelas-Ouviña, 2021). The Naruto Run PTM (Figure 2b) humorously reflects curfew anxiety and implicit fears about restricted freedom. In contrast, the Tom & Jerry PTM (Figure 4a) explicitly critiqued social policing during lockdowns—which reinforces a surveillance mentality—akin to Polish memes that critiqued government measures (Norstrom & Sarna, 2021). Similarly, the Hazmat PTM (Figure 5a) exaggerated contamination fears and reflected the normalization of extreme safety measures.

With 65.79% of memes focused on the pandemic, Romanian memes might have played a key role in creating a climate of fear: the PTMs reflect not only humor but also a critique of government control and display a certain evolution from lighthearted critiques to political engagement that aligns with polarized digital discourse (see Buraga & Pavelea, 2021; Cotoc & Radu, 2022). They also blended humor and implicit or explicit fears with the potential to contribute to a discourse and climate of fear by reinforcing social anxieties (particularly during those times of uncertainty). As fear is used as a tool for control and social cohesion, often justified by uncertain or diffuse threats (Altheide, 2010, 2016; Bauman, 2006), with their dual role of providing emotional coping and highlighting fears, Romanian PTMs fit into this framework. They also exhibited critiques of government actions and public health policies that invoked fear through social policing and the normalization of extreme protective measures, aligning with the ways in which fear has been historically used to justify control (see Altheide, 2010; Corradi et al., 1992; Robin, 2006; Wodak, 2015). This echoes theories that visual culture, including memes, can be a tool for both expressing dissent and reinforcing social anxieties making significant contributions to a climate of fear (see Altheide, 2016; Bleiker, 2018; Huang, 2011; Stapleton & Byers, 2015). Finally, the Romanian PTMs, by repeatedly invoking narratives of fear alongside humor, irrevocably participated in shaping public perceptions of fear.

Limitations & Future Research

One limitation of this study is its focus on a limited timeframe (March to May 2020) and specific Facebook MPs, which may not capture the evolving nature of PTMs throughout the pandemic or their prevalence across other platforms like Instagram, Twitter, or TikTok. Expanding the dataset to include other periods and platforms could offer a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamic relationship between memes and public discourse. Moreover, the article primarily examines how PTMs contribute to a culture of fear, but it does not delve deeply into their psychological or social impact over time.

Future research should consider how such content affects long-term public anxiety, coping mechanisms, and trust in institutions. This could include longitudinal studies tracking the development of meme narratives in relation to changing pandemic contexts or crises. Additionally, comparative cross-cultural analyses could highlight the unique ways PTMs functioned as tools of humor, social critique, or coping in different cultural backgrounds. Such analyses would expand our understanding of meme culture as a global phenomenon while shedding light on its localized expressions.

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Correctional Educators' Metaphorical Perceptions of Their Professional Selves

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Abstract

Metaphor is a widely studied phenomenon, valued not only for its aesthetic appeal and variety but also for its significant role in shaping thinking and cognition. In qualitative educational research, metaphors serve as valuable instruments for depicting existing educational states, revealing new insights into educational practice and theory, as well as for gaining a deeper understanding of educators' world. Metaphors allow for linking information about one familiar concept to another, creating a new understanding through the comparison process that generates new meaning. Educators working in juvenile correctional institutions or reformatories form a rather under-researched community. As they carry out their educational activities in a closed world, there is limited information available about them. This study adopted a qualitative research design. Within the framework of semi-structured individual interviews conducted with fifteen correctional educators, I used the method of metaphor collection based on analogy, using the target concept of *juvenile correctional educator*. The resulting twenty-seven metaphors were organised into source concepts and subjected to content analysis. While the majority of the metaphors pertain to care and nurturing, others point to the closed nature of the institution, suggesting that the focus here is more on the role of the caregiver rather than that of the knowledge transmitter. With this method, my aim was to explore juvenile correctional educators' most complex image of their own professional selves.

Keywords: metaphor, metaphor analysis, qualitative educational research, reformatory, correctional educator

Introduction

Merriam-Webster (n.d.) defines a metaphor as "a figure of speech in which a word or phrase literally denoting one kind of object or idea is used in place of another to suggest a likeness or analogy between them" (Merriam-Webster, n.d., Definition 1).

Metaphors have long been recognized in qualitative research as more than just a linguistic ornament. They have a profound influence on thinking and cognition and help individuals understand complex, abstract concepts. According to Lakoff and Johnson's conceptual metaphor theory, first articulated in *Metaphors We Live By* (1980), metaphors enable individuals to map knowledge from one domain of experience onto another, often more abstract domain. In this process, they generate meaning by linking familiar and unfamiliar concepts, allowing for a deeper, more nuanced understanding of those unfamiliar concepts. This theory has had a substantial influence across many disciplines, including education, psychology, and cognitive science.

Within qualitative educational research, metaphor analysis serves as a powerful method for uncovering the hidden dimensions of teachers' self-perceptions and their professional identities. It provides both practicing and prospective teachers the opportunity to explore and understand their own thought processes, as well as to increase their awareness of the characteristics of their personal theories that influence their behaviour (Fábián, 2015). Pedagogues often use metaphorical language to express how they view their roles, relationships with students, and the educational environment in which they operate. As metaphors provide a unique window into the cognitive structures and emotional dimensions that outline teachers' practices, they help elucidate how they deal with the challenges and responsibilities inherent in their profession (Cameron & Low, 1999; Leavy, 2013).

One under-researched area within this field involves educators working in juvenile correctional institutions. These professionals operate in a unique work environment that combines elements of traditional pedagogy with aspects of rehabilitation, child protection and detention. Juvenile correctional educators carry out their educational activities in a tightly controlled and often isolated world, where the traditional boundaries between educator and caregiver are blurred. As such, relatively little is known about how they perceive their roles or how they deal with the dual responsibilities of education and discipline. By examining the metaphors they use, this study aims to provide insight into the juvenile correctional educators' most complex image of their own professional selves.

The Role of Educators in Juvenile Correctional Institutions

Correctional education is generally referred to as the educational activities that are carried out while an individual is subject to supervision of the criminal justice system (Carver and Harrison, 2016). Educators working in juvenile correctional institutions hold a unique position within both the educational and correctional systems. Positioned as pedagogues, they form a community that has received relatively little scholarly attention.

The juvenile detention centre, or reformatory, operates simultaneously as a penal and pedagogical institution. On the one hand, it is part of the child protection system and therefore holds an educational function. On the other hand, correctional education is a sanction involving the deprivation of liberty for juvenile offenders, who must obey the rules of the institution. This duality creates a complex environment in which educators impart knowledge, foster rehabilitation and ensure compliance with institutional rules.

The role of the correctional educator is further complicated by the closed nature of the juvenile correctional institution, where they must strike a balance between maintaining authority and providing emotional and psychological support to their students, many of whom come from disadvantaged backgrounds and have experienced trauma, neglect, or engagement with the criminal justice system. This unique professional environment requires a multifaceted identity, one that combines caregiving, teaching, disciplinarian work, and psychological support.

Metaphors in Qualitative Educational Research

Metaphor is a frequently studied phenomenon in both cognitive science and education due to its significant role in shaping human thought and cognition. According to Elliot, metaphors play a central role in qualitative research because by their nature, they stimulate the imagination, evoke emotions, and inspire action and change (Elliot, 1984). Beyond their aesthetic appeal, metaphors allow individuals to understand abstract concepts by linking them to more familiar, concrete experiences, thus generating new meanings through the comparison process.

Definitions of metaphor abound, but a commonly accepted one in the context of education is that metaphors allow individuals to see, describe, or interpret unfamiliar educational phenomena, events, or actions in terms of something more familiar (Botha, 2009). For instance, teachers are often metaphorically described as "guides," which reflects their role in facilitating student learning rather than simply imparting knowledge.

Munby and Russell (1990) suggest that the study of metaphors can be beneficial for all pedagogues. In their view, observing how a person describes the world provides insights into how that individual interprets it. Brugman et al. (2019) highlight that metaphorical language helps create cognitive models, which guide how individuals interpret abstract concepts. In educational contexts, this aligns with how both educators and learners use metaphors to interpret complex pedagogical relationships and ideas.

According to Perry and Cooper (2001), metaphors serve as mirrors through which educators can reflect on their professional lives, thereby encouraging continuous and

purposeful self-reflection. Moreover, they enable both educators and learners to make sense of educational phenomena by relating them to something previously experienced (Botha, 2009). Cameron and Maslen (2010) emphasize that metaphors are not only useful for understanding personal cognitive frameworks but can also illuminate broader social dynamics within educational institutions. This helps researchers delve into the relational and emotional aspects of teaching.

Metaphors, as a qualitative research tool, have proven to be effective in various areas of education for uncovering attitudes and beliefs related to the concepts and individuals being studied, as well as for describing existing educational states and gaining new insights into educational practice and theory. Lynne Cameron (2003), for example, conducted an extensive analysis of metaphor use within educational discourse. Her research aimed at exploring the ways in which metaphors are used in classroom settings, how students develop an understanding of these metaphors, and how metaphors facilitate the learning process. It demonstrates that educators use a range of metaphors to bridge and minimize the gap between students' initial and explicit knowledge during classroom discourse (Cameron, 2003). Levin and Wagner (2006) explored student views on writing by examining the metaphors they used in their reflective writing within the science classroom (Levin & Wagner, 2006). Kissné Zsámboki and Patyi (2018) examined the historical changes in the image of kindergartens using the method of metaphor analysis, comparing past and present perceptions of kindergartens with the views of current kindergarten teacher training students (Kissné Zsámboki & Patyi, 2018). Similarly, metaphor analyses conducted in special education have provided valuable insights into attitudes and perceptions regarding special education concepts and individuals with disabilities (Őrley, 2011; Pénzes, 2008; Tamás, 2017; Tóthné Aszalai, 2018).

As far as correctional educators are concerned, metaphors offer a way to articulate the complex and often conflicting demands of their work, providing insight into how they manage the intersections of education, rehabilitation, and discipline.

Methodology

This study utilized a qualitative research design, employing the method of metaphor collection, based on analogy, to explore the professional identities of correctional educators. Fifteen educators working in a juvenile correctional institution participated in semi-structured interviews, a technique recognized as ideal for conducting exploratory research (King, 1994; Sankar & Jones, 2008). These interviews were specifically designed to encourage in-depth reflection on the educators' professional lives, with a particular focus on how they perceive their roles within both the educational and the correctional context. The interviewees were

asked to make comparisons that described their roles and responsibilities, reflecting on their day-to-day experiences working with juvenile offenders. The educators' responses were then classified and grouped according to their content. I used the categories of "target concept" and "source concept" known from cognitive linguistics, which refer to the two entities between which the examined subjects establish a metaphorical connection. The target concept in this case was *juvenile correctional educator*, while the source concepts emerged from the metaphors provided by the interviewees. Given that metaphor analysis fundamentally involves exploring the shared characteristics between two domains (Vámos, 2003), I focused on identifying the common features inherent in the meanings of the metaphors told by the educators during the interviews.

The metaphors obtained for the target concept of *juvenile correctional educator* have been arranged into nine distinct source concepts according to their content (See Table 1).

Table 1

Source concepts and metaphors obtained for the target concept of *juvenile correctional educator*

Source concepts	Metaphors
Caregiver, nurturer	*a gardener* *a desert reviver (person)* *a mother hen* *a lion tamer* *a zookeeper* *a wrangler (animal trainer)*
Family member	*a strictly loving parent* *a strict aunt* *a mother* *a mother and a father in one person*
Healer	*a psychiatric nurse* *a psychologist*
Slave, beast of burden	*a treadmill worker* *a horse (horse-drawn sleigh)*
Leader	*a pack leader* *a training officer* *a coach*

Source concepts	Metaphors
Guardian, protector	*the good shepherd* *a screw, hack (prison officer)* *a jailer mother hen*
A multitalented person	*a polymath* *a Renaissance man*
Educator, legal expert	*a teacher* *a lawyer*
Top athlete	*an Olympian (a competitor in the Olympic Games)*

Research Findings

As shown in Table 1, the most frequently recurring metaphors referred to roles of care and nurturing, such as "gardener," "desert reviver," "mother hen," "lion tamer," "zookeeper," and "wrangler." Additionally, a range of metaphors emerged that reflected professions associated with leadership, healing, and judgment, including "training officer," "teacher," "lawyer," "psychologist," "nurse," and "coach."

Caregiver, Nurturer

Educators in juvenile correctional institutions perform highly multifaceted roles, encompassing teaching, administrative tasks, mentoring new staff, and assisting university students completing their traineeship there. The "gardener" metaphor properly illustrates the complexity of their work, as both gardeners and educators engage in planning, nurturing growth, and creating optimal conditions for development. At the same time, both roles require patience, attentiveness, and the ability to foster growth over time. Similarly, the metaphor of "a desert reviver" highlights the challenge that educators face in trying to transform juvenile offenders who often lack emotional and intellectual nourishment into model citizens within a limited timeframe.

The "mother hen" metaphor embodies protection, care, and guidance. Like a mother hen sheltering her chicks, correctional educators provide a safe and supportive environment for juvenile offenders. They attend to their individual needs, encourage them, and strive to ensure the well-being of those under their care.

Metaphors such as "lion tamer," "zookeeper," and "wrangler" point to the disciplinary aspects of correctional education further depicting educators as professionals who tame unsocialized juveniles and guide them towards positive behaviours by harnessing their innate tendencies. They oversee the daily routines of juveniles, maintain a secure environment, and monitor progress, addressing both physical and psychological needs. They also train juveniles in social norms and life skills.

Family Member

The "strictly loving parent" metaphor captures the dual role of educators in providing care while enforcing discipline and accountability. Reward and punishment are essential tools in correctional education, with institutions often emphasizing positive reinforcement to encourage normative behaviour. The "strict aunt" metaphor suggests a figure who cares deeply but is also willing to enforce discipline. Correctional educators often serve as such figures, being approachable yet maintaining the authority necessary for effective supervision. The metaphor "mother and father in one person" underscores the complex familial roles educators assume, embodying both maternal warmth and paternal strictness to foster social integration among juveniles. They must be versatile in their approach to meet the diverse emotional and developmental needs of those under their care.

Healer

The "psychiatric nurse" metaphor draws parallels between educators and mental health professionals who care for individuals with personality disorders and addictions. Both roles involve comprehensive rehabilitation efforts and require the flexible use of appropriate communication techniques. Correctional educators often work with juveniles who have experienced trauma or have behavioural and emotional disorders, necessitating a therapeutic approach to address underlying issues. The "psychologist" metaphor underscores the necessity for educators to possess qualities like empathy, acceptance, and the ability to help juveniles navigate life challenges effectively.

Slave, Beast of Burden

The "treadmill worker" metaphor suggests that correctional educators may experience feelings of being overworked or undervalued, reflecting the demanding and sometimes repetitive nature of their duties, which can lead to fatigue or burnout. The picture of the "horse" pulling a sleigh emphasizes the exhausting and relentless nature of educators' work in juvenile institutions. Correctional educators, like the horse, carry significant responsibilities,

often under challenging conditions. Their efforts drive the progress of the juveniles and the institution, requiring steadfast commitment. At the same time, the horse pulling a sleigh symbolizes strength, and endurance.

Leader

The "pack leader" metaphor reflects the necessity for educators to be consistent, authoritative, and mentally strong to guide and unify the groups of juvenile offenders effectively. Similarly to a pack leader in animal groups, correctional educators establish authority and direction within the group, guiding behaviour, mediating conflicts, and fostering a sense of community and cooperation. The "training officer" metaphor further illustrates the strict adherence to rules and discipline required in institutional settings similar to military training environments. The educator's role involves balancing firmness with guidance, teaching juveniles essential life skills, promoting discipline, and preparing them for successful reintegration into society.

Correctional educators also act as coaches by encouraging juveniles to reach their potential, providing constructive feedback, and cultivating talents and interests that can lead to personal success. A coach is a professional who leads the training of athletes and not only needs to know the sport's techniques but must also have pedagogical sense and psychological knowledge to prepare athletes both physically and mentally for competitions. Similarly, in their work, educators must consider the juveniles' age characteristics, individual abilities and traits, emotional state, level and pace of development, as well as all circumstances that serve the juveniles' development.

Guardian, Protector

The "good shepherd" metaphor is one of the most emphasized metaphors in the Scriptures. Prophets speak of God as a shepherd but also refer to official leaders and kings as shepherds. The shepherd is a person whose job is to take care of sheep, moving them from one place to another. Correctional educators embody this role by overseeing the welfare of juveniles, guiding them through challenges, and safeguarding them from negative influences. They show the right path, direct, give protection, and provide emotional and mental support to those entrusted to them. An intriguing aspect of the "shepherd" metaphor is that shepherding is not merely an ancient profession in animal husbandry but also embodies a way of life.

One of my interviewees introduced a juvenile correctional variation of the "mother hen" metaphor commonly used for educators: the "jailer mother hen." This term represents

a supportive, nurturing prison guard where the roles of caregiver and supervisor become equally prominent. The phrase is a compound of the slang term "jailer" and "mother hen," highlighting the dual role of the educator as both a caring parental figure and a prison guard who supervises offenders. Correctional educators must balance compassion and support (the mother hen aspect) with the necessity of supervision and control (the jailer aspect), addressing the juveniles' needs while maintaining institutional safety and order.

The third metaphor belonging to this category is the "screw" or "hack." These are slang terms for prison officers and have the role to emphasize security, order, and enforcement of rules. Correctional educators share these responsibilities by maintaining a secure environment, enforcing institutional regulations, and ensuring that juveniles adhere to the established guidelines.

A Multitalented Person

Several interviewees alluded to the fact that an educator must embody the qualities of multiple professionals, effectively filling numerous roles in order to meet the diverse needs of juveniles. Thus, the metaphors "polymath" and "Renaissance man" refer to a person possessing a thoroughly developed personality and universal knowledge, serving as an expert across various disciplines. According to their job descriptions, in addition to their teaching, educational, and developmental duties, they also handle administrative tasks, assist in training newly hired staff at the institution, and facilitate the traineeship experiences of university students. Moreover, beyond their required teaching hours, they also take on numerous additional tasks, either on an occasional or regular basis, whenever the need arises or upon directive from their supervisors.

Educator, Legal Expert

The juvenile correctional educator is also a teacher who deals with teaching and education. As teachers, juvenile correctional institution staff plan curricula, prepare juveniles for examinations, and support their academic progress. Simultaneously, they are expected to be familiar with the most important laws affecting the operation and work of the institution, effectively serving as "legal experts" to ensure compliance and provide proper guidance within the legal framework governing their work.

Top Athlete

It was mentioned several times during the interviews that juvenile correctional educators are looked down on even by their peers within the teaching profession. Despite facing stigmatization within the profession, the "Olympian" metaphor carries educators' desire

and hope for recognition and appreciation. Similarly to competitors in the Olympic Games striving for excellence, dedicated juvenile correctional educators persist in their efforts, understanding that their work may lead to significant positive outcomes even if only for a few individuals. This metaphor underscores the dedication and resilience required to achieve significant positive outcomes, even when immediate rewards are limited.

The findings suggest that correctional educators perceive themselves as multifaceted professionals who must make use of a wide range of skills and expertise in their work. Several metaphors, such as "coach," "lawyer," and "shepherd," highlight the diverse roles that correctional educators play in the lives of those under their care. Whether guiding them through difficult emotional terrain, advocating for their rights within the institutional framework, or enforcing rules and expectations, correctional educators see themselves as jacks-of-all-trades who must be adaptable, resourceful, and resilient.

Conclusions

The metaphorical perceptions of correctional educators offer valuable insights into the complex and multifaceted nature of their work. While the majority of metaphors emphasize care and nurturing, others highlight the disciplinary aspects of correctional education, suggesting that these educators must constantly navigate the tension between providing emotional support and maintaining control. The dual roles captured in these metaphors suggest that correctional educators are constantly balancing care with discipline, ensuring adherence to institutional rules while fostering personal growth. This complex interplay reflects the educators' need to be adaptable, resourceful, and resilient.

Some metaphors underscore the rehabilitative focus of correctional education, drawing attention to the parallels between the roles of correctional educators and psychiatric professionals, as well as reflecting the broader societal role of correctional institutions as spaces for rehabilitation, where the goal is to help individuals reintegrate into society as functioning, law-abiding citizens. The metaphors used by correctional educators provide a rich and nuanced picture of their professional identities, revealing the complex and often contradictory nature of their work. Through these metaphors, it becomes clear that correctional educators play a vital role in both the rehabilitation and education of juvenile offenders, helping them develop the skills and attitudes necessary for reintegration into society.

The picture that emerges from this metaphor analysis is that of a correctional educator who is, in many ways, a "superhero" figure, balancing a wide range of responsibilities while often working in challenging and under-resourced environments. As B. Aczél (2010) puts it,

a correctional educator is someone "whose profession may encompass so many things that no detailed job description can fully capture, and for which even the best training institutions can hardly prepare them" (p. 98).

Despite the difficulties of their work, correctional educators remain dedicated, using their unique skill sets to help, guide, teach, and nurture those under their care. However, their work has got its frustrations and dissatisfactions as well, as reflected in the metaphors of exhaustion and futility that some of the interviewees used. These findings suggest that more attention should be paid to the emotional and psychological well-being of correctional educators, who often work under considerable pressure and with limited support.

By employing metaphor analysis in the context of juvenile correctional education—a relatively under-researched area—this study extends the application of metaphors in educational research. The metaphors articulated by correctional educators provide valuable insights into the cognitive and emotional dimensions of their professional identities and the complex realities of their professional environment. They reveal how these educators deal with the crossroads of education, rehabilitation, and discipline, often in challenging conditions that demand adaptability and emotional resilience.

I believe that my research—despite its limited scope—offers thought-provoking insights into the cognitive and emotional dimensions of correctional education and contributes to the relatively sparse literature on juvenile correctional educators. The resulting figurative language provides an opportunity to uncover and further contemplate deeper connections.

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Rhetorical Error: Combating Post-Truth and AI Nihilism Through Active Discourse Production

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Abstract

Using the classical pedagogical strategies of Isocrates as a framework, this paper investigates how a renewed focus on civic rhetoric in the classroom will allow for increased dialogue and active discourse production between those inside and outside the Academy. Although Isocrates did not use the word "rhetoric" himself, reading his translated texts through a current lens allows the application of rhetoric through renewed frameworks. As we find ourselves mainly existing in a post-truth world, there is a proclivity among many to replace facts with pathos. As Lee McIntyre (2018) explores in his work *Post Truth*, heightened reliance on emotion, social media, and fake news represents a dangerous form of nihilism. Connected to this is the abandonment of traditional media, the dismissal of evidence, and a blatant disregard for the truth—all of which can be considered "rhetorical error." As individuals become more and more distanced from others through a reliance on the digital, they retreat into what McIntyre calls "information silos" (2018). Active discourse production, building on Isocrates' notion of classical pedagogy, can directly challenge these information silos. Hart (2006) argues for returning to classical pedagogy in the writing classroom. This paper builds on this work, suggesting that pedagogy grounded in ideals put forth by Isocrates can directly challenge both post-truth nihilism and rhetorical error.

Keywords: rhetorical error, pedagogy, post-truth, nihilism, discourse

This paper builds on the Argumentor Conference's 2022 call for proposals and papers, which invited scholars to consider "Error" and how they relate to the term and concept. The call reminded scholars, researchers, and educators that Error is a constant, and that we "often find ourselves misguided or confused" (Bakó, 2022). Error occurs in debate,

pedagogy, spaces of controversy, relationships, and more facets of everyday life. Connected to this idea of Error is that of "rhetorical error," a term that can also be linked to rhetorical aberration (Gunn, 2020). The year 2016 and subsequent years have augmented the blurring of lines between rhetoric and other forms of strategic communication, notably that of manipulation and incautious propaganda. As Gunn (2020) illustrates in Political Perversion: Rhetorical Aberration in the *Time of Trumpeteering*, this manipulation is part of a recent turn towards the aberrant and obstructive, manifesting itself through recent and ongoing events that were augmented by the 2016 and now recent, 2020 US presidential election. In short, strategic communication and responsible rhetoric have increasingly fallen by the wayside in the age of misinformation and disinformation (McIntyre, 2018). In addition, rhetorical strategies that promote productive discourse and meaning-making are widely failing.

However, the university classroom can still be a space of intervention and invention, but only for a short time. As threats of AI and ChatGPT loom large, the window for encouraging and instilling the importance of critical thinking is short-lived. For example, a barrage of student-made videos can be found on YouTube where university students offer tips for using ChatGPT without getting flagged for plagiarism, cheating, and academic dishonesty. One example is "5 Ways to Use Chat GPT as a student without getting caught," which has reached over 17,000 views (The Innovation Classroom, 2023). Additionally, a recent opinion article published in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* written by Columbia University undergraduate Owen Kichizo Terry relays how widespread and prevalent the use of ChatGPT is among students (2023). Written firsthand from the undergraduate student perspective at an Ivy League institution, Kichizo Terry discusses the widespread use of the program, which many professors are still vastly unaware of (2023). The article, titled "I'm a Student. You Have No Idea How Much We're Using ChatGPT," highlights the use of the ChatGPT program to complete homework assignments, discussion posts, and papers (Kichizo Terry, 2023). Notably, Kichizo Terry also emphasizes the importance of reminding students of the weight of critical thinking and reflection (2023). In other words, what is the true meaning and purpose of obtaining an education? What is our role as educators in addressing the removal of critical thinking?

Although this paper intends not to discuss the ethicality or use of Chat GPT solely, it is essential to note the harmful impact of Chat GPT and other forms of AI on critical thinking, writing, and imagination (Bishop, 2023; Shidiq, 2023; Yu, 2023). As rhetoric and the importance of civic discourse span disciplines, so does the impact of a loss of critical thinking among student populations and beyond. As Shidiq (2023) indicates, Chat GPT has

the potential to produce creative works similar to the quality of human-produced work. Bishop (2023) calls on students to understand the difference between machine-based writing and sophisticated writing. Bishop, coming from the perspective of a law professor, argues how "[s]ophisticated writing [as opposed to machine-based writing] … requires critical thinking skills that language-generation models do not possess" (2023). Yu, writing from the discipline of Educational Psychology, explicates how reliance on Chat GPT technology "…diminish[es] human thinking and judgment abilities" (2023). A common theme emerges from this brief foray into the implications of ChatGPT for varied disciplines. There is concern regarding a loss of critical thinking and reasoning. Connected to this is a genuine and tangible threat of ChatGPT's ability to create imaginative and artistic creative works.

Beginning to use and investigate the classical pedagogical strategies of Isocrates as a framework, this paper explores how a renewed focus on civic rhetoric and liberal education in the university classroom will allow for increased dialogue between those inside and outside the Academy. Renewed frameworks will encourage discussions regarding the importance of critical thinking and meaning-making. This can address rhetorical error and what Gunn (2020) terms "rhetorical aberration"—unproductive rhetoric that is unwelcome and counterproductive to effective reflection and critical thinking. Conversations regarding AI, ChatGPT, and the regulation of AI programs can also follow. Providing students with tools to think critically about current exigencies such as political manipulation, propaganda, and implications surrounding the use of AI and Chat GPT is vital. As a goal, university learning should promote responsible rhetoric. Responsible rhetoric promotes overcoming rhetorical error—encompassing ideas such as citational justice (Ahmed et al., 2022; Kumar and Karusula, 2021; Kwon, 2022), the use of evidence to support claims, and critical thinking and reasoning, among others.

Although Isocrates did not use the word "rhetoric" himself (Carloni, 2022), reading his translated texts through a current lens allows the application of rhetoric through renewed frameworks. Furthermore, Isocrates is central to rhetoric despite his lack of definition of rhetoric and position among other rhetoricians of his time—as William Benoit states, "Isocrates is without question one of the greatest teachers in the history of rhetoric, if not the greatest (1990, p. 251). This lies in Isocrates' ability to view rhetoric as something that encompasses vital concepts such as "imagination and creativity" (p. 26), as discussed by Erika Rummel, dating back to her 1979 article titled "Isocrates' Ideal of Rhetoric: Criteria of Evaluation." Isocrates did not value a simplistic approach to rhetoric, which promoted "a mechanical reproduction of pre-cast notions" (Rummel, 1979, p. 26).

Rhetoric, as "imagination and creativity" (Rummel, 1979, p. 26), should be a focus of any university course. James Crosswhite addresses rhetoric and reasoning in his work *The Rhetoric of Reason* (originally published in 1996); for example, he highlights how acts such as claiming and questioning are communicative acts connected to ethics. Crosswhite (2012) also discusses responsibility in his book, encouraging students to understand purpose and address "argumentation" with dialogue and appropriate responsible research. This acknowledgment of responsibility is still relevant, especially as the rise in misinformation and disinformation continues—one area that has augmented this is the rise of fake news following the COVID-19 pandemic (Gonzalez, 2019).

As we find ourselves existing in a post-truth world, there is a proclivity among many to replace facts, diligent research, and evidence with pathos, a theme discussed in Bruce McComiskey's 2017 book *Post-Truth Rhetoric and Composition*. Often, the ability to reason critically is left behind in the wake of global events. As critical reasoning falls to the wayside, so does the ability to seek sound and unbiased evidence. By the same token, as Lee McIntyre (2018) explores in his book *Post Truth*, heightened reliance on emotion, social media, and fake news represents a dangerous form of nihilism. Connected to this is the abandonment of traditional media, the dismissal of reliable evidence, and a blatant disregard for the truth—all of which can be considered "rhetorical error." This blatant disregard and abandonment of critical thinking and, therefore, reflection is connected to Gunn's (2020) scholarship, which is noted above.

Moreover, as individuals become more and more distanced from others through a reliance on the digital, they retreat into what McIntyre defines as "information silos" (2018). This term came about before the current boom of AI and computer-generated writing and image programs, but it is just as relevant today as it was in 2018. Information silos will be intensified by AI and programs such as ChatGPT. Retreating away from dialogic classroom exchange (to draw on Bakhtin), AI removes the human-centered goal of information exchange and communication. Building on Isocrates' notion of classical pedagogy, active discourse production can challenge these information silos. Hart (2006) argues for a turn back to classical pedagogy in the writing classroom. For this paper, I build on current times, again suggesting that pedagogy connected to Isocrates can directly challenge both post-truth nihilism and rhetorical error. Returning to civic rhetoric can also now address and challenge issues relating to using AI and ChatGPT in the university classroom and beyond.

To further assess the idea of rhetorical error, a simple definition for the word "error" renders the following two explanations: "a mistake" and "the state or condition of being wrong in conduct or judgment." A simple search for the term "rhetoric" renders

standard definitions related to persuasion and a reminder that rhetoric and logic are among the three ancient arts of discourse. Rhetoric can now often carry a negative connotation—rhetoric in a post-truth and post-Trump era has gained traction as a means of bombast and exaggeration (Gunn, 2020). As a scholar of rhetoric, I understand that how others view rhetoric, as well as the application of rhetoric itself, is varied.

We are constantly in a state of rhetorical flux, as Barbara Biesecker (1989) articulates in her widely cited work regarding the rhetorical situation. As LaToya L. Sawyer discusses in her analysis of Biesecker's "Rethinking the Rhetorical Situation from within the Thematic of 'Différance'" she states how "Biesecker pointed out that deconstruction hadn't been productively appropriated by critics working in Rhetoric" (2012). Sawyer also points to Biesecker's use of "Derrida's [theory of] deconstruction and différance to upset the hierarchy altogether," with the hierarchy being Bitzer's notion that the rhetorical situation is always dependent on the event itself (2012). Thinking of rhetoric in flux and drawing on Edbauer's (2005) theory of rhetorical ecologies is also necessary when considering rhetoric's role in critical thinking, knowledge acquisition, and meaningful discourse production.

We also must turn to Andrea Lunsford's well-known and cited definition of rhetoric—"rhetoric is the art, study, and practice of human communication" (Hallsby & Jones, 2022). It is useful to focus on communication here, as well as Lunsford's view that rhetoric is a foundation—a foundation that should be used for ethical communication and discourse. In her 2012 lecture titled "The Role of Rhetoric (and Social and Other Media) Writing in 21st Century Universities," Lunsford also illustrates the idea of "rhetrickery"—a term defining rhetoric as "as a bag of cheap tricks, the veil of truth, or mere words." Although we cannot fully move away from "rhetrickery" and irresponsible uses of rhetoric by some, it should be a goal of rhetoric scholars to address the concept of rhetorical error. If the purpose of ethical and responsible rhetoric is to encourage accountable meaning-making, reflection, and critical thinking, then these skills need to be a continued focus. This is especially paramount for pedagogy and teaching, as rhetoricians are also professors, teaching in the space of a university classroom.

This renewed focus on civic rhetoric in the classroom will allow for increased dialogue between those inside and outside the Academy. As both a teacher and practitioner of rhetoric, I aim for rhetoric to be inclusive and accessible—in my opinion, everyone can promote positive change and action through discourse and communication. The teachings of Isocrates have long been connected to rhetorical studies and pedagogy—but this interest should be renewed in the wake of our post-truth era. The edited collection *Isocrates and Civic Education* (Poulakos and Depew, 2004) is one collection of scholarship addressing

Isocrates and education. One essay of note, "Isocrates' Civic Education and the Question of Doxa," also written by Poulakos (2004), considers *doxa* (here, in the sense of judgment). Isocrates taught elements of persuasion but was mainly interested in teaching his students how to make sound judgments within the political arena (Poulakos, 2004). Hearkening back to the work of Gunn (2020), this is one area that has been lacking—at least in the American political arena. Another essay of note, "Logos and Power in Sophistical and Isocratean Rhetoric" by Ekaterina V. Haskins (2004), recalls Isocrates and his reaction and opposition to Gorgias, who depicted rhetoric as a "powerful lord." Isocrates was not supportive of selfish rhetoric (Haskins, 2004). Additionally, Haskins (2004) does not regard Isocrates as an elitist—a productive claim when considering Isocrates and his role in current pedagogy in the modern university classroom.

Isocrates has also been used as a framework to teach technical writing (Brizee, 2015; Dubinsky, 2002; Haskins, 2004; Simmons and Grabill, 2007; Scott, 2009). Allen Brizee, in their article "Using Isocrates to Teach Technical Communication and Engagement," explains how "…integrating Isocrates into the pedagogical framework of civic engagement can help technical communication students better understand their rhetorical situations and the approaches necessary for collaborative knowledge building" (2015, p.135). This notion of collaboration is critical here, as technical communicators often work both in and out of the Academy. Moreover, Simmons and Grabill argue that without rhetorical theory, "it is difficult to foster collaborative knowledge building between civic and academic stakeholders" (2007, cited in Brizee, 2015, p. 135). Collaborative knowledge building between stakeholders can also apply to more significant issues addressed in this paper, such as ethicalities surrounding the regulation of AI and Chat GPT. Furthermore, in "Service Learning as a Path to Virtue: The Ideal Orator in Communication," Dubinsky (2002) explores connections to service learning and classical rhetoric—yet another way to foster collaboration and dialogic exchange with those outside the university setting.

Similarly, collaborative knowledge building can help us address "rhetorical error" and the by-products of rhetorical error. Again, drawing on McIntyre (2018), he clarifies how a heightened reliance on emotion, social media, and fake news represents a dangerous form of nihilism. For example, McIntyre (2018) discusses how confusion over verifiable facts (like who won the popular vote in the 2016 election) does not happen by accident. There is always a group that will stand to profit, or it may be for the power that comes from being able to now lie without consequences. As with propaganda, the goal is not to expose the truth but rather to demonstrate power over the truth itself. In short, reality is being constructed and created. Similarly, a false creation of truth relates to AI's creation

of knowledge and creative works. Removing the very human notion of creativity, imagination, or critical thinking is highly dangerous. And to reiterate, even before the onslaught of AI, there was a propensity to dismiss critical thinking and reflection.

As I have indicated, individuals continue to become more and more distanced from others through a reliance on the digital, retreating into information silos (McIntyre, 2018). Information silos threaten education, personal relationships, and overall society on many levels. These silos remove any possibility of productive discourse or meaning-making. As professors, how would we be able to instruct those already encapsulated in a silo of their own beliefs—beliefs which might now be viewed as "facts." As a professor teaching at a small college in the American South, I can attest that these information silos are typical and can make teaching and dialogic exchange a challenge. Active discourse production, building on Isocrates' notion of classical pedagogy, can directly and actively challenge these information silos.

Currently, I am designing a syllabus for a new class I plan to teach, tentatively titled "Civic Rhetoric and Communication: Challenging Disinformation, Misinformation, and a Post-Truth Society through Active Discourse and Meaning Making." Using the framework of scholars of classical rhetoric and technical communication, with a focus on *Technical Communication After the Social Justice Turn* (2019), my goal is to design a course, syllabus, and curriculum which will directly challenge post-truth and AI nihilism, the imminent danger of information silos, and the social inequities perpetuated and augmented by these constructs.

As this paper concludes, I now turn to the audience while also considering varied social and cultural contexts. I encourage thinking about the following questions through a lens productive to your own classroom and pedagogical methods: How might we promote reflection in a post-truth global society? How might we use elements from Isocrates and classical pedagogy in new ways in writing and other courses? How can we address the very real issues of Chat GPT and AI, further removing the possibility of imagination and critical thinking? Now, with these very real concerns about AI's impact on writing and education, there are equally critically critical concerns over white supremacy and misogyny in the metaverse and virtual reality. For lack of a sufficiently scholarly way to say this, the future is scarier than ever. We might not be able to catch up to ourselves. As global researchers, scholars, and teachers, how might we promote the space and time for reflection and critical thinking? I encourage us to continue conversations through cross-cultural exchange and dialogue.

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The Inspirers of a Modernist Artist Identity: Le Corbusier's Relationship with Naive and African Art

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Abstract

This study takes as its starting point a painting by André Bauchant, a naïve painter who inspired the modernists, most notably architect Le Corbusier. Bauchant's *Bouquet Le Corbusier* (1927), which features a large vase and the figures of Le Corbusier and his wife shrunk to the size of ants, was given to Le Corbusier as a gift. Bauchant was a gardener who served on the front lines during the First World War, and he did not start painting until reaching old age. In addition to André Bauchant Le Corbusier's other favorite painter was the indigenous, self-taught African artist Kalifala Sidibé. Le Corbusier bought many of his paintings and even wrote a book about him. We know from contemporary photographs that Le Corbusier was attracted not only to naïve paintings but also to artists who lived natural lifestyles. Indeed, Le Corbusier regularly painted and drew nude in his home. Le Corbusier was searching for a way to return to a more natural and ecological orientation that diverged from the path that European civilization seemed to be taking. In this quest, he drew inspiration from many sources, and his home was very much like a *Kunst-* und *Wunderkammer* room that gathered together the works of naïve and indigenous painters, as well as seashells, snail shells, and prehistoric sculptures. In this paper, I examine one of the sources of Le Corbusier's inspiration: his relationship with naïve artists. I explore the modern European artist and star architect's relationship to autodidactic and African art, as well as his socio– and mental–historical background.

Keywords: Le Corbusier, André Bauchant, Kalifala Sidibé, naïve art

Smoke. Champagne. Jazz. Victor Vasarely, Hemingway, Scott Fitzgerald, Picabia, and Le Corbusier are all in the same room together; however, they are there independently of each other, and are unaware of one another's presence (Dana & Vasarely, 2022, pp. 64–65).

They all came to the legendary Negro Ball at the Montparnasse Club to hear Josephine Baker. After listening to the singer's performance, Le Corbusier commented, "This American music of Negro origin has a modern and invincible lyrical force, and I see in it the basis of a musical feeling for life that expresses the new age and renders obsolete the prevailing European solutions" (Vadas, 1983, p. 106).

In the 1920s and 1930s, there was growing interest in Europe in Black culture, especially Black music and revues. By the turn of the century, the magical power of African masks and sculptures had captivated the Cubists. So-called "Negro painting," however, was a novelty, and one of its first patrons was Le Corbusier, then an internationally renowned architect. For centuries, panel painting had been unknown to the "natives" of the British-ruled Nigerian colonies; however, the art education initiatives of the École Coloniale (Colonial School) led to the introduction of a growing number of fashionable African painters in Paris in the late 1920s. (Yanagisawa, 2014, pp. 97–108). These painters made their mark on the art market. Swiss-born Le Corbusier (real name Charles-Édouard Jeanneret) had been living in the French capital for 20 years (Nagy, 1984, p. 7). He was passionate about what he called "naïve" and "primitive" art. According to the contemporary perception of the word, *primitive* from the source of ancient African art (l'art primitif africain), was used as an artistic notion rather than a quality attribute. He decorated his home with such works and was a dedicated collector. For Le Corbusier, these works served as a kind of *ars poetica* an artistic guide.

It is not well known that Le Corbusier was actually not a trained artist. In his book *Modulor*, Le Corbusier writes:

> Our man was self-taught. He escaped formal education. That is how he came to be ignorant of the canonical rules enacted and promulgated by the academy. And he escaped the academic spirit, kept his head clear and his nose alert. (1971, p. 29)

Indeed, Le Corbusier forged his autodidacticism into a virtue, which conformed with the fashionable notion of the avant-garde artist as a "genius without artifice," who is independent of schools and styles and preserves his artistic individuality. The legends he created about himself as an artist were an important component of his self-branding; by Le Corbusier's own account, his natural talent had developed independently from the "bourgeois" stylistic practices of the École des Beaux-Arts (Ybl, 1958, p. 5). Indeed, he left school at the age of ten and, like Giotto or Pliny learned to paint on his own without a teacher. At the age of 17, he designed his first building in his own mind. Additionally, he passed a drawing instructor exam—the only drawing exam he ever passed in his life—only

so that he could take a job as a teacher. The label of self-taught genius can also be applied to Picasso, who, although once a registered student at art school, never actually attended a single seminar (Zinke, 2008, pp. 67–68, p. 92). Lacking a degree in architecture, Le Corbusier later had to prove his professional credentials as an architect. For this purpose, he often made appearances in scholarly settings. For instance, he took an opportunity to be photographed with Albert Einstein and regularly stood for photographs at Cambridge. The main driving force behind Le Corbusier's attraction to the "naïve" and "primitive" essentially derived from the fact that he was self-taught.

There is also a Hungarian connection in an important moment from Le Corbusier's life. In 1911, August Klipstein, an art historian from Munich, traveled with Le Corbusier, who was then a student, on a grand tour along the Danube, eventually taking him to Tabán in Budapest. Le Corbusier wrote:

> At the foot of the hill, near the Citadel, old huts are like flowers among the acacia trees. Simple buildings. Their walls cling to each other. Trees grow out of them. They were born naturally in this turbulent land. We stayed for hours looking at this peaceful mountain. (Vadas cites Le Corbusier, 1987, p. 22)

It was then that Le Corbusier developed the concept of combining nature and architecture, which ignited within him a fascination for folk art and solutions from ancient architecture (Le Corbusier, 1968, p. 153).

In 1917, Le Corbusier moved into his first studio apartment in Paris, his "laboratory" at 20 Rue Jacob, where he worked until 1933. Painting became a field of experimentation and exploration for him. He and Amédée Ozenfant developed purism, a method for preserving the intellectual purity of Cubism and defending an order based on geometry that was free of decorative elements. He published his artistic ideas in a magazine they published together titled *L'Esprit Nouveau* (Besset, 1968). He first encountered naïve art in 1921 at French naïve painter André Bauchant's exhibition at the *Salon d'Automne*, where Bauchant presented his large-scale painting *Ulysses and the Sirens*, which was Le Corbusier's mythical alter ego, (Rüegg, 2017, pp. 71–72) along with eight other important works (von Moos, 2017, p. 262). Le Corbusier's admiration for Bauchant is reflected in the fact that he bought several of his paintings off the wall and published a treatise on the work of Bauchant, who at the time was a 48-year-old gardener from Auzouer-en-Touraine—hence the flower motif that covers Bauchant's paintings (Southgate, 2011, p. 32). In his treatise, Le Corbusier praised Bauchant's enchanting naivety and his willingness to defy the classical aesthetic canon (De Fayet, 1922, p. 2).

Le Corbusier wrote of Bauchant, "You worked hard, like a man possessed, from dawn till dusk... You fought a heroic battle with the private and the mockery of those around you" (Weber, 2008, pp. 526). At the time, even collectors of Henri Rousseau considered Bauchant's paintings too primitive—a view that only changed when art dealer Jeanne Bucher saw the magical Bauchant collection at Le Corbusier's home (Weber, 2008, p. 526). Le Corbusier, an architect, and Bauchant, a painter, developed a close friendship, as evidenced by the fact that Bauchant painted two intimate portraits of Le Corbusier. In 1924, he painted a portrait of Le Corbusier with his future wife, Yvonne Gallis, in which the former appears somewhat stiff, dressed in a suit, and the latter appears as a lively young woman who resembles a flamenco dancer. In 1927, Bauchant painted Le Corbusier and his cousin and business partner, Swiss architect Pierre Jeanneret, in a richly detailed landscape. Le Corbusier wore a brown trench coat while standing in front of a bridge over a valley, the bridge symbolized architecture, with Pierre Jeanneret, while Yvonne, a modern woman, is barefoot and holding a bouquet of flowers while sitting at the foot of a tree.

On the wall of Le Corbusier's study was a typical Bauchant floral still life titled *Bouquet Le Corbusier*. This commissioned work was unique for being unframed, with the edges of the canvas visible. It was fixed to the wall at the corners—as if it were a tapestry—between a period rowing machine, an empty frame, and a pile of books.

Other works in Le Corbusier's collection include *Hurricane at Saint Brice* (1931), *The Visit of the Bride* (1928), and an Adam and Eve painting he bought from a friend after visiting the Carthusian monastery in the Ema Valley near Florence. The structure of the monastery, with its interior spaces connected organically to the garden, introduced to Le Corbusier's architectural practice the concept of paradise on Earth (which informed his -shaped dwellings), an articulation of the relationship between nature and architecture, exterior and interior. It was at this time that he wrote a study of Nicolas Poussin's *Spring or Paradise on Earth* (1660–1664) for *L'Esprit Nouveau* and added to his collection Bauchant's painting of the first human couple (Suárez, 2014, pp. 62–63).

Among the Bauchant works, the religiously themed painting *The Coronation of Mary*, which can be interpreted as *ars poetica*, played a prominent role. It was hung in the bedroom of Le Corbusier's new apartment at 24 Rue Nungesser-et-Coli within an exciting interior. The built-in wardrobe in the living room doubled as a door to the bedroom, and to close it, a complete wardrobe had to be pushed through the doorway, like a stone slab rolling in front of the entrance to a rock cave. In the bedroom, there was an anthropomorphic vase (for Le Corbusier, the most erotic sex symbol), a washbasin, and a marriage bed with the crowning of Mary above it. The image ironically mixes ancient mythology and Christian iconographic elements.

The halo of the deity enthroned above the heads of Mary and Christ is pierced by horns and surrounded by naked angels in a Bacchanalian ceremony. The motifs of the painting unite the Dionysian and Apollonian worlds, reflecting Le Corbusier's own personality (Menin & Samuel, 2002). The friendship between Le Corbusier and Bauchant lasted for the rest of the painter's life.

Kalifala Sidibé (1900–1930), who was from French Sudan (present-day Republic of Mali), encountered panel painting through missionary and colonial art programs in the colonies in the 1920s (Cohen, 2020, pp. 189–191). Little has been written about Sidibé and, with the exception of a few pieces, the whereabouts of his works are unknown. According to exhibition catalogs published during his lifetime, he produced approximately 40 to 50 works, and he worked on each individual work for considerable lengths of time (Yanagisawa, 2014). His first exhibition was held in 1929 at the Georges Bernheim Gallery in Paris, with an introduction by Le Corbusier, historian Georges Huisman, and writer Roland Dorgelès. Dorgelès states that Sidibé enjoyed yams, loved crocodiles, and dried meat on the roof of his house. The intellectuals of the time made a distinction between the "genuine" and "unpolluted Negro" and the already "corrupted," or cultured, Black painter. Sidibé belonged to the former group, and his works were considered "authentic" creations that provided a "real" picture not only of the African landscape but of the Black man as well.

One of the anecdotes closely associated with him tells of his becoming a painter: One day, Sidibé crouched down in front of his hut and painted his wife's portrait in green and red on a canvas spread out on the ground. He did this without any training, like the young Giotto: "he became an artist, just like Giotto, without knowing what is art" (Chavance, 1929, p. 2). Another legend purports that his instinctive talent was bestowed upon him by the gods and other spirits of his tribe, who called upon him to paint (Le Corbusier, Dorgelès & Huisman, 1929). His exotic aura was reinforced by two photographs of him that have been widely reproduced: one showing him crouched, painting with rudimentary tools on a piece of cloth laid out on the ground, and another showing him posing with his naked children in front of his hut, on top of which he is drying pieces of meat and paintings (Yanagisawa, 2014). This is, of course, the stereotypical European image of the "primitive native," and Le Corbusier was perhaps the only one among his contemporaries to be interested in the Persian, Hindu, and Arab elements in Sidibé's paintings rather than the "typically African" elements (Le Corbusier, Dorgelès & Huisman, G., 1929). Sidibé died at the age of 30 in a drunken stupor following a successful exhibition of his work in Paris—as if there were a causal link between his tragic end and his initiation into the European art world. It was not by chance that a contemporary of Roland Dorgelès addressed him with the following line: "If you love Caliphala, leave her alone! Let him live peacefully in his family, in his village" (Chavance, 1929).

During Sidibé's short career, he became noticed by Le Corbusier, who bought more of his paintings and wrote articles about him. Le Corbusier was attracted to Sidibé's childlike, magical paintings. His fascination with Sidibé led to the introduction of animals, hybrid creatures, bulls, and minotaur in Le Corbusier's painting at the turn of the 1930s and the incorporation of curved lines into his architecture (Rosales, 2012, p. 105). It was at this time that he began to modernize the city of Algiers, and for the construction of Maisons Jaoul, he worked with Algerian master builders using traditional tools—ladders, hammers, and nails without the use of synthetic materials (Maniaque, 2008–2009, p. 107). We know from contemporary photographs that Le Corbusier was painting in the "native way"—that is, naked—during this period. His study was decorated with a bouquet of Bauchant flowers and a painting of Sidibé's rampaging elephants and lions. He also owned a painting of a giant mythical snake devouring a man, and a painting of an African hunting team. Le Corbusier bucked contemporary interior design trends by creating a *Kunst- und Wunderkammer* room in his house defying the preference for purist, functionalist interiors stripped of images (Rüegg, 2017, pp. 74–75). On his first visit to Le Corbusier's cluttered, untidy home, his regular photographer, Brassaï (Gyula Halász jr.), was unsure whether there was even a bathroom in it. In the mid-1930s, Le Corbusier moved into a penthouse and transformed its rustic brick walls into an exhibition space for expressing his emotions through using objects (Rüegg, A. 2017, p. 67). "I am attracted to all natural beings," Le Corbusier wrote in the opening line of his autobiography published in the same year (1935, p. 1). On the wall and on the floor Le Corbusier had placed objects and artistic works that represented, for him, nature and naturalness: prehistoric pots, naive and primitive paintings, antique torsos, stones of particular shapes, and shells. Art collector Louis Carré found this private collection—which was reminiscent of the Surrealists' evocative objects—to be immensely inspiring, an "ideal museum." He was so impressed that he organized a ten-day mini-exhibition in July 1935. As a gesture of "modern sensibility," Le Corbusier placed the contemporary works he wished to show among the objects in the collection.

In Le Corbusier's home—which was also a metaphor for his own concept of art—the values of ancient, primitive, and naïve art, as well as classical antiques, coexisted peacefully. Le Corbusier, the legendary suit-clad figure of functionalist architecture, was, in fact, a self-taught nude painter who was fascinated by the cultural values of the natural world, embraced the Sudanese Caliphate, and could not come to terms with the loss of his friend Bauchant for the rest of his life. Le Corbusier was looking for a way to return to something closer to nature, to an ecological system, like the one towards which European civilization is moving. Looking at his sources reveals a more sensitive face of the modernist architect.

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Book Review. "Aesthetically Sovereign"—Barker Debra K. S. and Conie A. Jacobs, Eds. *Postindian Aesthetics: Affirming Indigenous Literary Sovereignty*

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Anishinaabe writer Gerald Vizenor announced that "The postindian warriors of survivance" counter the literature of domination with their own simulations of survivance. Contemporary Indigenous literary "warriors" actively engage in the repudiation of "inventions and final vocabularies of manifest manners" (Vizenor, 1994, p. 167) through using imaginative strategies, as they combat the dominant culture's inventions of tribal identities. As such, the "postindian" is a self-representation of Indigenous identity that eclipses the dominant culture's inventions of the *indian* (Vizenor, 1994, p. 11). *Postindian Aesthetics* is a collection of essays that incarnates this Vizenorian vision. From the outset, the title and the cover proclaim the outcome. The choice of enlisting Onondaga/ Nez Perce artist Frank Buffalo Hyde for the cover is, indeed, befitting the goal of the project: "a book that argues for a literary canon that resists colonizing stereotypes of what has been and often still is expected in art produced by American Indians" (Barker & Jacobs, 2022, n.p.). With its depiction of a red buffalo posing for a selfie it bespeaks of the rejection of *politics of recognition* (Coulthard, 2014) through a self-representative stance. Postindians "do not have to dress up in beads and feathers in order to be powerful" (Warrior, 1995, p. 115), they maintain traditional values while at the same time reclaim the power of definition by repudiating the "fugitive poses" of colonial fantasies.

A collection of essays published in 2022, edited by Debra Barker (Rosebud Sioux Tribe) and Connie Jacobs, *Postindian Aesthetics* opens with Osage scholar Robert Warrior's accolade "my favorite thing about this book is the way as I was reading it, I found myself wanting to read poems and stories by the authors featured in these chapters"

(Barker & Jacobs, 2022, Foreword, p. xi), readers are inevitably drawn to leaf through the pages of the book. The collection of essays opens on a few lines acknowledging the people as Native American tradition would have it. A graphic poem by Esther Belin, part of the constellation of contributors to this collection of essays, sets the tone and particularity of this book, and it is comprehensive of various perspectives and introductory of Indigenous voices that are not widely discussed. Structured in four parts and nineteen essays, this book not only brings new voices to the Native American studies arena but also re-enlivens the memory of outstanding Indigenous creative writers who joined the Spirit world. Unfolding either in personal interviews or in academic formal language, the essays testify to the personal bias that undergirds the project of this book. Most contributors display, to varying degrees, their proximity to the subject of their essays.

The book is cleverly structured to a beginner's taste, notably the uncanny parallels with the Native American worldview of to the circle of life, a theme that recurs throughout the book, especially with California-based Navajo poet Esther Belin. The essays are organized into four blocks. The introductory block, which includes four chapters, positions the reader in the initial stage of the cycle. Styled as a series of thematically compact essays, the structure of the book is proportionate and creates an engaging arrangement for the reader. Each of the four parts of the book is prefaced with a summary of the featured essays, both rationalizing the selection and a sneak peek at the issues and artists they introduce.

As revealed in the preface, the seeds of the collection germinated from the papers presented at the Modern Language Association conference panel organized by the book editors, and its featuring of exclusively new material is a creditable hallmark of the collection. Additionally, the rationale for the selection is unmistakable as the essays are all "pieces introducing underrepresented writers and recognize contemporary genre categories and writers" (Barker & Jacobs, 2022, Preface, p. xv). The multifaceted nature of the book is guaranteed by contributions from scholars doing research in sundry fields within the overarching Native American Studies. Their chapters approach Indigenous sovereignty from a literary stance and push beyond the most frequently represented themes of Indigeneity. *Postindian*, as advertised in the blurb, is a "volume of essays by readers and for readers" (Barker & Jacobs, 2022, p. xiii), the book's major premise is showing that the Native American literary "canon" transcends the established contemporary authors, directing the attention of the readers towards "what we have been missing" (Barker & Jacobs, 2022, Foreword, p. xii). The essays are penned by several creative and visionary Indigenous studies scholars, both established and neophytes. Despite the wide range of personal accounts told by the contributors, a common thread binds them all together:

the engagement of contemporary American Indian writers in reclaiming sovereignty through the deployment of postindian aesthetics on the page. Considering the wide arc of subjects and contributions, I will forefront the pieces from each part that the nascent Indigenous studies scholar in me considers worthwhile.

Part One, "Nurturing Culture through Ancestor Words and Stories," inaugurates the conversation. In a purely decolonial thrust, this section highlights the aesthetics adopted by Native American writers, especially language, recovery, and the preservation of tribal stories, established by Albert White Hat Sr. as conducive to "deconditioning and liberation" (p. 11). This prefatory part of the book features readers-turned-writers whose major inspiration is the aesthetic prowess of Native American artists such as Luci Tapahonso and Jeannette C. Armstrong. Standouts among its selection are Molly McGlenn's reading of Kimberly Blaeser's poetry, particularly bodacious in her implementation of the strategy of *tribalography*, a concept that we owe to Choctaw scholar Leanne Howe. Indeed, Blaeser's ingenuity is brought to a new light in her focus on generationality—or bringing things together, as a tribalographic writing stipulates. Equally exciting is Joseph M. Marshall III endorsing the role of a contemporary *wyoka*, or "culture bearer" (Barker & Jacobs, 2022, p. 49), and his embrace of storytelling to preserve of national identity, thus, reminding us that storytelling is situated in the Indigenous movement for resurgence.

The second part, "New Directions in Tribal Literatures" brings together essays that reinvest Gloria Bird and Joy Harjo's platitudinal "reinventing the English language." This part focuses on examining how Indigenous writers render the complexity of Indigenous identity in literary forms, especially in their desire as postindian literary warriors to take up "new directions" (Barker & Jacobs, 2022, p. 56) by breaking out of the fossilized depictions of Native Americans and testify to their desire to achieve sovereignty. Particularly striking for me is Dean Rader's panegyric on Janice Gould's "trailblazing spirit" (Barker & Jacobs, 2022, p. 60). "A Cartography of Healing: Mapping the Poetry and Prose of Janice Gould" by Dean Rader offers an illuminating reading of the Koyangk'auwi poet and demonstrates how "edgy, bold, and groundbreaking her early writing actually was" (Barker & Jacobs, 2022, p. 60). Rader reinvests Gould's metaphor of the "map" as a new line of inquiry into mapping the intertwined histories of land, history, and the female body. Her decolonial sensibility takes place on the page through her brilliant mixing of genres, particularly attention-grabbing in its rejection of generic determination that juxtaposes the restrictions meted out on Indigenous lands, bodies, and sexuality.

The third part, entitled "Art in the Quotidian," takes stock at how Native American writers are involved in postindian aesthetics in everyday practices. It throws into relief

how Indigenous artists nurture creativity in their daily practice through literary and political activism that recalls past projects. I highly recommend this section from the book to those interested in Indigenous Resurgence and its emphasis on cultural revitalization that is engaged in. Personal preference from the essays is Siobhan Senier's analysis of Savageau's work in a piece titled "In and Out of the Crazywoods: Cheryl Savageau's Abenaki Grounding of a Bipolar Diagnosis." Born out of overlap of Indigenous Studies with disability literature, this essay grounds Native American literary productions in the movement for resurgence by proposing writing through one's trauma as a counter-diagnosis to the pathologizing narratives of Western literary trauma theory. Despite being an off-putting topic, Senier's riveting analysis of Savageau's experience with bipolar disorder offers a point of entry into Native American literature from the perspective of disability studies, yet another area where the Native American voice has, to my knowledge, been muted. Additionally, this essay shines in its introduction of the literary strategy of the lyric essay, or "poems in prose," as a form that fares well with the representation of trauma experienced by Native American women. Retrieving the idea of Suzanna Mintz of *lyrical counter-diagnosis*, Senier asserts that this form of writing, which harkens back to Abenaki tradition, "Compresses and expands memories and experiences rather than following a linear chronology" (Barker & Jacobs, 2022, p. 122) allowing, thus, for healing from "trauma of mental illness" that is "closely intertwined with the disruptions and trauma of colonialism" on Indigenous terms (Barker & Jacobs, 2022, p. 120). Senier recognizes Savageau's work as the epitome of postindian aesthetics in its embrace of the lyric essay as "counter-diagnosis," or an attempt at literally defying "the authoritative, linear narrative that would purport to make non-normative experiences *behave*" and its advancing of the idea that "survival is a deeply collective struggle" (Barker & Jacobs, 2022, p. 120).

"Affirming Indigenous Literary Sovereignty," the fourth part of the book, further entrenches Indigenous writers and poets in the decolonization movement through their literature, which is deeply grounded in their tribal practices."'Directional Memory:' Esther G. Belin's Poetic Geographies" by Jeff Berglund (non-Indigenous) is a standout for me, so much so the book opens with the writing of contemporary poet Esther Belin (Diné). Through "Male+Female divided" from her anthology *Of Cartography*, the collection of essays heralds a postindian aesthetic of land-based praxis. In a reactionary stance to the colonial spatial violence, Belin deploys her "politics of place" (Goeman, 2009) by staging her rebellion into linguistic and symbolic forms as her poems deploy the expressive power of Indigenous languages. Her defiance of the authority of government documents and institutions is mirrored in her poetic forms that articulate deep relationships with their Native lands, languages, and communities. Read in conjunction with Mishuana Goeman's gripping

reading of Belin poetry in discussion, "Notes toward a Native Feminism's Spatial Practice," this essay succeeds in enriching the discussion of postindian aesthetics and their deployment towards Indigenous sovereignty, literary, cultural, or political.

Intended as a work "introducing underrepresented writers and recognized contemporary genre categories and writers (poetry, LGBTQ+, graphic literature, and mixed media, among other forms" (Barker & Jacobs, 2022, p. xv), the book propels a return to the feminine as through unapologetically feminist Indigenous writers. The spectrum across the gender line is somehow diversified, a straightforward castigation of the patriarchal colonial fracture of kinship, added to the choice of opening the book with a cutting-edge graphic poem by Esther Belin titled "Male+Female divided" with its ironic undertone. The theoretical contribution of the book is undeniable. Though exclusively Indigenous-centered, the collection holds its own among other theoretical books with the effect of profoundly diversifying the corpus of Indigenous studies.

Postindian Aesthetics shines in its attempt at "drawing the circle wider" (p. 156) by bringing into the spotlight innovative, yet largely neglected scholarship of contemporary American literature. The list of contributors as well as the subject of study are nothing short of enticing to Native American avid readers. Some would berate the book for the absence of Gerald Vizenor in the proposed essays since the title of the book owes its magnetism in no small part to the Anishinaabe critic's invention "postindian." However, as the collection was intended as a probe into postindian aesthetics towards literary sovereignty, there is no better way to pay tribute to Vizenor than in showing the outreach of his theorizations. For bibliophiles, it simply offers a list of "new stacks of books and a list of new books to look for" (Barker & Jacobs, 2022, Foreword, p. xiv). Despite the rich diversity of content, the volume, with its circular sequence of essays, invariably conveys the sense of an uninterrupted and smooth reading experience. It is highly recommended to early-career researchers and established scholars alike, as well as those interested in engaging in the expansive Indigenous studies field.

The only drawback being that the essays in this book, whether introducing new names or celebrating more established ones, the rationale for selection should have been more honest, so much so most contributors do not shy away from manifesting their personal connection to the artist they write about. Indeed, the book is, at times, marred by the impassioned tone of the writing, revealing, thus, a certain degree of amity between the "postindian warrior" and the contributor, the book does not fail to fulfill its promise. Granted, this feature does not reduce the academic quality of the essays nor dismiss the artistic genius of the writers and poets discussed. However, this point could have been mentioned from the outset of the book, offering, thus, the reader a forthright vision of the book.

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Book Review. The Broadcasted Future of Sport Management. Branden Buehler's *Front Office Fantasies. The Rise of Managerial Sports Media*

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Wittgenstein (1977) asserted that the world is a system of colors. According to the theoreticians of system theory, a system is formed of many components, and changes suffered by a component of the system can affect all the other components and regular processes. In such systems, components and processes are in dynamic interdependencies. Such can be said, in our opinion, about the world of sports media and management, and Branden Buehler's book is an illustration of this.

Sport, marketing, business, and politics coexist, forming a complex system of networks and phenomena, within certain boundaries but having their specific dynamics. As Buehler explains on p. 172 of his book, "the symbiotic relationship between sport and media is likely to grow even tighter." Managerial sport is a social phenomenon, as one of the subtitles of the introduction formulates. The dynamics often seem to be spontaneous, but they are rarely so.

> Across platforms, these reporters almost exclusively focus on the minute details of the managerial moves, generally offering little critical commentary. Their reporting produces an endless stream of content that is likely appealing to sports media companies not just for its volume but also for its obsequiousness. Another suggestive illustration involves managerial sports films. (p. 190)

The entire volume is interesting to read but hard to understand for those unfamiliar with this world; on their part, a greater focus of attention is required. However, once the reader gets into the flow of the dynamism of this colorful and original text, it is harder to stop

until the whole volume is read. Also, the book's four chapters are delimited according to their subjects, but a certain line of thought is omnipresent throughout the volume, on which the judgments are built.

The bibliography is large, as a result of an extensive work of research, which started, according to the author, while he was in graduate school, and it was developed into the current volume due to the help and influence of a series of people. Each chapter has explanatory and bibliographic notes, while the general bibliography contains even more titles. The general bibliography is a clear reflection in the mirror of the author's personality, as it highlights the list of readings for realizing this project. At the same time, the bibliography is very variable in quality, from short articles to studies published in some of the most prestigious journals. The years of their publication also highlight the evolution of the author's interest in this specific subject.

The first chapter focuses on and starts by reflecting on the film *Moneyball*. To enjoy this chapter, the reader has to be familiar with the movies used as case studies by the author. The second chapter focuses on real-life coverage of sports administration, and the third chapter tackles the relationship of the sports industry with television and examines the specific industrial roots of this phenomenon. The fourth chapter scrutinizes the popularity of digital games, "both video games and fantasy leagues" (p. 47).

"The Managerial American Dream" deals with how the American Dream is realized through sport, in movies. It identifies some common patterns in Hollywood production, common for sports movies, like the rise of the underdog through hard training, and the way the role of management got more and more highlighted, starting with the eighties of the last century, and the way how the *Athletic American Dream* got replaced by the *Managerial American Dream* (p. 44).

Probably many readers will find the gender and race issues to be intriguing, as the author sublimely highlights certain aspects—the author of this current review finds especially interesting the contrast between "primitive" and "civilized" masculinity, expressed in the movies. Issues analyzed in this case are related to masculinity–femininity, and sport as a promotion of national propaganda (*Rocky IV*, *The Jump*, and others). The analysis performed on topics and archetypes leaves quite a few questions open for further interpretation. Such an idea is formulated, for example, in the following sentence:

> Most obviously, if the traditional sports film suggests that athletic performance is key to obtaining the American Dream, then the managerial sports film, in deemphasizing athletic action, instead posits that a different sort of performance—administrative performance—is key to the American Dream. (p. 43)

The author proceeds to a reflection concerning the concept of what he calls to be the American Managerial Dream, stating that it is hardly a revolutionary vision and that certain representations are closer to the American Nightmare. To understand these critics is recommended to watch the *High Flying Bird* Netflix production movie, with a critical eye, and understand its racial dimension, especially in the mirror of the BLM protests.

The chapter "He's Looking like a Depressed Asset. The Financial Logic of Managerial Sports Talk" expands the analysis to real-world sports events and their managerial aspects. Especially the Sport as "Investment" subchapter is of striking interest, where in the highlight of some specific sources of literature, the investment character of the sports media is analyzed. The conclusions are rather suggestions. I will highlight in this sense the last idea of the chapter:

> One can view, then, managerial sports talk not just as further ensconcing investment as the dominant metaphor for understanding the world but also offering investor exemplars to help audiences grapple with that transformation. (p. 78)

Almost equally intriguing are the rest of the subchapters, including the one dealing with the aspects of risk management in sports media.

The chapter "Datavisuality. The Quantified Aesthetic of Managerial Sports Television" deals with data, numbers, and quantification. This chapter is the most illustrated one with graphics and photos. At the same time, tables, diagrams, and figures characteristic of econometric analysis are missing. This will probably be the subject of another volume.

The fourth chapter deals with sports games and their complicated relationship with neoliberal capitalism.

> The goal of this chapter has not been to challenge or rebut the existing work of managerial sports games, but rather to add new layers to this work in further examining how managerial texts fit into everyday life amid the rhythms and imperatives of neoliberal capitalism. (p. 167)

Says a fragment of this text which is speaking for itself. The author openly suggests that managerial sports games are framing society through neoliberal values. The text is not simply about gaming, even if the author expresses a certain level of knowledge of the evolution of fantasy sports computer games, it focuses on their role in modeling managerial culture in sports. The chapter will be pleasant to read for those who enjoy playing *Football Manager* and similar games.

The "Conclusions," while highlighting how easy it is nowadays, due to technology, to stream and record podcasts, are leaving a question open, with all its affirmations. For example, "Within the world of managerial sports media, administrators—mostly men, mostly white—are often the true protagonists of sport in wielding special expertise and skills to shrewdly manage these athletes- cum- investments-cum-data" (p. 171). It is hard to deny the truthfulness of this statement; it is a phenomenon we all perceive.

> In addition, managerial sports media blocks out alternative methods of interpreting and understanding sports. If managerial texts are primarily centered on a conception of sport as rigidly hierarchical and highly rational, one might imagine a radically different version of sports media that rejects this orientation–perhaps, for instance, centering the "aesthetics delights" mentioned in the third chapter and, in the process, further highlighting qualities like creativity and playfulness. (p. 172)

This affirmation is also true, due to the nature of managerial communication, which has to be direct and efficient, and this is hard to change; at the same time, we have to agree with Buehler that alternative approaches are available, possible, and beneficial. An alternative approach to the rigid system of "traditional" relations among sports, managerial practice, and media is suggested:

> Similarly, with a relatively inexpensive camera and web streaming account, anyone can live stream a sporting event across the world. Indeed, communities surrounding amateur and minor sports have begun taking advantage of these possibilities, in the process creating a new form of sports media outside the traditional sports media apparatus. The question becomes, then, if this new "independent" sports media content will challenge the managerial mode or if, instead, managerial logics have become so ingrained in the presentation of the sport they even come to dominate this new realm. (p. 173)

May the future of the amateur broadcasting (see the example of Tiktok) and AI be an alternative for the traditional sports media apparatus, as Buehler formulates? Probably partially "yes," but I have doubts that much can change in the near future in this aspect.

Overall, this book in general received positive words by the anonymous authors of short reviews on different bookselling sites, and a thorough reading can confirm that it has lots of qualities. Its text, however, inspires mediation and contemplation over its affirmations rather than reproducing its content, similar to the character of an article from an encyclopedia. It is also leaving open certain directions for research, like the issue of masculinity–femininity in sports media, or the proportions of sports media like business reported to amateur, often underground broadcasting. The Front Office Fantasies can become a source for future research of great social impact. And, at the same time, it represents pleasant reading.

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